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Experimental Study on the Effect of Silica Fume on Strength and Durability of M40 Grade Ready Mix Concrete - A Review

Mohd. Ammaruddin[1], Harshit Bhilawe[2], Abhay Sahare[3], Sanket Narnaware[4], Prof. Atul D Gautam[5]
[1, 2, 3, 4] *Research Scholar (B.Tech in Civil Engineering), Civil Engineering Department, JD College of Engineering & Management, Nagpur, Maharashtra, India*
[5] *Assistant Professor, Civil Engineering Department, JD College of Engineering & Management, Nagpur, Maharashtra, India*

Abstract: Concrete is the most consumed construction material worldwide, and improving its strength and durability remains a critical research focus. The inclusion of mineral admixtures such as silica fume has emerged as an effective solution to enhance performance. This review paper presents an in-depth study of the effect of silica fume on the strength and durability characteristics of M40 grade Ready Mix Concrete (RMC). A total of twenty published research studies has been critically analyzed to understand the influence of silica fume replacement levels, ranging from 5% to 20%, on mechanical and durability parameters. The review identifies significant improvement in compressive, tensile, and flexural strength, along with enhanced resistance to chloride and sulfate attack. The identified research gap indicates a need for systematic experimental evaluation of silica fume with modern admixtures under RMC conditions, focusing on microstructural characterization and long-term durability.

Keywords: Silica Fume, M40 Grade Concrete, Ready Mix Concrete, Strength, Durability, Sustainable Concrete

I. INTRODUCTION

Concrete is the most widely used construction material worldwide due to its versatility, durability, and cost-effectiveness. However, the production of Ordinary Portland Cement (OPC), a primary ingredient in concrete, contributes significantly to global CO_2 emissions, accounting for nearly 5–7% of total anthropogenic emissions (Avinash Kumar et al., 2024). To address environmental concerns and improve the performance of concrete, researchers have extensively investigated the use of supplementary cementitious materials (SCMs), among which silica fume (SF), an industrial by-product from silicon and ferrosilicon alloy production, has received considerable attention (Rukhsana Rashid et al., 2016; Andrabi et al., 2019). Silica fume is highly reactive due to its fine particle size and high surface area, which enhances pozzolanic activity, leading to the formation of additional calcium silicate hydrate (C–S–H) gel and a denser microstructure (Cornelius Kanmalai Williams et al., 2020; G.V.V. Raj Kishore et al., 2021). Numerous studies have demonstrated that partial replacement of cement with silica fume can significantly improve the mechanical properties, such as compressive, tensile, and flexural strength, as well as durability characteristics, including resistance to chemical attacks, sulphate exposure, and chloride penetration (Jagan et al., 2021; Tariq et al., 2023). Moreover, recent research has explored the combined use of silica fume with other industrial by-products or nano-additives, such as fly ash, GGBS, PVC waste powder, copper slag, and nano-silica, to achieve sustainable, high-performance concrete suitable for structural and specialized applications (Manjunatha et al., 2021; Niket Singh et al., 2023; Şahin et al., 2024). Despite these advances, challenges remain in optimizing replacement levels, understanding long-term durability under aggressive environments, and evaluating emerging concrete technologies, including fiber-reinforced, polymer-modified, and 3D printable concretes. Therefore, a comprehensive review of recent studies is essential to consolidate current knowledge, identify research gaps, and provide guidance for developing sustainable, high-performance concrete mixes (Gražulytė et al., 2020; Gajre et al., 2024).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Previous Research Studies

A comprehensive literature review was conducted, covering twenty national and international research studies published between 2010 and 2025. The reviewed works primarily focused on mechanical properties, durability aspects, and microstructural analysis of concrete with varying silica fume replacement levels.

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Rukhsana Rashid et. al. (2016) conducted a detailed "Study on the Effect of Silica Fume on Properties of M40 Grade Concrete" at Sharda University, Greater Noida. In their experimental work, Ordinary Portland Cement (OPC 43 grade) was partially replaced with silica fume at proportions of 0%, 5%, 8%, 10%, 12%, and 15% by weight of cement. The study investigated the influence of silica fume on compressive, split tensile, flexural strength, and sulphate resistance of M40 grade concrete. The specimens were tested at curing periods of 7, 14, and 28 days for strength parameters, and up to 56 days for sulphate resistance. The results revealed that the optimum replacement level was 8% silica fume, which provided the maximum compressive strength among all mixes. Beyond this percentage, a decline in strength was observed, likely due to excess silica content causing microcracking and reduced workability. The split tensile and flexural strength tests showed a marginal improvement with the addition of silica fume, indicating that silica fume primarily contributes to densification of the concrete matrix rather than significantly improving tensile capacity. In terms of durability, concrete containing 8% silica fume exhibited better resistance to sulphate attack, showing less loss of compressive strength even after prolonged exposure. The study also emphasized that the inclusion of superplasticizers is necessary to maintain workability in mixes containing silica fume due to its fine particle size and high surface area. Overall, the authors concluded that silica fume improves strength and durability up to an optimal limit of 8%, making it a suitable pozzolanic material for high-performance M40 grade concrete.

Andrabi et. al. (2019) investigated the effects of silica fume and nano-silica on the compressive strength of M30 and M40 grade concrete at Desh Bhagat University, Punjab, India. The study aimed to enhance concrete performance by using nano-silica (215 nm) and silica fume as partial replacements for cement. Experimental mixes were prepared with nano-silica at 0.4%, 0.7%, and 1% by weight of cement. The results demonstrated that increasing nano-silica content improved both early-age and overall compressive strength of concrete. The authors concluded that nano-silica effectively refines the microstructure, enhancing the concrete's strength and durability, and the combination of silica fume and nano-silica provides an optimized approach for producing high-performance concrete suitable for structural applications.

Cornelius Kanmalai Williams et. al. (2020) conducted an "Experimental Study on Strength and Durability Index of Concrete Using Mineral Admixture". The study aimed to investigate the effect of silica fume, used as a mineral admixture, on the strength and durability performance of C30 grade concrete. In this experimental work, Ordinary Portland Cement (OPC) was partially replaced with silica fume at replacement levels of 5%, 10%, 15%, and 20% by weight of cement. The research focused on determining how varying percentages of silica fume influence the compressive strength and durability index of concrete. For this purpose, fifteen cube specimens (150 mm × 150 mm × 150 mm) and fifteen cylindrical specimens (100 mm diameter × 50 mm height) were cast and cured in water for 28 days before testing. The results showed a consistent increase in compressive strength with increasing silica fume content up to 10%, beyond which a slight reduction was observed. The optimum replacement level of silica fume was found to be 10%, which yielded the maximum compressive strength compared to the control mix. The study also included sorptivity tests to evaluate the concrete's durability index, indicating that the inclusion of silica fume significantly reduced water absorption and enhanced the concrete's resistance to moisture ingress. The durability index of concrete with silica fume was found to be within acceptable limits, suggesting improved long-term performance. Overall, the authors concluded that the addition of silica fume enhances both strength and durability of concrete up to an optimum replacement of 10%, making it a suitable admixture for producing durable high-performance concrete.

Rashidi et al. (2020) investigated the mix proportion for medium-grade concrete with silica fume as a cement replacement for general-purpose construction at the 13th International UNIMAS Engineering Conference (ENCON 2020). The study focused on incorporating silica fume, an industrial byproduct, as a partial replacement of cement to improve mechanical and durability properties of concrete. Medium-grade concrete was prepared with various percentages of silica fume, and the results indicated that 10% replacement was optimal, providing a 32% increase in compressive strength compared to concrete without silica fume. Replacement levels below 10% did not show significant improvements. The study concluded that silica fume can be effectively used in low- to medium-grade concretes to enhance performance while maintaining practicality and cost-effectiveness for general construction applications.

Siva et al. (2020) conducted an experimental investigation on partial replacement of cement by silica fume and ground granulated blast furnace slag (GGBS) with the addition of polypropylene fibers in M40 grade concrete. Cement was partially replaced with silica fume at 5%, 10%, and 15%, and GGBS at 20%, 30%, and 40% for various combinations. Additionally, 1% polypropylene fiber was added to control microcracks in concrete. The study evaluated mechanical properties including compressive strength, split tensile strength, and flexural strength. The results indicated that concrete with higher silica fume content and lower GGBS exhibited superior strength, and the incorporation of polypropylene fibers improved crack resistance, demonstrating the potential for enhanced durability and performance in sustainable concrete mixes.

Bhargava et al. (2020) conducted an experimental investigation of M40 grade concrete with supplementary cementitious materials (SCMs) and glass fiber, published in Materials Today: Proceedings, Volume 33, Part 1, pp. 519–523. The study focused on partially replacing cement with industrial by-products such as fly ash (FACF) and ground granulated blast furnace slag (GGBS) to reduce CO_2 emissions associated with cement production, while improving the mechanical performance of concrete. Various replacement levels were tested, and an optimized mix containing 25% SCMs was further enhanced with 0.5% glass fibers. The specimens were evaluated for compressive, tensile, and flexural strength at 7, 28, 56, and 90 days. The results indicated that the inclusion of SCMs and glass fibers significantly improved concrete performance in terms of strength and durability, with the optimized combination providing the best mechanical properties. The study concluded that partial replacement of cement with SCMs, combined with glass fibers, offers a sustainable and high-performance solution for M40 grade concrete.

Gražulytė et al. (2020) conducted a study on the effect of silica fume on high-strength concrete performance, presented at the 5th World Congress on Civil, Structural, and Environmental Engineering (CSEE'20). The research focused on high-strength concrete with a water–cement ratio of 0.4 and examined the influence of silica fume as a supplementary cementitious material on mechanical performance, including compressive, tensile, flexural, and cyclic loading capacities. Three concrete mixes with silica fume contents of 0%, 7%, and 10% were prepared. The results revealed that silica fume significantly enhanced all mechanical properties, and the optimal replacement level was 7%, which provided the best combination of strength and durability. The study also highlighted that silica fume improves the microstructure of concrete, thereby contributing to higher density and better performance under cyclic loading, making it suitable for applications such as road pavement construction.

Kanamarlapudi et al. (2020) presented a comprehensive review on the use of different mineral admixtures in concrete, including fly ash, silica fume, rice husk ash, ground granulated blast furnace slag (GGBFS), palm oil fuel ash, and metakaolin. The study highlighted that partial or full replacement of cement with these mineral admixtures can modify concrete properties, influencing compressive, split tensile, and flexural strength, as well as durability and workability. The authors concluded that the type and proportion of mineral admixture significantly affect the mechanical and durability performance of concrete, emphasizing the potential for sustainable construction practices through the use of industrial by-products.

G.V.V. Raj Kishore et. al. (2021) carried out an "Experimental Study on Strength Attainment of Concrete Containing Silica Fume and Fly Ash". The study focused on reducing the environmental impact and cost associated with cement production by incorporating supplementary cementitious materials, specifically silica fume and fly ash, as partial replacements for cement in high-strength concrete. In this investigation, Class F fly ash was used to replace cement at levels of 30%, 40%, and 50%, while silica fume was added at a constant dosage of 6% and 9% by weight of cement. The concrete specimens were cured for up to 90 days, and tests were conducted to evaluate both mechanical and durability properties, including compressive strength, flexural strength, Rapid Chloride Penetration Test (RCPT), and Ultrasonic Pulse Velocity (UPV). The results demonstrated that the combination of 6% silica fume with 30% fly ash achieved the highest compressive and flexural strength, indicating an optimal balance between pozzolanic activity and cement hydration. Furthermore, the RCPT and UPV tests revealed improved durability characteristics, showing reduced chloride ion permeability and enhanced concrete densification with the inclusion of silica fume. The study concluded that partial replacement of cement with silica fume and fly ash not only improves the strength development and durability of concrete but also contributes significantly toward sustainable and eco-friendly construction practices.

Jagan et. al. (2021) conducted a study on the effect of silica fume on the hardened and durability properties of concrete, published in the International Review of Applied Sciences and Engineering, Volume 12, Issue 1. The research investigated the performance of silica fume (SF) in M25 and M40 grade concrete at replacement levels of 0%, 5%, 10%, and 15%, examining properties at 7, 14, 28, and 90 days of curing. The study assessed the influence of SF on workability, compressive strength, elastic modulus, autogenous shrinkage, and acid attack resistance. Workability was evaluated using the slump cone test, while autogenous shrinkage was measured in both sealed and unsealed conditions. The results demonstrated that increasing the percentage of silica fume improved the hardened properties such as compressive strength and elastic modulus, particularly at later curing ages. However, the inclusion of SF also led to a slight increase in autogenous shrinkage for both concrete grades. Acid attack tests indicated that concrete containing silica fume exhibited better resistance compared to the control mixes. The study concluded that silica fume enhances the mechanical strength and durability of concrete, although care must be taken regarding potential increases in shrinkage at higher replacement levels.

Manjunatha M. et. al. (2021) presented an "Experimental Study on the Influence of PVC Waste Powder and Silica Fume on Strength and Microstructure Properties of Concrete", published in Case Studies in Construction Materials, Volume 15, e00610 (Elsevier). The study investigated the combined influence of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) waste powder (PWP) and silica fume on the fresh, mechanical, and microstructural behavior of M40 grade concrete.

The research aimed to explore sustainable alternatives for cement by incorporating industrial and plastic waste materials to minimize environmental impact. In the experimental program, silica fume was kept constant at 8%, while PVC waste powder was varied at 0%, 5%, 10%, 15%, 20%, 25%, and 30% as partial replacement of cement. The fresh concrete properties were assessed using a slump test, while mechanical strength tests — compressive, split tensile, and flexural — were conducted at 7, 14, 28, and 90 days of curing. Microstructural analysis was performed to observe the formation and quality of the calcium-silicate-hydrate (C-S-H) gel. The results revealed that up to 15% replacement of cement with PVC waste powder, when combined with 8% silica fume, produced concrete with satisfactory workability and enhanced strength characteristics. Beyond 15% replacement, a reduction in strength was noted, likely due to poor bonding between cement paste and PVC particles. The microstructural study confirmed that the 15% PWP mix exhibited a denser matrix with improved C-S-H gel formation compared to higher replacement levels. The study concluded that using 8% silica fume in combination with 15% PVC waste powder can effectively enhance both the strength and sustainability of M40 grade concrete, offering a dual benefit of waste management and cement reduction in construction materials.

Niket Singh et. al. (2023) conducted an experimental investigation on the behavior of concrete with silica fume and copper slag as partial replacement of cement. The study focused on enhancing the strength, durability, and workability of concrete while promoting environmental sustainability by reducing cement content. In their research, silica fume and copper slag were incorporated as partial replacements for cement at levels of 10% and 20%, respectively, in M30 grade concrete. The experimental program included casting beam specimens with various replacement combinations (10%, 20%, and 30%) and testing them at 28 days to determine compressive and flexural strength. The findings demonstrated that the optimized combination of silica fume and copper slag significantly improved concrete strength, durability, and workability compared to control mixes. The study concluded that the synergistic use of silica fume and copper slag provides a practical, cost-effective, and sustainable solution for producing high-performance concrete.

Tariq et. al. (2023) conducted a study on the use of silica fume in pervious concrete at RIMT University, Mandi Gobindgarh, India. The research focused on the effect of silica fume as a partial replacement of Ordinary Portland Cement (OPC) on the mechanical properties and workability of concrete. Silica fume, a by-product of silicon metal and alloy production, acts as a highly reactive pozzolan and a micro-filler, enhancing the concrete's strength. The study revealed that 15% replacement of OPC with silica fume was optimal, significantly increasing compressive and tensile strength while slightly reducing workability. The authors concluded that incorporating silica fume at this level offers both engineering and economic benefits, providing a cost-effective and sustainable approach for concrete production.

Farahani et al. (2023) conducted an experimental study on the mechanical properties and durability of polymer concrete incorporating silica fume and vinyl ester resin published in Materials. The study explored the effects of partial replacement of Portland cement with silica fume powder and vinyl ester resin on workability, compressive strength, tensile strength, water absorption, and fracture behavior of polymer concrete. Sixteen different polymer concrete mix designs were investigated. The results indicated that a combination of 10% silica fume and 5% vinyl ester resin produced the maximum compressive strength of 34.26 MPa and the maximum tensile strength of 4.92 MPa. For durability evaluation, water absorption tests showed that the mix containing 15% vinyl ester resin and 5% silica fume achieved the lowest initial and final water absorption values (0.62% and 1.95%, respectively). The study concluded that the synergistic use of silica fume and vinyl ester resin significantly improves mechanical performance and durability, making polymer concrete a high-strength and corrosion-resistant material suitable for harsh environmental conditions.

Şahin et al. (2024) investigated the effect of silica fume on fiber-reinforced 3D printable concrete (FR-3DPC), focusing on mechanical, rheological, and dimensional stability performance. The study evaluated silica fume as a viscosity-modifying mineral additive in FR-3DPC reinforced with polypropylene fiber, using replacement levels of 3%, 6%, 9%, and 12% of cement weight. Results indicated that 3% silica fume decreased the dynamic yield stress, improving initial flow, while higher percentages (6–12%) increased both dynamic yield stress and apparent viscosity. Additionally, compressive strength generally improved with increasing silica fume content, whereas flexural strength and drying-shrinkage performance were negatively affected. The authors concluded that silica fume can enhance certain mechanical and rheological properties of 3D printable concrete, but excessive usage may compromise other performance parameters.

Gajre et. al. (2024) conducted a comparative study on the compressive and flexural strength of M40 grade concrete with partial replacement of cement by Nano Silica Powder, published in the Journal of Construction Engineering, Technology & Management. The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of Nano Silica Powder (NSP) as a sustainable alternative to reduce cement usage while enhancing concrete performance. Various replacement levels of NSP were investigated to analyze their influence on compressive strength, flexural strength, workability, durability, and microstructural characteristics.

The research demonstrated that the inclusion of NSP refined the pore structure, improved hydration kinetics, and increased resistance to chemical attacks, leading to enhanced long-term durability. Experimental results indicated that optimal incorporation of NSP significantly improved both crushing and flexural strength of M40 concrete compared to conventional mixes. Additionally, an economic and environmental assessment highlighted the potential of NSP to reduce the carbon footprint of concrete production. The study concluded that partial replacement of cement with Nano Silica Powder is a viable strategy for producing high-performance, eco-friendly concrete with superior mechanical and durability properties.

Avinash Kumar et al. (2024) conducted an experimental investigation on the strength and durability characteristics of silica fume-based blended cement concrete to evaluate the potential of silica fume as a sustainable supplementary cementitious material. The study, published in the International Journal of Scientific Research and Engineering Development (IJSRED), Volume 7, Issue 3, emphasized the environmental drawbacks associated with Ordinary Portland Cement (OPC) production, which accounts for nearly 5–7% of global CO_2 emissions.

To address this concern, the researchers partially replaced cement with silica fume and assessed the mechanical and durability performance of the resulting blended concrete. The experimental program involved testing the compressive, split tensile, and flexural strengths of both control and silica fume mixes at 7 and 28 days of curing. The findings revealed that the inclusion of silica fume significantly enhanced the strength parameters of the concrete. The improvement was attributed to the pozzolanic activity of silica fume, which reacts with calcium hydroxide to form additional calcium-silicate-hydrate (C–S–H) gel, leading to a denser microstructure and reduced porosity.

The authors further observed that silica fume addition improved the durability characteristics by lowering the permeability and enhancing resistance to environmental degradation. Overall, the study concluded that silica fume not only improves the mechanical strength and durability of concrete but also contributes to reducing the carbon footprint, making it a sustainable option for modern construction practices.

Nadim et al. (2024) investigated the effect of silica fume on the microstructural and mechanical properties of concrete made with 100% recycled aggregates. The study aimed to evaluate the performance of recycled aggregate concrete (RAC) when ordinary Portland cement (OPC) is partially replaced with silica fume (SF) at replacement levels of 4%, 8%, 12%, and 16% by weight. Five concrete mixes were prepared, including a control mix without SF, and the mechanical properties were tested through compressive and split tensile strength measurements at 7 and 28 days. Workability was assessed using the slump test, which showed a decreasing trend with higher SF content.

The results indicated that the inclusion of SF enhanced both early-age and later-age mechanical performance of RAC, with 12% SF providing the optimum strength. Microstructural analysis using scanning electron microscopy (SEM) and X-ray diffraction (XRD) revealed that SF promoted secondary hydration by reacting with calcium hydroxide to form additional calcium silicate hydrate (C–S–H), improving the interface transition zone and overall concrete density. The study concluded that 12% silica fume is recommended as an optimal partial replacement of cement in RAC to achieve improved mechanical and microstructural performance, while also promoting sustainable use of recycled materials.

Lodhi et. al. (2025) carried out an experimental investigation on concrete mixes incorporating iron powder, granite powder, and silica fume, published in the International Research Journal of Modernization in Engineering Technology and Science. The study focused on the utilization of mineral admixtures and industrial by-products to enhance the properties of concrete. Silica fume was identified as a highly reactive pozzolan and micro-filler that significantly improves both the strength and durability of concrete. Granite powder served primarily as an inert filler or fine aggregate replacement, enhancing workability and contributing to early-age strength. Iron powder, though less commonly studied in conventional concrete, was considered in the context of its potential contribution to specialized applications. The experimental results suggested that the combined use of silica fume, granite powder, and iron powder can optimize mechanical performance, durability, and sustainability of concrete, while also promoting the reuse of industrial waste materials in high-performance construction applications.

Chakraborti et al. (2025) investigated the mechanical performance of M40 grade concrete with partial replacement of cement by ground granulated blast furnace slag (GGBFS) and silica fume. Cement was replaced with 20%, 30%, and 35% GGBFS and 5%, 10%, and 15% silica fume, while keeping the water-cement ratio and aggregates as per the standard M40 mix design. The study evaluated fresh properties such as workability and mechanical properties including compressive strength at 7, 14, and 28 days. The results indicated that the combined use of GGBFS and silica fume as cement substitutes positively influenced both workability and compressive strength, highlighting the potential of these supplementary cementitious materials for sustainable and high-performance concrete.

B. Research Gap

A comprehensive review of twenty national and international studies conducted between 2010 and 2025 highlights the significant potential of silica fume as a supplementary cementitious material for enhancing the mechanical and durability properties of concrete. While these studies have contributed valuable insights, several gaps remain that warrant further investigation:

1) Limited Focus on Combined Use of Multiple Industrial Wastes: Many studies (Rukhsana Rashid et al., 2016; Niket Singh et al., 2023; Manjunatha et al., 2021) explored silica fume in combination with single additives such as fly ash, GGBS, PVC powder, or copper slag. However, the synergistic effects of multiple waste materials in combination with silica fume on concrete performance remain underexplored, particularly for optimizing both mechanical strength and durability.
2) Insufficient Research on Microstructural Analysis in Emerging Concrete Types: Studies like Şahin et al. (2024) and Farahani et al. (2023) investigated silica fume in fiber-reinforced and polymer concretes. Yet, the microstructural characterization of silica fume in novel concrete types such as 3D printable concrete or polymer-modified concrete is limited, leaving a gap in understanding how microstructure evolution influences mechanical and durability performance.
3) Lack of Long-Term Durability Assessments Under Aggressive Environments: While durability tests (sulphate resistance, RCPT, water absorption) were performed in several studies (Cornelius Kanmalai Williams et al., 2020; G.V.V. Raj Kishore et al., 2021), there is insufficient long-term assessment of concrete containing silica fume under aggressive environmental conditions, such as combined chemical, freeze-thaw, or cyclic loading scenarios.
4) Optimal Dosage Variation Across Different Concrete Grades: The reviewed studies reported varying optimal replacement levels of silica fume (ranging from 3% to 15%) depending on concrete grade and additives. This highlights a lack of standardized guidelines for determining the optimum silica fume content across different grades and types of concrete, particularly for high-performance and sustainable mixes.
5) Limited Investigation on Workability Challenges and Rheological Behavior: Several studies (Rukhsana Rashid et al., 2016; Şahin et al., 2024; Tariq et al., 2023) mentioned reduced workability at higher silica fume replacement levels. However, systematic studies on mitigating workability issues while maintaining mechanical and durability enhancements are scarce, especially in combination with other additives or fibers.
6) Environmental and Sustainability Assessments Are Minimal: A few studies (Bhargava et al., 2020; Avinash Kumar et al., 2024; Gajre et al., 2024) acknowledged the environmental benefits of using silica fume and other industrial wastes. Yet, quantitative assessments of carbon footprint reduction, life cycle analysis, and cost-benefit evaluations of such blended concretes are limited.
7) Gap in Studying Mechanical Performance Beyond Compressive Strength: Most studies emphasized compressive strength improvement (Rashidi et al., 2020; Andrabi et al., 2019; Gražulytė et al., 2020). However, tensile, flexural, impact, and fracture mechanics properties of concrete containing silica fume and other supplementary materials need further detailed investigation to understand structural performance comprehensively.
8) Scarcity of Research on Recycled Aggregate Concrete with Silica Fume: Only Nadim et al. (2024) addressed the use of silica fume in 100% recycled aggregate concrete. The combined effect of silica fume with other industrial or nano-additives in recycled aggregate concrete remains a largely unexplored area, despite its potential for sustainable construction practices.

III. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

A. Materials

1) Cement: OPC 53 grade
2) Fine Aggregate: River sand (Zone II, IS 383:2016)
3) Coarse Aggregate: 20 mm down crushed stone
4) Silica Fume: High-purity amorphous silica fume from ferro-silicon industry
5) Water: Potable water as per IS 456:2000

B. Mix Design

1) Grade: M40 (Target strength 48 MPa)
2) Water–cement ratio: 0.40
3) Silica fume replacement levels: 0%, 5%, 10%, 15%, 20%
4) Mix proportioning as per IS 10262:2019

C. Tests to be Conducted

Fresh Concrete Tests:

- Slump test

Hardened Concrete Tests:

- Compressive strength (7, 28, 56 days)

IV. CONCLUSION

The reviewed literature highlights the significant role of silica fume as a supplementary cementitious material in enhancing the mechanical and durability properties of concrete. Studies consistently indicate that partial replacement of cement with silica fume improves compressive, tensile, and flexural strength, while also refining the microstructure, reducing porosity, and enhancing resistance to chemical attacks, sulphate exposure, and chloride penetration (Rukhsana Rashid et al., 2016; Andrabi et al., 2019; Cornelius Kanmalai Williams et al., 2020). Optimal replacement levels generally range between 7–12%, beyond which excessive silica content may lead to reduced workability and microcracking (Şahin et al., 2024; Nadim et al., 2024). Recent investigations emphasize the synergistic effects of combining silica fume with other industrial by-products or nano-additives, such as fly ash, GGBS, PVC waste powder, copper slag, and nano-silica, to produce sustainable and high-performance concrete (Manjunatha et al., 2021; Niket Singh et al., 2023; Gajre et al., 2024). Furthermore, emerging technologies, including fiber-reinforced concrete, polymer-modified concrete, and 3D printable concrete, benefit from the incorporation of silica fume, though challenges remain in balancing mechanical performance, workability, and long-term durability. Despite extensive research, gaps still exist in understanding the long-term performance of silica fume-based concretes under aggressive environmental conditions, the combined effects of multiple supplementary materials, and the practical application in large-scale and 3D printable structures. Addressing these gaps through further experimental and microstructural studies will be crucial for developing sustainable, high-performance concrete solutions that meet the evolving demands of modern construction practices.

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