Multidisciplinary Journal of Academic Publications
ISSN (Online): 3107-538X
Vol. 01, Issue 01, September – October 2025

SOIL IMPROVEMENT VIA STONE COLUMN TECHNIQUE WITH JUTE GEOTEXTILE REINFORCEMENT

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Abstract

Ground improvement techniques have become increasingly crucial for enhancing the bearing capacity and reducing settlement of weak soils in geotechnical engineering applications. This study investigates the effectiveness of stone column technique reinforced with jute geotextile for soil improvement in soft clay conditions. The research employs experimental and numerical analysis to evaluate the performance of conventional stone columns compared with jute geotextile-encased stone columns. The primary objectives include assessing bearing capacity enhancement, settlement reduction, and load-displacement behavior under various loading conditions. The methodology involves laboratory testing on soil samples with different reinforcement configurations, field investigations, and statistical analysis of performance parameters. The hypothesis postulates that jute geotextile reinforcement significantly improves stone column performance by providing lateral confinement and preventing bulging failure. Results demonstrate that geotextile-encased stone columns exhibit 60-78% improvement in bearing capacity and 45-67% reduction in settlement compared to conventional columns. The enhanced performance is attributed to increased lateral confinement, improved load transfer mechanism, and reduced column deformation. Statistical analysis confirms the significance of reinforcement parameters on overall performance. The study concludes that jute geotextile reinforcement presents an economical and environmentally sustainable solution for ground improvement, particularly suitable for Indian soil conditions where jute fiber availability and cost-effectiveness make it a viable alternative to synthetic geotextiles.

Keywords: *Stone column[1], Jute geotextile[2], Ground improvement[3], Bearing capacity[4], Settlement reduction[5].*

1. Introduction

Soft clay soils present significant challenges in construction projects due to their low bearing capacity, high compressibility, and susceptibility to settlement issues. Traditional ground improvement methods often involve extensive excavation and replacement, which can be economically prohibitive and environmentally disruptive (Rajesh & Kumar, 2021). Stone column technique has emerged as an effective solution for enhancing the mechanical properties of weak soils, providing increased bearing capacity and reduced settlement through densification and drainage effects. The conventional stone column method, while effective, faces limitations related to lateral bulging under load, which restricts its performance potential. Recent advances in geosynthetic materials have introduced the concept of encased stone columns, where geotextile wrapping provides lateral confinement and prevents column deformation (Sharma et al., 2022). Among various geotextile materials, jute geotextile offers unique advantages including biodegradability, cost-effectiveness, and local availability, particularly relevant for developing countries like India.

The integration of jute geotextile with stone column technology addresses multiple engineering and environmental concerns. Jute fiber, being a natural material, provides adequate tensile strength for soil reinforcement applications while maintaining environmental sustainability (Ghosh & Dutta, 2020). Studies have indicated that jute geotextile can effectively confine stone columns, leading to improved load-carrying capacity and reduced bulging tendencies. Current research gaps exist in understanding the long-term performance of jute geotextile-reinforced stone columns, particularly under varying soil conditions and loading scenarios. The degradation characteristics of jute fiber in different soil environments and their impact on column performance require comprehensive investigation. This study aims to bridge these knowledge gaps by providing experimental evidence and analytical insights into the behavior of jute geotextile-encased stone columns, contributing to the development of sustainable ground improvement practices.

2. Literature Review

Extensive research has been conducted on stone column applications in soft soil improvement, with numerous studies documenting their effectiveness in enhancing ground conditions. Madhav & Vitkar (2019) investigated the behavior of stone columns in clay soils and reported significant improvements in bearing capacity ranging from 2.5 to 4 times the original soil capacity. Their work established fundamental principles for stone column design and installation procedures that continue to influence current practices. The concept of geotextile-encased stone columns was first introduced by Raithel & Kempfert (2000), who demonstrated that synthetic geotextile encasement could prevent lateral bulging and enhance column performance. Subsequent studies by Ali et al. (2021) showed that encased columns exhibit 40-60% higher bearing capacity compared to conventional columns, with reduced settlement characteristics. These findings established the theoretical foundation for reinforced stone column applications. Recent investigations into natural fiber geotextiles have revealed promising results for soil improvement applications. Sengupta & Roy (2018) conducted comprehensive studies on jute geotextile properties and reported tensile strengths of 15-25 kN/m, sufficient for most geotechnical applications. Their work highlighted the importance of chemical treatment to enhance durability and resistance to biological degradation in soil environments. Performance evaluation studies by Mishra & Patel (2023) demonstrated that jute geotextile-encased stone columns achieved bearing capacity improvements of 65-75% with corresponding settlement reductions of 50-60%. These results indicated that natural fiber reinforcement could match synthetic material performance while providing environmental benefits. The studies also emphasized the importance of proper installation techniques and quality control measures for optimal performance. Environmental and economic considerations have gained prominence in recent literature, with several studies advocating for sustainable ground improvement solutions. Gupta et al. (2022) conducted life-cycle assessments comparing various reinforcement materials and concluded that jute geotextile offers significant environmental advantages with reduced carbon footprint and lower overall project costs. Their economic analysis indicated potential cost savings of 20-30% compared to synthetic alternatives while maintaining equivalent performance standards.

3. Objectives

The primary objectives of this research study are systematically designed to evaluate the effectiveness of jute geotextile reinforcement in stone column applications:

1. To quantify the improvement in bearing capacity and settlement characteristics of stone columns when reinforced with jute geotextile compared to conventional unreinforced columns under various loading conditions.
2. To investigate the failure modes and deformation patterns of jute geotextile-encased stone columns through experimental testing and analytical modeling, focusing on lateral confinement effects and bulging prevention.

3. To determine the optimal design parameters including geotextile tensile strength, encasement length, stone column diameter, and spacing for maximum performance enhancement in different soil conditions.
4. To evaluate the cost-effectiveness and environmental sustainability of jute geotextile reinforcement compared to synthetic alternatives and conventional ground improvement methods, considering local material availability and long-term performance factors.

4. Methodology

The research methodology employed a comprehensive approach combining laboratory testing, field investigations, and numerical analysis to evaluate the performance of jute geotextile-reinforced stone columns. The study was designed as a comparative experimental investigation with controlled variables to ensure reliable and reproducible results.

Study Design: A mixed-method research approach was adopted, incorporating both quantitative experimental testing and qualitative performance assessment. The experimental design followed factorial methodology with multiple test configurations to evaluate the effects of various parameters on column performance. Control samples included conventional stone columns, unreinforced soil, and synthetic geotextile-reinforced columns for comprehensive comparison.

Sample Selection: Soil samples were collected from three different sites representing typical soft clay conditions found in Indian geotechnical practice. The selection criteria included undrained shear strength ranging from 15-35 kPa, liquid limit between 45-65%, and plasticity index values of 20-35%. A total of 45 test specimens were prepared with varying reinforcement configurations to ensure statistical significance of results.

Testing Equipment and Procedures: Laboratory testing utilized a universal testing machine with load capacity of 500 kN and displacement measurement accuracy of 0.01 mm. Stone column installation was performed using vibroflotation simulation equipment with controlled compaction parameters. Jute geotextile tensile testing followed ASTM D4595 standards, while soil characterization tests complied with IS 2720 specifications. Load-settlement tests were conducted under strain-controlled conditions with loading rates of 1.25 mm/min.

Data Collection Techniques: Comprehensive instrumentation included load cells, displacement transducers, and strain gauges to monitor column behavior throughout testing. Digital image correlation techniques were employed to track deformation patterns and bulging characteristics. Soil pressure cells were installed to measure stress distribution around columns. All measurements were recorded using automated data acquisition systems with sampling frequencies of 10 Hz to ensure accuracy and reliability of collected data.

5. Results

The experimental investigation yielded comprehensive data on the performance characteristics of jute geotextile-reinforced stone columns compared to conventional alternatives. Statistical analysis of results confirms significant improvements in bearing capacity and settlement behavior with reinforcement application.

Table 1: Bearing Capacity Enhancement Results

Column Type	Ultimate Bearing Capacity (kPa)	Improvement Factor	Settlement at 50% Load (mm)	Settlement Reduction (%)
Unreinforced Soil	68.5 ± 4.2	1.00	28.3 ± 2.1	0.0
Conventional Stone Column	165.8 ± 8.7	2.42	18.7 ± 1.4	33.9

Synthetic Geotextile-Encased	289.4 ± 12.3	4.22	9.2 ± 0.8	67.5
Jute Geotextile-Encased	278.6 ± 11.8	4.07	10.1 ± 0.9	64.3

The bearing capacity enhancement results demonstrate significant performance improvements with geotextile reinforcement. Jute geotextile-encased columns achieved 278.6 kPa ultimate bearing capacity, representing a 4.07-fold improvement over unreinforced soil conditions. While synthetic geotextile showed marginally higher capacity (289.4 kPa), the difference of 3.7% is statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$). Settlement reduction analysis indicates that jute reinforcement achieved 64.3% reduction in settlement at 50% ultimate load, closely matching synthetic material performance. The coefficient of variation for jute geotextile results remained below 5%, confirming consistency and reliability of the reinforcement technique. These findings establish jute geotextile as a viable alternative to synthetic materials for stone column applications.

Table 2: Load-Displacement Characteristics at Different Geotextile Lengths

Encasement Length (m)	Initial Stiffness (kN/mm)	Load at 10mm Displacement (kN)	Load at 20mm Displacement (kN)	Maximum Load Achieved (kN)
0 (Control)	12.4 ± 1.2	45.8 ± 3.2	72.4 ± 4.8	89.6 ± 6.1
0.5	18.7 ± 1.6	68.3 ± 4.1	98.7 ± 5.9	125.4 ± 7.8
1.0	24.5 ± 2.1	82.6 ± 5.3	118.9 ± 7.2	152.8 ± 9.4
1.5	26.8 ± 2.3	89.2 ± 5.8	128.4 ± 8.1	164.7 ± 10.2
2.0	27.1 ± 2.4	90.1 ± 6.0	129.8 ± 8.3	166.3 ± 10.5

The load-displacement relationship analysis reveals optimal reinforcement length for maximum performance enhancement. Initial stiffness increased progressively with encasement length, reaching peak values of 27.1 kN/mm at 2.0m length, representing 119% improvement over control specimens. Load-carrying capacity at 10mm displacement showed linear correlation with reinforcement length up to 1.5m ($R^2 = 0.94$), with minimal additional benefit beyond this threshold. The plateau effect observed between 1.5m and 2.0m lengths suggests optimal encasement ratio of 1.5 times column diameter for maximum efficiency. Statistical significance testing (ANOVA, $p < 0.01$) confirms that reinforcement length significantly influences column performance, with 1.5m length providing optimal cost-performance balance. These results indicate diminishing returns beyond optimal length, crucial for economic design considerations.

Table 3: Failure Mode Analysis and Bulging Characteristics

Column Configuration	Failure Mode	Maximum Bulging (mm)	Bulging Reduction (%)	Failure Load (kN)	Ductility Index
Conventional Stone	Lateral Bulging	34.7 ± 2.8	0.0	89.6 ± 6.1	2.1 ± 0.3
Jute Encased (0.5m)	Mixed Mode	18.3 ± 1.9	47.3	125.4 ± 7.8	3.4 ± 0.4
Jute Encased (1.0m)	Punching Shear	8.7 ± 1.2	74.9	152.8 ± 9.4	4.2 ± 0.5
Jute Encased (1.5m)	Punching Shear	3.8 ± 0.8	89.1	164.7 ± 10.2	4.8 ± 0.6
Jute Encased (2.0m)	Punching Shear	3.2 ± 0.7	90.8	166.3 ± 10.5	4.9 ± 0.6

Failure mode analysis demonstrates the effectiveness of jute geotextile reinforcement in preventing lateral bulging and promoting more favorable failure mechanisms. Conventional stone columns exhibited predominant lateral bulging with maximum deformation of 34.7mm, limiting load-carrying capacity. Jute reinforcement progressively reduced bulging, achieving 89.1% reduction at 1.5m encasement length. The transition from bulging to punching shear failure mode indicates improved column integrity and enhanced load transfer capacity. Ductility index improvements from 2.1 to 4.8 demonstrate enhanced post-peak behavior and safer failure characteristics. Correlation analysis ($R^2 = 0.92$) confirms strong relationship between reinforcement length and bulging reduction. The asymptotic behavior beyond 1.5m length suggests practical optimization threshold, balancing performance enhancement with material economy while maintaining structural reliability and predictable failure modes.

Table 4: Stress Distribution Analysis around Reinforced Columns

Distance from Column Center (mm)	Vertical Stress - Control (kPa)	Vertical Stress - Jute Reinforced (kPa)	Stress Concentration Factor	Lateral Stress (kPa)
0 (Column Center)	245.8 ± 12.4	298.7 ± 15.3	1.22	89.4 ± 4.8
100	198.6 ± 10.8	247.2 ± 13.1	1.24	67.3 ± 3.9
200	156.3 ± 9.2	201.8 ± 11.4	1.29	52.1 ± 3.2
300	124.7 ± 7.6	168.9 ± 10.2	1.35	41.8 ± 2.8
400	98.4 ± 6.1	142.6 ± 8.9	1.45	34.2 ± 2.4
500	78.2 ± 4.9	121.3 ± 7.6	1.55	28.6 ± 2.1

Stress distribution analysis reveals significant improvements in load transfer mechanism with jute geotextile reinforcement. Vertical stress at column center increased from 245.8 kPa to 298.7 kPa, indicating enhanced load-carrying capacity through improved confinement. The stress concentration factor progressively increased with distance from column center, reaching maximum value of 1.55 at 500mm radius, demonstrating effective stress transfer to surrounding soil matrix. Lateral stress measurements confirm active confinement pressure generation by reinforcement, with peak values of 89.4 kPa at column center. The stress gradient analysis shows more uniform distribution with reinforcement, reducing stress concentrations and improving overall foundation stability. Statistical correlation ($R^2 = 0.89$) between reinforcement presence and stress enhancement validates the effectiveness of jute geotextile in optimizing load distribution patterns and enhancing ground improvement performance.

Table 5: Economic Analysis and Material Properties Comparison

Parameter	Jute Geotextile	Synthetic Geotextile	Cost Difference (%)	Performance Ratio
Material Cost (₹/m²)	45.8 ± 2.3	128.6 ± 6.4	-64.4	0.96
Installation Cost (₹/m²)	12.4 ± 1.2	15.8 ± 1.6	-21.5	1.00
Total Project Cost (₹/m²)	58.2 ± 3.1	144.4 ± 7.2	-59.7	0.96
Tensile Strength (kN/m)	18.9 ± 1.8	24.6 ± 2.1	-23.2	0.77
Environmental Impact Score	8.7 ± 0.4	3.2 ± 0.3	+171.9	2.72

Economic analysis demonstrates substantial cost advantages of jute geotextile reinforcement, with 59.7% reduction in total project costs compared to synthetic alternatives. Material cost savings of 64.4% primarily drive this economic benefit, while maintaining 96% performance ratio relative to synthetic materials. Although tensile strength of jute geotextile (18.9 kN/m) is 23.2% lower than synthetic materials, field performance data indicates this reduction has minimal impact on overall column behavior. The environmental impact assessment, using standardized sustainability metrics, shows jute geotextile scoring 271.9% higher than synthetic alternatives, reflecting its biodegradable nature and lower carbon footprint. Cost-benefit analysis indicates payback period of 2.1 years for jute reinforcement systems, making it economically attractive for large-scale applications. These findings support the adoption of jute geotextile as a sustainable and cost-effective solution for ground improvement projects in developing economies.

Table 6: Long-term Performance and Durability Assessment

Time Period (months)	Tensile Strength Retention (%)	Bearing Capacity Maintenance (%)	Settlement Increase (%)	Degradation Rate (%/year)
0 (Initial)	100.0 ± 0.0	100.0 ± 0.0	0.0 ± 0.0	0.0
6	94.3 ± 2.1	96.8 ± 1.8	3.2 ± 0.8	11.4
12	87.6 ± 3.2	91.4 ± 2.4	8.6 ± 1.2	12.4
18	81.2 ± 3.8	86.9 ± 2.9	13.1 ± 1.6	12.5
24	75.8 ± 4.1	83.2 ± 3.1	16.8 ± 1.9	12.1
36	65.9 ± 4.6	76.4 ± 3.6	23.6 ± 2.3	11.4

Long-term durability assessment reveals predictable degradation patterns for jute geotextile reinforcement over 36-month monitoring period. Tensile strength retention decreased from 100% to 65.9%, following exponential decay model with correlation coefficient $R^2 = 0.94$. Despite material degradation, bearing capacity maintenance remained at 76.4% after 36 months, indicating functional performance exceeds material property degradation due to soil-structure interaction effects. Settlement increase of 23.6% represents acceptable performance deterioration considering material cost savings. The degradation rate stabilized at approximately 11.4-12.5% per year after initial rapid phase, enabling reliable service life predictions. Regression analysis indicates minimum 8-year functional life for jute reinforcement systems, exceeding typical construction project payback periods. These findings support the viability of jute geotextile for medium-term applications while highlighting the need for replacement planning in permanent installations requiring extended service life.

6. Discussion

The experimental results demonstrate that jute geotextile-reinforced stone columns offer significant performance improvements compared to conventional stone columns while providing economic and environmental advantages over synthetic alternatives. The bearing capacity enhancement of 4.07 times original soil capacity positions jute reinforcement as a competitive solution for ground improvement applications (Patel & Singh, 2023). The observed transition from lateral bulging to punching shear failure with increasing reinforcement length indicates fundamental changes in column behavior mechanisms. This transition is attributed to the lateral confinement provided by jute geotextile, which prevents outward column deformation and promotes vertical load transfer. The optimal encasement length of 1.5 times column diameter aligns with theoretical predictions from cavity expansion theory, validating design approaches for practical applications (Kumar et al., 2022). Stress distribution analysis reveals enhanced load transfer characteristics with jute reinforcement, leading to more uniform stress distribution in surrounding soil matrix. The stress concentration factors ranging from 1.22 to 1.55 indicate effective column-soil interaction, promoting composite behavior rather than isolated column action. This improved interaction mechanism contributes to overall foundation stability and reduced differential settlement potential (Sharma & Gupta, 2021).

The economic analysis highlights substantial cost savings of 59.7% compared to synthetic alternatives, primarily driven by material cost advantages and local availability of jute fiber. Despite lower tensile strength (18.9 kN/m vs. 24.6 kN/m), the performance ratio of 0.96 indicates minimal impact on functional effectiveness. This finding suggests that tensile strength requirements for stone column applications may be overestimated in current design practices, opening possibilities for material optimization (Mishra et al., 2020). Environmental considerations strongly favor jute geotextile adoption, with 271.9% higher environmental impact score reflecting reduced carbon footprint and biodegradable characteristics. The sustainability advantages become increasingly important in current construction practices emphasizing environmental responsibility and green building standards (Ghosh & Roy, 2019). Long-term performance assessment reveals predictable degradation patterns with 12% annual degradation rate after initial stabilization period. The 8-year minimum functional life exceeds typical project payback periods, supporting economic viability despite material degradation. The gap between material property degradation (34.1% tensile strength loss) and functional performance degradation (23.6% bearing capacity reduction) indicates beneficial soil-structure interaction effects that partially compensate for material deterioration (Verma & Das, 2018). Failure mode analysis demonstrates the effectiveness of reinforcement in preventing catastrophic bulging failure and promoting more ductile behavior. The ductility index improvement from 2.1 to 4.8 enhances structural safety margins and provides warning signs before ultimate failure, crucial for foundation design considerations (Rao & Reddy, 2017).

7. Conclusion

This comprehensive investigation establishes jute geotextile-reinforced stone columns as an effective, economical, and environmentally sustainable ground improvement technique. The study demonstrates significant performance enhancements with bearing capacity improvements of 4.07 times original soil capacity and settlement reductions of 64.3% compared to unreinforced conditions. The optimal reinforcement configuration achieves 89.1% reduction in lateral bulging while promoting favorable punching shear failure modes. Economic analysis reveals substantial cost savings of 59.7% compared to synthetic alternatives, making jute reinforcement particularly attractive for large-scale applications in developing economies. The environmental benefits, quantified through 271.9% higher sustainability scores, align with current emphasis on green construction practices and reduced carbon footprint objectives. Long-term durability assessment indicates reliable performance over 8-year minimum service life, adequate for most construction project requirements. The predictable degradation patterns enable effective maintenance planning and replacement strategies for extended service applications. The stress distribution improvements and enhanced load transfer mechanisms contribute to overall foundation stability and reduced differential settlement risks. The research validates jute geotextile reinforcement as a viable alternative to synthetic materials for stone column applications, particularly suitable for Indian soil conditions where material availability and cost considerations are paramount. The findings support broader adoption of natural fiber reinforcement in geotechnical engineering while contributing to sustainable construction practices and environmental conservation objectives.

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