The kinetics curve of nitrogen mineralization from perennial leaves litter decomposed by earthworm (*Phretima californica*)

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**ABSTRACT**

The kinetics of N release during the process of decomposition of organic matter is influenced by organic matter quality, temperature, humidity, and decomposer. Acacia, coffee, salacca, and bamboo leaf litter are native plants and be the pioneer plants on the slopes of Mount Merapi after the eruption in 2010. However, there is a lack of information on the N mineralization process from the leaves litter of acacia, coffee, salacca, and bamboo. The study aimed to determine the kinetics of N release from the litter leaves of acacia (*Acacia decurrens*), coffee, salacca, and bamboo, which were tested with three approaches, namely zero order, first order, and second order. The experiment was carried out using 10 *Phretima californica* earthworms that were incubated with 35g of annual plant leaves at 25°C. The levels of NH₄⁺ and NO₃⁻ were measured at 0, 7, 15, 30, 45, 75, and 105 days after incubation by using the indophenol blue and derivative spectrophotometric method, respectively. Throughout the decomposition 105 days, the release of NO₃⁻ was higher than that of NH₄⁺ due to the nature of NH₄⁺ that was more easily immobilized than NO₃⁻. The highest NO₃⁻ release in acacia litter (1.56 mg kg⁻¹) occurred 30 days after incubation, while in coffee, salacca, and bamboo occurred 105 days after incubation, reaching 1.92 mg kg⁻¹, 2.47 mg kg⁻¹, and 1.88 mg kg⁻¹, respectively. High N compound on the leaves litter unaffected to increasing total biomass earthworms in the end of incubation however promotes N mineralization rapidly. The kinetics of the second-order equation showed higher compatibility than the other equations to the N release with coefficient determination was higher. The kinetics of mineralization can be a strategy to use the leaves litter of perennial plants as sources of N nutrient input into soil.


1. **Introduction**

Litter decomposition plays an important role as the source of N in maintaining fertility and biological activities in the soil (Parthon et al, 2007). N changes are affected by the initial chemical composition of organic matter (Manzoni et al, 2008) and its properties that are easily lost through leaching, evaporation, erosion, and absorption by plants (Patti et al, 2013). There have been some studies conducted to increase the availability of N through the mineralization process, one of which is the study by Bhat et al. (2018), reporting the measurement of N mineralization in 5 different types of soil with organic and inorganic fertilizers, where N mineralization potential and cumulative N mineralized is higher in soil receiving organic manures while the N mineralization rate is highest in the soil where the use of integrated nutrient management. Besides, Hasegawa & Horie (1994) also determined an equation model to estimate N in paddy fields through differences in the percentage of moisture and soil temperature before submergence.

The mineralization pattern introduced by Stanford & Smith (1972) illustrates the kinetic equation that consists of a simple model as a function of temperature and humidity. The model is based on three kinetic parameters, including potential mineralization (N₀), mineralization rate constant (k), and activation energy (E₃). Based on his experiments, almost
all types of soil show that the net N mineralization is linearly
the square root of time (\( t^{1/2} \)). Lodhi et al. (2009) also add that
net N mineralization increases with the increasing time,
temperature, and humidity. Purwanto et al. (2005) state that
the rate of N mineralization (positive or negative) depends on
the balance of consumption and production of inorganic N
itself.

Earthworms contribute to the process of decomposition
through fragmentation, incorporation, and the mixing of
plant residues into the soil (Jiang et al., 2018). Dechaine et al.
(2005) added that earthworms had a positive correlation with
the rate of litter decomposition. Besides, Lubbers et al.
(2017) also proved that earthworms accelerated the
mineralization of organic matter through \( \text{CO}_2 \) and \( \text{N}_2\text{O} \) gas
loss from residual soybean plants by 112% and 670%,
respectively (Kernecker et al., 2014).

The quality of litter determines the rate of decomposition,
as is the regulation of N mineralization (Pei et al., 2019).
Acacia, coffee, salacca, and bamboo leaf litter are native
plants and be the pioneer plants on the slopes of Mount
Merapi after the eruption in 2010. However, there is a lack of
information on the N mineralization process from the leaves
litter of acacia, coffee, salacca, and bamboo. This study aimed
to determine the kinetics of N mineralization from the four
perennial leaves litter incubated with earthworm Phretima
californica.

2. Materials and Method

2.1 Preparation of soil, earthworm, and perennial plant
leaves litter

The soil used in the experiment was taken from the
Kalitengah Lor area, which was located on the upper slope
of Mount Merapi, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The soil and leaves
litter preparation was done by following the procedures of
Jiang et al. (2018) and Zheng et al. (2018). The soil was taken from
the top layer (0-20 cm) and then sieved with a 2 mm
strainer to remove gravel. The soil was incubated for seven
days before incubated with leaves and earthworms. The
leaves were dried at 60°C for 24 hours, then cut to 2-3 cm in
size and mashed using a blender to pass the 1mm filter. The
leaves were saturated with distilled water for 24 hours and
dried, and its weight was determined to obtain water holding
capacity (Hoeffner et al., 2018).

Phretima californica earthworms were collected from the
upper slopes of Mount Merapi. Before incubation, the
earthworm’s digestive tract was emptied first by placing it on
a petri dish covered with moist filter paper for 24 hours
(Cesarz et al, 2016; Hoeffner et al., 2018). After the digestive
tract was empty (marked by the loss of black particles from
the body earthworms), the earthworms were incubated
together with the soil and leaves.

2.2 Incubation and sampling

This study was carried out using a microcosms system, in
which 100 g of soil, together with 35 g of leaves litter and 10
earthworms, was incubated in 500 ml plastic tubes. The soil
and litter were separated by a wire gauze that has a hole size
of 1 mm. The tube was covered with polyethylene cloth and
tied with rubber to keep the earthworms from coming out but
still to maintain aeration. The experiment consisted of three
replications that were stored in an incubator at 25°C for 105
days. Leaves sampling was performed at 0, 7, 15, 30, 45, 75,
and 105 days of incubation.

2.3 Analysis of soil and leaves litter

Leaves litter was removed from the plastic tube and
separated from earthworms on 0, 7, 15, 30, 45, 75, and 105
days after incubation. Furthermore, leaves litter was dried at
60°C for 24 hours and then analyzed chemically. Soil reaction
(pH-H_2O) was measured using a pH meter with a ratio of 1:5
for soil and distilled water (Miller & Kissel, 2010). The organic
C content of the soil and leaves litter was measured using the
muffle furnace method at 550°C (Miller & Kissel, 2010),
assuming that organic matter had 58% C. The total N content
of the soil and leaves litter was measured using the
Kjeldahl destruction method (Unckel, 2018), and the C/N ratio
was obtained from the calculation. The total nutrient contents
of the leaf litter were determined using the wet ashing method
by Stammer & Mallarino (2018), where determining of K and
Na used flame photometry, Ca and Mg used Atomic
Absorption Spectrophotometry (AAS), and P used
spectrophotometry equipment. Lignin and α-cellulose of the
leaf litter were analyzed using the Klasen method (Kirk &
Obst, 1988), while hemicellulose was analyzed using the
modified chlorite method (Palohuego et al., 1962).

2.4 Nitrogen mineralization

The leaves litter was incubated with earthworms at 25°C,
and nitrogen mineralization was measured at 0, 7, 15, 30, 45,
75, and 105 days. Five grams of litter were put in a plastic
bottle, then added with a 50 ml 2 M KCl solution and shaken
for an hour. The solution was filtered with Whatman paper
no.42, and the aliquot was analyzed to determine ammonium
\( (\text{NH}_4^+) \) content by using the indophenol blue method
(Bollette et al, 1961). Nitrate \( (\text{NO}_3^-) \) was measured using a derivative
spectrophotometric method (Lastra, 2003), in which 0.1 g of
the litter passing of 40 mesh strain er was saturated with 10
ml of distilled water and heated at 45°C using a water bath
for an hour then filtered using Whatman paper no.42 until clear
extract was obtained. As much as 0.1 ml of clear extract was
put into a test tube, and 0.4 ml of salicylic acid solution was
added and allowed to stand for 20 minutes at room
temperature. A total of 9.5 ml of 2N NaOH was added slowly
and directly measured using spectrophotometry at a
wavelength of 388 nm.

The potential of N mineralization was calculated by the
kinetic approach of the Zero order, First order, and Second-
order models (Stanford & Smith, 1972). Nitrogen
mineralization was N that was mineralized in time \( t \), \( N_0 \) was
the potential for mineralized N, and \( k \) was the rate of
mineralization.

Linier equation of Zero order: \[ [\text{A}]_t = [\text{A}]_0 +kt \] 
Linier equation of First order: \[ \log[\text{A}]_t = \log[\text{A}]_0 -(kt/2.303) \] 
Linier equation of Second order: \[ 1/[\text{A}]_t = 1/[\text{A}]_0 +kt \]
2.5 Chemical properties of the soil and leaves litter

The chemical properties from acacia, coffee, salacca, and bamboo leaf litter were one of the factors that determine N mineralization. These properties would be associated with the decomposition process that is assisted by earthworm, where the leaf litter that had high recalcitrant compounds would be arduous decomposition. The initial chemical properties from leaf litter were presented in Table 1.

Total nitrogen content of acacia, coffee, salacca, and bamboo leaf was 60.94, 61.67, 58.68, and 58.28, respectively. The acacia leaf had the highest total N than others. The total carbon of acacia, coffee, salacca, and bamboo leaf was 60.94, 61.67, 58.68, and 58.28, respectively. The coffee leaf had the highest total C than others. The C/N ratio obtained was 20, 34, 26, and 27, where the coffee leaf had the highest C/N ratio. The total percentage of lignin from acacia, coffee, salacca, and bamboo leaf was 28.06, 27.96, 27.33%, and 21.55%, respectively. The total percentage of cellulose from acacia, coffee, salacca, and bamboo leaf was 35.45%, 29.05%, 23.50%, and 28.95%, respectively. The total percentage of hemicellulose from acacia, coffee, salacca, and bamboo leaf was 19.85%, 17.15, 38.3%, and 36.8%, respectively (Table 1).

The Physico-chemical properties of the initial soil affect the leaf litter decomposition. The initial characteristics of soil (Table 2) such as actual acidity (pH H$_2$O) were 6.22 that was classified as slightly acidic. The percentage of organic carbon was 60.94% and was classified as very high, the percentage of total nitrogen was 0.14% and was classified as low, C/N ratio 60 was classified as high, and a class of texture soil was classified as sandy.

3. Result

3.1 Dynamic release of NH$_4^+$ and NO$_3^-$ during incubation

Statistical evaluation of the significance of leaves litter and time duration of incubation can be done by the analysis of the variance (ANOVA) of the obtained results. The results are summarized in Table 3. The F-values of 19.2 (litter), 8.15 (time duration), and 3.61 (litter*time duration) for NH$_4^+$, the F-values of 5.11 (litter), 11.18 (time duration), and 3.48 (litter*time duration) for NO$_3^-$. Based on F-values, the release of NH$_4^+$ and NO$_3^-$ was highly correlated with types of leaf litter and time duration of incubation because it significantly affects N mineralization (p-value < 0.01).

The release time of NH$_4^+$ was faster than NO$_3^-$. The release of NH$_4^+$ from acacia showed increasing up to 15 days after incubation and had been highest released. After that, the release showed decreased at 30 days after incubation and increased again for 45 days after incubation. The release of NH$_4^+$ from coffee showed the highest release was on 15 days after incubation and the lowest was on 30 days after incubation. The release of NH$_4^+$ from salacca showed the highest release was on 15 days after incubation and the lowest was on 0 days after incubation. The release of NH$_4^+$ from bamboo showed the highest release was on 15 days after incubation and the lowest was on 30 days after incubation. The dynamic of release time from NH$_4^+$ is presented in Figure 1.

The release of NO$_3^-$ from acacia showed increasing up to 30 days after incubation and had been the highest released. After that, the release showed a decreased on 45 days after incubation and had been the lowest released. The release of NO$_3^-$ from coffee showed the highest release was on 105 days after incubation and the lowest release was on 0 days after incubation. The release of NO$_3^-$ from salacca showed increasing up to 105 days after incubation and represented...
this litter had linearly related to duration time. The release started increasing on 45 days after incubation. The highest release was on 105 days after incubation and the lowest release was 30 days after incubation. The release of NO$_3^-$ from bamboo showed decreasing up to 7 days after incubation and started increasing at 15 days after incubation up to 45 days after incubation. After that, the release showed decreasing up to 75 days after incubation and increasing again up to 105 days after incubation. The highest release was 105 days after incubation. The dynamic of release time from NO$_3^-$ is presented in Figure 2.

**Figure 1.** The dynamics mineralization NH$_4^+$ between different types of leaves litter: (a) acacia, (b) coffee, (c) salacca, and (d) bamboo with N mineralization dynamics for 105 days

**Figure 2.** The dynamics mineralization NO$_3^-$ between different types of leaves litter: (a) acacia, (b) coffee, (c) salacca, and (d) bamboo with N mineralization dynamics for 105 days
3.2 Kinetics of nitrogen mineralization

The equation used to describe the kinetic of N mineralization was zero order, first order, and second order. The coefficient of determination \( R^2 \), mineralization rate \( k \), and potential \( N_o \) were used to determine the mineralization process from leaves litter that was incubated is presented in Table 4.

Zero order model had the \( \text{NH}_4^+ \) mineralization for acacia, coffee, salacca, and bamboo leaf litter that had the coefficient of determination \( (0.11, 0.21, 0.33, \text{ and } 0.48, \) respectively). The mineralization rate \( k \) from these leaves litter \( (0.01 \text{ day}^{-1}, \text{ 2.05, } -2.06, -2.35, \text{ and } -1.89 \text{ day}^{-1}, \) respectively) and potential \( -0.001, -0.001, 0.002, \text{ and } -0.001 \text{ mg kg}^{-1}, \) respectively). Moreover, the \( \text{NO}_3^- \) mineralization for leaves litter each other had the coefficient of determination \( (0.42, 0.63, 0.39, \text{ and } 0.03, \) respectively). The mineralization rate \( (0.03, -0.06, 0.05, \text{ and } 0.87 \text{ day}^{-1}, \) respectively) and potential \( (0.13, 0.28, 0.27, \text{ and } 0.06 \text{ mg kg}^{-1}, \) respectively). In the first order model had the \( \text{NH}_4^+ \) mineralization for acacia, coffee, salacca, and bamboo leaf litter had the coefficient of determination \( (0.05, 0.26, 0.47, \text{ and } 0.58, \) respectively). The mineralization rate \( (-2.05, -2.06, -2.35, \text{ and } -1.89 \text{ day}^{-1}, \) respectively) and potential \( (-0.04, -0.12, 0.09, \text{ and } -0.12 \text{ mg kg}^{-1}, \) respectively). The \( \text{NO}_3^- \) mineralization for these leaves litter had the coefficient of determination \( (0.45, 0.63, 0.19, \text{ and } 0.01, \) respectively). The mineralization rate \( (-0.75, 0.54, -0.37, \text{ and } -0.14 \text{ day}^{-1}, \) respectively) and potential \( (0.10, 0.11, 0.07, \text{ and } 0.02 \text{ mg kg}^{-1}, \) respectively). In the second order model, the \( \text{NH}_4^+ \) mineralization for acacia, coffee, salacca, and bamboo leaf litter had the coefficient of determination \( (0.01, 0.54, 0.59, \text{ and } 0.09, \) respectively). The mineralization rate \( (178.94, 234.45, 6.86, \text{ and } 252.14 \text{ day}^{-1}, \) respectively) and potential \( (10.36, -29.83, 69.61, \text{ and } 86.68 \text{ mg kg}^{-1}, \) respectively). The \( \text{NO}_3^- \) mineralization for the leaves litter, this model had the coefficient of determination \( (0.04, 0.44, 0.34, \text{ and } 0.004, \) respectively). The mineralization rate \( (2.08, 2.77, 4.99, \text{ and } 1.71 \text{ day}^{-1}, \) respectively) and potential \( (-0.12, -0.33, -0.55, \text{ and } -0.04 \text{ mg kg}^{-1}, \) respectively).

3.3 Mean total biomass of earthworm

The mean total biomass of earthworm in leaves litter of acacia showed decreasing between before and after incubation. The weight of biomass before incubation was 3.39 g and after incubation was 1.47 g. Coffee leaf litter had mean total biomass of earthworm in before incubation was 1.85 g and after incubation 1.85 g. Salacca leaf litter had mean total biomass earthworm in before incubation was 2.95 g and after incubation was 2.30 g. Finally, the bamboo leaf litter showed the mean total biomass of earthworm before incubation was 2.32 g, and after incubation 0.08 g. The mean total biomass of earthworm is presented in Table 5.

3.4 Mean total nutrients of leaves litter

pH from acacia, coffee, salacca, and bamboo leaf was not significantly different from before and after incubation. The total nitrogen showed all litters had a significant difference between before and after incubation. The total phosphor showed the acacia, coffee, and salacca leaf litters led to a significant difference in before and after incubation, but bamboo leaf litter was not significantly different before and after incubation. The total potassium showed coffee and bamboo leaf litters led to significant differences before and after incubation, meanwhile, acacia and salacca were not significantly different. The total calcium showed coffee and salacca leaf litter led to significant difference on before and after incubation, meanwhile acacia and bamboo were not significantly different. The total magnesium showed all litters were not significantly different before and after incubation. The mean total nutrients from leaves litter incubation are presented in Table 6.
Some macronutrients from acacia leaf litter during the decomposition process (Table 6) showed high total N and K nutrients, but low total P, Ca, and Mg. The number of P, Ca, and Mg nutrients after incubation were 0.005%, 0.009%, and 0.051%, respectively. For coffee, The P, Ca, and Mg nutrients at the end of incubation were 0.004%, 0.01%, and 0.049%, respectively. For salacca, Nitrogen content was likely to promote mobilization of phosphorus, which was supported by the increase in phosphatase activity. Macronutrients like P, Ca, and Mg nutrient were 0.005%, 0.009%, and 0.059%, respectively. And the last for bamboo, Total P, Ca, and Mg at the end of incubation were 0.004%, 0.008%, and 0.049%, respectively.

4. Discussion

Among the three kinetic models for NH₄⁺ mineralization, the second-order model performed the highest coefficient determination for coffee and salacca leaves litter. The high NH₄⁺ mineralization rate can be seen in Figure 1, where the highest release was about 15 days incubation and decreased to 105 days. The greatest mineralization occurred at 15 days that be expected because of the high percentage of recalcitrant compounds in both of the leaves litter. These results are in line with Mishra et al. (2016) where a significant increase in nitrogen mineralization was observed after 15 days up to 45 days of incubation in comparison to the initial day. After 90 days it reached its initial level. The slow rate of N mineralization may be due to the slow decomposition of organic matter because of the presence of higher molecular weight compounds such as lignin and cellulose. The characteristics of salacca and coffee leaf litter (Table 1) that also contribute to N mineralization, where the salacca leaf litter has the highest hemicellulose and coffee leaf litter has the highest total carbon and C/N ratio and the lowest total nitrogen content. The high compound of hemicellulose for salacca can be stimulated mineralization on the initial stage of decomposition and decreased after that. Moreover, Cavatte et al. (2012) adding state that plants that have high concentrations of secondary metabolites, such as phenol compounds that are rich in carbon will be lead to low decomposition in the latter stage. The coffee leaf litter has a high potassium content (Table 6) as said by Menegatti et al. (2014) where the coffee residue had a higher concentration of K but didn’t affect decomposition. K did not any structural function in plants and because it’s not incorporated into any carbon chain, K can readily return to the soil in a plant-available form after harvested or plant senescence without decomposition processing. The slope of mineralization in the latter incubation apparently in line with total biomass earthworm that didn’t increase throughout incubation time (Table 5). As said by Römbke et al. (2009) that the decrease in earthworm abundance and biomass are probably caused by changes in the chemical composition of the residues and soil organic matter available as food.

The high NO₃⁻ mineralization rate of coffee can be seen in Figure 2, where the highest release was about 105 days after incubation. Although they have maximum mineralization at 105 days, coffee leaf litter has faster mineralization than salacca. The coffee starts to increase from 0 days, but salacca starts from 75 days after incubation. Although much not different, the coffee leaf litter has higher total carbon and C/N ratio (Table 1) than salacca. However, the total biomass earthworm is not increasing in the latter incubation (Table 5).

This is showed that the high C/N ratio can be an obstacle for earthworm growth. This is in line with Jiang et al. (2018) where no significant difference in earthworm was detected for the low-quality residue (high C/N ratio) treatments until 60 days incubation. The highest pH in the coffee residue (Table 6) is expected since the degradation process increases the pH of the organic material and P release at the initial stage of decomposition (Han et al., 2011). Morrill & Dawson (1961) add that nitrification is closely related to the pH reaction, in which ammonium oxidation results in neutral to higher pH, while the oxidation of nitrite to nitrate leads to pH value below the neutral point. Moreover, Abdelhafez et al. (2018) also state that increased acidity is caused by the decomposition of organic matter, which is due to the release of H ions together with nitrification that occurred in the respiration of decomposer organisms under aerobic conditions. The coffee leaf litter has the lowest P, Ca, and Mg nutrient (Table 6) and this is in line with Martinez et al. (2003) where the recommendation for coffee tree nutritional status evaluation is picked of leaf samples that take place after flowering. In the pre-and post-flowering stages, nutrient absorption is efficient. The mean of P, Ca, and Mg nutrients were 1.1, 15.2, and 3.0, respectively, and this result is higher than the report. In leaves, lower concentration occurs at the stage when the fruit is small and increases with growth (Dubberstein et al., 2016). The amount of P nutrient in salacca is lower than the result of Adelina et al. (2018) where the mean of P nutrient is 0.20%. Lower P might be caused by the leaf sample that was used for analysis came from the oldest leaf. Adelina et al. (2018) stated that phosphorus is easily redistributed from one organ to another, easily dissipated from older leaves, and accumulates in younger leaves. The utilization of dead leaves for decomposition gives important

### Table 6. Mean total nutrients of leaf litters before and after incubation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Before incubation</th>
<th>After incubation</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acacia</td>
<td>Coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pH</td>
<td>5.68bcd</td>
<td>5.67abc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (%)</td>
<td>11.00a</td>
<td>7.15b</td>
</tr>
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<td>P (%)</td>
<td>0.0002bc</td>
<td>0.0002c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K (%)</td>
<td>5.51c</td>
<td>8.67a</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ca (%)</td>
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<td>0.009b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mg (%)</td>
<td>0.050bc</td>
<td>0.054ab</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remarks: The values with the same letter are not significantly different at p<0.05
information about the functional state of the perennial plants and the data can be used to evaluate the possibility of using litterfall nutrient content as an index to tree nutrition (Robert et al., 1996).

The first-order model has the highest coefficient of determination from bamboo. The high NH$_4^+$ mineralization rate can be seen in Figure 1, where the highest release is about 7 to 15 days after incubation. After that, mineralization decreases at 30 to 45 days and increases again at 75 days, and finally decreases until 105 days. The highest mineralization occurred at 7 to 15 days (initial decomposition) probably caused by the C/N ratio that has been by this litter (Table 1). This result is in line with Marinari et al. (2010) where the C/N ratio is positively correlated to the potential mineralization of NH$_4^+$ in an organic matter because it is more easily decomposed. The decrease at 15 to 30 days is likely caused by competition between lignin and cellulose decomposer and increasing for 75 days probably despite by decomposition of other C forms like hemicellulose and soluble C. This result is in line with Talbot & Treseder (2012) where the fluctuation of mineralization is caused by the activity of decomposers while decomposed lignin and cellulose and occurred competition in both of them. After that, the presence of other C forms (hemicellulose and soluble C) that have not degraded, lead to increasing mineralization on the next level incubation. The litter that has high N compounds induces C limitation of decomposed activity. Furthermore, the illustration of NO$_3^-$ mineralization rate can be seen in Figure 2, where the highest released for NO$_3^-$ is 105 days after incubation. On this figure, NO$_3^-$ mineralization increased from 7 to 45 days after incubation and decreased at 75 days. This result is in line with Masunga et al. (2016) where the net N mineralization increased at the beginning of the incubation period that was recorded at 40 days of incubation. This is probably caused by sufficient N to degradation activity. After that, the mineralization is slowed and stopped at 75 days probably caused by the organic N is complexed in the more stable recalcitrant compounds that remained after the initial rapid mineralization. After 75 days of incubation, the mineralization increased to 105 days, because lignin compounds can control decomposers for degradation of organic material. When lignin degradation occurred, N released from the cell wall and the microbes break down lignin to access protected N particularly (Talbot & Treseder, 2012). The macronutrients from bamboo leaf litter have lower N and P nutrients than the result from Tu et al. (2011) that showed bamboo leaf had total N and P were 3.88 and 0.35 g kg$^{-1}$, respectively. It might be caused there were different structures domination tree species and physical structure between them. The plantation dominated by a single tree species, they found that the chemical differences (also some physical structure differences) between litter fractions can lead to different mass loss patterns.

Acacia leaf litter had the highest N mineralization in the zero-order model. The high NH$_4^+$ mineralization can be seen in Figure 1, where the highest release is about 15 days after incubation. After 15 days, the release decreased at 30 days and increase again at 45 days and decreased to 105 days. The characteristic of acacia leaf litter (Table 1) may be a reason for this trend, where this litter had the highest lignin (28.06%), cellulose (35.45%), and total nitrogen (2.94%). The high N compound in this litter produces rapid mineralization in initial decomposition. This result was in line with Pei et al. (2019) were at the earlier stage, the leaching loss of soluble compounds is the dominant process for the litter with more easily degradable components (usually higher initial N) and then the mineralization becomes very slow due to lignified materials and lipids. The high NO$_3^-$ mineralization rate can be seen in Figure 2, where the highest release was about 30 days. At 30 days occurred the highest NO$_3^-$ release and the second release NO$_3^-$ at 45 days while the second decrease in NH$_4^+$ at the same time. Mineralization NH$_4^+$ and NO$_3^-$ occurred in reverse. This result is in line with Azam et al. (1993) where the nitrification of NH$_4^+$-N was slowed in the presence of NO$_3^-$ because NH$_4^+$ was immobilized in preference to NO$_3^-$, this inhibitory effect may have contributed to the difference between NH$_4^+$ and NO$_3^-$ in promoting the mineralization N. Total nitrogen and phosphor acacia have different significance between before and after incubation (Table 6). The lowest value at latter incubation is in line with the results from Abdulrazak et al. (2000) and Rubanza et al. (2007) where the amount of P, Ca, and Mg nutrient from acacia tree leaves were 0.9-4.1, 8.8-22.4, and 2.2-2.3 g kg$^{-1}$, respectively. The lowest nutrients might be caused by the treatment different from a sample that will be analyzed. In this research, the acacia leaf is collected from the plant that has fallen. Meanwhile, according to the research from Abdulrazak et al. (2000) and Rubanza et al. (2007) that the leaf samples are harvested at their advanced maturity stage at the end of the rainy seasons and then pooled and oven-dried at 60°C for 48 hours.

Among 7 to 15 days incubation (Figure 2), the release of NO$_3^-$ in acacia and bamboo leaf litters underwent relatively high fluctuations, whereas for coffee and salacca leaf litters tended to be linear. The potential mineralization (N0) that is lower than the mineralization rate (k) is acacia (NH$_4^+$ mineralization), salacca (NO$_3^-$ mineralization), and coffee (NH$_4^+$ and NO$_3^-$ mineralization). Moreover, the potential mineralization that is higher than the mineralization rate is salacca (NH$_4^+$ mineralization), acacia (NO$_3^-$ mineralization), and bamboo (NH$_4^+$ and NO$_3^-$ mineralization). The reason for this condition was associated with variable N immobilized. This result was in line with Guendehou et al. (2014) where the high differences in the initial litter quality (carbon and nitrogen) across the species contributed to absolute decay rates (k), ranging from 1.69-4.67 year$^{-1}$. The higher k values represented a larger amount of readily decomposable organic matter (Purwanto et al., 2005). The same thing was stated by Toda & Haibara (1999), that the low k value in cedar and cypress trees illustrates that N mineralization was affected not only by total N in residue but also in total carbon used for N release. The low k value from the decomposition of plant litter is correlated with reducing total biomass earthworm (Table 5), where Dechaine et al. (2005) adding state that reducing earthworm numbers in tropical soil decreased the decomposition rate of plant litter.
5. Conclusion

Different types and chemical composition of the litter led to different N mineralization and kinetic models. The kinetic model of zero-order and the first-order was able to describe the release of NH$_4^+$ in bamboo and NO$_3^-$ release in coffee and the second-order was able to describe NH$_2$($^+$) mineralization of salacca leaf. Kinetics of N mineralization can be a strategy for the use of perennial plant leaves litter as a source of nutrient input for maintaining soil health and fertility.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare no competing financial or personal interests that may appear and influence the work reported in this paper.

References


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