

POTENCY OF INDIGENOUS MICROBES OF PIYUNGAN LANDFILL YOGYAKARTA FOR MICROPLASTIC BIODEGRADATION

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ABSTRACT

Research on the bacteria and fungi potentially degrading microplastic in Piyungan Landfill has not been done much. Meanwhile, plastic pollution is one of many environmental problems faced in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. The accumulation of plastic waste is getting more significant daily, and the capacity of landfills is decreasing. Bacterial and fungal testing was carried out by taking soil samples from landfills and isolating dilute Nutrient Broth, Malt Extract Agar, and Nutrient Agar media. Bacterial and fungal were identified by morphology colony and cell, then tested for plastic biodegradation by selected bacterial and fungal. The result of this research, there are 18 bacterial isolate and five isolate fungi, but for the degradation testing, chosen just three bacterial (Isolate A, F, J) degrade Polypropylene for ± 30 days and three fungal (Isolate PA, PK, RJ) to degrade LDPE for ± 14 days. The indicator for determining plastic degradation is clear-zone formation. The test result showed that isolate F, which had similarity with bacteria in the genus of *Micrococcus*, had a higher potential to degrade microplastic with clear-zone formation ± 1.23 mm. Meanwhile, fungal isolate PK, similar to *Penicillium sp.*, had a higher potential to degrade microplastic, marked by the most significant clear-zone appearance, ± 2.3 cm.

Keywords: Indigenous Microbes, Piyungan landfill, Microplastic biodegradation

1. INTRODUCTION

The global problem that is often recognized by the public is plastic pollution. In 2016, plastic production reached 322 million tons of plastic fibre manufacture [1]. The resistant nature of plastic makes it complex and lengthy for the degradation process by nature [2]. Plastic in micro-size has many types, shapes, and sizes, one of which is microplastic. Microplastic is a type of plastic waste that has a size smaller than 5 mm [3]. Microplastics have persistent properties and contain toxic or carcinogenic chemical elements. The compound can seep into the soil through leachate and enter the food chain, impacting human health and the environment [4]. A study by Utami and Liani [5] found that samples of ground-well water in the Piyungan landfill area contained microplastics. The highest microplastic was found in an area of 0 – 1 km in Lingkong Village at 146 ± 109 particles/L. These microplastics have Polystyrene (PS) and Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) polymers. If the use of plastic continues but is not balanced with the calculation of the

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length of the plastic decomposition process, the high level of plastic consumption, and the reduced availability of landfill land as a last resort in waste disposal, the problem of waste generation will not be avoided [2].

One solution to overcome microplastic pollution is the bioremediation method using microorganisms to degrade microplastics. Bioremediation is a way to clean up pollutants that is not difficult to do and has a low cost. Biodegradation by microorganisms can be obtained from an area polluted by plastic [6]. Previous research has shown that bacteria and fungi can be used as plastic biodegradation agents. It is known that the bacteria *Micrococcus rubidea*, *Pseudomonas putida*, *Micrococcus marcescens*, and *Vibrio fluvialis* have a plastic degradation ability of 94%-98%. On the other hand, the fungus that can degrade plastic is *Aspergillus terreus*, whose capability is 3.25% [7][8]. Research by Wardani [9] also proved that fungi in the genus *Aspergillus* could degrade LDPE by 5.7% in 30 days.

In 2018, the waste at the Piyungan landfill reached 500,000 tons or 549.74 tons/day. Plastic waste in the Piyungan landfill that has been piled up for a long time will break down into microplastics and contaminate water sources and the surrounding environment. In addition, the cattle grazing at the Piyungan landfill, the cows there often eat plastic, which is very dangerous for the health of animals and the food chain of organisms [10]. Based on the problems that occurred, this study was conducted to explore bacteria and fungi from the Piyungan landfill, which have the potential to degrade microplastics. The results of this study are expected to help provide information on the process of handling plastic waste by utilising microorganisms in the Piyungan landfill.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Study sites and sampling locations

Soil samples were taken from the Piyungan landfill which is located at Ngablak, Sitimulyo Village, Piyungan District, Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta Province. The sampling points were presented in Figure 1.



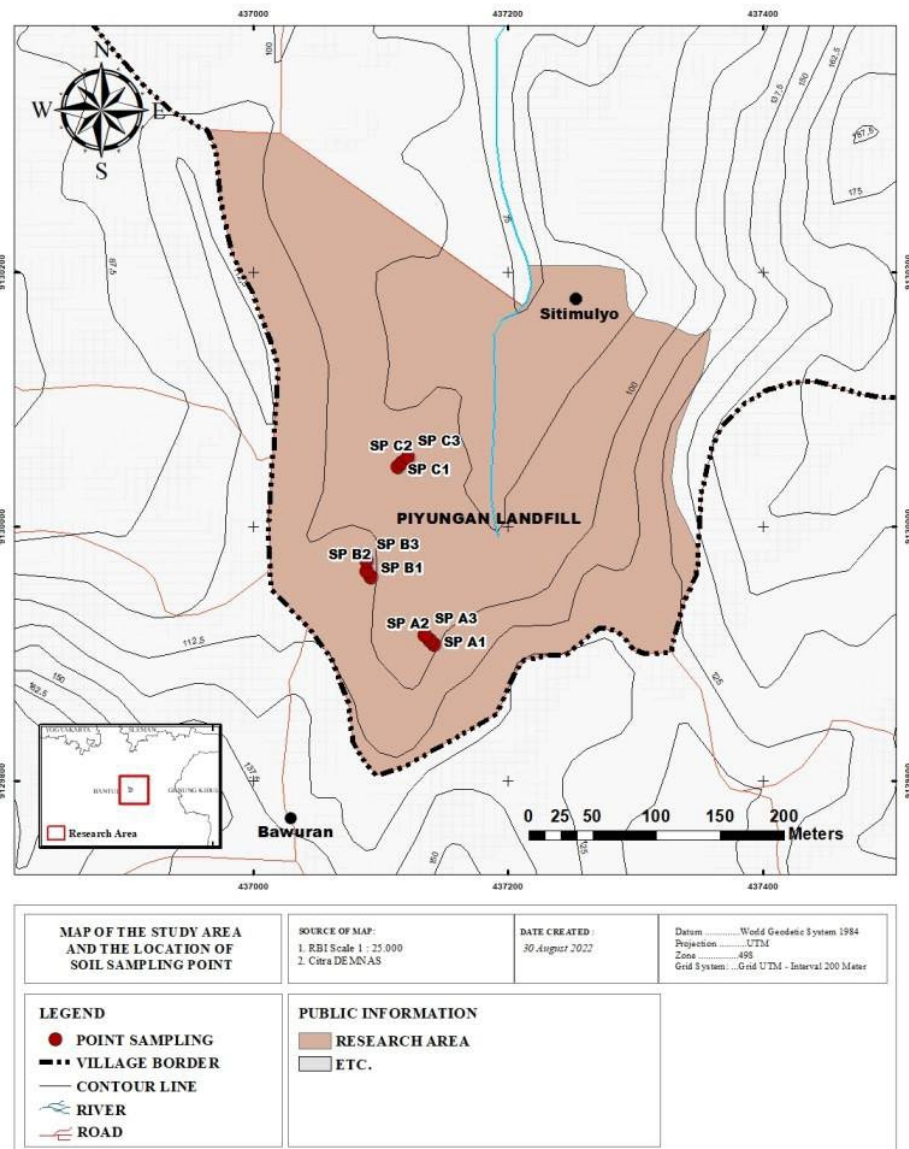


Figure 1 Sampling Points in the Piyungan Landfill

2.2. Sample preparation

Soil samples were taken using the grab sampling method at three sampling points (SP1, SP2, and SP3). Samples were collected on March, 8th 2022 from three points (15 cm in depth) with 1 m interval between them (Figure 2). The samples were kept in a cooler box containing an ice pack [11]. Finally the samples were stored in a refrigerator at 4°C for further analysis [12].



Table 1 Coordinates of Sampling Points

Sampling points	1	2	3
A	110 25'47.2"S 7 52'16"E	110 25'47.1"S 7 52'15.9"E	110 25'47"S 7 52'15.8"E
B	110 25'45.6"S 7 52'14.3"E	110 25'45.5"S 7 52'14.1"E	110 25'45.5"S 7 52'13.9"E
C	110 25'46.3"S 7 52'15.5"E	110 25'46.4"S 7 52'11.4"E	110 25'46.6"S 7 52'11.2"E

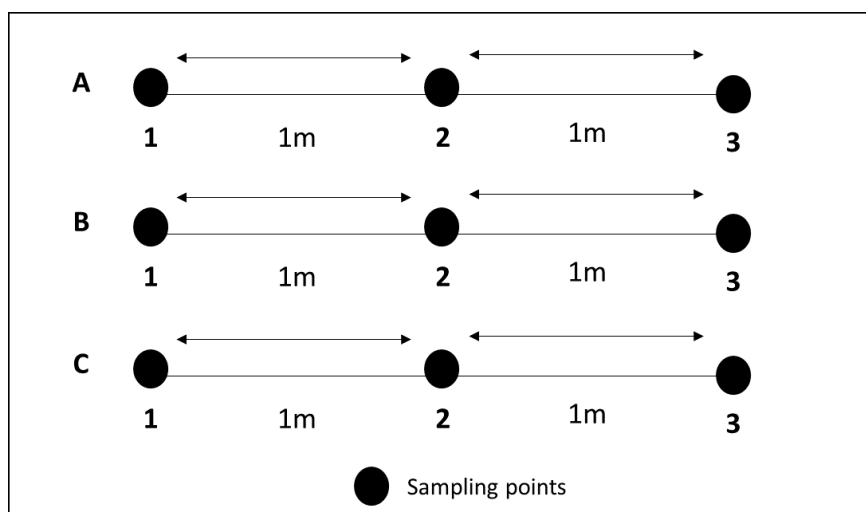


Figure 2 Interval Sampling Illustration

2.3. Media Preparation

In this study three kinds of media were used namely *Dilute Nutrient Broth* (DNB) agar, *Malt Extract Agar* (MEA) (MERCK, Germany), and *Nutrient agar* (NA) (MERCK, Germany). DNB agar and MEA were used for bacterial and fungal isolation, respectively. NA media were used for isolation cultivation and plastic biodegradation analysis. MEA and NA media were made according to the manufacturer's instructions. While DNB agar media were made by 100-fold diluted *Nutrient Broth* (NB) media (OXOID, UK) adding with 2% *Bacto agar* (OXOID, UK).

2.4. Isolation of Bacteria and Fungi

In this study, bacterial and fungal isolation was carried out using the *Direct Plating* method. In brief, the soil samples (5 g fresh weight) were suspended in 45 ml of *Buffered Peptone Water* (BPW) media (MERCK, Germany) and vigorously mixed for 6 minutes. The serial dilution of the samples was made until 10⁻⁷. Further, serial dilution from 10⁻⁴ to 10⁻⁷ was used for subsequent procedures [13]. Serially diluted samples (1 ml aliquots) were plated on DNB agar and MEA media using the pour plate method. The DNB media were used for bacterial isolation, while MEA media were used for fungal isolation. After 14 days of incubation, bacterial and fungal colonies were counted using a colony counter and recultured onto NA media to obtain pure cultures [14].

2.5. Bacterial and Fungal Identification

2.5.1 Bacterial morphology

In this study, bacterial and fungal identification was carried out based on morphological characterization. Observation of the morphology of the bacterial colonies was carried out using a colony counter to clarify the identification of the shape, colour, elevation, and



margins of the colonies, as well as to calculate the total bacterial colonies based on colony morphology. Furthermore, the identification of colony morphology was compared with the reference [15]. Further, the gram staining test was conducted to identify the bacterial cell by clarifying the cell shape and gram type.. The gram staining test was performed according to Singh *et al.* [16].

2.5.2 Fungal morphology

According to Barneth [17][18], fungal morphology was identified by macroscopic and microscopic observation. Fungal observations identified the fungal colonies' diameters, colony structure, and colour according to Hartanti [18]. In contrast, microscopic observations identified conidia, spores, hyphae, conidiophores, and sporangia, according to Iramayana [19]. Fungal microscopic identification was conducted using slide culture and *lactophenol cotton blue* (LPCB) staining. In brief, the sliced media was put on the observation glass, then a small number of fungi were placed in the media using a needle and scratched around. Further, the media were placed in a petri dish with cotton and distilled water. The media on Petri dishes were incubated for 3-5 days [20]. After the incubation, the fungal mycelium will appear at the edge of the agar. Further, the LPCB staining method was used to observe the fungal component, according to Hulse [21] [22].

2.6. Plastic Biodegradation Analysis

2.6.1 Plastic Biodegradation using Bacterial isolates

The ability of bacterial isolates to degrade plastic was observed by clear-zone/halo zone formation in the NA media containing plastic fragments. The type of plastic, namely Polypropylene (PP), was used. The degradation test begins with sterilised plastic with 70% alcohol (soaked for 1 hour), sprayed with distilled water, and then air-dried. Next, the plastic was inoculated on a petri dish with NA media which previously contained the selected bacterial isolates. Then it was incubated at 30°C for approximately 14 days. After that, the sample was dripped with Congo red reagent (pH adjusted to 6.7), then continued incubating for about 14 days to see the clear-zone formation around the plastic. Next, the clear zone was measured using a millimetre ruler [7].

2.6.2 Plastic Biodegradation using Fungal isolates

The ability of fungal isolates to degrade plastic was carried out using low-density polyethylene (LDPE) powder in minimal nutrient media divided into 1% LDPE and 5% LDPE. The LDPE powder and media were autoclaved at 121°C for 15 minutes and then placed on a petri dish. A small number of fungal isolates were inoculated at the centre of the media, then incubated at 28°C for seven days. After that, the clear-zone formation around the colonies was observed. The isolates with maximum clear-zone diameter were targeted as microplastic degraders [23].

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. Characteristics of Bacterial and Fungal Isolates

Based on the isolation of bacteria and fungi taken from soil samples from the Piyungan landfill, Bantul, Special Region of Yogyakarta, based on sampling points SP1, SP2, and SP3, 18 bacterial isolates and five fungal isolates were obtained. Isolation was carried out with an incubation time of ± 14 days with a temperature of 30° C for bacteria and incubation time of ± 2 days with a temperature of fungal isolates that had different variations depending on the colony type and cell morphology. Microbial growth in the soil can be influenced by temperature, humidity, pH, and O₂ requirements [24]. In addition, soil texture can affect the effectiveness of bacterial and fungal growth. This study selected three bacterial isolates and three fungal isolates for plastic biodegradation



analysis. The morphology characteristics of cell bacteria are presented in Table 2. Furthermore, the characteristics of the cell morphology are shown in Table 3. Both bacteria and fungi colonies are shown in Figure 2.

Table 2 The characteristics of selected bacterial isolates from Piyungan Landfill

Sampling point	Isolate code	Colony morphology				Cell morphology	
		Shape	Elevation	Margin	Colour	Cell shape	Gram type
SP1	A	Circular	Flat	Entire	White	Cocci	+
SP2	F	Irregular	Convex	Undulate	White	Cocci	+
SP3	J	Circular	Flat	Entire	Yellow	Cocci	-

Table 3 The characteristics of selected fungal isolates from Piyungan Landfill

Sampling point	Isolate code	Cell morphology						
		Texture	Observe	Reverse	Exudate drops	Form	Hyphal	Conidia
SP1	PA	Velvety	Greyish blue with white color on the edges	Yellow	Yes	Rugose	Insulated, short, branched	Rounded conidia, single phialides and grow in clusters on the metule
SP2	PK	Velvety	Gray with white edges then turns yellow	Yellow	Yes	Rugose	Insulated, short, branched	Rounded conidia, single phialides and grow in clusters on the metule
SP3	RJ	Cottony	Slow white mycelium growth and does not spread over the dish	Yellowish white	Yes	Verrucosae	Not insulated, branched, very long stolon hyphae	Rounded sporangium at the tip of the sporangiophore



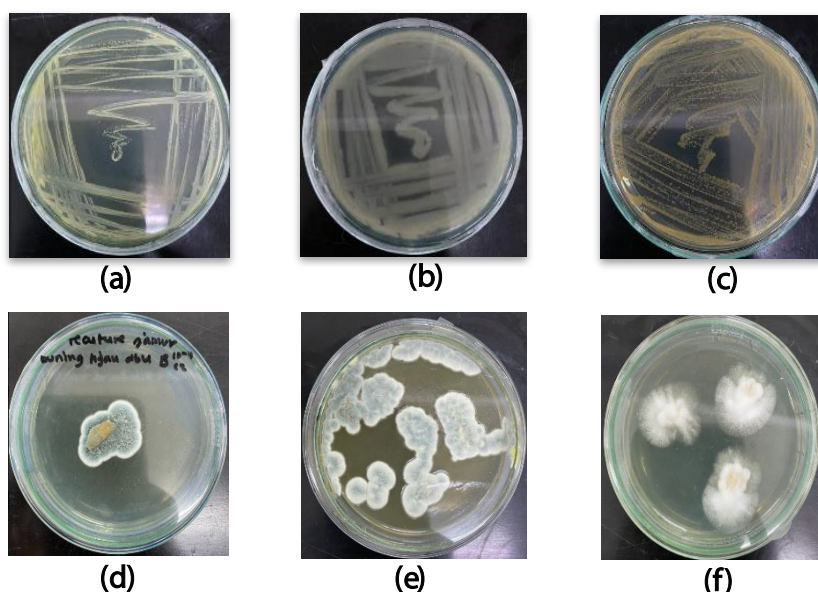


Figure 2 Morphology colony of bacterial and fungal
(a) bacterial isolate A, (b) bacterial isolate F, (c) bacterial isolate J, (d) fungal isolate PA, (e) fungal isolate PK, and (f) fungal isolate RJ

3.2. Plastic Biodegradation Ability of the Bacterial and Fungal Isolates

The potency of selected bacterial and fungal isolates in plastic degradation were observed in the media. The clear zone or halo zone formation around the bacterial and fungal culture indicates plastic fragments or debris. For the bacterial isolates, the analysis was carried out using Polypropylene (PP) plastic from soil samples taken from the Piyungan landfill, Bantul, Special Region of Yogyakarta. In Indonesia, Polypropylene (PP) plastic is the third biggest type of plastic produced as packaging for food and beverages [22]. Thus, we used the Polypropylene plastic-type in our study. The results showed that after 14 days of incubation, the clear-zone formation could be observed in all of the tested media containing the selected isolates (Figure 3). The clear zone is formed due to the activity of using plastic substances as a source of energy and carbon for the metabolism of the bacteria [23]. Isolate F has the greatest potential for plastic degradation because it has an average clear zone distance formed in the plastic area, which is 1.23 mm. While the bacteria with the smallest potential in degrading plastic is isolate A with an average value of the clear zone distance formed in the plastic area, which is 0.35 mm (Table 4). Based on previous research, the research was conducted using the purification method and degradation test to obtain the type of microplastic-degrading bacteria, *Micrococcus rubidaea* which had a degradation ability of 98% and *Micrococcus marcescens* had a degradation ability of 96% [7].



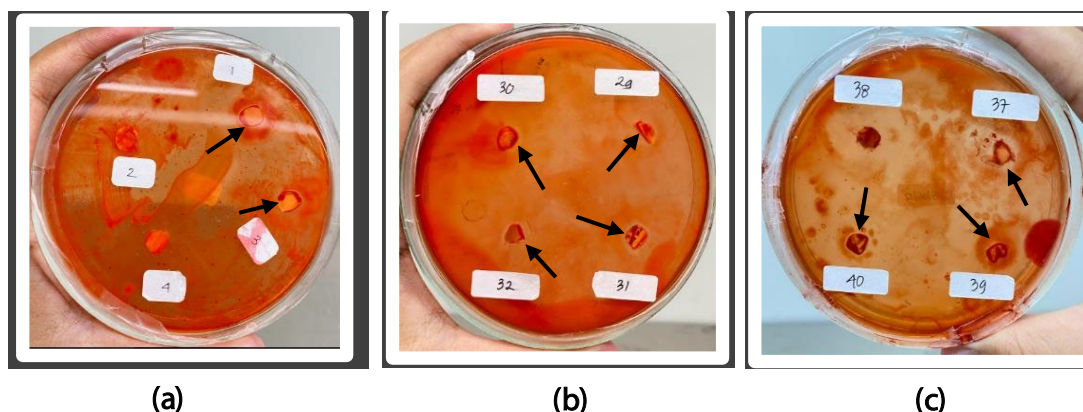


Figure 3 Clear zone formation of selected bacterial isolates around the PP plastic after 30 days incubation in NA media: clear zone of bacterial isolate A (a), clear zone of bacterial isolate F (b), and clear zone of bacterial isolate J (c).

Table 4 The clear zone size of the selected bacteria isolates

Isolate code	Average size of clear zone formation (mm)
A	0.35
F	1.23
J	0.94

In this study, isolates A, F, and J, which formed a clear zone in the plastic area, had similar characteristics to the bacteria in the genus of *Staphylococcus*, *Micrococcus*, and *Enterococcus*, respectively [24][25][26]. The observation of clear-zone formation on plastic biodegradation is the initial step to seeing the presence of bacterial activity in the plastic area. The biodegradation ability of the bacteria as plastic degrading agents can be further observed by looking at the formation of biofilms and the percentage of plastic weight reduction. Biofilms are formed from bacterial colonies attached to plastics to break down complex polymer bonds into simpler bonds such as monomers, dimers, and oligomers using the help of extracellular enzymes. Polymers can be degraded due to enzymes attached to the substrate. Moreover, the hydrolytic cleavage occurs and undergoes mineralization to turn into CO₂ and water. Plastic can be degraded over a long period because when the nutrients or carbon contained in the composition of the NA media run out, bacteria will use plastic as a carbon source to carry out metabolic processes [27].

The fungal degradation was examined on the 10-fold diluted MEA media added with LDPE powder [29]. This kind of plastic is widely used around the world for packaging [28]. Isolates were inoculated at the centre of the media and then cultivated in an incubator for seven days at 28°C. The results showed that the fungal isolates positively impacted both 1% and 5% LDPE concentrations based on their clear-zone formation (Figure 4). The appearance of a clear zone indicates that isolates could use LDPE powder, thereby degrading polyethylene as a carbon source [30]. A clear area around the colony might show enzyme activity [31]. Isolate RJ had the maximum clear zone in 1% LDPE, while



isolate PK obtained the ultimate clear zone in 5% LDPE (Table 5). The higher concentration, the larger the clear zone received [32].

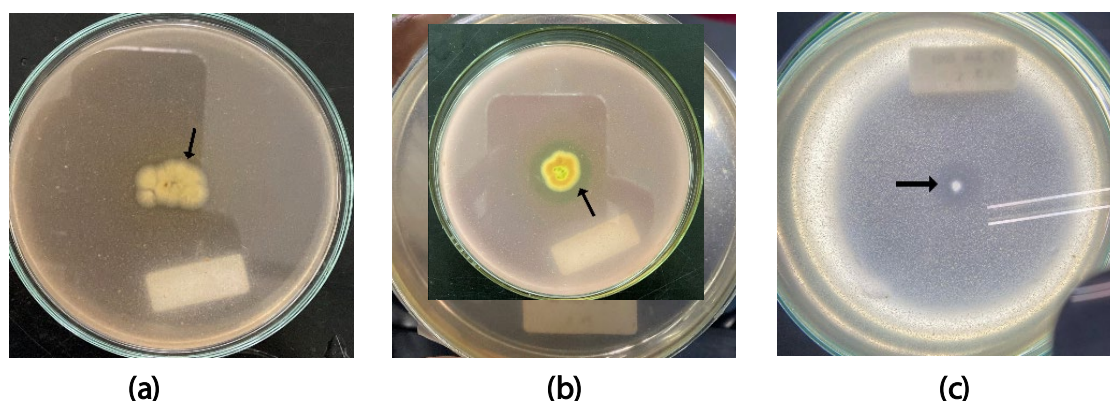


Figure 4 Clear zone formation of selected fungi around LDPE plastic after ±14 days incubation in minimal MEA media: clear zone of isolate PA (a), clear zone of isolate PK (b), and clear zone of isolate RJ (c).

Table 5 The clear zone size of the selected fungi isolates

Isolate code	Clear zone in 1% LDPE (cm)	Clear zone in 5% LDPE (cm)
PA	0.1-0.3	0.1-1.55
PK	0.05-0.35	0.55-2.3
RJ	0.2-1.1	0.1-0.6

All the isolates (PA, PK, and RJ) showed positive results based on their clear-zone formation on the minimal MEA media with LDPE powder. Isolates PA and PK had similar characteristics to fungi in the genus of *Penicillium* [37]. Isolate RJ had the closest similar feature to fungi in the genus of *Rhizopus* [38]. Fungi have apical hyphae that can expand their mycelium through various materials [34]. The penetration ability of hyphae is related to the secretion of exoenzymes and their hydrophobins. Those compounds and abilities cause fungal adhesion to the plastic's hydrophobic substrate [33]. Fungal strains with the maximum size of a clear zone had a better degradation ability [35]. Thus, based on this study, isolated PK had the best ability to degrade LDPE, followed by isolated PA. At the same time, isolated RJ had the minimum capability to degrade LDPE. The fungal examination as plastic biodegradation agents can be further observed by scanning electron microscopy (SEM), pH changes, weight reduction, FTIR, and soil microbial biomass carbon test [36].

4. CONCLUSIONS

To summarise, the investigation of this study to explore the potential of microorganisms from the Piyungan landfill to degrade plastic resulted in a culture collection of three selected bacterial isolates (isolate A, F, and J) and three selected fungal isolates (isolate PA, PK, and RJ). The bacterial isolates were able to degrade polypropylene (PP), while



the fungal isolates were able to degrade low-density polyethylene (LDPE). The highest ability of a microorganism to degrade plastic is indicated by the maximum size of the clear zone. The bacterial and fungal isolates with the largest clear zone diameter were isolated in F and J, thus promising for plastic biodegradation.

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