Performance Evaluation of M40 Concrete Reinforced with Recycled Nylon-6 Fibres from Waste Fishing Nets

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ABSTRACT - The increasing demand for sustainable construction materials has led to the exploration of alternative reinforcement techniques in concrete. This study investigates the performance of M40 grade concrete reinforced with recycled Nylon-6 fibres obtained from discarded fishing nets. The primary objective is to evaluate the influence of fibre incorporation on the mechanical properties and cracking behaviour of concrete while promoting environmentally responsible material reuse.

Concrete mixes were prepared with varying fibre volume fractions, and their fresh and hardened properties were assessed through standard experimental procedures. Key parameters such as workability, compressive strength, and strength development at different curing ages were analysed. The results indicate that the inclusion of recycled Nylon-6 fibres enhances crack resistance, improves post-cracking behaviour, and contributes to a more ductile failure pattern. Compressive strength was observed to meet the requirements of structural-grade concrete, with optimal performance achieved at moderate fibre dosages.

The study demonstrates that recycled Nylon-6 fibres can effectively function as secondary reinforcement without significantly compromising workability or strength. In addition to mechanical benefits, the use of waste fishing nets contributes to reducing marine pollution and supports sustainable construction practices. The findings highlight the potential of integrating recycled polymer fibres into conventional concrete as a viable and eco-friendly solution for modern infrastructure development.

Key Words: Recycled Nylon-6 fibres; Waste fishing nets; Fibre-reinforced concrete; M40 concrete; Compressive strength; Crack resistance; Ductility; Sustainable construction; Mechanical properties; Marine plastic waste; Eco-friendly materials; Structural concrete.

1.INTRODUCTION

Concrete remains the most widely utilized construction material due to its versatility, availability, and high compressive strength. Despite these advantages, it inherently exhibits low tensile capacity and brittle behaviour, which often leads to the formation of micro-cracks at early stages. These cracks may originate from shrinkage, thermal variations, or applied loading, and over time they propagate, adversely affecting durability, serviceability, and structural integrity. Enhancing the crack resistance and post-cracking performance of concrete has therefore become a key area of research in modern civil engineering.

One of the effective approaches to address these limitations is the incorporation of discrete fibres within the concrete matrix. Fibre-reinforced concrete (FRC) improves toughness, ductility, and energy absorption capacity by bridging cracks and delaying their propagation. Conventional fibres such as steel, glass, and synthetic polymers have been widely used; however, they often involve higher costs, corrosion-related concerns, or environmental implications due to non-recyclable material usage. In recent years, the focus has shifted towards sustainable and eco-friendly alternatives that can provide similar or enhanced performance while reducing environmental impact.

The accumulation of plastic waste, particularly discarded fishing nets in marine environments, has emerged as a significant ecological challenge. These nets are predominantly made of Nylon-6, a synthetic polymer known for its high tensile strength, flexibility, and resistance to abrasion and moisture. Due to their non-biodegradable nature, waste fishing nets persist in the environment for extended periods, posing threats to marine life and ecosystems. Recycling such materials into construction applications presents a promising solution that simultaneously addresses environmental concerns and material performance requirements.

In this context, the use of recycled Nylon-6 fibres derived from waste fishing nets as reinforcement in concrete offers a dual advantage. These fibres possess favourable mechanical properties that can enhance crack control, improve post-cracking behaviour, and increase the overall ductility of concrete. At the same time, their utilization contributes to sustainable waste management and reduces dependency on virgin synthetic materials. While previous studies have explored the use of polymer fibres in cementitious composites, limited research has been conducted on their application in structural-grade concrete such as M40.

The present study focuses on evaluating the performance of M40 grade concrete reinforced with recycled Nylon-6 fibres obtained from discarded fishing nets. The investigation aims to analyse the effect of fibre inclusion on workability and mechanical properties, particularly compressive strength and strength development at different curing ages. Furthermore, the study seeks to identify an optimum fibre dosage that provides improved performance without compromising the quality and practicality of concrete. By integratingsustainable materials with structural applications, this research contributes to the development of durable, efficient, and environmentally responsible construction practices..

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

Concrete continues to dominate modern construction due to its high compressive strength and adaptability; however, its inherent brittleness and low tensile resistance often result in early crack formation. These cracks, originating from shrinkage, thermal stresses, or applied loads, can significantly affect durability and long-term structural performance. To mitigate these limitations, fibre-reinforced concrete (FRC) has been extensively studied as an effective solution. The inclusion of fibres improves crack resistance, enhances ductility, and increases energy absorption capacity by providing a crack-bridging mechanism within the concrete matrix.

In recent years, there has been a paradigm shift toward sustainable construction practices, encouraging the use of recycled and waste materials in concrete. Among such materials, recycled polymer fibres, particularly Nylon-6 fibres derived from discarded fishing nets, have gained attention due to their favourable mechanical properties and environmental benefits. These fibres exhibit high tensile strength, flexibility, and resistance to abrasion and moisture, making them suitable for reinforcing cementitious composites.

Silva et al. [1] explored the use of recycled nylon fibres obtained from fishing nets in cement-based composites and reported notable improvements in flexural strength and fracture toughness. Their study demonstrated that fibre inclusion enhances post-cracking behaviour by improving load transfer across cracked sections. Similarly, Gupta and Thomas [2] investigated the mechanical performance of concrete reinforced with recycled polyamide fibres and found that tensile strength increased significantly, while compressive strength showed minimal variation. This indicates that nylon fibres primarily contribute to crack control rather than direct load-bearing capacity.

Santosh et al. [3] examined the influence of marine waste nylon fibres on the workability and strength characteristics of concrete. Their results revealed a reduction in workability with increasing fibre content, attributed to fibre interlocking and increased surface area. However, an improvement in flexural strength was observed at optimum fibre dosages, suggesting that careful proportioning is essential to balance performance and workability. Farahi and Costa [4] further analysed the crack-bridging behaviour of recycled nylon fibres and reported a substantial reduction in crack width along with improved post-cracking load-carrying capacity. Their findings highlight the effectiveness of nylon fibres in enhancing ductility and delaying brittle failure.

Mendes et al. [5] evaluated the impact resistance of concrete incorporating recycled fishing net fibres and observed a significant increase in energy absorption capacity. Fibre-reinforced specimens exhibited superior resistance to repeated impact loading compared to conventional concrete. In terms of durability, Rahman and Ali [6] studied the performance of nylon fibre-reinforced concrete under alkaline and sulphate environments and concluded that nylon fibres remain stable within the cement matrix, contributing to improved durability and reduced degradation.

Verma and Rajkumar [7] investigated the flexural behaviour of polyamide fibre-reinforced concrete and reported enhanced load–deflection characteristics and improved toughness. These findings are supported by microstructural investigations conducted by Moradi et al. [8], who used scanning electron microscopy to analyse the fibre–matrix interface. Their study revealed strong bonding and reduced micro-crack formation, indicating that nylon fibres enhance the internal integrity of concrete.

The application of recycled Nylon-6 fibres in structural-grade concrete has also been explored in recent studies. Kulkarni and Patil [9] examined the performance of M40 grade concrete reinforced with recycled nylon fibres and identified an optimum fibre content that improves flexural strength and toughness while maintaining acceptable compressive strength. Bharath et al. [10] investigated the use of marine plastic waste fibres in concrete and reported improvements in tensile strength, permeability resistance, and overall durability, emphasizing the sustainability benefits of such materials.

Fernando et al. [11] studied recycled polyamide fibres in cement composites and found that fibre inclusion enhances ductility and reduces crack propagation. Dhanush and Mehta [12] demonstrated that marine plastic fibres improve impact resistance and structural performance, while Oliveira et al. [13] reported significant improvements in load–deflection behaviour and toughness in polyamide fibre-reinforced concrete. Priyanka et al. [14] highlighted the economic feasibility of using recycled nylon fibres, noting that they provide a cost-effective alternative to conventional synthetic fibres.

Shrinkage behaviour has also been addressed in previous research. Harish and Swain [15] reported that nylon fibres effectively reduce shrinkage crack width and delay crack initiation, improving the durability of concrete structures. Similarly, Torres et al. [16] evaluated fracture energy and found that nylon fibre inclusion significantly enhances resistance to crack propagation and increases energy absorption capacity.

Further studies by Atiq and Khan [17] confirmed that polyamide fibres improve the tensile and flexural performance of structural-grade concrete, supporting their applicability in real-world construction. Lee and Park [18] investigated the bond behaviour of nylon fibres and observed strong interfacial bonding, which facilitates effective stress transfer and crack control. Patel and Shah [19] reported improvements in toughness and impact resistance, while Sousa et al. [20] demonstrated that recycled nylon fibres contribute to reduced permeability and enhanced durability of concrete.

Despite the considerable research conducted on fibre-reinforced concrete, certain limitations remain. Many studies focus on low- to medium-strength concrete or mortar systems, with limited investigation into high-strength structural concrete such as M40. Additionally, variations in fibre content, geometry, and dispersion techniques often lead to inconsistent results, particularly at higher dosages where workability becomes a challenge. The combined evaluation of mechanical performance, durability, and sustainability aspects is also not comprehensively addressed in existing literature.

Therefore, there is a clear need for systematic investigation into the use of recycled Nylon-6 fibres derived from waste fishing nets in structural-grade concrete. The present study aims to fill this gap by analysing the performance of M40 concrete with varying fibre contents, focusing on strength development, crack resistance, and overall structural behaviour. This research not only contributes to improving concrete performance but also supports sustainable waste management and environmentally responsible construction practices.

Beyond mechanical performance, recent research has increasingly focused on understanding the interaction mechanisms between fibres and the cement matrix, which govern the overall behaviour of fibre-reinforced concrete. The effectiveness of Nylon-6 fibres is strongly influenced by parameters such as fibre length, aspect ratio, surface texture, and distribution within the matrix. Studies have shown that optimal fibre geometry improves mechanical interlocking and enhances the fibre–matrix bond, which plays a critical role in stress transfer and crack resistance.

Oliveira et al. [13] emphasized that shorter fibres improve dispersion but may reduce crack-bridging efficiency, whereas longer fibres enhance toughness but may lead to mixing difficulties. This trade-off highlights the importance of selecting an appropriate fibre length to achieve balanced performance. Similarly, Lee and Park [18] demonstrated through pull-out tests that fibre surface characteristics significantly affect bonding behaviour. Roughened or treated fibres exhibit improved adhesion, resulting in better crack control and reduced slippage under loading conditions.

3.RESEARCH GAP & PROBLEM STATEMENT

3.1 Research Gap

A substantial body of research has been conducted on fibre-reinforced concrete using both synthetic and recycled fibres, demonstrating improvements in crack resistance, ductility, and overall mechanical performance. In particular, recycled Nylon-6 fibres derived from waste fishing nets have shown promising potential as a sustainable reinforcement material. Previous studies have reported enhancements in flexural strength, tensile behaviour, fracture energy, and impact resistance with the inclusion of nylon fibres [1]–[20].

However, despite these advancements, several critical gaps remain in the existing literature. Most of the research has primarily focused on low- to medium-strength concrete or mortar systems, with limited attention given to structural-grade concrete such as M40, which is widely used in practical engineering applications. The behaviour of recycled Nylon-6 fibres in such higher-grade concrete, particularly in terms of compressive strength development and structural performance, is not comprehensively understood.

Furthermore, there is a lack of systematic studies that investigate the optimum fibre dosage required to achieve maximum performance benefits without adversely affecting workability. While moderate fibre content has been shown to improve mechanical properties, higher dosages often result in reduced workability, fibre clustering, and compaction issues. The balance between performance enhancement and practical usability remains insufficiently explored.

Another significant gap lies in the combined evaluation of multiple performance parameters. Many existing studies focus on isolated aspects such as strength, durability, or impact resistance, rather than providing a holistic assessment that integrates mechanical properties, workability, and sustainability considerations. Additionally, the influence of recycled fibre characteristics such as length, dispersion, and bonding behaviour on the overall performance of structural concrete requires further investigation.

From a sustainability perspective, although the reuse of waste fishing nets has been recognized as an eco-friendly approach, there is limited research that quantitatively evaluates the **dual** benefits of environmental impact reduction and structural performance improvement within a single study framework.

Therefore, there is a clear need for a comprehensive investigation into the use of recycled Nylon-6 fibres in structural-grade concrete, focusing on performance optimization, practical feasibility, and sustainability.

3.2 Problem Statement

Concrete, despite being the most widely used construction material, suffers from inherent limitations such as low tensile strength, brittle failure behaviour, and susceptibility to cracking. These issues lead to reduced durability, increased maintenance costs, and compromised structural performance over time. Conventional reinforcement methods, while effective in handling tensile stresses, do not adequately address early-age micro-cracking or improve the post-cracking behaviour of concrete.

Fibre reinforcement has emerged as a viable solution to enhance crack control and ductility; however, commonly used fibres such as steel, glass, and synthetic polymers present challenges related to cost, corrosion, and environmental impact. At the same time, the accumulation of waste fishing nets made of Nylon-6 poses a serious environmental problem due to their non-biodegradable nature and long-term persistence in marine ecosystems.

Although recycled Nylon-6 fibres offer a promising alternative as a sustainable reinforcement material, their application in M40 grade structural concrete has not been sufficiently explored. Key aspects such as their effect on compressive strength development, workability, crack resistance, and overall structural behaviour remain inadequately understood. Moreover, the absence of clearly defined optimum fibre content limits their practical implementation in construction.

Hence, the core problem addressed in this study is to determine whether recycled Nylon-6 fibres derived from waste fishing nets can be effectively utilized as a sustainable reinforcement material in M40 concrete, while maintaining structural performance and practical workability. The study aims to identify the optimum fibre dosage and evaluate the extent to

which these fibres can improve crack resistance and overall concrete performance without compromising its fundamental properties.

4.METHODOLOGY

The present investigation employs a systematic experimental methodology to evaluate the performance of M40 grade concrete reinforced with recycled Nylon-6 fibres derived from discarded fishing nets. The study is designed to assess the influence of fibre inclusion on fresh and hardened properties of concrete, with particular emphasis on strength development, crack behaviour, and overall structural performance.

All constituent materials were selected in accordance with relevant Indian Standard specifications to ensure consistency and reproducibility of results. Ordinary Portland Cement of 53 grade was used as the primary binder. Fine aggregate consisted of natural river sand conforming to Zone II grading, while coarse aggregate comprised a blend of crushed angular aggregates of 20 mm and 10 mm sizes. Potable water free from impurities was used for both mixing and curing. A polycarboxylate ether-based superplasticizer was incorporated to offset the reduction in workability caused by fibre addition and to maintain a uniform and cohesive mix. The reinforcing material used in this study was recycled Nylon-6 fibres obtained from waste fishing nets, selected due to their favourable mechanical properties such as high tensile strength, elasticity, and resistance to abrasion and moisture.

The preparation of recycled Nylon-6 fibres was carried out through a controlled process to ensure uniformity and effectiveness. Waste fishing nets were collected and subjected to thorough cleaning to remove salts, organic matter, and surface contaminants. The cleaned nets were then dried under ambient conditions and manually processed into fibres of lengths ranging between 12 mm and 30 mm. This range was selected to achieve a balance between effective crack bridging and ease of dispersion within the concrete matrix. The prepared fibres were visually inspected to ensure uniform size distribution and absence of impurities, thereby improving fibre–matrix interaction.

The concrete mix design was carried out for M40 grade in accordance with IS 10262:2019 and IS 456:2000 provisions. The target mean compressive strength was determined using the standard statistical relation:

$$f_{ck(target)} = f_{ck} + 1.65 \times S$$

where f_{ck} represents the characteristic compressive strength and S denotes the standard deviation associated with quality control. A water–cement ratio of 0.40 was adopted to satisfy both strength and durability requirements. The mix proportions were carefully adjusted to accommodate fibre addition while maintaining homogeneity and preventing segregation. Recycled Nylon-6 fibres were incorporated in varying volume fractions of 0%, 0.2%, 0.4%, 0.6%, and 0.8% to evaluate their influence on concrete performance and to identify the optimum dosage.

Mixing was carried out using a laboratory tilting drum mixer to ensure uniform blending of all constituents. Initially, cement, fine aggregate, and coarse aggregate were dry mixed to achieve uniform distribution. The pre-processed Nylon-6 fibres were then introduced gradually into the dry mix to prevent fibre balling and to promote even dispersion. Subsequently, a portion of the mixing water was added, followed by the remaining water mixed with superplasticizer. Mixing was continued until a homogeneous, cohesive, and workable concrete mix was achieved, with fibres uniformly distributed throughout the matrix.

Specimens were cast in standard cube moulds of size 150 mm × 150 mm × 150 mm for compressive strength evaluation. The concrete was placed in layers and compacted using a vibration table to remove entrapped air and ensure proper consolidation. Surface finishing was carried out to maintain uniform specimen geometry. After casting, the specimens were left undisturbed for 24 hours before demoulding. The demoulded specimens were then cured in water maintained at a temperature of 27 ± 2°C. Testing was conducted at curing ages of 7, 14, and 28 days to monitor strength development over time.

The workability of fresh concrete was evaluated using the slump test as per IS 1199. This test provided insight into the effect of fibre content on flow characteristics and ease of placement. Hardened concrete properties were assessed through compressive strength testing using a compression testing machine in accordance with IS 516. The compressive strength was determined using the relation:

$$f_c = \frac{P}{A}$$

where P is the maximum load at failure and A is the loaded area of the specimen. In addition to numerical results, the mode of failure was carefully observed to analyse crack initiation, propagation patterns, and the role of fibres in enhancing ductility and delaying brittle failure. Particular attention was given to fibre bridging and pull-out mechanisms, which are indicative of improved post-cracking behaviour.

The collected data were analysed systematically to evaluate the influence of fibre dosage on concrete performance. Compressive strength values at different curing ages were compared to identify strength development trends. The relationship between fibre content and workability was also examined to assess practical feasibility. Statistical consistency of results was ensured by comparing individual specimen values with average strengths. Based on the overall performance, including strength, workability, and failure characteristics, the optimum fibre content was determined.

This methodology provides a comprehensive experimental framework for assessing the feasibility of using recycled Nylon-6 fibres as a sustainable reinforcement material in structural-grade concrete. By integrating material preparation, mix design, controlled experimentation, and detailed analysis, the study establishes a reliable basis for evaluating both engineering performance and environmental benefits.

5.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The experimental investigation was carried out to evaluate the compressive strength and performance characteristics of M40 grade concrete reinforced with recycled Nylon-6 fibres derived from waste fishing nets. The results obtained from cube testing at different curing ages are analysed to understand strength development, fibre influence, and structural behaviour.

5.1 Compressive Strength Development

The compressive strength of fibre-reinforced concrete specimens was determined at curing ages of 7, 14, and 28 days. The results indicate a consistent and progressive increase in strength with time, following the expected hydration pattern of cementitious materials. The average compressive strength values recorded were approximately 30.16 MPa at 7 days, 36.41 MPa at 14 days, and 44.04 MPa at 28 days.

The 28-day compressive strength exceeds the characteristic strength requirement of M40 grade concrete, confirming that the inclusion of recycled Nylon-6 fibres does not adversely affect the strength development of concrete. Instead, the results suggest that fibre incorporation contributes to maintaining structural integrity while enhancing performance.

5.2 Strength Variation and Consistency

The individual cube results at each curing age exhibited minimal variation, remaining within acceptable limits specified by relevant standards. This consistency indicates uniform fibre dispersion and proper mixing and compaction during specimen preparation. The absence of significant variation also suggests that fibre addition did not introduce defects such as segregation or void formation within the concrete matrix.

At early ages, particularly at 7 days, the strength gain is attributed primarily to cement hydration, while at later stages, improved fibre–matrix interaction contributes to enhanced performance. The gradual increase in strength between 14 and 28 days reflects continued hydration and densification of the internal microstructure.

5.3 Effect of Fibre Inclusion on Strength Behaviour

The inclusion of recycled Nylon-6 fibres primarily influences the post-cracking behaviour of concrete rather than directly increasing compressive strength. The fibres act as crack arresters, bridging micro-cracks and delaying their propagation under load. This mechanism reduces stress concentration within the matrix and contributes to improved load distribution.

Although fibres are not load-bearing components like aggregates, their presence enhances the toughness and stability of concrete. The results indicate that an optimum fibre content improves performance without compromising compressive strength. However, excessive fibre content may lead to reduced workability and potential clustering, which can negatively affect strength.

5.4 Comparative Strength Development

A comparative analysis of strength gain over time reveals a significant increase between curing intervals. The strength increase from 7 to 14 days is approximately 20%, while a similar increase is observed from 14 to 28 days. This trend indicates efficient hydration and improved bonding within the concrete matrix.

The presence of Nylon-6 fibres contributes indirectly to this behaviour by restricting micro-crack formation during early stages, thereby allowing better stress transfer and improved structural continuity. Compared to conventional concrete reported in literature, fibre-reinforced concrete demonstrates enhanced resistance to crack propagation and improved overall performance.

5.5 Failure Behaviour and Crack Analysis

The failure patterns observed during compressive strength testing provide important insights into the behaviour of fibre-reinforced concrete. Conventional concrete typically exhibits sudden and brittle failure upon reaching peak load. In contrast, the fibre-reinforced specimens showed a more gradual failure pattern, indicating improved ductility.

The presence of Nylon-6 fibres resulted in visible crack bridging, where fibres held the cracked sections together even after initial failure. This behaviour delayed crack widening and prevented sudden collapse. Fibre pull-out mechanisms were also observed, indicating effective bonding between fibres and the cement matrix.

The improved failure behaviour demonstrates that recycled Nylon-6 fibres enhance the energy absorption capacity of concrete and contribute to a more controlled and stable failure process.

5.6 Microstructural Interpretation

From a microstructural perspective, the improved performance of fibre-reinforced concrete can be attributed to several mechanisms. The fibres act as micro-reinforcement elements that intercept crack paths and reduce crack propagation. This results in a more uniform stress distribution within the concrete matrix.

Additionally, the presence of fibres helps in reducing the formation of micro-voids and enhances the density of the interfacial transition zone (ITZ). The improved fibre–matrix bond further contributes to better load transfer and overall structural integrity.

5.7 Overall Performance Evaluation

The experimental results confirm that recycled Nylon-6 fibres can be effectively used as secondary reinforcement in M40 grade concrete. The incorporation of fibres improves crack resistance, enhances ductility, and contributes to better post-cracking behaviour without compromising compressive strength.

The findings also indicate that an optimum fibre dosage exists, beyond which workability and uniformity may be affected. Therefore, careful control of fibre content is essential to achieve balanced performance.

6.CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the performance of M40 grade concrete reinforced with recycled Nylon-6 fibres obtained from waste fishing nets. The experimental results indicate that the inclusion of fibres does not adversely affect compressive strength, with the 28-day strength reaching approximately 44 MPa, thereby satisfying the requirements of structural-grade concrete.

The addition of Nylon-6 fibres significantly enhanced the crack resistance and post-cracking behaviour of concrete. The fibres acted as effective crack-bridging elements, restricting crack propagation and resulting in improved ductility and a more controlled failure pattern compared to conventional concrete. This behaviour contributes to better energy absorption and overall structural stability.The study also highlights the importance of maintaining an optimum fibre dosage, as excessive fibre content may reduce workability and lead to compaction issues. A balanced fibre proportion ensures improved performance without compromising practical applicability.

From a sustainability perspective, the utilization of recycled Nylon-6 fibres provides an effective solution for managing marine plastic waste while enhancing the mechanical performance of concrete. Overall, the findings demonstrate that recycled Nylon-6 fibres can be successfully used as a sustainable and efficient secondary reinforcement material in M40 concrete for modern construction applications.

Furthermore, the study confirms that the integration of waste-derived fibres can contribute to the development of greener construction materials without sacrificing structural reliability. The approach not only supports resource conservation but also opens new pathways for incorporating recycled polymers in high-performance concrete. This reinforces the potential of such materials in future infrastructure projects focused on durability, sustainability, and cost-effectiveness.

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