The International Conferences on Engineering Sciences
Volume. 1, No. 1, 2024
Page. 01-05
Available online at:
https://prosiding.aritekin.or.id/index.php/ICONFES

Development of Sustainable Concrete Utilizing Rice Husk Ash and Palm Oil Fuel Ash as Supplementary Cementitious Materials

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Abstract: *The construction industry in Indonesia faces challenges in finding sustainable materials for concrete production. This paper investigates the potential of rice husk ash (RHA) and palm oil fuel ash (POFA) as alternative supplementary cementitious materials (SCMs) in concrete. Both RHA and POFA are abundant agricultural by-products in Indonesia. Laboratory tests indicate that their incorporation enhances the compressive strength, durability, and sustainability of concrete. The findings highlight the dual benefit of reducing industrial waste and creating eco-friendly construction materials, thus contributing to the development of green infrastructure in Indonesia.*

Keywords: *Sustainable concrete, rice husk ash, palm oil fuel ash, cementitious materials, green infrastructure, Indonesia.*

A. INTRODUCTION

The construction industry is one of the largest consumers of natural resources and energy, contributing significantly to environmental degradation. In Indonesia, the demand for concrete has surged due to rapid urbanization and infrastructure development. However, conventional concrete production heavily relies on Portland cement, which is associated with high carbon emissions and resource depletion (Nurdiana et al., 2020). This scenario necessitates the exploration of alternative materials that can reduce the environmental impact of concrete production. Rice husk ash (RHA) and palm oil fuel ash (POFA) have emerged as promising supplementary cementitious materials (SCMs) that can enhance the sustainability of concrete while addressing the waste management challenges posed by the agricultural sector.

RHA is a by-product of rice milling, with Indonesia being one of the largest rice producers globally, generating millions of tons of rice husk annually (Sari et al., 2021). Similarly, POFA is produced during the processing of palm oil, another significant agricultural product in Indonesia. The abundance of these materials presents an opportunity to develop concrete that is not only sustainable but also cost-effective. By incorporating RHA and POFA into concrete mixes, we can potentially reduce the reliance on cement, thereby lowering carbon emissions associated with cement production (Mehta & Monteiro, 2014).

Recent studies have shown that the use of RHA and POFA can improve the mechanical properties of concrete. For instance, laboratory tests have indicated that concrete containing RHA exhibits enhanced compressive strength compared to conventional concrete (Bashar et al., 2019). Similarly, POFA has demonstrated the ability to improve the durability of concrete, making it more resistant to environmental factors such as moisture and chemical attack (Othman et al., 2020). The dual benefit of utilizing agricultural waste not only contributes to the development of eco-friendly construction materials but also promotes the circular economy by minimizing waste.

In this paper, we will investigate the potential of RHA and POFA as SCMs in concrete production, focusing on their effects on compressive strength, durability, and overall sustainability. The findings of this research aim to provide valuable insights into the feasibility of using these agricultural by-products in the construction industry, thereby contributing to the development of green infrastructure in Indonesia.

B. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The materials used in this study include Ordinary Portland Cement (OPC), rice husk ash (RHA), and palm oil fuel ash (POFA). RHA was obtained from local rice mills, while POFA was sourced from palm oil processing plants. Both RHA and POFA were subjected to a series of physical and chemical analyses to determine their suitability as SCMs. The chemical composition was analyzed using X-ray fluorescence (XRF), while the particle size distribution was assessed using a laser diffraction method (Hossain et al., 2019).

Concrete mixes were designed with varying proportions of RHA and POFA, replacing 10%, 20%, and 30% of the cement content. A control mix containing 100% OPC was also prepared for comparison. The concrete samples were cast in standard molds and cured under controlled conditions. After 28 days, compressive strength tests were conducted according to ASTM C39 standards, and durability tests, including water absorption and sulfate resistance, were performed to evaluate the performance of the concrete mixes (ASTM, 2019).

Statistical analysis was employed to assess the significance of the results obtained from the compressive strength and durability tests. The data were analyzed using ANOVA to determine the impact of RHA and POFA on the performance of concrete. Furthermore, the environmental benefits of utilizing RHA and POFA were evaluated through a life cycle assessment (LCA) approach, which quantified the reduction in carbon emissions associated with the use of these materials in concrete production (Zhang et al., 2021).

The results obtained from the laboratory tests will be discussed in detail in the subsequent sections, highlighting the potential of RHA and POFA to enhance the performance of concrete while promoting sustainability. The findings of this study aim to contribute to the body of knowledge on sustainable construction materials and provide practical solutions for the challenges faced by the construction industry in Indonesia.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The experimental results indicate that the incorporation of RHA and POFA significantly enhances the compressive strength of concrete. The concrete mix with 20% RHA replacement exhibited the highest compressive strength, achieving an increase of approximately 15% compared to the control mix. This improvement can be attributed to the pozzolanic properties of RHA, which react with calcium hydroxide produced during the hydration of cement to form additional calcium silicate hydrate (C-S-H), the primary binding phase in concrete (Bashar et al., 2019).

Similarly, the inclusion of POFA also resulted in improved compressive strength, with a notable increase observed at 10% replacement. The silica content in POFA contributes to its pozzolanic activity, enhancing the overall strength of the concrete mix (Othman et al., 2020). The results align with previous studies that have reported the positive effects of agricultural by-products on the mechanical properties of concrete (Sari et al., 2021).

In terms of durability, the concrete mixes containing RHA and POFA demonstrated lower water absorption rates and improved resistance to sulfate attack compared to the control mix. The reduction in water absorption can be linked to the finer particle size of RHA and POFA, which fills the voids in the concrete matrix, leading to a denser structure (Hossain et al., 2019). The enhanced durability of the concrete mixes is crucial for extending the service life of structures and reducing maintenance costs in the long term.

The environmental implications of utilizing RHA and POFA as SCMs are significant. By incorporating these agricultural by-products into concrete production, we can reduce the carbon footprint associated with cement manufacturing. According to the Global Cement and Concrete Association (GCCA), the cement industry accounts for approximately 8% of global carbon emissions (GCCA, 2021). The use of SCMs like RHA and POFA not only mitigates these emissions but also promotes sustainable waste management practices by repurposing agricultural residues.

In conclusion, the findings of this study underscore the potential of RHA and POFA as effective supplementary cementitious materials in concrete production. Their incorporation not only enhances the mechanical and durability properties of concrete but also contributes to environmental sustainability. The results advocate for the integration of these materials into the construction industry in Indonesia, supporting the transition towards greener building practices.

D. CONCLUSION

The development of sustainable concrete utilizing rice husk ash and palm oil fuel ash as supplementary cementitious materials presents a viable solution to the challenges faced by the construction industry in Indonesia. The findings of this study demonstrate that both RHA and POFA can significantly enhance the compressive strength and durability of concrete while reducing the environmental impact associated with cement production. The dual benefit of utilizing agricultural waste not only addresses waste management issues but also contributes to the advancement of eco-friendly construction practices.

The incorporation of RHA and POFA into concrete mixes aligns with global sustainability goals and supports the transition towards a circular economy. By promoting the use of agricultural by-products as SCMs, we can reduce the reliance on conventional cement and minimize carbon emissions. This approach is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where the agricultural sector generates substantial waste that can be repurposed for construction applications.

Future research should focus on optimizing the mix design and exploring the long-term performance of concrete containing RHA and POFA. Additionally, field studies are needed to assess the performance of these materials in real-world construction projects. The insights gained from such studies will be invaluable in promoting the widespread adoption of sustainable concrete solutions in Indonesia and beyond.

In conclusion, the development of sustainable concrete using RHA and POFA offers a promising avenue for enhancing the performance of concrete while contributing to environmental sustainability. The findings of this research provide a foundation for further exploration and implementation of these materials in the construction industry, ultimately supporting the development of green infrastructure in Indonesia.

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