



Feasibility of bamboo as construction material

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Abstract : Bamboo is a naturally occurring resource that is fast regenerative and has great potential as a sustainable building material. The mechanical characteristics of bamboo, including its tensile, compressive, flexural, and durability strengths, are examined in this research in light of its use in structural design. The article also highlights bamboo's potential as a building material and addresses variables influencing these qualities, including species variances, moisture content, and treatment techniques.

Keyword – tensile strength, compressive strength, bamboo, construction

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Bamboo has been utilized for thousands of years, especially in regions like Southeast Asia and South America, for both non-structural and structural reasons. Bamboo's strong strength-to-weight ratio, environmental sustainability, and quick growth have made it a popular substitute for traditional building materials in recent decades.

1.2 Objectives

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate bamboo's mechanical qualities and investigate its potential as a building material. Understanding bamboo's potential as a replacement for conventional materials like steel, concrete, and wood is emphasized.

Benefits of Bamboo in Construction

- 1) Bamboo grows rapidly and can be harvested within 4-5 years, making it a renewable resource.
- 2) Bamboo has a high strength-to-weight ratio, comparable to steel in terms of tensile strength.
- 3) Bamboo absorbs more CO₂ and releases more oxygen than many other plants, contributing positively to the environment.
- 4) In regions where bamboo is locally available, it can be a cost-effective construction material.
 - Sustainability:
 - Bamboo is a rapidly renewable material with a short growth cycle (3-5 years), making it an environmentally friendly alternative to steel.
 - Bamboo absorbs carbon dioxide during its growth, contributing to carbon sequestration and helping mitigate climate change.
 - Bamboo can be sourced locally, reducing transportation costs and the environmental impact associated with long-distance shipping of steel.
 - Low Environmental Impact:
 - Bamboo requires minimal energy for processing compared to steel, which is highly energy-intensive.
 - Bamboo is biodegradable, unlike steel, which is not biodegradable and may contribute to long-term waste in landfills.
 - High Strength-to-Weight Ratio:
 - Bamboo has an excellent strength-to-weight ratio, meaning it is strong while being lightweight.
 - This makes it an ideal material for reinforcement in lightweight concrete structures.
 - Flexibility and Ductility:
 - Bamboo provides more flexibility and ductility than steel, making bamboo-reinforced concrete more resilient to bending, dynamic loads, and even earthquakes.
 - Bamboo's natural flexibility could provide better performance under seismic conditions compared to conventional steel reinforcement.

- Lower Cost in Certain Regions:
 - In areas where bamboo is abundant, it can be a cost-effective alternative to steel, especially considering the high cost of steel reinforcement in developing countries.
 - Bamboo's rapid growth and easy availability contribute to its low cost in these regions.
- Reduced Carbon Footprint:
 - Using bamboo as reinforcement reduces the overall carbon footprint of the concrete mix due to its low-energy processing and renewable nature.
- Rapid Growth and Renewability:
 - Bamboo is one of the fastest-growing plants, with some species capable of growing up to 91 cm (35 inches) in a single day. This makes it an exceptionally renewable resource compared to timber and steel, which take years or decades to replenish.
 - Unlike hardwood trees, which require decades to mature, bamboo can be harvested every 3-5 years, making it a viable option for sustainable construction on a larger scale.
- Local Availability:
 - Bamboo can be sourced locally in many parts of the world, especially in tropical and subtropical regions. This reduces dependency on steel imports and provides opportunities for local economic development and employment in areas where bamboo is abundant.
 - In regions where bamboo is indigenous or widely grown, its use in construction can stimulate the local economy and reduce the carbon footprint associated with transporting conventional materials.
- Carbon Sequestration:
 - Bamboo has a high rate of photosynthesis and can absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, helping mitigate climate change. This characteristic makes bamboo a valuable material not only for construction but also as a carbon sink, reducing the overall carbon footprint of the building materials.
 - Bamboo plantations can store carbon in both the plant biomass and the soil, further contributing to environmental sustainability.
- Natural Insulation Properties:
 - Bamboo has natural insulating properties, helping to regulate temperature and reduce energy consumption in buildings. Bamboo-reinforced concrete may provide enhanced thermal efficiency, potentially lowering heating and cooling costs in buildings.
 - When used in combination with fly ash and silica fume in concrete, bamboo-reinforced structures could improve overall building comfort and energy efficiency.
- Lightweight and Easy to Handle:
 - Bamboo is lighter than traditional reinforcement materials like steel, making it easier to handle and transport. This reduces the overall weight of concrete structures and makes construction easier, particularly in areas with limited access to heavy machinery.
 - The light weight of bamboo also means that transportation and handling costs are lower compared to steel, which requires more energy and resources to transport.
- Improved Flexural Strength:
 - Bamboo has high tensile strength and elasticity, which can enhance the flexural strength of concrete beams and slabs. The inherent flexibility of bamboo can help concrete structures resist cracking under bending or seismic loading.
 - This makes bamboo particularly suitable for use in regions that experience seismic activity, as it can improve the overall earthquake resistance of structures.
- Cultural Significance and Tradition:
 - In many parts of the world, bamboo is a culturally significant material used for construction in traditional buildings. Its use in modern concrete structures could preserve cultural heritage while advancing the sustainability of construction materials.
 - Incorporating bamboo into modern concrete reinforcement systems can help blend traditional knowledge with innovative, eco-friendly construction techniques.
- Increased Sustainability in Concrete Mix Design:
 - The use of bamboo in concrete can complement other sustainable practices, such as the partial replacement of cement with fly ash and silica fume, which are waste products that contribute to reducing the environmental impact of concrete production.
 - Bamboo-reinforced concrete, combined with supplementary materials, can lead to more environmentally friendly and resource-efficient construction practices, aligning with global efforts to reduce construction's ecological footprint.
- Economic Opportunity for Developing Countries:
 - Bamboo cultivation and processing provide a potential source of income for rural communities in developing countries where bamboo grows abundantly.
 - The use of bamboo in construction can support local industries, including bamboo harvesting, processing, and manufacturing, creating jobs and fostering economic development in areas with limited access to other construction materials.
- Potential for Hybrid Reinforcement Systems:
 - Bamboo reinforcement could be used in combination with other materials (e.g., steel, synthetic fibers) to create hybrid reinforcement systems that capitalize on the unique properties of bamboo, such as its flexibility, combined with the strength and durability of traditional materials.
 - Hybrid systems can optimize the benefits of bamboo while mitigating some of its limitations, such as lower bond strength and durability under harsh conditions.

1.3 Ministry of Housing Opinion

- 1) Indian Government, which states “Inexpensive housing refers to any housing that meets some form of affordability standard, which might be income level of the family, size of the house unit or affordability in terms of EMI size or ratio of house price to yearly income”
- 2) The Ministry of Housing projected a housing shortage of 18.78 million houses during the 12th plan period, with 99 percent in the economically weaker and lower income groups.
- 3) It is estimated that the real estate sector contributed to 6.3% of the GDP. Housing is the largest component of the financial as well as the construction sector .A push on AH will not only lead to better quality of life, but also significantly provide a boost to the GDP of the country.
- 4) Housing is a basic need for human being, and is now becoming a burden for low and medium income group. Thus, we need cost effective housing and bamboo is the best building material.

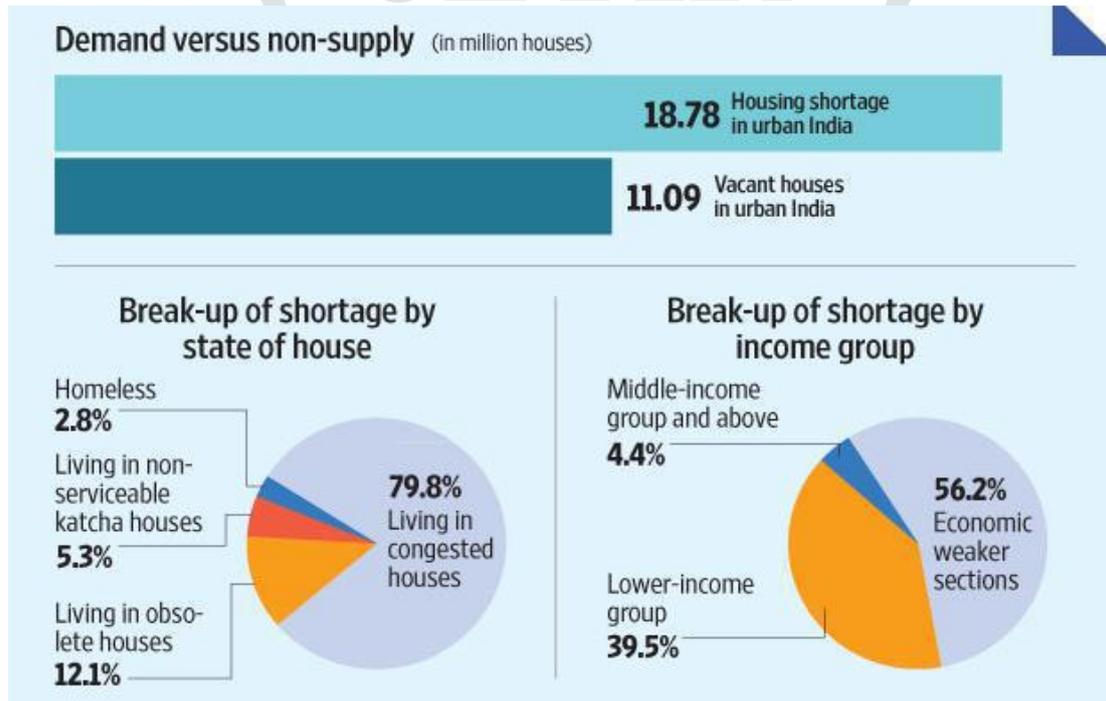


Figure: Housing Supply and Shortage in India

1.3.1 Availability of bamboo in India

The total bamboo bearing area of the country has been estimated to be 15.0 million ha. Madhya Pradesh has maximum bamboo bearing area of 1.84 m ha followed by Arunachal Pradesh (1.57 million ha), Maharashtra (1.35 million ha) and Odisha (1.12 million ha). As compared to the estimates of ISFR 2019, the total bamboo bearing area in the country has decreased by 1.06 million ha. Comparing state wise trea of present assessment with ISFR 2021, it has been observed that bamboo bearing area in Mizoram has shown highest increase of 1,085 sq km followed by Arunachal Pradesh (758 sq km). Similarly, Madhya Pradesh has shown highest decrease of 2,473 sq km in the bamboo bearing area followed by Maharashtra (1,882 sq km).

| Circle wise application List under NBM in 2020-21 | | |
|---|--------------|--------------------------|
| Sr. No. | Circle Name | Area Planted in Hectares |
| 1 | Gadchiroli | 114.5 |
| 2 | Nashik | 413.5 |
| 3 | Pune | 149 |
| 4 | Amravati | 204.5 |
| 5 | Aurangabad | 247.5 |
| 6 | Kolhapur | 278 |
| 7 | Chandrapur | 112.5 |
| 8 | Thane | 151 |
| 9 | Dhule | 187 |
| 10 | Nagpur | 183 |
| 11 | Yawatmal | 26 |
| | TOTAL | 2066.5 |

Table 1: Bamboo plantation in 2020-21 as per National bamboo mission scheme

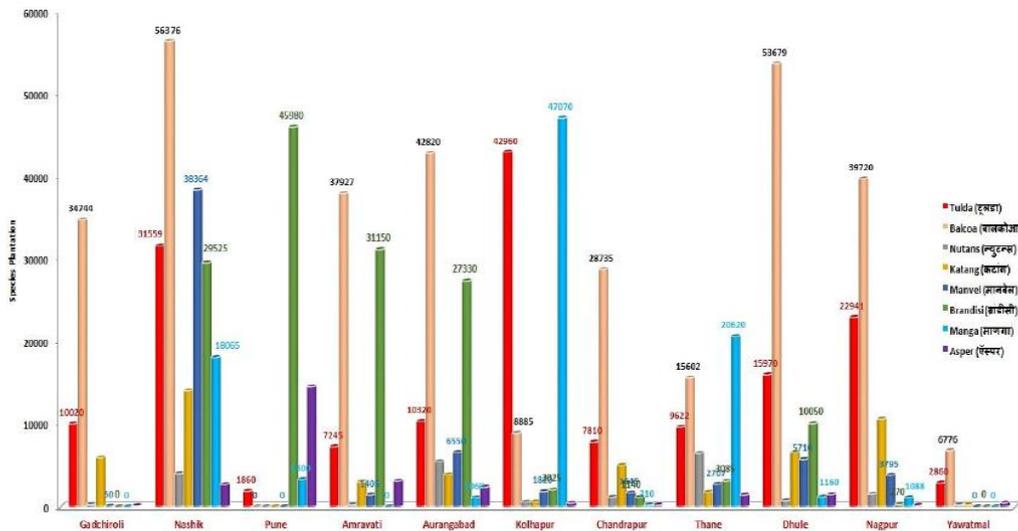


Figure 1 : Bamboo species wise plantation graph of Maharashtra circle in 2020-21 under National bamboo mission scheme

2. Mechanical Properties of Bamboo
2.1 Compressive Strength

Compressive strength is a crucial factor for materials used in structural applications like columns and load-bearing walls. Bamboo's compressive strength varies between species but can be comparable to softwood. It ranges from 80 MPa to 100 MPa depending on treatment and environmental conditions.

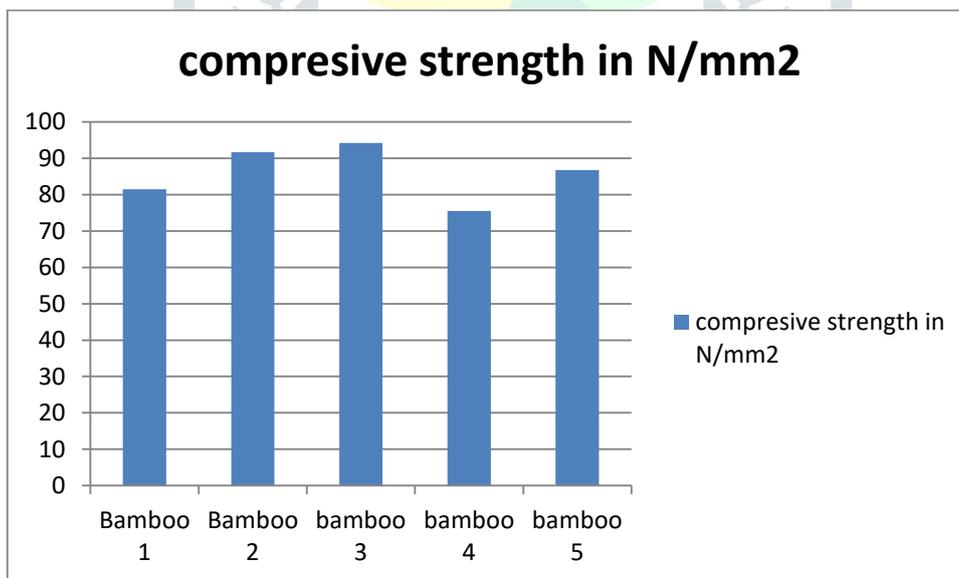


Figure 2: Graph showing compressive strength of bamboo

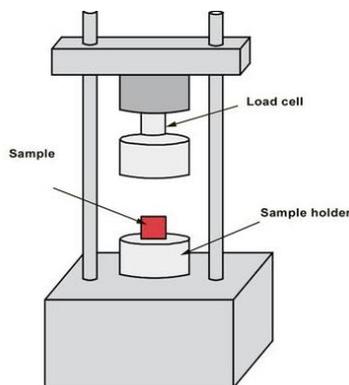


Figure 3: Image showing compression testing machine

2.2 Tensile Strength

Tensile strength refers to the material's ability to resist elongation under tension. Bamboo has a tensile strength in the range of 140 MPa to 175 MPa, which is higher than that of many common materials like concrete.

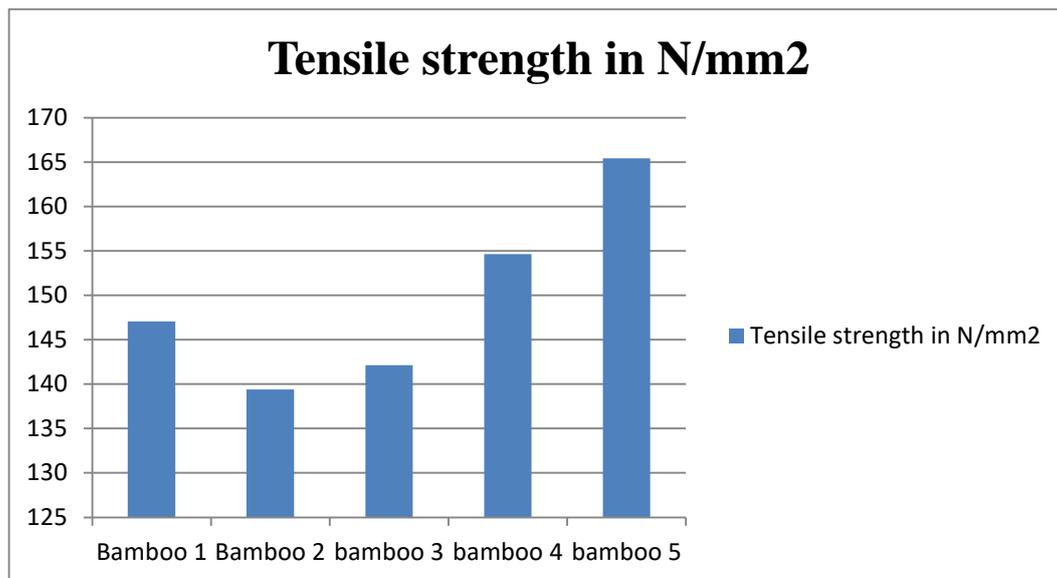


Figure 4 : Tensile strength of bamboo



Figure 5 : Image showing tensile strength of bamboo

The tensile strength of bamboo can vary significantly within the same species and even within a single culm. For example, the internodes (the sections between nodes) generally have higher tensile strength than the nodes themselves. Species, age, and environmental conditions can all affect bamboo's tensile strength.

Bamboo's strength makes it a suitable material for reinforcement in concrete, furniture making, and other structural applications.

2.3 Flexural Strength

Flexural strength is vital for materials subjected to bending forces, such as beams or flooring elements. Bamboo shows impressive bending strength, with a modulus of elasticity ranging from 18 GPa to 23 GPa.



Figure 6: Image of bamboo beams kept for curing

2.5 Moisture Effects

The moisture content of bamboo directly affects its mechanical properties. High moisture levels can lead to swelling, reduced strength, and potential biological degradation. In dry conditions,

3.2 Age and Growth Conditions

The age of bamboo affects its mechanical properties. Younger bamboo is generally stronger in tension, while older bamboo may be more rigid but weaker in shear.

4. Applications in Construction

4.1 Structural Use

Bamboo's high strength-to-weight ratio allows it to be used in structural elements like beams, columns, and trusses. It can serve as an alternative to timber and steel in specific construction applications.

4.2 Bamboo as Reinforcement in Concrete

Research has shown that bamboo can be used as reinforcement material in concrete, providing an eco-friendly alternative to steel.

5. Challenges and Limitations

Despite its potential, bamboo faces several challenges in construction applications:

Durability Issues : Bamboo is prone to attack by insects and fungi.

Moisture Sensitivity : Its mechanical properties degrade in humid or wet conditions.

Lack of Standardization : Bamboo's mechanical properties are highly variable depending on the species, treatment, and environmental conditions.

6. Recent Advancements

Recent studies and advancements focus on:

Improved Treatment Methods : Chemical and heat treatments to enhance bamboo's durability and resistance to pests.

Hybrid Materials: Combining bamboo with other materials like concrete and steel to improve performance.

7. Conclusion

- 1) Bamboo holds significant potential as a sustainable building material due to its high strength-to-weight ratio, renewability, and adaptability.
- 2) Its practical application in construction depends on overcoming challenges related to durability, moisture sensitivity, and standardization.
- 3) Ongoing research and technological advancements promise to enhance its feasibility for broader use in the construction industry.

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