Contents

CERTIFICATE ..... *ii*

DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE ..... *iii*

CERTIFICATE FROM THE SUPERVISOR ..... *iii*

COPYRIGHT TRANSFER CERTIFICATE ..... *iv*

ABSTRACT ..... *v*

DEDICATION ..... *viii*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... *ix*

Contents ..... *x*

List of Figures ..... *xvii*

List of Tables ..... *xxii*

List of Abbreviations ..... *xxiii*

List of Nomenclature ..... *xxv*

Preface ..... *xxviii*

Chapter 1. Introduction *1*

1.1. Background 1

1.1.1. FRP Composites 2

1.1.2. Nanocomposite 3

1.2. Motivation 8

Chapter 2. Literature Review *13*

2.1. Introduction 13

2.2. Epoxy 13

2.3. Nanoparticles Reinforcement 17

2.3.1. Metal-based nanoparticles 18

2.3.2. Clay nanoparticles 18

2.3.3. Ceramic nanoparticles 19

2.3.4. Polymer-based nanoparticles 19

2.3.5. Carbon-based nanoparticles 20

2.4. Graphene 20

2.5. CNT 22

2.6. Fabrication of GNP and CNT epoxy nanocomposite 26

2.7. Research Gap 27

2.8. Research Aims and Objectives 30

2.9. Structure of The Thesis 31

Chapter 3. Development of Nanocomposite by Magnetic Field Induced Alignment of GNP 35

3.1. Introduction 35

3.2. Method: Physical phenomena of applied DC electromagnetic-coerced alignment of Fe_3O_4-GNP 35

3.2.1. Rotation of Fe_3O_4-GNP particles 39

3.2.2. Chaining of Fe_3O_4-GNP nanoparticles 42

3.2.3. Migration of Fe_3O_4-GNP nanoparticles 47

3.2.4. Slackening of aligned Fe_3O_4-GNP nanoparticles 48

3.3. Experimental section 49

3.4. Results and discussion 50

3.4.1. Experimental results 50

3.5. Model Results 52

3.5.1. Rotation 53

3.5.2. Chaining of nanoparticles 55

3.5.3. Migration 57

3.5.4. Slackening 58

3.5.5. Considerations on the model results 58

3.6. Conclusion 60

Chapter 4. Experimental Characterization Optimising Alignment Parameters of GNP Epoxy Base nanocomposite 62

4.1. Introduction 62

4.2. Experimental section 62

4.2.1. Basic materials 63

4.2.2. Synthesis of Fe_3O_4 and Fe_3O_4-GNP 63

4.2.3. Preparation of GNP epoxy and Fe_3O_4-GNP epoxy nanocomposites 64

4.3. Characterization, morphology and microstructure of GNP, Fe_3O_4-GNP and nanocomposites 68

4.3.1. HR-XRD (High Resolution X-Ray Diffraction) 68

4.3.2. FTIR (Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy) 68

4.3.3. Raman measurements 68

4.3.4. TGA (Thermogravimetric analysis) 69

4.3.5. DSC (Differential scanning calorimetry) 69

4.3.6. AFM (Atomic force microscopy) 69

4.3.7. XPS (X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy analysis) 69

4.3.8. BET (Brunauer–Emmett–Teller) analysis 70

4.3.9. Exploration of the alignment of the Fe_3O_4-GNP 70

4.3.10. HR-SEM and HR-TEM analysis 70

4.3.11. Chemorheological behaviours of epoxy during curing 70
4.3.12. Measurement of magnetic properties 71
4.4. Results and discussion 71
4.4.1. HR-XRD analysis 71
4.4.2. FTIR (Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy) 74
4.4.3. Raman spectroscopy 74
4.4.4. TGA (Thermogravimetric analysis) 75
4.4.5. DSC (Differential scanning calorimetry) 77
4.4.6. XPS (X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy analysis) 79
4.4.7. BET (Brunauer–Emmett–Teller) analysis 81
4.4.8. Exploration of the alignment of the Fe_3O_4-GNP 82
4.4.9. SEM and TEM analysis 82
4.4.10. AFM analysis 86
4.4.11. Magnetic properties of GNP, Fe_3O_4, and Fe_3O_4-GNP 90
4.4.12. Chemorheological behaviour of epoxy during curing 91
4.5. Conclusion 92
Chapter 5. Fracture and Failure Analysis of GNP and Aligned Fe_3O_4-GNP Epoxy Nanocomposite 94
5.1. Introduction 94
5.2. Experimental 95
5.2.1. Basic Materials 95
5.2.2. Preparation of GNP epoxy and aligned Fe_3O_4-GNP epoxy nanocomposites 95
5.3. Mechanical properties 95
5.3.1. Tensile tests 95
5.3.2. Compression tests 96
5.3.3. Compact tension (CT) test for fracture toughness 96
5.3.4. $CTOD_c$ measurement by clip gauges 99

5.3.5. Fracture surface analysis 100

5.4. Results 102

5.4.1. Tensile Properties 102

5.4.1.1. Maximum tensile load 104

5.4.1.2. Maximum tensile extension 105

5.4.1.3. Young's modulus 106

5.4.1.4. Yield strength 107

5.4.1.5. Toughness 108

5.4.2. Compression Properties 109

5.4.2.1. Compressive yield strength 110

5.4.2.2. Compressive modulus 112

5.4.3. Fracture toughness and fracture energy 114

5.4.3.1. Maximum CT load 115

5.4.3.2. Stress intensity factor 116

5.4.3.3. Strain energy release rate 118

5.4.3.4. Critical Crack Tip opening displacement 119

5.4.4. Fracture surface analysis 122

5.4.4.1. Stereo zoom optical microscopy 122

5.4.4.2. Atomic force microscopy 123

5.5. Discussion 130

5.6. Conclusions 135

Chapter 6. Fatigue Analysis of GNP and Aligned Fe_3O_4-GNP Epoxy Nanocomposite. 136

6.1. Introduction 136

6.2. Experimental procedure 137

6.2.1. Materials and specimen preparation the nanocomposites 137

6.2.2. Cyclic fatigue and FCGR test 138

6.2.3. Fatigue fracture surface analysis 142

6.3. Result 142
6.3.1. Cyclic fatigue loading and its response 143
6.3.2. The impact of nanoparticles on thresholds for fatigue crack growth, ΔK_{th} and ΔG_{th} 147
6.3.3. The influence of nanoparticles on the FCGR 150
6.3.4. The impact of nanoparticles on the constant of the Paris law 153
6.3.5. Fatigue fracture surface analysis 158
6.4. Discussion 163
6.4.1. Thermal softening 164
6.4.2. Fatigue crack growth mechanism 165
6.5. Conclusion 168
Chapter 7. Fracture Energy of CNT/Epoxy Nanocomposites with Progressive Interphase Debonding, Cavitation, and Plastic Deformation of Nanovoids 170
7.1. Introduction 170
7.2. A theoretical multi-scale modelling approach 171
7.2.1. General concepts 171
7.2.1.1. Macro-scale: 172
7.2.1.2. Micro-scale: 173
7.2.1.3. Nano-scale: 173
7.2.2. Mean mechanical properties and stiffness tensor 173
7.2.3. Description of RVE 174
7.3. Energy release rate procedure in multi-scale modelling 177
7.4. Elastic debonding induced toughness improvement 183
7.5. Cavitation 185
7.6. Plastic deformation of nanovoids 186
7.7. Results and discussion 191

7.7.1. Effect of the interphase properties on cavitation-induced toughness improvement 192
7.7.2. Growth of nanovoid and plastic deformation 192
7.7.3. Experimental comparison of fracture energy, analytical evaluation and error 194
7.8. Conclusions 199
Supplementary 200
Chapter 8. Conclusion and Future Scope 202
8.1. Introduction 202
8.2. Conclusion 202
8.2.1. Development of nanocomposite by Magnetic Field Induced Alignment of Graphene Nanoplatelets 203
8.2.2. Experimental Characterization Optimising Alignment Parameters of GNP epoxy base nanocomposite 203
8.2.3. Fracture and Failure Analysis of GNP and aligned Fe_3O_4-GNP epoxy Nanocomposite 204
8.2.4. Fatigue Analysis of GNP and aligned Fe_3O_4-GNP epoxy Nanocomposite 205
8.2.5. Fracture Energy of CNT/Epoxy Nanocomposites with Progressive Interphase Debonding, Cavitation, and Plastic Deformation of Nanovoids 206
8.3. Future Scope 208
REFERENCES 210
List of Publications 232