



Mechanical characterization of five species of Italian bamboo

Luisa Molari^{a,*}, Lando Mentrasti^b, Marco Fabiani^c

^a DICAM, University of Bologna, Viale Risorgimento 2, Bologna 40136, Italy

^b DICEA, Università Politecnica delle Marche, Facoltà di Ingegneria, Via delle Brecce Bianche, Ancona 60131, Italy

^c Università Politecnica delle Marche, Facoltà di Ingegneria, Via delle Brecce Bianche, Ancona 60131, Italy

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ABSTRACT

High mechanical performance coupled with sustainability gives to bamboo a high potential to substitute conventional construction materials in various applications. In particular, there are countries in which this material has been used in construction for millennia and represents an asset, on the contrary, there are countries where there is still not enough knowledge of the structural properties of locally-grown bamboo. In these cases, it is important to extend the knowledge of the mechanical properties of local bamboo species supported by the development of suitable standardised testing procedures. In this view, the paper presents the results of an experimental study for the mechanical characterization of five bamboo species cultivated in Italy (*Phyllostachys bambusoides*, *edulis*, *iridescens*, *violascens* and *vivax*). For compressive tests, the used methodology is compliant with ISO Standards; for tensile test, the procedure suggested by ISO is very difficult to apply so different set ups have been proposed and in the second part of the paper a critical discussion about ISO methodology and its possible improvements are reported. The findings from this research shed light on current challenges and on the possible future steps for a wider uptake of natural materials in constructions.

1. Introduction

Construction engineering is increasingly challenged with using eco-sustainable resources by employing raw materials permitting waste and pollution reduction. In this regard, the exploitation of renewable natural materials are particularly suitable as possible substitutes of materials conventionally used [1,2]. The plant of bamboo is one of the more effective resources which satisfy the requirement of green material for several reasons: its amazing rapid grow, its low embodied energy [3,4], its worldwide spreading and its excellent mechanical strength in respect to density [5]. In some Asian, Latin-American and African countries bamboo culms are traditionally used as beams and columns [6,7,8]. Furthermore, the bamboo culms may be also used to realize engineered products, such as laminated composites and scrimber [9,10].

Mechanical characteristics of several species of bamboo grown in subtropical regions are studied, together with their relationship with the anatomical meso-structure: *Phyllostachys pubescens* [11,12,13], *Guadua angustifolia* Kunth [12,14,15,16] *Bambusa stenostachya* [12], *Bambusa pervariabilis* [11], *Bambusa vulgaris* [17,18], *Schizostachyum grande* and *Gigantochloa scortechinii* [17].

On the contrary, a systematic investigation of the structural properties of the species growing in temperate climate is rather limited. First studies on *Phyllostachys viridiglaucens* and *Phyllostachys edulis* are

reported in Refs. [19,20].

To promote the use of bamboo in engineering in those countries where it is not regarded as a structural material, an accurate experimental investigation about its mechanical performances is necessary.

The first aim of this paper is the characterization of five species of *Phyllostachys*, a bamboo family increasingly growing in Italy: *Phyllostachys bambusoides*, *Phyllostachys edulis*, *Phyllostachys iridescens*, *Phyllostachys violascens* and *Phyllostachys vivax*. The objective is also to identify the species having the best structural performances or the species which are more adapt to be engineered.

The experimental investigations are carried out, as far as possible, according to the standard ISO 22157-1:2019 “Bamboo structures - Determination of physical and mechanical properties of bamboo culms - Test methods” [21].

Carrying on the tests, it was clear that the compression test suggested by ISO standard was effective and easy to perform while tensile test was not effective and hard to perform.

In general, and in particular in bamboo specimens, tension tests (parallel to the fibers) are more difficult than the compressive characterization since several issues can affect the tensile test results. Fiber gradation across the thickness and anchorage conditions of the specimens influence the strength and the failure [22]. Moreover, the geometry of the specimen is always very complex (being a curved shell)

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: luisa.molari@unibo.it (L. Molari), mentrasti@univpm.it (L. Mentrasti), marco.fabiani3@istruzione.it (M. Fabiani).

Nomenclature

Symbol	Description
A	cross-sectional area of the culm calculated as $(\pi/4)[D^2 - (D - 2\delta)^2]$ (mm ²)
δ	the wall thickness (mm)
b	width of tension test specimen in gauge region (mm)
D	outer diameter of the bamboo culm (mm)
$E_{c,0}$	compressive modulus of elasticity parallel to fibers (MPa)
$E_{t,0}$	tensile modulus of elasticity parallel to direction of fibers (MPa)
F	load applied in test (N, kN)
F_{ult}	maximum (ultimate) load applied in test (N, kN)
$\sigma_{c,0}$	compressive stress in the direction of the fibers during compression test (MPa)
$\sigma_{c,0.20}$; $\sigma_{c,0.60}$	$\sigma_{c,0}$ at 20% and 60% of the ultimate force, respectively

$f_{c,0}$	compressive strength parallel to direction of fibers (MPa)
$\sigma_{t,0}$	tensile stress in the direction of the fibers during tension test (MPa)
$\sigma_{t,0.20}$; $\sigma_{t,0.60}$	$\sigma_{t,0}$ at 20% and 60% of the ultimate force, respectively (MPa) –
$f_{t,0}$	tension strength parallel to direction of fibers (MPa)
ε_z	longitudinal strain in the direction of the fibers (-)
$\varepsilon_{z,20}$; $\varepsilon_{z,60}$	ε_z at 20% and 60% of the ultimate force, respectively (-)
ε_t	circumferential strain (-)
$\varepsilon_{t,20}$; $\varepsilon_{t,60}$	ε_t at 20% and 60% of the ultimate force, respectively (-)
L	length of test piece (mm)
m_i	initial mass of test specimen (g)
m_0	oven-dry mass of test specimen (g)
ρ	density (kg m ⁻³)

often presenting natural flexure and twist; further, the friction coefficient of the outer and inner surfaces of the culm are considerably different, due to both the higher hardness of the outer surface and to the presence of a sort of natural polymeric wax covering it [23]. Moreover, great tensile longitudinal force needed at failure, may not be associated with a sufficient strength in the radial direction, required to sustain the compressive force generating by the jaws often leading to a premature crushing in the grip area.

ISO 22157 dates back in 2004 (ISO 22157-1:2004, [24]) and the set up suggested for tensile test in the first release was the traditional dog bone specimen (ISO 22157-2:2004, [25]). The new release published in 2019 [21], specifies a new set-up for tensile test, whose main novelty is the geometry of the specimen: a stick with rectangular cross section with a dimension equal to the culm wall thickness, δ , and width, b , equal to one-half the culm wall thickness or less.

The norm also suggests a reliable interposition of soft wood tabs between the sample and the jaws. This interposition is extremely difficult due to the small-involved area of the specimen and the low adhesion of the bamboo with soft wood.

Performing the tests with this standard is very hard, mainly for bamboo having relatively small wall thickness, like the Italian ones, due

to the small area of the specimens.

The second aim of the paper is to point out the problems which arise performing tensile tests on bamboo specimens and to propose some different set ups able to mitigate the drawbacks.

The paper is organized in two parts. The first part shows the results of the mechanical characterization, in compression and tension, of five bamboo Italian species:

- (i) The compression tests are carried out following ISO 22157:2019, strictly.
- (ii) For tension test a set-up, suitable for thin-thickness Italian bamboo, is proposed.

The second part of the paper is dedicated to

- (i) discuss critically some aspect of the methodology proposed in ISO 22157:2019 for tensile tests;
- (ii) describe the modifications of the experimental rig we adopt to improve the execution of tension test;
- (iii) compare the results obtained following the different set-up.

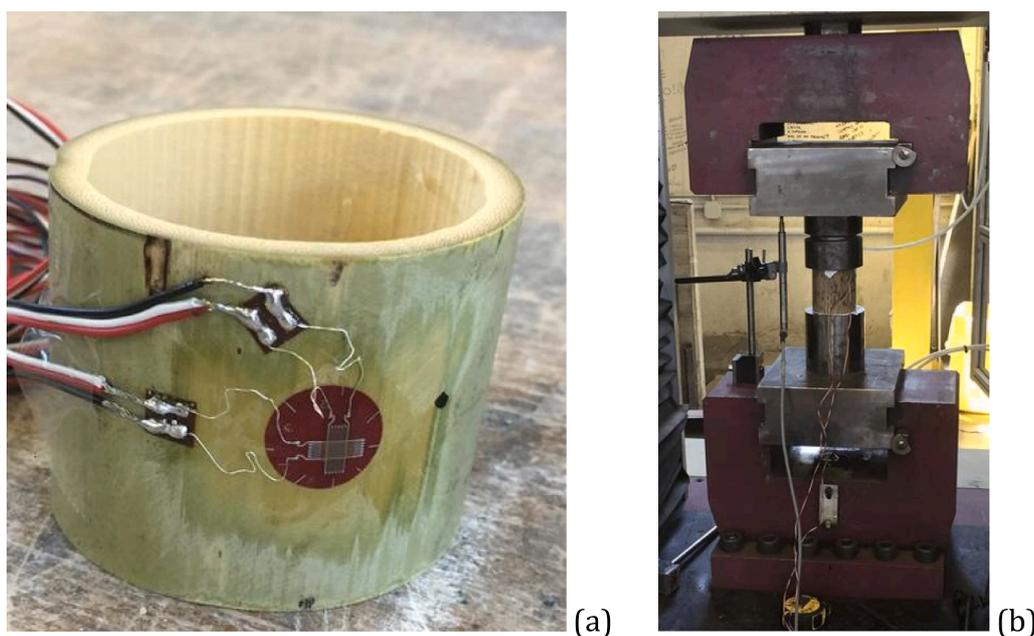


Fig. 1. Compression test: (a) specimen equipped with a bidirectional strain gauge, (b) set up.

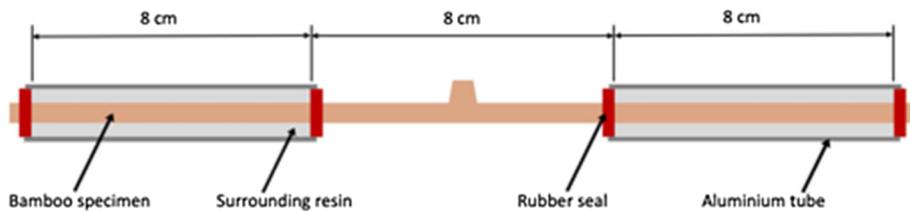


Fig. 2. Sketch of the specimen.



Fig. 3. Tension specimens.

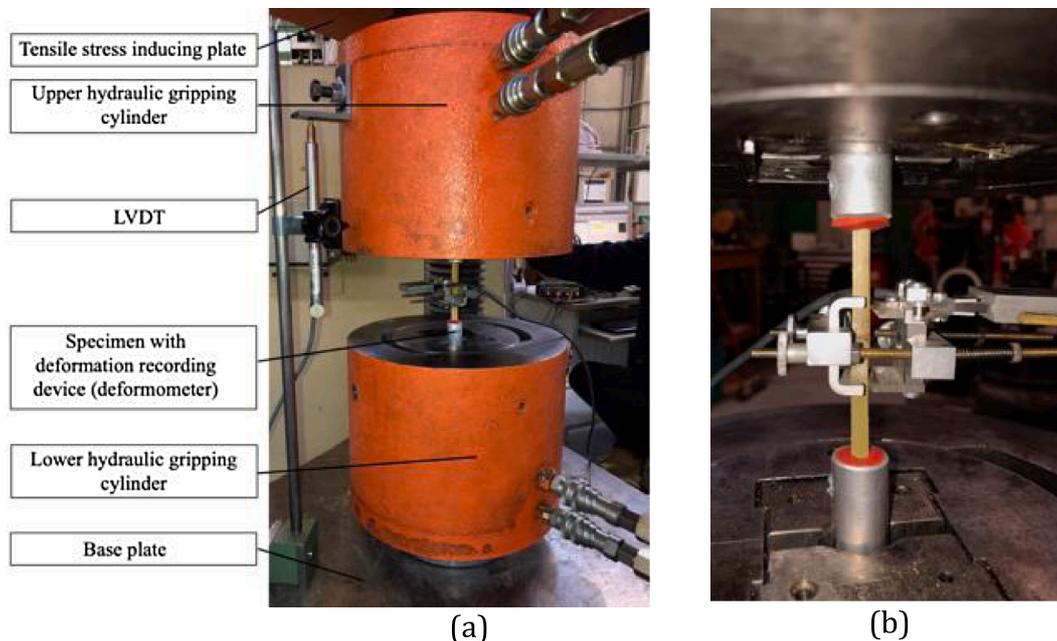


Fig. 4. Tension test: (a) experimental set-up, (b) zoom on the specimen with estensometer.

2. Mechanical characterization of Italian bamboo

2.1. Materials

This study enrolls five species of Italian bamboo of the family of Phyllostachys: *Bambusoides* (BAM), *Edulis* (EDU), *Iridescens* (IRI), *Vivax* (VIV) and *Violascens* (VIO). All the tested bamboo culms were cultivated

in Italy, in particular *Bambusoides*, *Iridescens*, and *Vivax* in Langhe (Piemonte region, north-west part of Italy), *Edulis* in Pordenone, (Friuli Venezia Giulia, north east part of Italy), and *Violascens* in Bologna, Emilia Romagna.

Two parts of one meter length are cut from the culm: the first one from 0.5 to 1.5 m from the ground (identified as ‘BOT’) and the second one from 2.5 to 3.5 m from the ground (identified as ‘TOP’). From each

Table 1

Mean value, standard deviation of diameter, thickness and density of the specimen used in compressive tests.

Species		D [mm]		δ [mm]		ρ [kg m ⁻³]		n. culms
		Mean	St.Dev	Mean	St.Dev	Mean	St.Dev	
BAM	TOP	58.06	3.25	4.70	0.55	875	6	6
	BOT	58.67	2.96	5.95	0.41	891	43	6
	ALL	58.36	2.98	5.33	0.80	883	29	12
EDU	TOP	62.42	3.88	5.81	0.59	918	67	6
	BOT	71.78	0.84	8.69	0.79	898	55	6
	ALL	67.10	5.57	7.25	1.65	908	56	12
IRI	TOP	62.07	2.30	5.74	0.31	887	36	6
	BOT	61.73	3.18	7.83	1.10	832	29	6
	ALL	61.90	2.65	6.78	1.34	860	42	12
VIO	TOP	46.18	4.15	3.94	0.19	762	9	6
	BOT	56.08	3.31	5.11	0.33	724	52	6
	ALL	51.13	6.29	4.53	0.67	743	39	12
VIV	TOP	77.67	8.88	5.49	0.81	790	19	6
	BOT	81.19	6.70	7.10	0.44	751	22	6
	ALL	79.43	7.72	6.29	1.05	770	28	12

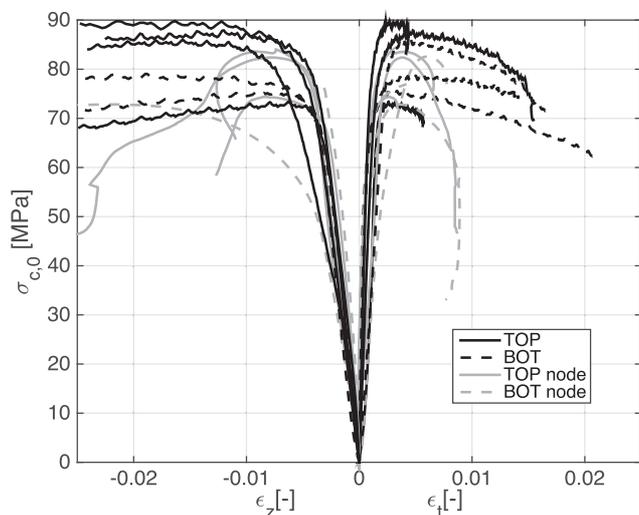


Fig. 5. Compression test: examples of stress versus longitudinal and circumferential strain for BAM species.

Table 2

Compression test: mean values and standard deviation for each species considering all the tested specimens.

Species	f _{c,0} [MPa]		E _{c,0} [GPa]		r [-]		w [-]	
	Mean	St.Dev	Mean	St.Dev	Mean	St.Dev	Mean	St.Dev
BAM	80.43	6.75	20.34	5.02	0.34	0.17	9.60	0.79
EDU	68.69	8.06	14.04	3.64	0.27	0.10	10.84	0.30
IRI	80.12	5.00	21.89	3.99	0.35	0.20	10.38	0.39
VIO	59.50	7.26	16.27	5.71	0.47	0.28	10.15	1.50
VIV	64.35	2.80	17.37	2.61	0.39	0.15	10.11	0.23

of the two parts of a culm, 4 specimens are obtained: two cylinders for the compressive test, one with node and another one without node and two sticks of rectangular cross section for the tension test, one with node and one without node. Three culms for each species are examined. The cylindrical specimens for compressive test are cut from the culm using a circular saw. The stick specimen for the tensile test are obtained using a splitter.

Humidity and density are measured as suggested by ISO 22157:2019 for each tested culm.

2.2. Experimental set-up

2.2.1. Compression test parallel to the fibers

The dimensions of the specimens were established and measured in accordance with ISO 22157:2019 such that $L < D$ or $L < 10 t$, being L the height of the specimen, D the external diameter and δ the thickness of the culm specimen.

The tested specimens were equipped with two orthogonal bidirectional strain gauges as shown in Fig. 1a to measure the deformation in the direction of the application of the load (parallel to the fibers) called ϵ_z and in the circumferential direction named ϵ_t .

Loading has been provided by means of a hydraulic press universal machine (METROCOM, 600 kN maximum static capacity), in displacement control, with an imposed displacement velocity of 0.3 mm/minute. A linear variable displacement transducer (LVDT) HBM 1-WA/50MM-T was used to measure vertical displacement. The upper plate of the press is provided by a spherical joint to mitigate a possible uneven load distribution on the sample cross-section. A layer of Teflon tissue of extremely low thickness was interposed between the specimen and the load plates, in order to limit friction. A picture of the set up is shown in Figure 1b.

The normal stress, $\sigma_{c,0}$, in longitudinal direction and the compressive strength $f_{c,0}$ are:

$$\sigma_{c,0} = \frac{F}{A},$$

$$f_{c,0} = \frac{F_{ult}}{A}$$

respectively, being A the nominal area of the circular crown of the cross section of the culm, F the force imposed by the press machine.

Assuming a linear elastic constitutive law and a homogeneous state of strain, it was possible to recover the longitudinal Young modulus and the ratio between the transversal and longitudinal deformation.

As suggested by ISO, the Young modulus was calculated in the interval between 20% and 60% of the maximum stress:

$$E_{c,0} = \frac{\sigma_{c,0.60} - \sigma_{c,0.20}}{\epsilon_{z.60} - \epsilon_{z.20}}$$

being $\sigma_{c,0.60}$ and $\sigma_{c,0.20}$ the stress at 60% and at 20% of the ultimate normal stress, respectively, and $\epsilon_{z.60}$, $\epsilon_{z.20}$ the related longitudinal strains.

The same interval is chosen to calculate the Poisson ratio between tangential and longitudinal deformation:

$$r = -\frac{\epsilon_{t.60} - \epsilon_{t.20}}{\epsilon_{z.60} - \epsilon_{z.20}}$$

being $\epsilon_{t.60}$, $\epsilon_{t.20}$ the transversal strains correspondent at 60% and at 20% of the maximum stress.

2.2.2. Tension test parallel to the fibers

To overcome all the difficulties faced proceeding with the set up suggested by ISO 22157:2019, a different first set up to characterize the five bamboo species is assessed (in the second part of the paper a discussion about the ISO 22157:2019 standard prescriptions for tensile test is reported with other possible solutions).

Each specimen is prepared splitting a bamboo stick of cross section with one dimension equal to the culm wall thickness of the culm δ and the width, b , equal to 5 mm. The stick is then buried at the extremities in an aluminium pipe filled by resin. For centring the stick and sealing the resin two hollow cylindrical shaped rubber seals are posed at the two ends of the piece of pipe as shown in Fig. 2. An epoxy resin (SI-KADUR®-330) is filled from bottom to top, using a 100 ml syringe by two holes drilled in each aluminium tube (as shown in Fig. 3). The specimen is then dried for 24-hour at room temperature.

The testing set-up is shown in Fig. 4a. The load is applied through universal testing machine GALDABINI, with maximum capacity of

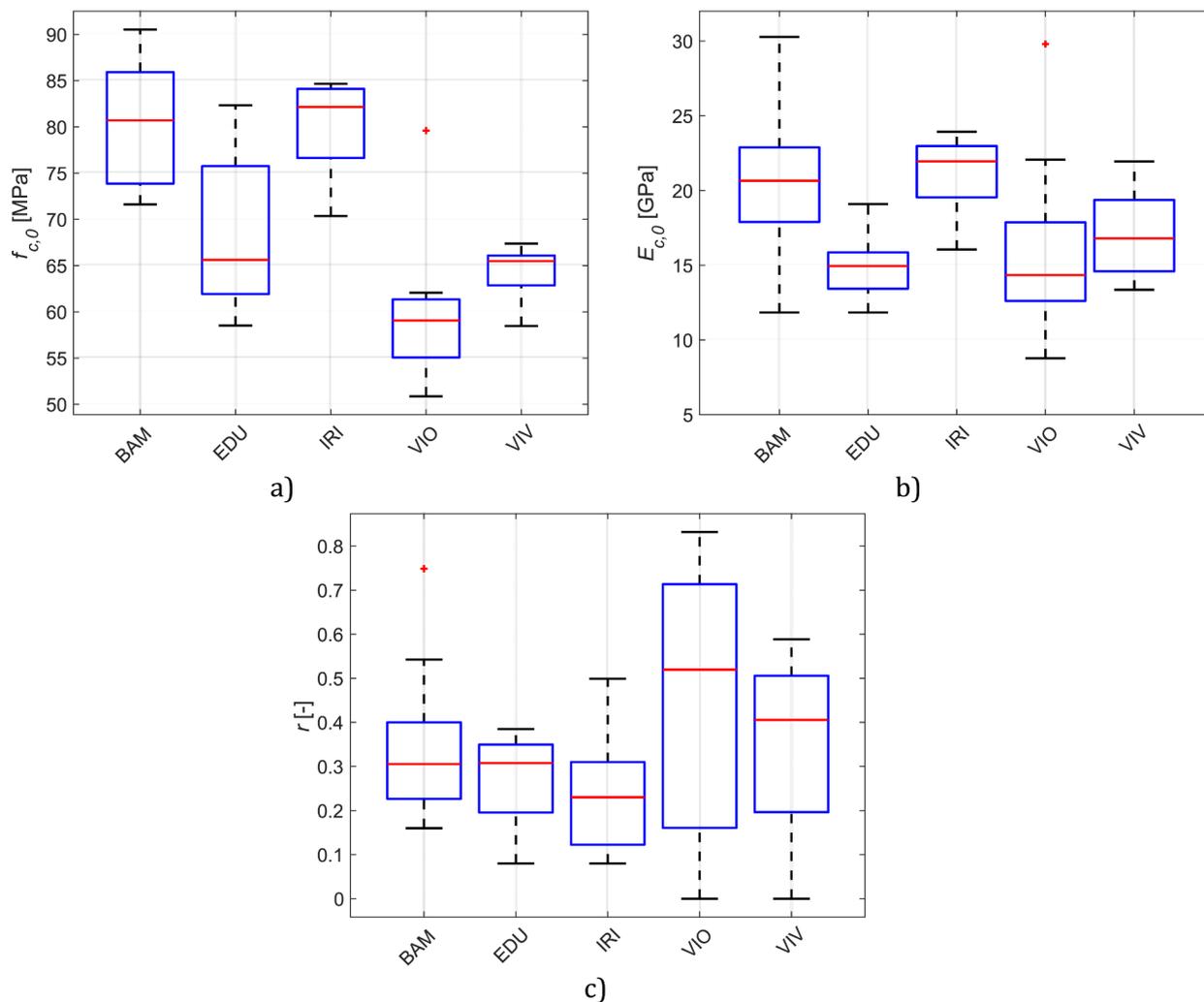


Fig. 6. Compression test: (a) strength, (b) Young modulus, (c) Poisson ratio for each species considering all the specimens.

100 kN. A DD1 HMB estensometer was installed directly on the specimen, holding on to the sides of it, as shown in the close-up of Fig. 4b. To monitor the displacements between the jaws, an additional LVDT HBM 1-WA/50MM-T was installed.

The normal stress in the direction of the load $\sigma_{t,0}$ was calculated considering the area A as suggested by ISO 22157:2019. The longitudinal strain ε_z was measured by the estensometer.

Assuming a linear elastic constitutive law, the longitudinal Young modulus was calculated (as suggested by ISO 22157:2019) as:

$$E_{t,0} = \frac{\sigma_{t,0\ 60} - \sigma_{t,0\ 20}}{\varepsilon_{z\ 60} - \varepsilon_{z\ 20}}$$

The value of the tensile strength was calculated at the maximum loading force as

$$f_{t,0} = \frac{F_{ult}}{A}$$

2.3. Results

2.3.1. Initial dimensions and density of the culms

The mean value and the standard deviation of the external diameter D , of the thickness δ and the density ρ of the culms are reported in

Table 1. The mean diameters span from 51.13 mm, for VIO, to 79.43 mm, for VIV. The thickness goes from 4.53 mm of VIO to 7.25 mm of EDU (which shows a very thick culm at the bottom in respect to the upper part).

The density is comparable for BAM, EDU and IRI, while lower values have been found for VIO and VIV. For all the species, the density of the TOP specimens is higher than the BOT ones, except BAM for which the two values are similar.

2.3.2. Compressive test parallel to the fibers

Fig. 5 shows longitudinal compression stress versus longitudinal strain (negative values) and versus circumferential strain (positive values) for all the specimens tested for BAM. All the other species show the same behaviour.

The graph reveals an initial linear stress–strain relationship followed by a non-linear behaviour. The mean values and standard deviation of the ultimate compressive stress, of the Young modulus, of the ratio between the transversal and longitudinal strains and of the water content are collected in Table 2.

Performing a statistical analysis using the Matlab tool Anova

Fig. 6 shows the box plot of compressive strength, Young modulus and Poisson ratio of the different species. The analysis of Variance conducted by using Matlab tool Anova shows that for compressive

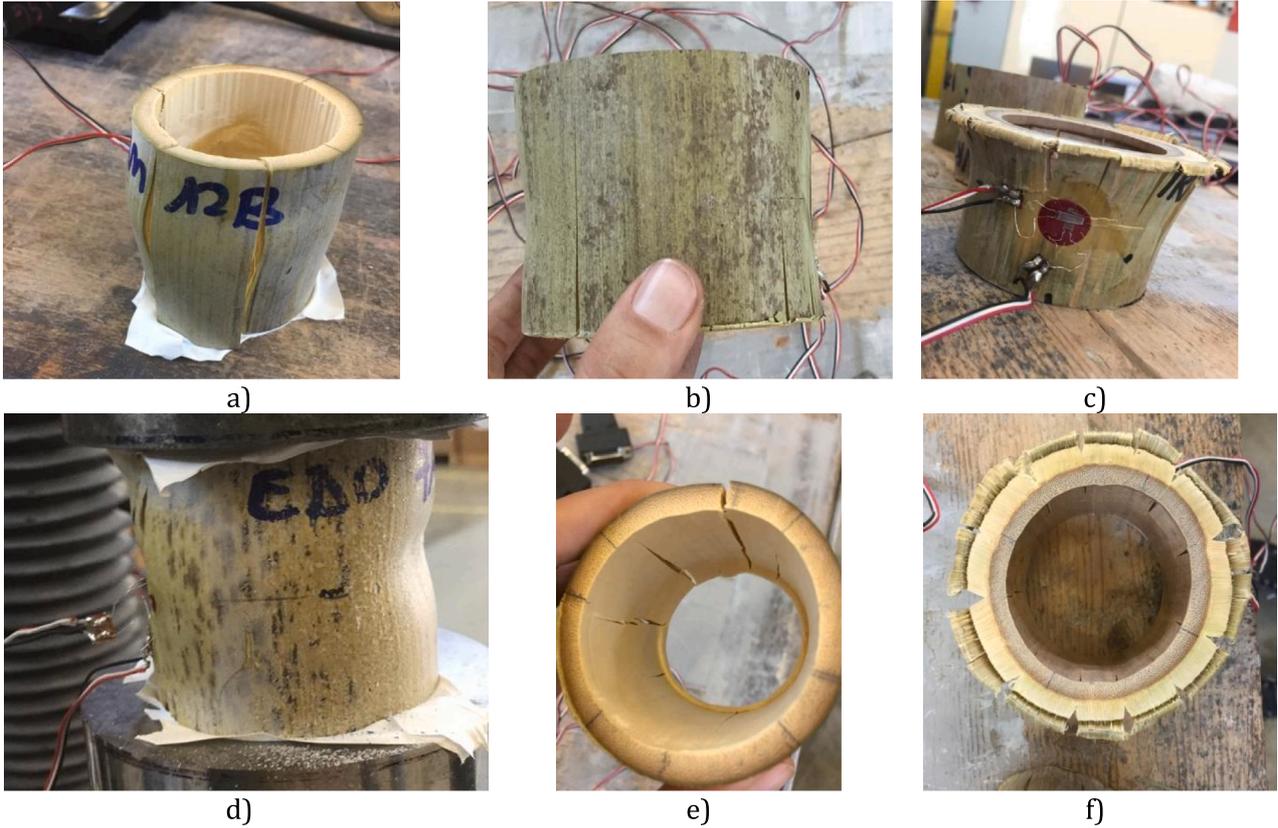


Fig. 7. Compression test: failure mode.

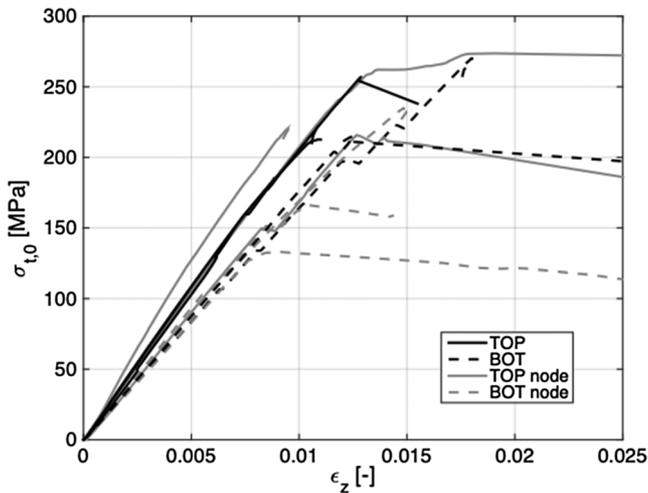


Fig. 8. Tension test: examples stress versus longitudinal strain for Bambusoides species.

Table 3
Tension test: mean values for each species considering all the tested specimens.

Species	$f_{t,0}$ [MPa]		$E_{t,0}$ [GPa]		w [-]	
	Mean	St.Dev	Mean	St.Dev	Mean	St.Dev
BAM	220.28	41.91	21.80	2.60	9.59	0.78
EDU	193.51	42.73	15.19	2.92	9.09	0.30
IRI	229.38	34.92	18.22	3.12	9.11	0.39
VIO	148.91	31.40	18.17	4.63	9.04	0.23
VIV	188.84	37.62	14.90	4.75	8.94	1.50

strength BAM and IRI are significant different from EDU, VIV and VIO.

For Young modulus BAM, EDU and VIV do not behave in a significant different way in respect to other species. IRI behaves differently from VIO.

For Poisson ratio the species do not show significant differences. Four failure modes are encountered:

- 1) expansion of the central part of the specimen (Fig. 7a),
- 2) expansion of the bottom and upper part of the specimen (Fig. 7b),
- 3) expansion of only one part (the upper or the bottom) (Fig. 7c),
- 4) a local buckling (Fig. 7d).

In all the cases there is a local crush of the specimen (Fig. 7e) in the part of the specimen in contact with the loading plates which can, in some cases, lead to a separation of the outer skin of the bamboo (Fig. 7f). In cases where the compression test far exceeds the resistance limit, longitudinal cracks appear due to the expansion of the specimens.

2.3.3. Tension test parallel to the fibers

The diagram depicted in Fig. 8 shows the longitudinal stress versus the longitudinal strains for BAM species.

In some cases a linear elastic brittle behaviour is encountered, in some other cases there is a non linear behaviour after the maximum stress due to the successive failure of fibers as observed by Amada [26]. The different behaviour is related to different failure modes reported in the following.

In Table 3 the mean values and the standard deviation of strength, Young modulus and the relative water content are collected, in Fig. 9 the related box plot is depicted.

A variance analysis shows that there are significant differences between BAM and IRI shows significant differences with VIO.

Regarding the Young modulus, the variance analysis shows that all the species behave similarly.

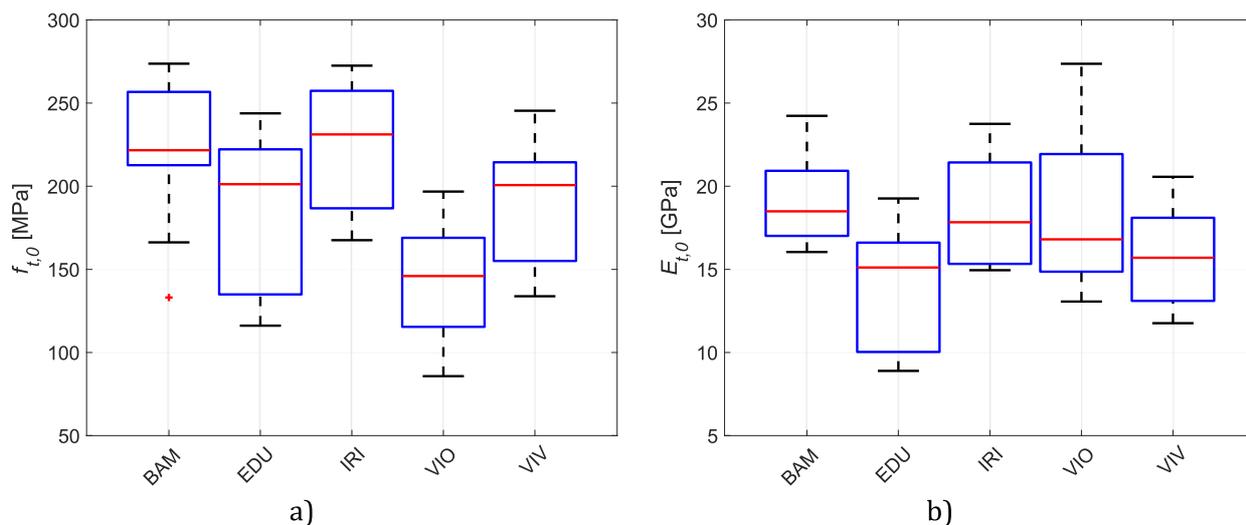


Fig. 9. Tension test box plots: (a) strength, (b) Young modulus.

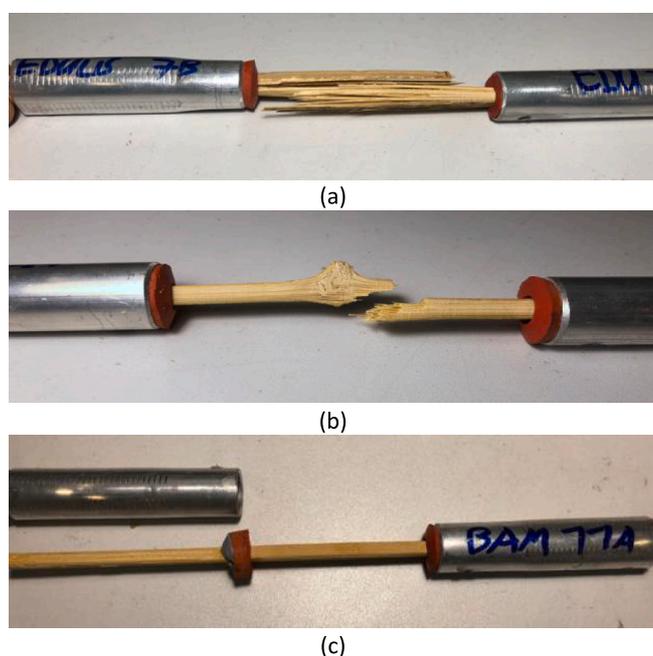


Fig. 10. Tension test: failure modes: (a) delamination of the fibers, (b) localized fracture, (c) bonding failure.

The failure of specimens in tension test can be divided into two groups. The first group experiences a sort of delamination (20 times) (Fig. 10a), while a second group experiences a localized fracture (32 times) (Fig. 10b). In some cases a failure of the bond between resin and metal pipe occurs (8 times) (Fig. 10c). The data of the tests in which this latter failure is encountered, are not considered.

2.3.4. Influence of the position of the sample in the culm

The values of compression and tension strength separated for specimens in different positions of the culm, are reported in Fig. 11a and Fig. 11b. It can be noted that in the upper specimens the tensile and compressive strength are higher in terms of mean values in respect to the specimens extracted from the bottom part of the culm. On the contrary using a variance analysis the differences are not significant

except for EDU for compressive strength.

Fig. 11c, d and e show respectively, the values of Young modulus in compression and tension and the values of the Poisson ratio in compression. Using a variance analysis also in this cases the differences are not significant except for EDU and BAM for Young modulus in tension.

In Table 4, the ratio between the mean value of strength in tension and compression test for specimen from top and bottom part of culm is reported. The compressive strength decays deeper in respect to the tension strength from the top to the bottom. The species with the higher gap in the tension and compression strength between the top and bottom part of the culm is EDU, which has an evident difference also in geometry between the two parts with a particularly thicker bottom part of the culm in respect to the upper part of culm.

2.3.5. Influence of the presence of the nodes

The presence of node lowers the tension strength in terms of mean values (Fig. 12b) while it seems to not significantly influence the other values (Fig. 12a, c and d).

Significant differences highlighted by variance analysis can be noted only for tension strength for EDU VIO and VIV.

In Table 5 the ratio between the strength in tension and compression test for specimen with and without node is reported.

2.3.6. Mechanical characteristics versus density

Correlation coefficients between density and the mechanical characteristics as strength, Young modulus and Poisson ratio are reported in Table 6. It can be noted that compression and tension strength show a good correlation with density, while Young modulus and Poisson ratio are not correlated. The regression line between strength and density is shown in Fig. 13.

3. Discussion on tension test methodology

In this section we want to deal with tensile test procedure. The main innovation introduced by ISO 22157:2019 in tensile test (in direction of the fiber) is a rectangular cross section specimen “with breadth equal to the culm wall thickness and width equal to one-half the culm wall thickness or less”.

This innovation leads to a great simplification of the practical realization of the specimens (with a splitter). The stick required by the norm is incomparably simpler, rapid and, above all, more reliable than

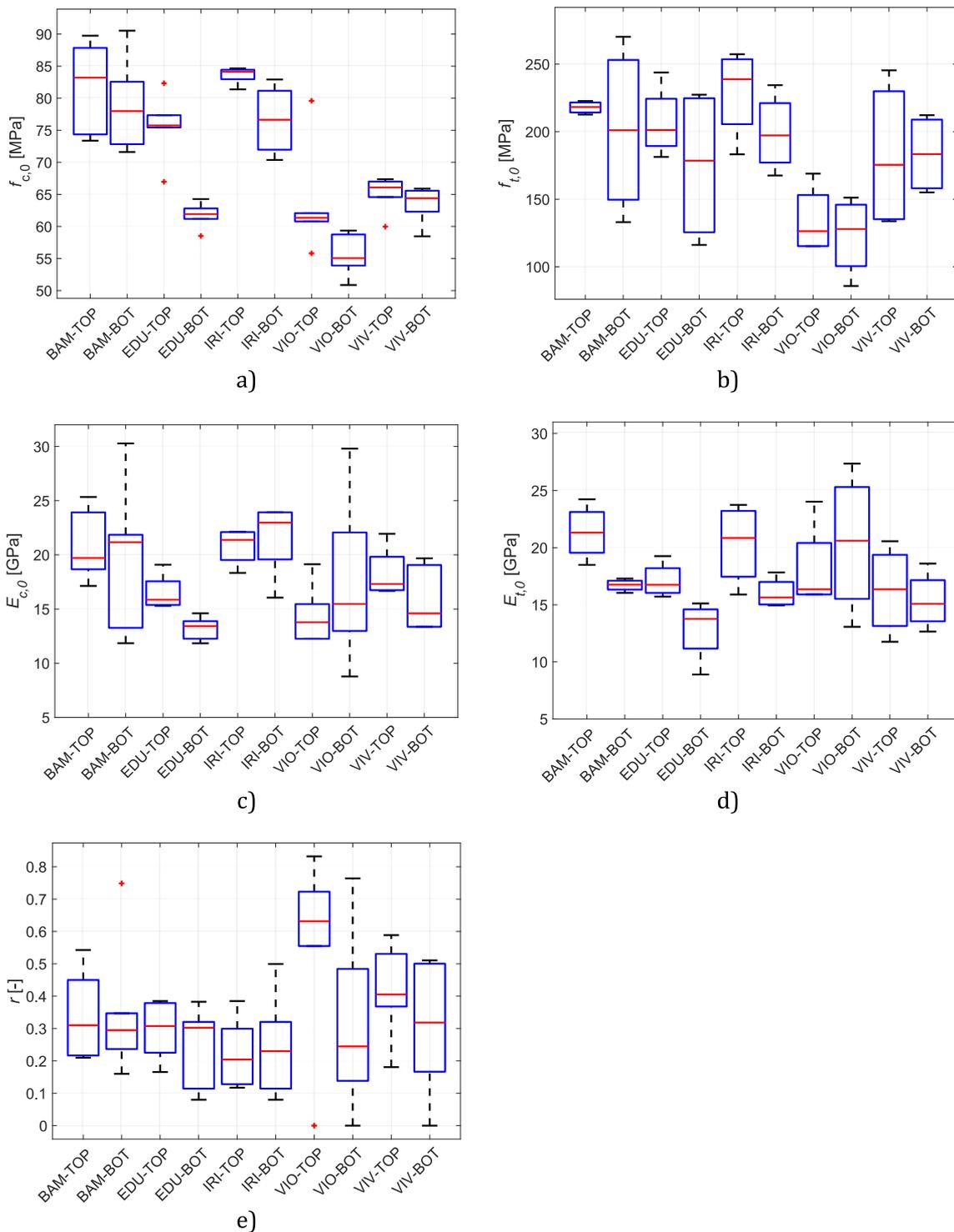


Fig. 11. Influence of the position of the culm: (a) compression strength, (b) tension strength, (c) Young modulus, (d) Young tensile modulus and (e) Poisson ratio for all the specimens of each species.

the dog bone specimen traditionally used. It leads also to a great advantage because the splitting process does not artificially break the natural path of the fibers.

Further, the configuration allows the jaw to grip equally well the lignin core and the cortical layer. When an appropriate grip system is employed, the better-distributed state of stress at the jaws arrangement

makes the interposition of a softwood tab at the ends of the specimen (suggested by ISO 22157:2019, §11.3) essentially useless, as can be seen in the next section.

The small size of the suggested section makes hard to use mini or micro strain-gauge but facilitates mounting a mechanical extensometer (e.g. HBM DD1).

Table 4

Ratio between mean strength in case of specimen from the bottom part of the culm and from the top part of the culm.

Species	$f_{c,0, TOP}/f_{c,0, BOT}$	$f_{t,0, TOP}/f_{t,0, BOT}$
BAM	1.12	1.11
EDU	1.43	1.17
IRI	1.14	1.09
VIV	1.36	1.10
VIO	1.32	1.07

On the contrary the choice of a thin cross section in the circumferential direction make often difficult the splitting of the specimen with a node (ISO 22157:2019 §12.2). In some species, having a relatively small diameter, the sample may be very irregular: the cross-section changes longitudinally and diverges from the rectangular shape (becoming trapezoidal, rhombic or quasi-triangular); the sample may result in bent or twisted.

The last occurrence suggests the inappropriateness of the prescription (§12.1) for which “the grips should also be restrained from rotation about both principal axes of the specimen”. Mounting a distort specimen by forcing its natural geometry may alter its response. On the contrary, a mechanical device capable of adaptation avoids the problem (similarly to the spherical bearing surface arrangement provided in the compression test machine “to ensure that the load is concentrically applied”, ISO §10.1).

Furthermore, in order to obtain a meaningful experimental tensile strength for the bamboo, the cross-section of the ISO specimen should be *trapezoidal*, namely obtained with splitting planes passing through the ideal axis of the culm. A simple geometrical calculus shows that the over-estimation of the area of a rectangular ISO sample with respect to the trapezoidal correct shape,

$$\frac{\Delta A}{A_{rect}} \sim \frac{\frac{\delta}{D}}{1 - \frac{\delta}{D}}$$

is equal to 5%, 8% and 11% when $t/D = 0.05, 0.75, 0.10$, respectively.

In the experimental test reported below, the cross-section is trapezoidal and, therefore, its longer and the shorter base are measured, accordingly. No particular problem occurs due to the resulting small non-complanarity at the jaws.

3.1. Alternative set up for tension test

To overcome the difficulties a new procedure for the tensile test is proposed.

An experimental rig has been specifically designed to mitigate the effects of the crushing of the specimen at the jaws (leading almost invariably to a premature collapse). The designed grip system shown in Fig. 14a has two original characteristics:

1. the slope of the wedge (3/10) is well greater than in the common uniaxial testing machine, with the aim to distribute the transversal force, compressing the weak part of the material;
2. universal spherical joints connect both the grip system to the fixed frame (load cell and base support, respectively). This arrangement allows the adaptation of non-perfect specimens during the test, either bent or twisted.

The aim of this part of the experimental investigation is the appraisal of the innovation introduced in tensile test protocol. For this purpose, a minimal protocol is adopted for each of the 5 species:

- the specimens are obtained *from the same part of the culm* (TOP), through adjacent simple splits (internode: length ~ 250 mm; with a node: ~ 300 mm);
- the width is almost one-half of the wall thickness;
- specimens are tested, discarding the most distorted samples: 6 Internode, 6 with a Node, 6 with the Reduced cross-section, as described below, Fig. 14b;
- the strain-force time history is registered by an HBM DD1 extensometer and HBM 10kN load cell; the time to failure always exceeds 300 s;
- the specimen is in direct contact with the jaws, without interposition of soft material.

To investigate the possible negative influence of the jaws grip system on the tension strength, and to get a *well-defined and controlled* cross-section, the tests were additionally performed with specimen with a *reduced cross-section* in the middle of an internode sample.

The reduction of area is carried out on the *lateral* sides of the strip, so that the external and internal surfaces of the culm are not disturbed. Therefore, the functionally graded nature of the sample remains unaltered and no corrective factor need to introduce on the strength results.

The width of the specimen is reduced by abrasion with a half-round file, following a template to guaranty a symmetric manufacturing (Fig. 14b). The operation is very simple, rapid and repeatable. Since the measurement of the *minimal* cross-section area is now very reliable (with respect to the great variability of the nominal area along an ISO sample), as well as the placement of the critical cross-section, it is expected to reach greater values for strength with reduction of the dispersion.

3.2. Results, Comparison and evaluation of the new procedure

The experimental results obtained with the proposed setup with and without node (named respectively ‘ISO’ and ‘ISO-node’) and the results obtained for specimens with reduced cross section without nodes (named ‘reduced’) are presented in Table 7 and in Table 8 and in the graphs of Figure 15 and Figure 16 in terms respectively of strength and Young modulus for all the species.

The examination of the results of the two groups of specimens, allows stating that the ISO specimens give results comparable in terms of variance analysis with those obtained using the set up described in the first part of the paper (named ‘standard’), even though, in the present study, different criteria are used to select the specimens. In particular, Fig. 17 shows the mean and the coefficient of variation of the strength and of the Young modulus for all the species.

For ISO specimen, the value of the strength and Young modulus is often less disperse as shown in Fig. 17 by the relative standard-deviation (namely standard-deviation/mean).

It is very interesting to emphasize the failure modes encountered using this testing procedure:

- a distinct de-fibering in the middle zone (Fig. 18a);
- delamination of the cortical layer which propagates along the entire specimen (Fig. 18b and c).

Both modes highlight the great importance to have a sufficient strength in *radial direction* in order to attain a good *tensile* behavior. As a consequence, it seems important to devise a systematic experimental investigation about of the *transversal shear strength*, a parameter appearing inessential, at first sight, in bamboo culms employed for members in tension.

It is worthy of mention a brief comment about the response shown

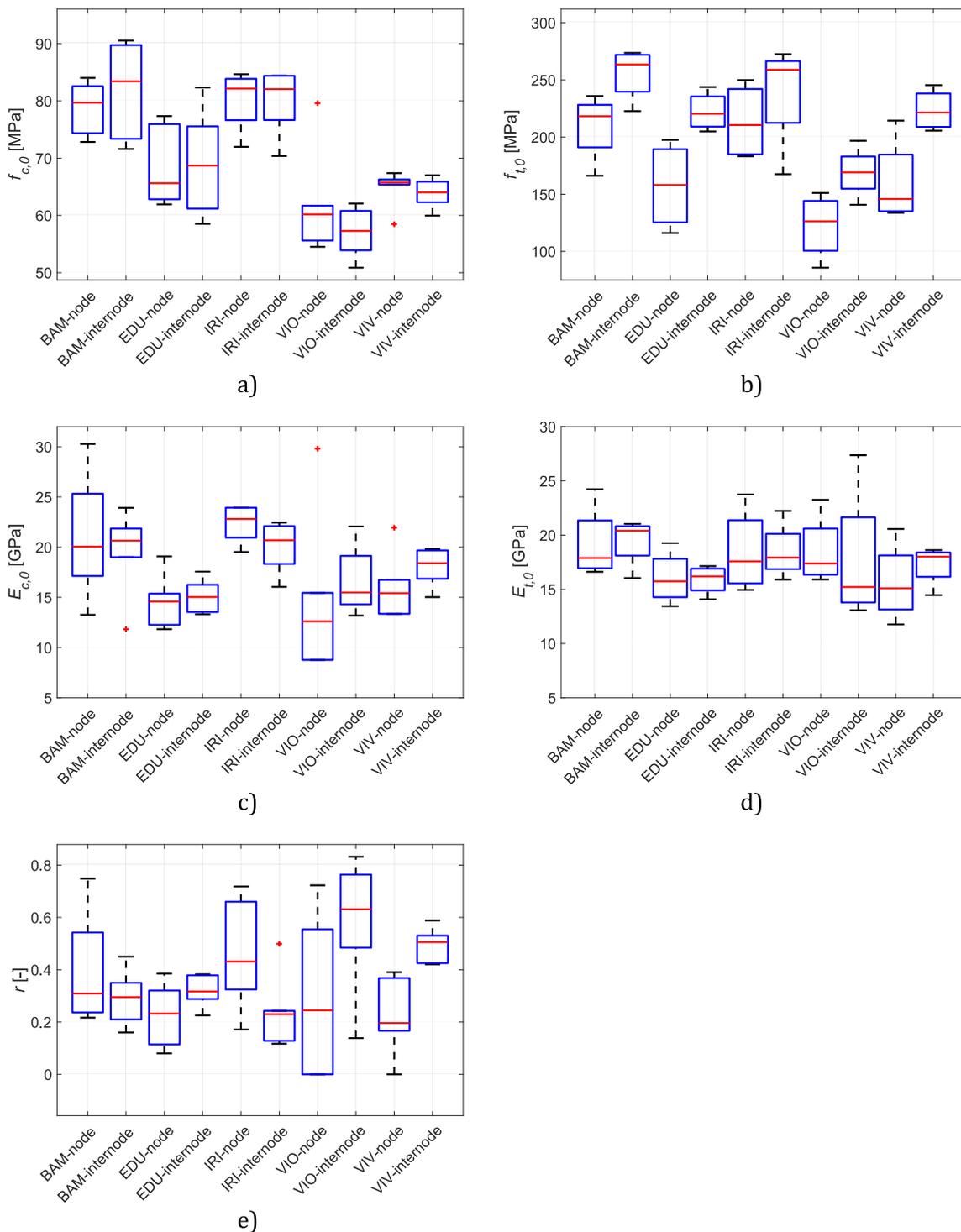


Fig. 12. Influence of the node: (a) compression strength, (b) tension strength, (c) Young modulus, (d) Young tensile modulus and (e) Poisson ratio and for all the specimens of each species.

in Fig. 19b, of an inter-node sample (BAM N5) affected by a natural knee (Fig. 19a), for the possible consequences in structural applications of the culms. In a first phase, the sample responds as two in-series beams, slightly misaligned under traction (smaller stiffness). The increasing tension changes the geometry towards the configuration of two aligned straight beam, whose stiffness (E) is therefore comparable with

that of the other samples

4. Conclusions

The paper presents the results of an experimental study for the mechanical characterization of five species of Italian bamboo. All the

Table 5
Ratio between mean strength in case of specimen with and without node for compression and tension tests.

Species	$f_{c,0,Internode}/f_{c,0,Node}$	$f_{t,0,Internode}/f_{t,0,Node}$
BAM	0.96	1.12
EDU	0.98	1.47
IRI	1.00	1.14
VIV	1.01	1.36
VIO	1.09	1.32

Table 6
Correlation coefficients between density and the mechanical characteristics as strength, Young modulus and Poisson ratio.

Tension test		Compression test		r
$f_{t,0}$	$E_{t,0}$	$f_{c,0}$	$E_{c,0}$	
0.42	0.07	0.73	0.06	-0.17

species were cultivated in the norther part of Italy. The tested culms have external diameters from 51.13 mm (*VIO*) to 79.43 mm (*VIV*). All the tested species present rather thin culms, from 4.53 mm (*VIO*) to 7.25 mm (*EDU*).

The main results from compression tests are:

- compression strength ranges from a mean value around 60 MPa (*VIO*) to the about 80 MPa (*BAM* and *IRI*): half of the specimens have been made with nodes and half without; half from the upper part (TOP) and half from the bottom part of the culm (BOT);
- Young modulus ranges from 14.04 MPa (*EDU*) to 20.34 MPa (*BAM*) and 21.89 MPa (*IRI*);
- Poisson ratio, namely the circumferential strain over the longitudinal compressive strain, goes from 0.27 (*EDU*) to 0.47 (*VIO*).

The main results for tension tests are:

- tension strength ranges from a mean value of 150 MPa (*VIO*) to 220 MPa (*BAM*) and 230 MPa (*IRI*);
- Young modulus ranges from 21.8 MPa (*BAM*) to 14.90 MPa (*VIV*).

The influence of the node and of the position in the culm has been

Table 7
Tension test: mean values and standard deviation of the strength for each species considering all the tested specimens in the three different set ups.

Species	ISO		$f_{t,0}$ [MPa]		ISO-node	
	Mean	St.Dev	Reduced Mean	St.Dev	Mean	St.Dev
BAM	232.31	46.01	288.73	53.10	191.61	35.64
EDU	193.50	38.13	205.45	36.95	138.75	19.06
IRI	243.29	25.11	257.79	35.39	237.83	16.38
VIO	173.61	16.53	159.44	24.97	127.49	16.20
VIV	207.65	40.99	123.73	23.23	152.01	5.79

Table 8
Tension test: mean values and standard deviation of the Young modulus for each species considering all the tested specimens in the three different set ups.

Species	ISO		$E_{t,0}$ [GPa]		ISO-node	
	Mean	St.Dev	Reduced Mean	St.Dev	Mean	St.Dev
BAM	23.03	4.07	20.61	1.99	18.64	8.05
EDU	12.20	1.19	15.93	4.67	12.22	4.16
IRI	17.74	1.17	20.11	0.75	16.60	4.43
VIO	12.05	1.36	12.29	1.43	15.06	2.64
VIV	16.87	1.89	17.45	1.08	20.42	10.22

investigated.

The density is quite comparable for *BAM*, *EDU* and *IRI* (860 to 900 kg/m³), while lower values have been found for *VIO* and *VIV*.

Both tensile and compressive strength are positively correlated with density, whilst no correlation has been found between density and Young modulus or Poisson coefficient ratio.

The second part of the paper discusses critically some aspects of the methodology proposed in recent version of ISO 22157:2019 for tensile tests and describe the appropriate modifications of the experimental set up to be able to perform tension tests also on thin bamboo like the Italian one.

In the paper, tests with three different set ups are proposed:

- specimen with the extremities buried in a pipe filled by resin;
- specimen with the ISO geometry without soft wood reinforcement at the extremities;
- specimen with a reduced cross-section in the middle of the

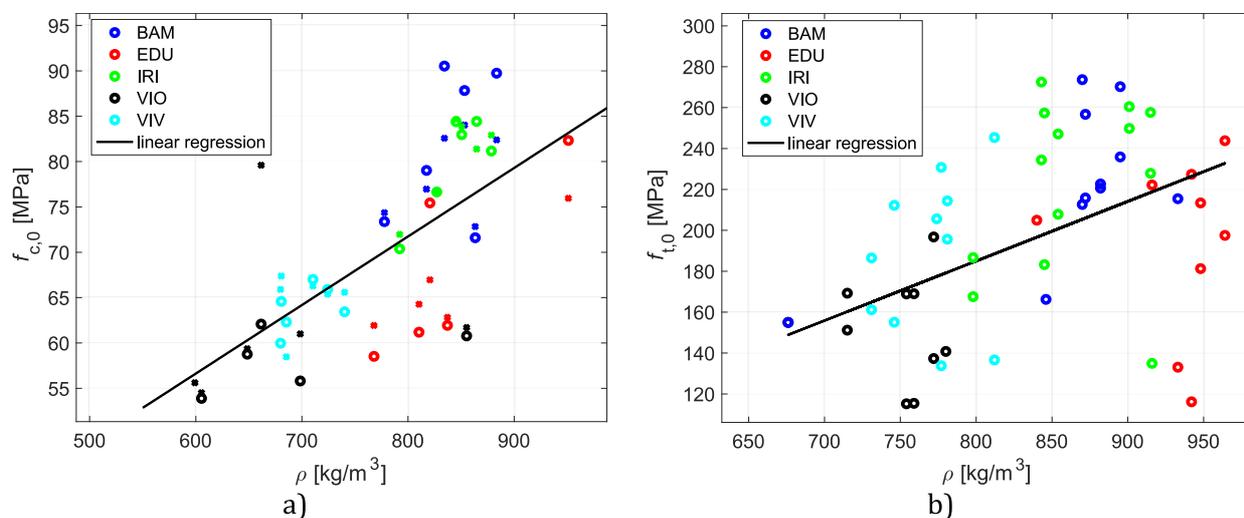


Fig. 13. (a) Compression strength versus density and (b) tensile strength versus density.

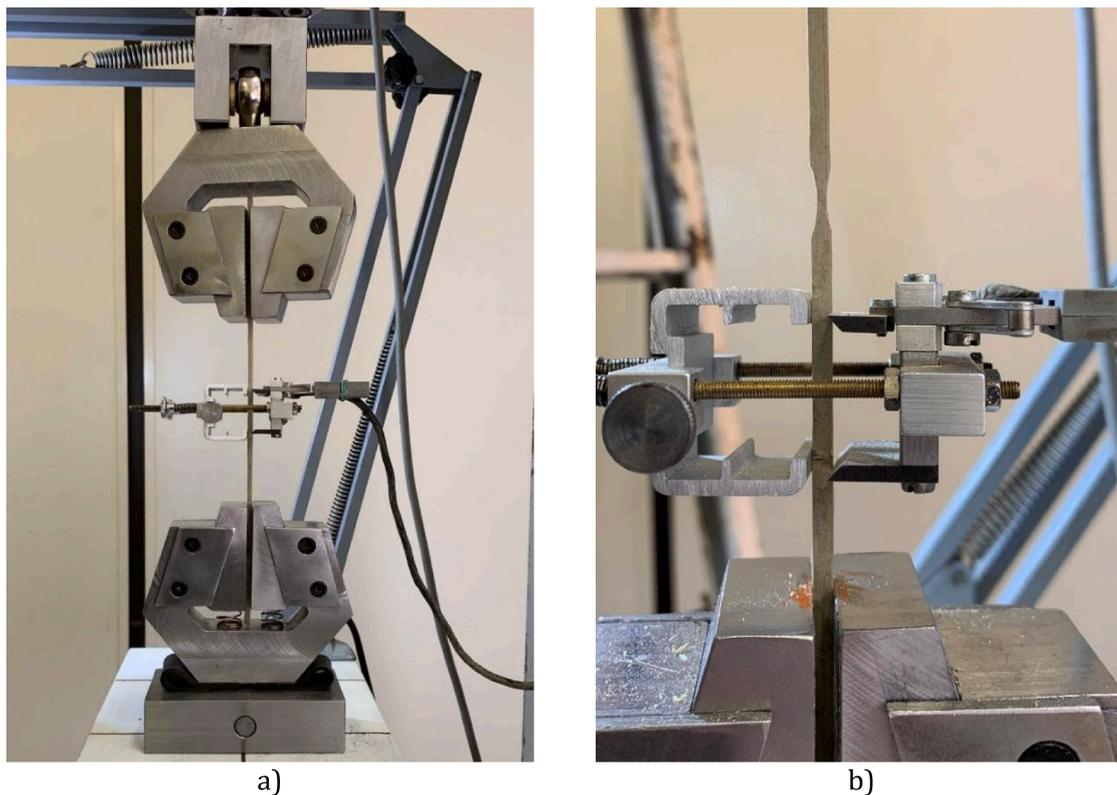


Fig. 14. (a) Experimental rig and (b) a specimen with reduced cross-section.

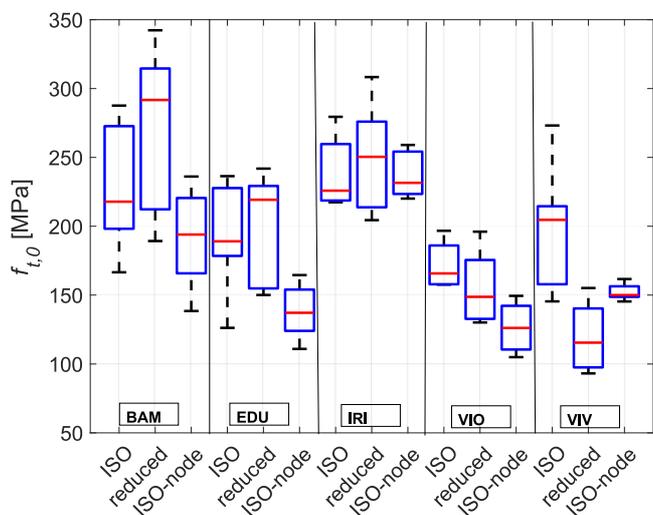


Fig. 15. Box plot for strength of the five species.

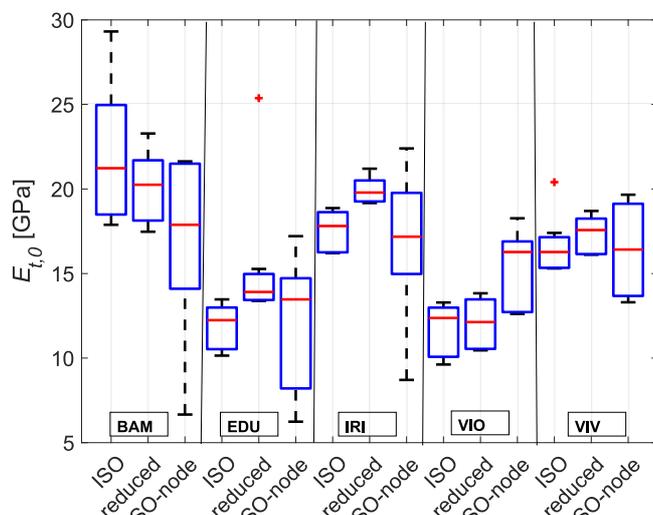


Fig. 16. Box plot for Young tensile modulus of the five species.

specimen.

In conclusion, the ISO prescriptions about the tensile tests appear to be a significant and reliable improvement for the mechanical characterization of bamboo culms in the direction of the longitudinal fibers but performing the test as suggested is rather difficult without appropriate experimental rig.

All the three set ups proposed are suitable for thin bamboo and present comparable results.

The experimental investigation shows that several autochthone

Italian bamboo species have excellent mechanical performance so that they can be adopted as a renewable and sustainable structural material.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

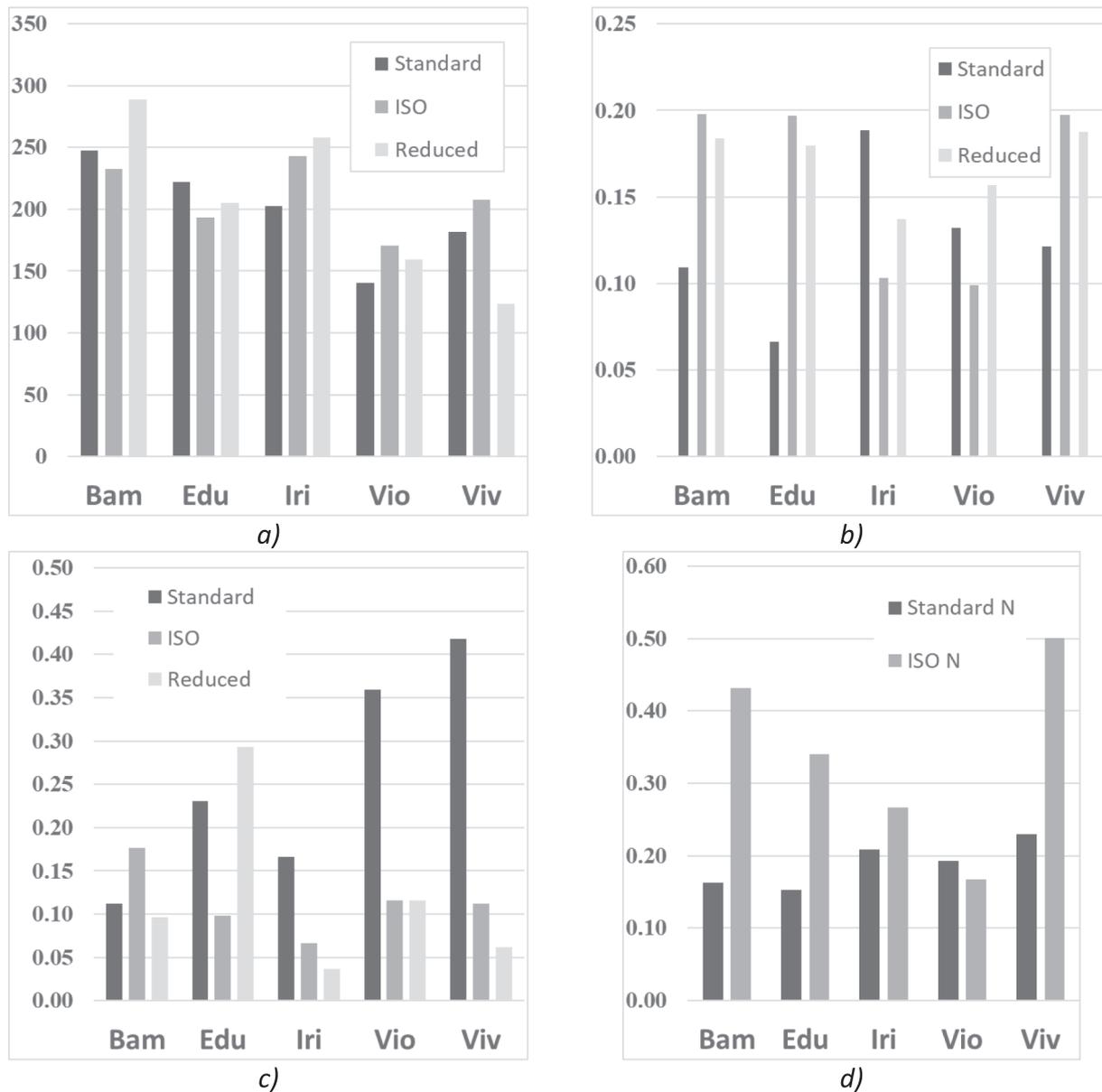


Fig. 17. Comparison of the tensile tests: (a) Strength values [MPa]; (b) Strength: Coefficient of variation; (c)–(d) Young modulus: Coefficient of variation.

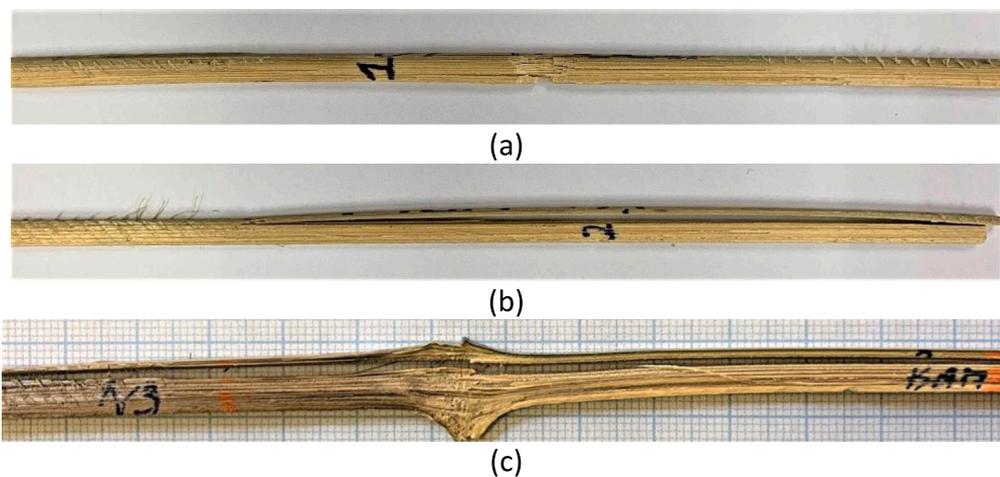


Fig. 18. Two typical failure modes: defibring in the middle zone (a); delamination of the cortical layer in internode specimen (b) and in a specimen with node (c).

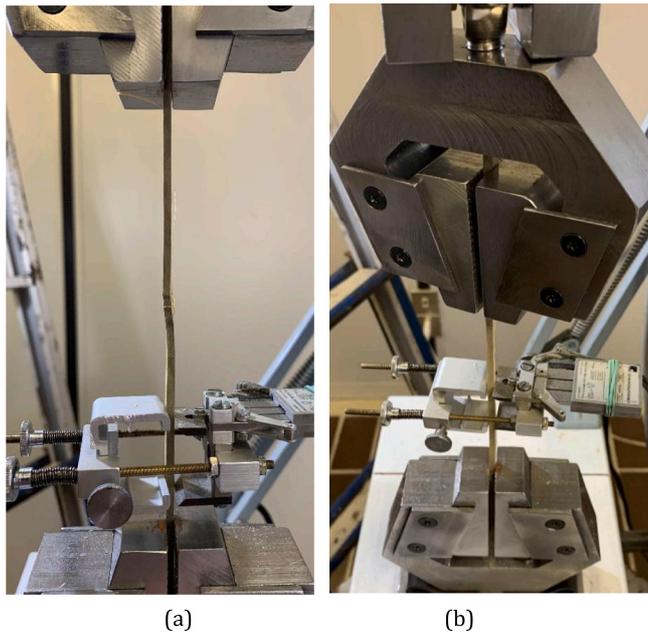


Fig. 19. (a) Specimen tested with natural “knee” which leads to (b) a natural twist to the anchorage of the press machine.

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