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Use of nanomaterials to improve material properties in construction projects

Mohammed Abdul-Kareem Malallah[1]

[1]*Assistant Lecturer, School Buildings Department, Nineveh Education Directorate, The Ministry of Education, Iraq.*

E-mail:moh89kar@gmail.com

Abstract. *This research focuses on the one known application of enhancing concrete properties through the incorporation of nanomaterials an important construction material. The study also emphasises the role of nanomaterials in improving the microstructure of concrete and, hence, its strength, durability, and sustainability. The utilisation of nanomaterial in construction materials, especially concrete, is a great development towards augmentation of construction practises performance and sustainability. This research assesses the possibility of utilising nanomaterials to enhance the mechanical properties, durability and decrease the effects on the environment. At the same time, the study also turns to the problems of nanomaterial utilisation, with emphasis at the adverse effects on human health and environmental impact. Based on a review of the currently available literatures, the research res appears to be justified since it seeks to select suitable nanomaterials for construction utilisation, and evaluate the consequent alterations of material performance parameters, and the impact of the resultant modifications on sustainable construction technologies. The results provide an argument in favour of the further development of nanotechnology, along with doing more studies to prove that using nanomaterials will help to improve the properties of concrete. That mean greater performance of structural elements more light weight and more resistance*

Keywords: Nanomaterials, Concrete, Mechanical Properties, Health risks*, Construction Materials, Nanotechnology*

1. Introduction

1.1 General Background

Concrete is the backbone of structural engineering as it is the main material used in construction processes. The construction industry has great improvement over the years because using many technological elements. Of all these innovations, thus the technique of nanotechnology has emerged as one of the promising frontiers. This section will discuss the improvement of construction material and the advance of application of nanotechnology in construction industry, as the background of the innovation. The management of materials that are incorporated in construction has lately shifted considerably especially with the introduction of nanomaterials. This represents a new and exciting strategy for application of material science at what is known as the nanoscale level for using new forms of construction and components for construction projects that are stronger and more efficient. Since the problems of sustainability, efficiency, and resilience of constructions are some of the areas

of concern in the construction industry; advancing nanomaterials epitomise one of the key possibilities of solving the aforesaid challenges and enhancing material characteristics.

1.2 Nanomaterials

The material comes with fascinating characteristics arising from its porous nature and high reactivity and its high surface area; hence it can be finding application in different sectors of the industries. Nanomaterials are materials in which elements of the structural building blocks are less than hundred nanometres in size. This section categorises the nanomaterials according to the kind and focuses on the distinctions in structure and benefits of using Carbon nanotubes, Nano clays, and Nanofibers. All these materials can be used to improve the mechanical thermal and electrical performances of conventional construction materials. Nanomaterials, in this instance can refer to any material substance characterised by structures that can range between one to one hundred nanometres. In all these categories these materials possess improved characteristics than their mass-counterpart: the strength to weight ratio, thermal and electrical conductivity, and resistance to environmental degradation. The use of nanotechnology in construction means that there are great opportunities of coming up with unique and improved building material that will even out do today's known performance.

1.3 Problem Statement

Concrete is one of the most popular constructional materials around the world which is well-known for its strength. However, there is always some weakness associated with ordinary concrete including low tensile strength, tendencies to crack and inadequate ability to withstand rough climates. These limitations can greatly impact the life of concrete structures as well as the effectiveness and efficiency of concrete structures construction. However, for all the befits of nanomaterials bring, they have not been used extensively in construction. This section presents an evaluation of major issues affecting the industry such as costs, effect of using nanomaterial on concrete. It will also underscore the current state of material performance against the potential increase's nanomaterials may offer in improvement the behaviour of concrete in structural elements. However, the following challenges are evident where nanomaterials could be used in constructions; Nevertheless, the adverse factors are high manufacturing costs. Moreover, the practise of incorporating nanotechnology into current construction systems calls for a holistic appreciation of how these materials interface with regular construction materials and the process of construction. Therefore, researchers seek to obtain structural elements that have a high capacity to withstand different loads at the lowest cost. Adding nanomaterials increases the efficiency of these elements. With the help of improved properties of concrete through special materials, it is possible to achieve better results in strength and durability of structures for today's construction.

1.4 Research Objective

The research objective for the utilization of nanomaterials in concrete for structural elements for improving the concrete material properties. The rationale of this research is to determine how nanomaterials can enhance construction materials so that the general performance and durability of constructions can be improved. These objectives will be explained in this section and include determining the suitable nanomaterials for certain construction usages and analysing their effects on sustainability and costs. The broad aim of this research is therefore to examine the use of nanomaterials in improving the characteristics of construction materials. This research's objectives are to highlight nanomaterials that can be efficiently used in constructions, determine efficiency changes and investigate the possibility of integrating nanomaterials into the construction industry.

These objectives will in turn be achieved to contribute to the achievement of sustainable construction technologies as well as safe utilisation of nanomaterials in the construction sector. Moreover, studies find ways to determine the durability changes in concrete structures with moreover additives such as Nanomaterials. This research aims to create a basis for developing cementitious systems with better and more sustainable energy efficiency with the use of nanotechnology.

1.5 Research Content

This research is divided to five chapters and references as shown below:

1- Introduction
2- Literature Review
3- Methodology
4- Results and Discussion
5- Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

2. Literature Review

The review work of Ferreira et al. (2021) asserted that nanomaterials offer great opportunities for boosting the construction industry to increase the performance, improved lifespan, and sustainability of construction materials. The researchers pointed out the use of nanomaterials may have positive effects for the environment by minimising waste and using high durability of the materials that help to put less pressure on the environment. Also, the authors of the study highlight the economic benefits of nanomaterials which increase the efficiency of materials used in construction and decrease the need for maintenance. However, the study also pays much attention to the issues of risks towards human health when using nanomaterials. It necessitates the proper assessment and control concerning risk on handling and exposures during production and structures formation. The researchers propose a scenario where benefits of nanomaterials are optimised, while the negative effects on the environment and public health are least felt [1].

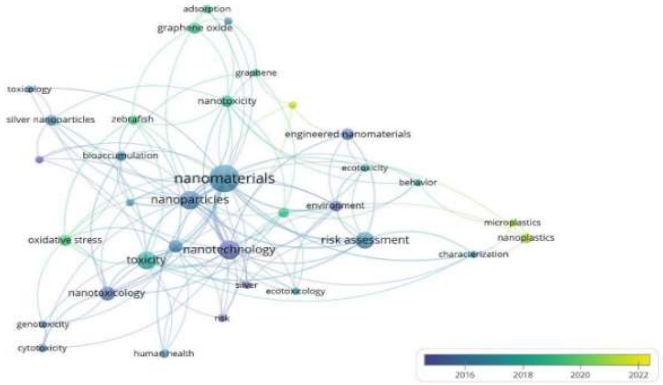

Figure 1. keywords bibliometric network of nanomaterials and their impact on human health and the environments

In the study of Macías Silva et al. (2024), the properties and use of nanomaterials in construction and focusing more on housing construction are clearly described. The researchers pointed out that nano material infused within the content can boost the technical and structural features of the building material thus it increases the strength and durability of the building materials. The study also focuses on the ability of nanomaterials to increase sustainable practise levels by decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and energy usage in construction projects. In this paper, the researchers highlight some

economic advantages of using nanomaterials, including low costs of maintenance and durability. The authors call for the expansion of nanomaterial production research to analyse the long-term impacts on the environment and the people [2].

Figure 2. Nanocomposites used in housing construction

A good literature review which offers a comprehensive description of nanomaterials in the construction industry can be found in the work of Huynh et al. (2018). Carbon nanotubes, graphene and metal oxides as the main type of nanomaterials are examined by the researchers and their unique properties are identified to provide enhanced opportunities for construction applications. This material can improve the mechanical properties, thermal stability and exhibit antibacterial characteristics as well as capability of forming self-cleaning layer. The study also focuses on how nanotechnology can enhance the efficiency and or sustainable utilisation of construction material. Thus, based on their utilisation of nanomaterials in more traditional constructions' material, the researchers find a vision of higher durability, even less maintenance, and better environmental impact [3].

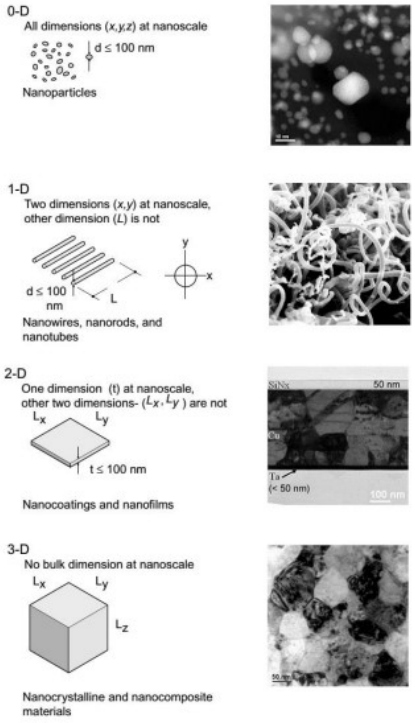

Figure 3. Classification of nanomaterials according to 0-D, 1-D, 2-D, and 3-D [4]

In the work by Mohajerani et al. (2019), the authors aimed to present an example of the nature of nanoparticles in constructing material and their effect. The authors also focus on some physical properties of nanoparticles, which include improvement of mechanical properties, durability and resistance against environmental factors. Such properties make nanoparticles suitable to enhance the performance of construction materials including concrete, asphalt and coatings. Thus, the study can be valuable in demonstrating the usage of nanoparticles to minimise maintenance cost and enhance the durability of construction materials. Also, the researchers discuss other advantages to the environment from applying nanoparticles, including low energy use and lesser emissions of greenhouse gases [5]. These advances in nanomaterials and Smart construction materials are discussed in the study by Hamzaoui and Kadir in 2021. They also describe the role of nanomaterials, how they can be incorporated into construction materials to upgrade their characteristic, including mechanical strength and durability and thermal performance. These improvements contribute to the intelligently utilised building components in the construction industry. The study also opens the door for research into the use of nanomaterials for smart buildings that can sense changes in the environment and adjust the building's energy consumption. The researchers conduct on the subject also discuss various limitations such as health implications of nanomaterial usage and the need for a set standard rule governing the use of such materials. The final section stresses the need for the deeper investigation of the consequences of nanomaterials on the environment and human health,

acknowledging at the same time the vast opportunities of their use in the field of construction [6]. Nanotechnology is the process by which large surfaces or construction projects are coated with or infused with particles at the nanoscale. The application of nanotechnology presents a solution to the development of materials, with enhanced mechanical properties, high durability, as well as thermal protection, traits that fit the needs of current construction. Due to the high reactivity of nanomaterials, it is possible to achieve superior enhancements in the performance of gigantic construction materials especially concrete and cement-based systems. The enhancement of mechanical properties is one of the main advantages of nanomaterial incorporation including carbon nanotubes (CNTs), and nano-silica. Studies show that incorporation of these nanomaterials can significantly enhance the other physical characteristics of concrete mixes particularly compressive strength and flexural analysis [7] [8]. For instance, investigating that the incorporation of nano-silica can enhance the microscopic structure of the concrete thus developed composites should be denser and more robust [8] [9]. Furthermore, works which employ Graphene or its derivatives show that not only does the material improve the mechanical characteristics, but it also decreases the weight of the construction material which propel the architects into designing more creatively [10]. In addition, thermal functions of the constructions can also be enhanced greatly with the help of nanomaterials. Nanocomposites have been shown to provide better thermal insulation, which is essential for energy-efficient buildings ("Advances in Nanomaterials for Enhancing Mechanical and Thermal Insulation of Building Materials: In the context of the present paper, a literature review means a large-scale and systematic evaluation of all articles of value to the research subject, which is often called “Integral Review: A Comprehensive Review” [11]. Introducing nanoparticle into the material can result to enhanced thermal capabilities of the material; thus lowering energy demands within building structures [12]. This dual functionality is especially worthwhile in the framework of ecological construction concepts, where energy-related issues are a critical factor. Nevertheless, the integration experience of nanomaterials in construction is not without its problems. Challenges include, cost of production, incorporation of nanomaterials into construction human practises, and risks to health must be considered [13] [14]. Some nanomaterials have incompatibilities with the existing cement matrices, which are other challenges to nanotechnology; however, more effort is required to enhance the utilisation of nanotechnology in construction applications [15]. Besides, there is still a debate about the effects of nanomaterials on the environment. Despite the fact that they seem to provide certain advantages concerning the performance of materials they are made of, their life cycle consequences prolonging the process of production and disposal need to be taken into account so that they do not hinder the achievement of the Objective Sustainable Development Goals [16]. Therefore, there is the need to establish measures concerning the safe utilisation of nanomaterials since risks are always associated with this element in construction [17]. In conclusion, the incorporation of nanomaterials in construction activities provides various chances to improve the properties of used materials to give better construction features such as strength, durability, and energy-efficient constructions. However, great challenges need to be met in an effort of increasing compatibility, safety and environmental aspects in relation to the application of nanotechnology in construction industry.

3. Methodology

3.1 The behaviour of Nanomaterials

The introduction of nanomaterials in concrete modifies the concrete by increasing performance aspects making it more efficient. It therefore matters that at the nanoscale, materials tend to exhibit properties that are different from the materials in their bulk form mainly because of high surface area to volume ratio, and mechanical properties. These properties allow for better adhesion with the cement matrix, increases its mechanical and durability and environmental stability. In addition, the

poor compatibility of nanomaterials with the hydration products also known to improve the densities of the microstructure of the concrete thus in the provision of strength to the concrete apart from reducing its permeability in order to increase is durability and performance in different uses. The procedure of nanomaterial concrete consists in purposeful dispersion of nano-scale particles, including silica, titanium oxide or carbon nanotube in concrete structure. This is usually done though a procedure called high-energy ball milling or ultrasonication to make certain that the nanoparticles are shed sufficiently to guarantee uniform distribution throughout the composite matrix. The integration of nanomaterials is important in improving concrete mechanical strength, durability and reducing chances of creation of cracks. However, nanomaterials are also helpful for decreasing porosity and increasing the density of the concrete matrix, which increases its performance. However, there are several challenges that needs to be communicated, for example concerns which affect the proper mixing of nanomaterials, and interaction between nanomaterials and other chemical attached to the concrete backbone to achieve the maximum result in correct way without affecting the structural behaviour of concrete.

In the same regard, the use of nanomaterials in concrete also has its environmental benefits. In terms of mechanical properties of concrete, by increasing the strength and the durability of concrete structures this increases the useful life of structures by minimising opportunities for rehabilitation or replacement. It can therefore lead to lesser energy being used often and less materials being used over time. Moreover, nanomaterials applied in concrete also help to progress the concept of green construction and it is possible to minimise a negative impact on the environment and CO2 emissions. In fact, with the development of this study in this field, the development of nanomaterial-enhanced concrete in various industries and construction projects is promising, indicating that more novel and sustainable solutions have been created in the built environment.

3.2 Types of Nanomaterials

Two major kinds of nanomaterials are used in concrete technology, and each has unique added value to the composite material. Some noticeable used nanomaterials are carbon nanotubes which have high tensile strength and electrical conductivity and Nano silica for improvement of pozzolanic reaction and microstructure of concrete. Other ingredients which have also attracted interest are nano clays and titanium dioxide nanoparticles used in enhancing the performance of concrete in terms of mechanical properties and photocatalytic activity, respectively. The choice of piecing specific kinds of nanomaterials depends on the qualitative characteristics of the concrete that is being produce as well as the intended use of the concrete and therefore requires an analysis of these nanomaterials' behaviours for applications in construction. The different categories of nanomaterials in concrete applications will be carbon type nanomaterials such as carbon nanotubes and graphene, metal type nanomaterials like nano silica and nano titanium dioxide, others type nanomaterials.

The nanomaterials used in concrete applications encompasses a vast category where every category brings several properties that improve the general performance of concrete. Of these, carbon-based nanomaterials are quite visible and perhaps the most visible are the carbonate nanotubes and graphene. Most of these materials are valued for their exciting mechanical features; especially, tensile strength and flexibility, aside from their excellent electrical conductivity. It was also found that the addition of carbon nanotubes as well as graphene within the concrete mixture enhances the structures performance by increasing its capacity to withstand stress and strain. This improvement is of great significance in cases where strength and stiffness are crucial for the structure, and such cases include high rise buildings, bridges and infrastructure for High Load carrying capacity.

However, other nanomaterials, particularly the metal-based nanomaterials, are of great significance in enhancing concrete technology. For instance, nano- silica has established a reputation for being a viable cost-effective solution for improving the toughness and operating life of concrete blends. It

works as a pozzolanic admixture that reacts with the lime to create extra calcium silicate hydrate, that contributes to concrete strength for successful concrete pouring. Like other nanoparticles, P25-titanium dioxide also possesses photocatalytic properties, which can be useful in self-cleaning function and destroy hazardous gases in air under sun light. It applies the metal-based nanomaterials to not only enhance the mechanical performance of concrete but also increase its durability and service life and protect it from the attacks of moisture and chemicals. Also, nanomaterials in concrete field are new and improved with research and development to present new nanomaterials that enhances the concrete technology. Such innovations could be bio-based nanomaterials which will try to replace some materials with biological materials; they could also be advanced composites which will be formed by the mixture of two or more nanomaterials. The incorporation of such materials into concrete mixtures is creating the enabling platform for better workability, low permeability, thermal properties amongst others.

In summary, nanomaterials improve concrete's mechanical and durability characteristics; they also fit with the current focus on sustainable construction. Since these advanced materials enhance the performance characteristics of concrete, they help create stronger structures for modern engineering requirements and work environment conditions. Future research on the opportunity within the science of nanotechnology promises better and improved concrete applications in terms of performance, sustainability and efficiency.

3.3 Chemical properties of Nanomaterials

Nanomaterials in concrete have unique chemical characteristics that improve behaviour and sustainability of the material. Here are some key chemical properties:

- High Reactivity: Nano particles such as nano-silica and nano-titanium dioxide are fast reacting materials because their high surface area enhances the rate of hydration and gains high concrete strength [18].
- Enhanced Bonding: Nanomaterials enhance interfacial interaction between cement particles and aggregates, which enhance the packing density and structure of the concrete [9].
- Reduced Permeability: Into distortion of nanomaterials leads to a decrease in the concrete permeability thus making the resultant concrete resistant to water absorption and chemical attacks [9].
- Improved Workability: Special nanomaterials sustainable used to improve the fresciness of neat concrete and improve work ability of fresh concrete which affect the ease of mix, place and finish [18].
- Thermal Stability: New main finding: The incorporation of nanomaterials in concrete can enhance the concrete material's thermal stability to heat and thermal cycling [19].

These properties give nanomaterials considerations for enhancing the performance of concrete, creating better, stronger, and sustainable construction materials.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

The incorporation of nanomaterials into concrete has resulted in substantial enhancements of the mechanical characteristics and durability of concrete. For instance, the nano silica particles have been reported to increase the compressive strength of concrete due to nano-particle filling capacity of the micro pores in concrete leading to an increase in density in the microstructure. This leads to a better strength-weight ratio, essential when constructing high-rise buildings and other large structures. Research carried has shown that incorporation of carbon nanotubes (CNTs) enhances tensile strength and flexural strength of concrete. Typically, the content of nanomaterials in concrete may differ depending on the type of nanomaterial and the characteristics, which are expected to be obtained.

This was found to be at 0.05% by weight of the cement content of the mix. This amount gives the highest increase in compressive, tensile and flexural strength of concrete. Due to the interaction with micro-cracks and stopping the crack from spreading further, there is high fracture resistance from CNTs. This improvement is crucial especially for structures that experience variable forces and earthquake actions. In general, nano silica entails incorporation in concrete in the amount of between 1wt% and 3wt% of cement. These ranges contribute to the improvement of the compressive strength and the reduction of permeability. The Nano-Titanium Dioxide addition is expected to be approximately 1% to 2% of cement weight of the total concrete mixture. The improvement of photocatalytic properties and durability of concrete is achieved by this. Possibly, nanomaterial can cause gain in compressive strength of up to 30 percent than normal concrete combinations. In addition, these nanomaterials found to minimise the porosity and permeability of the concrete, thereby enhancing the capability of the material against other conditions like freeze-thaw exposure and chemical attack. The findings of the microstructural studies are that the dispersion of nanomaterials promote the development of a denser and more homogeneous matrix to improve load-carrying capacity and durability of concrete structures.

4.2 Discussion

Nanomaterial application in concrete is among the improvement's additions in civil engineering. The nano modifications presented for concrete respond to several traditional flaws that affect the material, resulting in structures that are not only stronger and longer lasting, but also more environmentally friendly. Nano-engineered concrete has improved mechanical properties that make architectural and structural design with slender lightweight structural members possible without compromising on structural safety and efficiency of such systems. This is particularly advantageous in the construction of bridge projects, tall structures, and special shapes of buildings. But the use of nanomaterials in concrete has some problems. Dispersal of nanomaterials should be effectively conducted and, at the same time, the presence of agglomerations that weaken concrete properties must be avoided. Also, threats posed by nanomaterials to human health and the environment expected enhancement of standard working practises in construction industry. From an engineering structural point of view, it is evident that integration of nanomaterials requires redesigning of the conventional design codes and standards. Current analytical models for behaviour prediction of concrete may not be adequate to incorporate the improved properties resulting from nanomaterial addition hence impedance with conventional practises. Although the engineering of nanomaterial allows the concrete properties to be improved, the further practise of using nanomaterials in construction must consider the method of production and safety for human health as well as the novel design procedures. It will therefore require extensive study to enhance the utilisation of nanomaterials for the improvement of construction technology. The research evidence points to the fact that nanotechnology's disruption is possible in civil engineering based on the performance improvement of concrete. The enhanced tensile strength and the flexural resistance is considered due to the bridging and reinforcement mechanisms of the nanomaterials at micro and nanoscale levels. That is, and following along the same vein, it can be hypothesised that attaining improved water permeability rates and enhanced durability against aggressive environmental conditions, which indicates the potential for the practical application of nanomaterial coatings in construction and infrastructure, will result in more sustainable construction processes that are characterised by a reduced need for maintenance and increased longevity of the durables. But, of course, it should also be taken into account that the use of nanomaterials has estimated cost and potential difficulties in the implementation of nanomaterials into the traditional concrete production process and the lack of sufficient knowledge on how to use nanomaterials as additives for structural engineering.

5. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Summary

The paper presents the incorporation of nanomaterials into construction materials especially concrete and shows how they can improve on mechanical properties, durability and sustainability of the concrete constructions. Now, concrete is recognised as the primary building material whose primary characteristics include high durability and resistance. But they come with some draw back like they are liable to crack and also undergo environmental stressing. In the available literature, the review focused on the enhancement of the performance and durability of construction materials by the incorporation of nanomaterials. Research has shown that the use of nanomaterials results to increased durability of the products, less frequency of maintenance needed and effects on environmental pollution due to minimised waste. The economic implications are also tenable, and a better material ensures that the costs are reviewed to fit the improved quality. Nevertheless, the document focuses on the risk's occurrence of nanomaterials and, in particular, their impact on the health of people and the environment. It also emphasises the need to undertake a proper risk analysis of nanomaterials during their manufacturing and use in construction.

5.2 Conclusion

The potential of using nanomaterials in operation procedures to enhance the characteristics of construction materials for environmental gain make this venture a fascinating area of research. Some of the improvements identified in the mechanical characteristics and durability of concrete in the results section suggests that the application of nanotechnology holds a critical position in coming phases of construction industry. However, this use comes with health hazards concerning the nanomaterials and issues to do with the environment to warrant an understanding and regulation. The results point to the fact that nanomaterials bring enormous advantages, but their application should be pursued correctly to avoid potential drawbacks. Nanomaterials incorporated in concrete can enhance the mechanical characteristics of concrete either in compressive strength, tensile strength or flexural strength. It can surely help in sourcing cost effective construction sectors in terms that have a longer durability.

5.3 Recommendation

The recommendation in the study is aimed at the extension of the study of the impacts of nanomaterials on the concrete technology. It is recommended the following:

- **Further Research**: Further recognition regarding the impacts of nanomaterials is required as to their stability on health and environment in the future. This also entails creating tactics to employ in risk and benefits assessment that are so far well developed in form of tests.
- **Regulatory Framework:** The regulation and codification of nanomaterials in construction are essential to conduct accordingly. This should also contain measures to be taken when handling and exposing during production and application.
- **Training and Education:** Education, notably to construction workers and professionals, about the risks of using nanomaterials and ways of avoiding them may go a long way in redressing this challenge. Here there is a need to ensure that educational programmes highlight the pros and cons of using nanotechnology in construction.
- **Sustainability Practices:** Promote efficiency in the utilisation of nanomaterials through appropriate integrated environmental management measures that address recycling and waste minimization to affect improved ram environmental impacts of construction.
- **Collaboration:** Efficient cooperation between academicians, practicians, and policy makers in terms of organising meetings, conferences, and seminars providing an exchange of information and techniques concerning the application of nanomaterials in construction.

This may result into the development of new techniques in operations that can work well towards dealing with performance issues while at the same time improving the safety standards within the organisation.

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