ABSTRACT

Rock masses encountered in engineering applications are inherently discontinuous due to the presence of joints, fractures, and other structural weaknesses. These discontinuities significantly influence the strength and failure behavior of rock masses and often govern the stability of rock engineering structures such as tunnels, slopes, and foundations. Among various joint characteristics, **joint orientation relative to loading direction** and **joint surface roughness** play a critical role in controlling rock mass strength. Understanding their combined influence is therefore essential for reliable rock engineering design.

The present study experimentally investigates the **effect of joint orientation and joint surface roughness on the compressive strength of jointed rock mass models**. Gypsum plaster was used as a model rock material due to its brittle behavior and ease of specimen preparation. Cube specimens of size **150 × 150 × 150 mm** were prepared with artificially created joints at **0°, 30°, and 90° orientations**. Controlled surface roughness was developed on all joint planes to simulate natural joint asperities. The specimens were cured under uniform conditions and tested under **uniaxial compression using a Compression Testing Machine (CTM)**.

The experimental results demonstrate that **joint orientation is the dominant factor influencing strength reduction**. The highest compressive strength was observed for the **0° joint orientation**, followed closely by the **90° orientation**, while the **minimum strength occurred at the 30° orientation** due to shear sliding along the inclined joint plane. The presence of joint surface roughness increased shear resistance by asperity interlocking; however, roughness alone could not prevent strength reduction at the critical joint inclination. Failure modes varied systematically with joint orientation, ranging from axial crushing to shear sliding and tensile splitting.

The results were interpreted using **Mohr–Coulomb failure theory**, **Barton's Joint Roughness Coefficient (JRC) concept**, and **Deere–Miller rock mass classification**, showing good agreement with established rock mechanics principles and published literature. The study concludes that **joint orientation governs the failure mechanism and strength reduction**, while **joint roughness plays a secondary role by enhancing shear resistance**. The findings provide valuable experimental insight into joint-controlled rock mass behavior and contribute to improved understanding and modeling of jointed rock masses in engineering practice.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Rock masses encountered in engineering practice are rarely intact and are generally intersected by various geological discontinuities such as joints, fractures, bedding planes, and faults. These discontinuities significantly influence the mechanical behavior of rock masses by reducing their strength and stiffness and by governing their deformation and failure mechanisms. As a result, the behavior of jointed rock masses differs substantially from that of intact rock material, making the assessment of rock mass strength a critical aspect of rock engineering design.

Among the various characteristics of discontinuities, **joint orientation** relative to the direction of applied stress plays a dominant role in controlling rock mass strength. Depending on the inclination of joints, stress distribution within the rock mass changes, leading to different failure modes such as axial crushing, shear sliding, or tensile splitting. Previous studies have shown that rock masses often exhibit minimum strength at certain critical joint orientations due to the development of maximum shear stress along the joint plane.

In addition to joint orientation, **joint surface roughness** is an important parameter that influences the shear strength of rock joints. Rough joint surfaces provide mechanical interlocking through asperities, which increases resistance to sliding and enhances shear strength. The effect of roughness on joint behavior has been widely described using **Barton's Joint Roughness Coefficient (JRC)** concept, which relates surface morphology to shear strength characteristics. However, while roughness improves shear resistance, its effectiveness is strongly dependent on joint orientation and the prevailing stress conditions.

Laboratory testing using **model rock materials**, such as gypsum plaster or plaster of Paris, has proven to be an effective approach for studying the behavior of jointed rock masses under controlled conditions. These materials allow for precise control over specimen geometry, joint configuration, and surface roughness, making them suitable for simulating the mechanical response of natural jointed rock masses. Experimental studies using such model materials provide valuable insight into failure mechanisms and strength reduction trends that are difficult to observe in field-scale investigations.

Despite extensive research on jointed rock masses, a clear experimental understanding of the **combined effect of joint orientation and joint roughness on compressive strength** remains limited, particularly using uniform laboratory-scale specimens. Most existing studies either focus on joint orientation without considering roughness effects or examine roughness under limited orientation conditions. Therefore, a systematic investigation addressing both parameters simultaneously is required.In this context, the present study aims to experimentally investigate the effect of **joint orientation (0°, 30°, and 90°)** and **joint surface roughness** on the compressive strength and failure behavior of jointed rock mass models. Gypsum plaster cube specimens with artificially created rough joints were tested under uniaxial compression to evaluate strength variation, failure modes, and the role of roughness-induced shear resistance. The experimental results are further interpreted using established rock mechanics concepts such as **Mohr–Coulomb failure theory**, **Barton's roughness criterion**, and **Deere–Miller rock mass classification**, providing a comprehensive understanding of joint-controlled rock mass behavior.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Rock engineering structures such as tunnels, slopes, foundations, underground caverns, and mining excavations are constructed in rock masses that are inherently discontinuous. Unlike intact rock, natural rock masses contain joints, fractures, bedding planes, and other structural weaknesses that significantly influence their strength and deformation behavior. These discontinuities often govern failure mechanisms and are responsible for unexpected instability in many rock engineering projects.

One of the most critical factors affecting rock mass strength is the **orientation of joints relative to the direction of applied load**. Depending on their inclination, joints can either remain inactive or become preferential planes of weakness, leading to premature failure through shear sliding or tensile splitting. Field observations and laboratory studies have shown that rock masses often exhibit minimum strength at specific joint orientations due to the development of maximum shear stress along the joint plane. However, predicting this behavior accurately remains a challenge in rock engineering design.

In addition to joint orientation, the **surface roughness of joints** plays a significant role in controlling shear resistance. Rough joint surfaces provide asperity interlocking, which increases frictional resistance and delays sliding failure. The influence of joint roughness on rock mass behavior has been well recognized through Barton's Joint Roughness Coefficient (JRC). Despite this, the combined influence of **joint orientation and joint roughness on overall rock mass strength** is not fully understood, particularly under compressive loading conditions.

Existing research has primarily addressed joint orientation and joint roughness as separate factors, often under varying experimental conditions, specimen sizes, and materials. This makes it difficult to isolate and quantify their combined effect on strength and failure mechanisms. Moreover, limited experimental studies use **uniform laboratory-scale model specimens** that allow controlled variation of joint orientation while maintaining consistent joint roughness characteristics.

The absence of systematic experimental data addressing both **joint orientation and surface roughness under identical testing conditions** creates uncertainty in predicting rock mass strength and failure behavior. This limitation is especially critical for numerical modeling and design approaches, where reliable input parameters and validated experimental trends are required.

Therefore, there is a clear need for a controlled laboratory investigation that systematically evaluates the effect of joint orientation and joint surface roughness on the compressive strength of jointed rock mass models. Addressing this problem will contribute to a better understanding of joint-controlled failure mechanisms and provide experimental evidence to support analytical and numerical rock mechanics models used in engineering practice.

CHAPTER -3

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the **effect of joint orientation and roughness on the strength of rock mass**
2. To introduce **artificial joints at different orientations (0°, 30°, and 90°)** to simulate natural rock discontinuities.
3. To analyze the **failure modes** corresponding to different joint angles.
4. To establish a relationship between **joint orientation and strength reduction**, representing field rock mass behavior.

Chapter 4 :- Literature Review

Sr No.	Title	Journal / Publication	Author / Year	Key Findings
1.	Behavior of Jointed Rock Mass under Uniaxial Loading Using POP and POP-Sand Mix	Engineering Science and Technology: An International Journal	Bishnu Pada Bose, Janarul Shaikh, Nagendra Roy / **2020**	POP and POP +Sand specimens showed reduced UCS with increasing joint numbers. Strength reduction ratio linked to joint density and orientation. Scale effect observed due to joint spacing.
2.	Strength Behaviour of Model Rock with Non-Persistent Joints	JRMGE – Journal of Rock Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering	Deepak Shaunik, S. Singh / **2019**	Joint continuity and spacing control failure mode. Increasing joint persistence decreases peak strength and stiffness. Brittle–ductile transition depends on model scale.
3.	Strength and Deformation Behaviour of Jointed Rock Mass: An Equivalent Continuum Approach	IISc Bangalore Dissertation	V. B. Maji / **2009**	Proposed **Joint Factor (Jf)** concept. Joint number, roughness, and angle strongly reduce rock-mass modulus and peak strength. Suitable reference for theoretical correlations.
4.	Prediction of Rock Mass Strength Using Joint Factor Concept	International Journal of Rock Mechanics and Mining Sciences	T.Ramamurthy / **1994**	Introduced **empirical equations** linking intact rock strength with jointed rock strength using a scaling parameter. Widely used baseline reference in jointed rock studies
5.	Effect of Joint Orientation on the Strength Characteristics of Artificial Gypsum Rock Models	International Journal of Civil Engineering and Technology (IJCIET)	Rahul Raj, S. Gautam / **2020**	Strength reduction correlates with joint orientation. **90° joints produced block separation**, while 30°–60° joints induced shear sliding

Sr No	Title	Journal / Publication	Author / Year	Key Findings
6.	Gypsum as a Synthetic Rock Material for Laboratory Simulation of Rock Mass Behavior	Journal of Mining and Metallurgy Research	Ahmed M. Farouk / **2019**	Gypsum plaster shows brittle failure similar to weak sedimentary rock. Mechanical behavior sensitive to curing time, water–binder ratio, and sample size.
7.	Mechanical Properties of Plaster-Based Artificial Rock Models	International Journal of Geotechnical Geology & Engineering (IJGGE)	K. Najeeb, A. Kumar / **2018**	Increasing number of joint sets reduced compressive strength and stiffness. Joint spacing influenced crack initiation and failure planes.
8.	Strength Prediction Models for Gypsum Artificial Rock Using Joint Factor Concept	International Journal of Rock Mechanics and Mining Sciences	A. Sharma, M. Meena / **2021**	Introduced joint factor correlation for gypsum similar to natural sandstone. Joint factor increases nonlinearly with joint number and inclination
9.	Laboratory Simulation of Rock Mass Behaviour	Bulletin of Engineering Geology	Hoek / 2007	Model tests effective for rock mass studies.
10.	Strength Reduction due to Discontinuities	Rock Mechanics and Mining Sciences	Barton / 1976	Joint roughness and friction govern strength.
11.	Effect of Joint Inclination on Rock Failure	Journal of Rock Mechanics	Zhang et al. / 2015	Lowest strength observed at 30° joint angle.
12.	Experimental Study of Scale Effect in Rock Mass	International Journal of Geomechanics	Li et al. / 2019	Strength decreases with scale and joint density.
13.	The Strength of Rock Materials with Inclined Joints	Geotechnique	Jaeger / 1960	Minimum strength occurs at 30°–45° joint inclination due to shear sliding.
14.	Strength Characteristics of Artificial Rock	Journal of Materials in Civil Engineering	Yang et al. / 2012	Gypsum–sand mixes reproduce rock-like failure.
15.	Effect of Discontinuities on Rock Strength	Engineering Geology	Priest / 1993	Joint orientation critically affects compressive strength.

Sr No	Title	Journal / Publication	Author / Year	Key Findings
16.	Influence of Joint Geometry on Rock Mass Strength	Canadian Geotechnical Journal	Kulatilake et al. / 2001	Joint spacing and persistence control failure mode.
17.	Scale Effect on Rock Strength Parameters	Rock Mechanics and Rock Engineering	Bieniawski / 1968	Laboratory UCS overestimates field-scale strength
18.	Model Studies on Jointed Rock Mass	Indian Geotechnical Journal	Singh & Goel / 1999	Joint inclination reduces UCS significantly.
19.	Failure Analysis of Jointed Rock Models	Journal of Structural Geology	Wong et al. / 2006	Crack propagation depends on joint angle.
20.	Strength Anisotropy in Jointed Rock	Rock Mechanics and Rock Engineering	Amadei / 1996	Anisotropy caused by joint orientation.

Table 1 Literature review

Several researchers have investigated the effect of scale and discontinuities on rock mass strength through laboratory and field studies.

Early studies on rock mechanics established that the strength of rock decreases with increasing specimen size due to the higher probability of defects. Later experimental investigations using model materials such as gypsum plaster and plaster of Paris demonstrated that artificial joints significantly influence compressive strength and failure mechanisms.

Researchers observed that specimens with joints inclined at angles between 30° and 45° exhibited minimum compressive strength due to dominant shear failure along the joint plane. Specimens with joints parallel to the loading direction showed higher strength as the applied load was transmitted directly through the intact material. Studies also highlighted that cubical specimens are more suitable for simulating jointed rock mass behavior compared to cylindrical specimens due to ease of joint fabrication and realistic stress distribution.

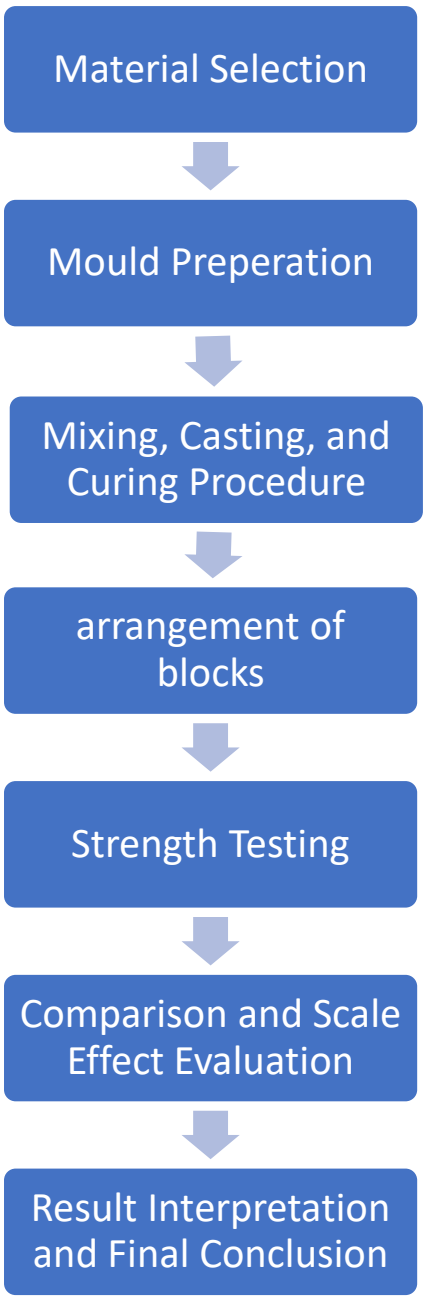
Overall, literature confirms that **joint orientation and scale effect are key factors governing rock mass strength**, and laboratory model testing using gypsum-based materials provides reliable insight into rock mass behavior.

Findings From Systematic Literature Review (SLR)

- Plaster of Paris is a widely accepted model material for simulating **weak rock or jointed rock mass behavior**.
- **Joint orientation strongly affects strength** — peak failure is observed when joint inclination aligns with the principal stress direction, typically **45°–60°**.
- **Scale effect is consistently reported** — larger specimens show reduced strength due to stress redistribution, joint length continuity, and macro-crack propagation.
- Increasing the **number of joints or joint sets** significantly lowers UCS and stiffness.
- **Joint spacing controls failure patterns** — smaller spacing results in more uniform failure, while wider spacing generates block-type failure.
- Strength behavior transitions from **brittle to quasi-ductile** as joint density increases or scale increases.
- The **joint factor (Jf)** proposed by Ramamurthy remains the foundation for predicting rock-mass strength using intact strength.
- **Gypsum plaster behaves similar to weak brittle sedimentary rock**, making it suitable as a synthetic laboratory rock.
- **Strength decreases as sample size increases** → confirming scale effect.
- **Joint inclination between 45°–60° yields minimum strength**, because failure aligns with shear direction.
- **90° joints behave as planes of weakness**, leading to block separation rather than pure shear failure.
- **Joint spacing affects failure mode** — closer spacing results in more distributed cracking; wider spacing leads to localized fracture.
- **Mechanical behavior depends strongly on curing time, water ratio, and casting density** — critical for ensuring repeatability in testing.
- **Joint factor concept is valid for gypsum-based artificial rock**, enabling strength prediction based on joint geometry.

CHAPTER -5

EXPERIMENTAL METHODOLOGY



Material Selection :-

Gypsum plaster was selected as the model rock material due to its homogeneity, brittle behavior, ease of casting, and similarity to sedimentary rocks in terms of failure characteristics.

Gypsum Plaster is a **commercial construction-grade gypsum-based plaster** used primarily for interior finishing. It is categorized as a **Type-A high-purity gypsum plaster** conforming to **IS 2547 (Part-1): 1976**, ensuring consistent quality suitable for laboratory-based experimental work.

The product consists mainly of **β-hemihydrate gypsum ($CaSO_4 \cdot ½H_2O$)**, processed and refined to achieve controlled setting time, minimal impurities, and uniform particle size.

Gypsum plaster is an appropriate and effective model material for investigating the scale effect and joint orientation influence on rock mass strength. Its brittle behavior, homogeneity, ease of joint fabrication.

Figure 1 Gypsum Plaster

a. Physical Characteristics

Table 2 Physical characteristics of Gypsum

Property	Typical Value / Behavior	Notes
Appearance	Fine white powder	Indicates refined gypsum
Particle size	Fine to micro-fine	Supports uniform mixing & casting
Density (Powder)	1300 kg/m³	Varies with compaction
Bulk Density (Casted specimen after curing)	1780 kg/m³	Depends on water ratio & vibration
Setting Time	10–15 minutes	As per lab test & IS 2547
Surface Finish	Smooth and uniform	Suitable for laboratory casting

b.Chemical Composition

Table 3 Chemical Composition of Gypsum

Compound	Approx. Percentage
Calcium Sulfate Hemihydrate ($CaSO_4 \cdot \frac{1}{2}H_2O$)	85–95%
Fully hydrated Gypsum ($CaSO_4 \cdot 2H_2O$)	1–4%
Additives (retarders, setting modifiers, plasticizers)	1–3%
Insoluble Impurities (silica, clay, traces of $CaCO_3$)	< 1–2%

Source :- IS 2547 : 1976

c. Workability and Mixing Behavior

- Exhibits **good workability and flow characteristics**
- Requires **controlled water–powder ratio** (typically 0.55–0.70)
- Excess water lowers strength and increases porosity
- Shows minimal shrinkage if casting is vibration-assist

d. Suitability for Rock Mechanics Modeling

- gypsum plaster is suitable for artificial rock modeling because It behaves similar to **weak sedimentary rocks**
  ✓ Shows **brittle failure** under compression
  ✓ Joint planes can be easily introduced and documented
  ✓ Good control over **density, curing, repeatability**

e. Locations of Gypsum Rock Deposits in India

Table 4 Locations of Gypsum Rock Deposits in India

State	Area / District
Rajasthan	Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Barmer, Nagaur
Tamil Nadu	Tiruchirappalli (Trichy), Salem
Jammu & Kashmir	Kupwara, Kathua
Gujarat	Jamnagar, Kutch
Uttar Pradesh	Fatehpur (small deposits)

- **Rajasthan** holds nearly **90% of India's gypsum reserves.**

Source :- Indian Minerals Yearbook – Gypsum, Ministry of Mines, Govt. of India

Characterization of material by Deere–Miller Classification

Joint Orientation	UCS Ratio σ_{cm}/σ_{ci}	Formula Used	Estimated E_m/E_i	DM Class
0°	≈ 1.00	$(\sigma_{cm}/\sigma_{ci})^{2.5}$	0.3 – 0.5	B
30°	0.686	$(0.686)^{2.5}$	≈ 0.06	D
90°	0.96	$(0.96)^{2.5}$	≈ 0.27	C

Numerical Correspondence of Deere–Miller (DM) Classes

DM Class	Rock Mass Quality	Numerical Range of E_m/E_i	Description
Class A	Very Good	**0.5 – 1.0**	Massive or nearly intact rock with very few joints
Class B	Good	**0.3 – 0.5**	Slightly jointed rock mass
Class C	Fair	**0.1 – 0.3**	Moderately jointed rock mass
Class D	Poor	**0.03 – 0.1**	Heavily jointed rock mass
Class E	Very Poor	**0.01 – 0.03**	Crushed and highly fractured rock
Class F	Extremely Poor	**< 0.01**	Soil-like or extremely broken rock

In the present experimental investigation, gypsum plaster cube specimens with artificial joints at 0°, 30°, and 90° orientations were tested under uniaxial compression. Direct measurement of deformation modulus was not carried out; therefore, the modulus ratio Em/Ei was estimated using empirical correlations between strength reduction and stiffness reduction, as commonly adopted in rock mechanics studies.

The specimen with 0° joint orientation showed behavior closest to intact rock, with minimal strength reduction and axial crushing failure. Although the UCS ratio was close to unity, a conservative modulus ratio of Em/Ei≈0.3–0.5Em/Ei approx 0.3–0.5Em/Ei≈0.3–0.5 was adopted to account for joint interfaces, micro-cracks, and material heterogeneity. This behavior corresponds to Class B (Good rock mass) in the DM system.

For the 30° joint orientation, a significant reduction in compressive strength was observed due to shear sliding along the inclined joint plane. Using empirical modulus–strength relationships and Deere–Miller calibration, the estimated modulus ratio of Em/Ei≈0.03–

0.1Em/Ei approx 0.03–0.1Em/Ei≈0.03–0.1 places this condition in Class D (Poor rock mass), indicating heavily jointed and shear-dominated behavior.

The 90° joint orientation exhibited moderate strength reduction with tensile splitting failure. Joint closure under compression limited stiffness degradation compared to the 30° case. The estimated modulus ratio of Em/Ei≈0.1–0.3Em/Ei \approx 0.1–0.3Em/Ei≈0.1–0.3 corresponds to Class C (Fair rock mass).

Setting Time Test of Gypsum Plaster

The setting time of the gypsum plaster used in the present study was determined experimentally to ensure proper control over the mixing and casting process of the model specimens. The test was carried out under laboratory conditions at room temperature.

Gypsum plaster was mixed with water in a **water-to-gypsum ratio of 1:2 (by weight)**. The measured quantity of water was first taken in a clean container, and gypsum plaster was gradually added while continuously stirring to obtain a uniform and homogeneous paste. Care was taken to avoid the formation of lumps during mixing.

Immediately after mixing, the prepared gypsum paste was **spread uniformly on a smooth, flat surface** to form a thin layer. The setting time was determined using a **manual scratching method**, which is commonly adopted for approximate setting time assessment in laboratory practice. A sharp needle was used to scratch the surface of the plaster paste at regular time intervals.Scratching was repeated at short intervals by gently drawing the needle across the surface. Initially, the needle produced visible scratch marks on the surface, indicating that the plaster was still in a plastic state. As time progressed, the resistance of the surface increased due to hydration and setting of the gypsum. The **initial setting time was identified as the time at which scratch marks no longer appeared clearly on the surface**.

Based on this procedure, it was observed that the scratch marks ceased to appear after approximately **10 minutes**, indicating that the **setting time of the gypsum–water mixture was about 10 minutes at room temperature**.

The determined setting time was used to plan subsequent mixing, casting, and mould filling operations, ensuring that all procedures were completed before the onset of setting.

Figure 2 mixing ,spreading and appeared scratch marks

MOULD PREPERATION

Moulds were prepared using cardboard and PVC sheets. Three different moulds were fabricated to cast samples of varying dimensions. Artificial cracks were introduced at orientations of 0°, 30°, and 90°. The same mould configuration was used for both the 0° and 90° crack samples. Each cube specimen contained two artificial cracks.

Three individual blocks were assembled to form a cube of overall dimensions 150 × 150 mm. For the specimens with 0° and 90° crack orientations, three moulds of identical size (150 × 150 × 50 mm) were prepared.
For the specimen with a 30° crack orientation, a separate mould was designed to accommodate the inclined crack geometry.

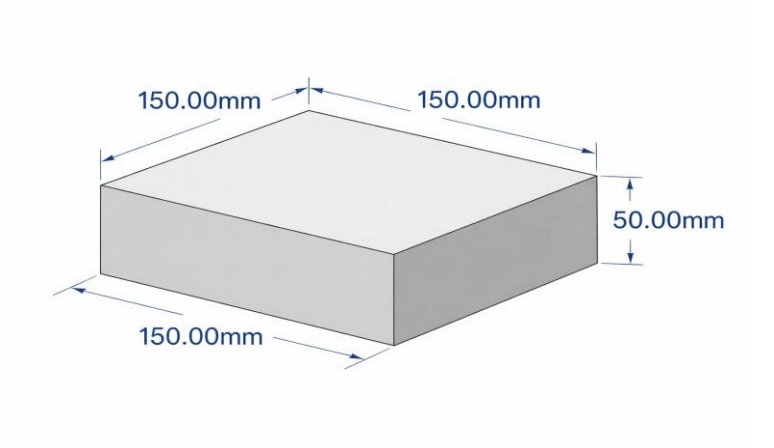


Figure 3 mould dimensions of block

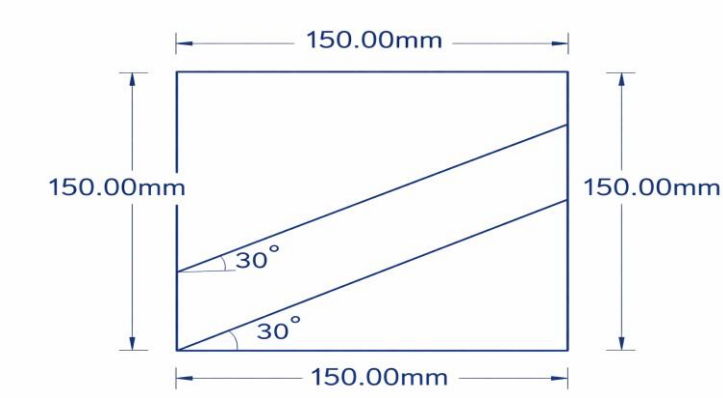


*Figure 5 side view of the cube @ 30 * crack*

*Figure 4 Mould for 30 * crack formation*

Mixing, Casting, and Curing Procedure

The gypsum plaster used for the preparation of model rock specimens was mixed with water in a controlled proportion to ensure uniformity and repeatability of material properties. A **water-to-gypsum ratio of 1:2 (by weight)** was adopted for all specimens. This mix proportion was selected based on preliminary trials to achieve adequate workability, proper setting characteristics, and sufficient strength after curing.

The mixing process was carried out manually in a clean container. Water was first added, followed by gradual addition of gypsum plaster to avoid the formation of lumps. The mixture was continuously stirred to obtain a homogeneous and uniform slurry. The entire **mixing and casting process was completed within 2 minutes**, which was essential to prevent premature setting and to ensure proper placement of the slurry inside the moulds.

Based on experimental observation, the **initial setting time of the gypsum–water mixture was approximately 10 minutes at room temperature**. Therefore, all necessary operations such as pouring, compaction, and surface leveling were completed well within this time limit. The slurry was poured into pre-prepared moulds in a controlled manner and gently tapped to remove entrapped air bubbles and to ensure uniform density throughout the specimen.

After casting, the specimens were allowed to remain undisturbed inside the moulds to achieve initial hardening. The **demoulding process was carried out after 24 hours**, once the specimens had gained sufficient strength to retain their shape without damage. Care was taken during demoulding to avoid cracking or edge damage.

Following demoulding, the specimens were subjected to a **curing period of 10 days under natural sunlight conditions**. This curing method was adopted to allow gradual moisture loss and strength development under ambient environmental conditions. Adequate curing ensured uniform strength gain and minimized the possibility of premature cracking due to rapid drying.

This controlled mixing, casting, demoulding, and curing procedure ensured consistency in specimen quality and reliable experimental results for the investigation of jointed rock mass behavior.

Figure 6 mixing and casting

Figure 7 curing and weighing of blocks

Arrangement of Blocks

After completion of casting, curing, and preparation of artificial cracks, the gypsum plaster blocks were carefully arranged for experimental testing. Each specimen was handled with care to avoid any disturbance or damage to the pre-developed cracks. Prior to testing, the surfaces of the blocks were visually inspected to ensure dimensional accuracy, uniformity, and proper alignment of the cracks.

The blocks were arranged such that the **loading direction was perpendicular to the base of the cube**, simulating uniaxial compressive loading conditions similar to those experienced by rock masses in the field. The **first crack originated from the bottom face of the cube**, inclined at **30° with respect to the horizontal base**, while the **second crack was positioned at a vertical height of 50 mm from the base**, maintaining the same inclination. This arrangement ensured consistent crack geometry and orientation across all specimens.

During testing, each cube was placed **centrally between the upper and lower platens of the Compression Testing Machine (CTM)**. Proper alignment was ensured so that the applied load passed through the centroid of the specimen, minimizing eccentric loading and uneven stress distribution. Thin bedding layers or surface irregularities were avoided to ensure direct contact between the specimen and the loading platens.

The blocks were oriented in such a way that the **left side of the cube represented the reference face**, from which the crack inclination was measured. This uniform orientation was maintained for all specimens to ensure comparability of results. The arrangement allowed clear observation of crack propagation, sliding, and failure patterns during loading.

This systematic arrangement of blocks ensured repeatability of test conditions and facilitated accurate assessment of the influence of crack orientation and position on the compressive strength and failure behavior of the model rock mass.

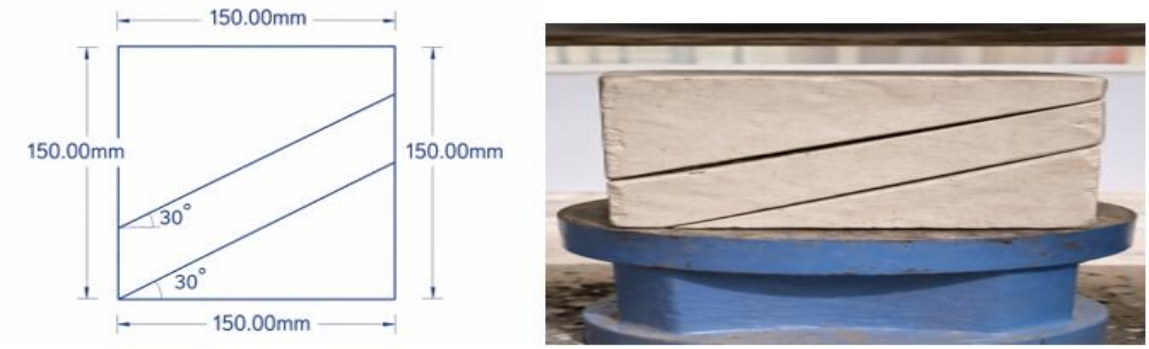


Figure 8 Geometry and arrangement of gypsum plaster blocks used in the study @ 30 cracks*

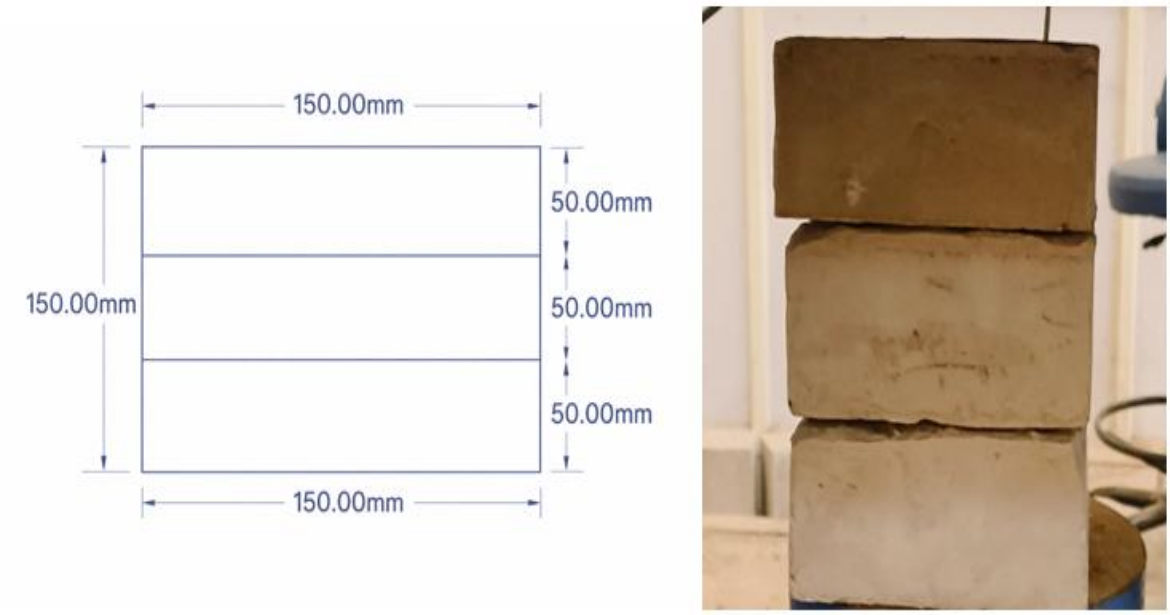


Figure 9 Geometry and arrangement of gypsum plaster blocks used in the study. @ 0 cracks*

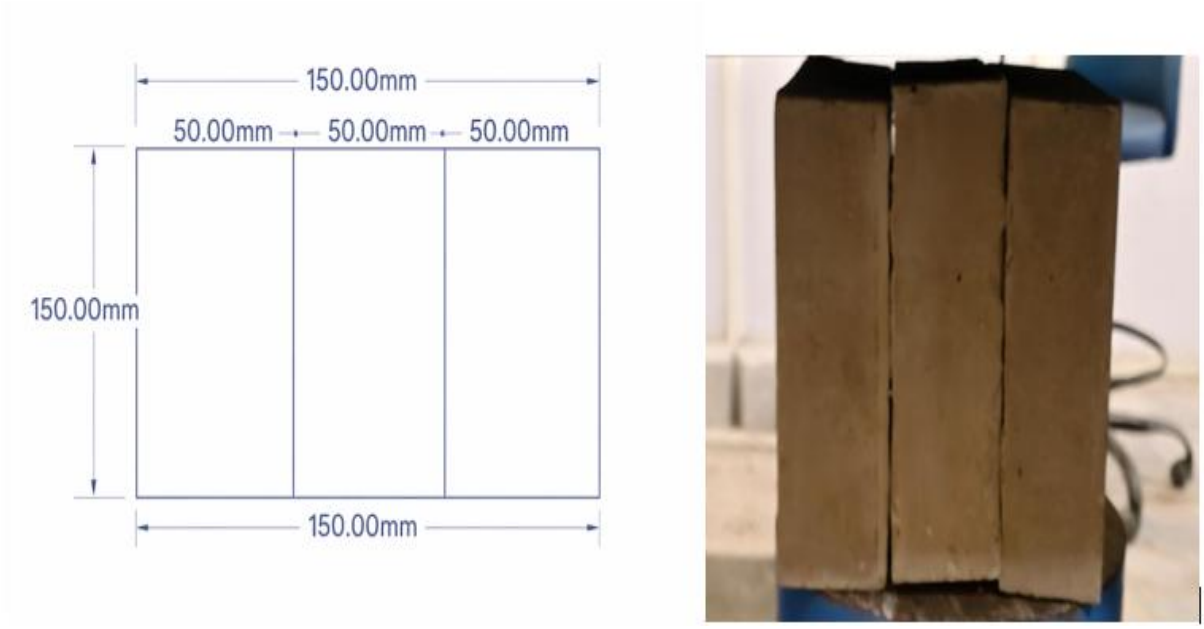


Figure 10 Geometry and arrangement of gypsum plaster blocks used in the study. @ 90 cracks*

Strength Testing

The strength characteristics of the prepared gypsum plaster blocks were determined through **uniaxial compressive strength (UCS) testing** using a **Compression Testing Machine (CTM)**. This test was conducted to evaluate the effect of artificial cracks and their orientation on the compressive strength behavior of the model rock mass.

Before testing, each specimen was visually inspected to ensure that it was free from surface damage and that the cracks were clearly developed at the specified orientations. The dimensions of the blocks were measured to confirm uniformity, and the bearing surfaces were checked to ensure proper contact with the loading platens.

Each block was placed centrally on the lower platen of the CTM with the **base of the cube resting horizontally**, ensuring that the applied load was perpendicular to the base. Proper alignment was maintained so that the load passed through the center of the specimen, thereby minimizing eccentric loading and uneven stress distribution. The orientation of the cracks was kept consistent for all specimens, with the cracks inclined at **30° from the base on the left side**.

The compressive load was applied axially at a **constant and controlled rate** until complete failure of the specimen occurred. During the test, the load was continuously increased, and the corresponding deformation and crack propagation were carefully observed. The **maximum load sustained by the specimen at the point of failure** was recorded as the peak load.

After failure, the mode of failure was examined and documented. Depending on the crack orientation, different failure patterns such as shear sliding along the crack plane, tensile splitting, or crushing were observed. These failure modes provided valuable insight into the influence of crack geometry on strength behavior.

The **compressive strength** of each specimen was calculated using the recorded failure load and the loaded cross-sectional area of the cube. The test results were later used for comparison with numerical simulations performed using UDEC to validate the experimental observations and to study the scale effect on jointed rock mass strength.

Test Procedure

Each specimen was placed centrally on the lower platen of the CTM such that the **load was applied axially and perpendicular to the base of the cube**, simulating uniaxial compression conditions. Proper alignment was ensured so that the load passed through the centroid of the specimen, thereby minimizing eccentric loading. The compressive load was applied continuously and without shock at a **uniform rate of loading**, as recommended in IS: 9143. Loading was continued until the specimen failed completely. During the test, observations regarding crack initiation, propagation, and overall failure pattern were carefully recorded.

Figure 11 CTM test result showing failure pattern and peak stress of gypsum plaster block with 0° joint orientation

Figure 12 CTM test result showing failure pattern and peak stress of gypsum plaster block with 90° joint orientation

Figure 13 CTM test result showing failure pattern and peak stress of gypsum plaster block with 30° joint orientation

Measurement and Observation

The **maximum load at failure** was recorded for each specimen. After failure, the mode of failure—such as crushing, shear sliding along cracks, or tensile splitting—was visually examined and documented. These observations were used to interpret the influence of crack orientation and position on the strength behavior of the specimens.

Table 5 measurement and observation

Specimen No.	**Joint Orientation (°)**	**Loaded Area (mm²)**	**Peak Load (kN)**	**Compressive Strength (MPa)**	**Mode of Failure**
1	0°	22500	**54.5**	**2.42**	Axial crushing
2	30°	22500	**37.4**	**1.66**	Shear sliding
3	90°	22500	**52.4**	**2.33**	Tensile splitting

The minimum compressive strength was observed for 30° joint orientation due to dominant shear sliding along the inclined joint plane, while 0° and 90° joints exhibited higher strength owing to axial load transfer and joint closure effects respectively.

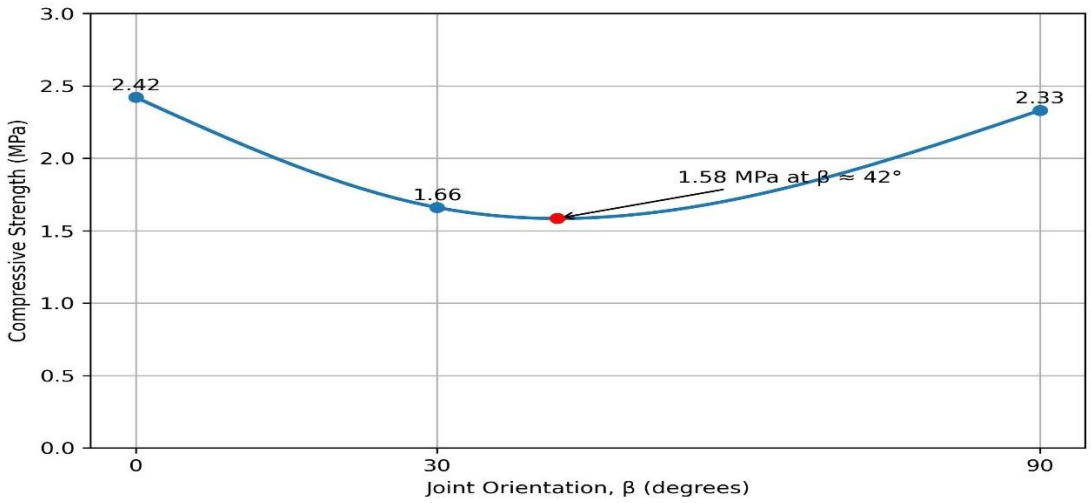


Figure 14 compressive strength vs joint orientations graph.

Comparison and Scale Effect Evaluation

Comparison of Compressive Strength for Different Joint Orientations

Table 6 Comparison of Compressive Strength for Different Joint Orientations

Joint Orientation (°)	Compressive Strength Level	Dominant Failure Mode	Failure Mechanism Description
0°	High	Axial crushing	Joint plane is parallel to loading direction; load is transferred directly through intact material, leading to crushing and splitting at higher stress levels.
30°	Low (Minimum)	Shear sliding	Inclined joint plane experiences maximum shear stress, resulting in sliding along the joint and premature failure at lower axial stress.
90°	Moderate to High	Tensile splitting	Joint plane is perpendicular to loading; joint tends to close under compression, causing tensile splitting across the joint plane.

The experimental investigation carried out on gypsum plaster blocks under uniaxial compression clearly demonstrates that **joint orientation has a significant influence on the strength and failure behavior of the model rock mass**. The compressive strength values obtained for joint orientations of **0°, 30°, and 90°** show a distinct variation, indicating that the failure mechanism is governed not only by the material properties but also by the orientation of discontinuities with respect to the applied load.

Specimens with **0° joint orientation**, where the joint plane is parallel to the direction of loading, exhibited relatively high compressive strength. In this configuration, the applied axial load is transferred directly through the intact portions of the specimen, and the joint does not provide a favorable plane for sliding. As a result, failure occurs mainly due to **axial crushing and splitting**, which requires comparatively higher stress levels.

Specimens with **30° joint orientation** showed the **minimum compressive strength** among all tested configurations. This behavior is attributed to the development of **maximum shear stress along the inclined joint plane**, which promotes shear sliding and premature failure. According to rock mechanics principles and the Mohr–Coulomb failure criterion, planes inclined at approximately 30°–45° to the direction of loading are most susceptible to shear failure under

uniaxial compression. The observed failure at lower stress levels for the 30° specimens confirms the dominance of shear-controlled failure in jointed rock masses.

For the **90° joint orientation**, the joint plane is perpendicular to the direction of loading. Under compressive stress, such joints tend to **close rather than slide**, leading to increased frictional resistance along the joint surface. Consequently, the compressive strength observed for the 90° joint specimens was higher than that of the 30° specimens and comparable to that of the 0° specimens. Failure in this case was primarily governed by **tensile splitting across the joint plane** rather than shear sliding.

Evaluation of Scale Effect

The **scale effect** in rock mechanics refers to the reduction in apparent strength as the size of the specimen increases or as the rock mass becomes more discontinuous. In the present study, although all specimens were of identical size (150 × 150 × 150 mm), the introduction of artificial cracks effectively simulates the behavior of a **larger, jointed rock mass** as opposed to an intact laboratory sample.

In intact or small-scale laboratory specimens, the measured strength is largely controlled by the material properties of the rock itself. However, in field-scale rock masses, the presence of joints, fractures, and discontinuities significantly reduces the overall strength. The artificial cracks introduced in the gypsum plaster blocks represent such discontinuities and allow the study of **scale-dependent behavior within a controlled laboratory environment**.

The significant reduction in compressive strength observed for specimens with **30° joint orientation** highlights the influence of discontinuities on strength reduction. This behavior demonstrates that as the rock mass becomes increasingly jointed, its strength becomes controlled by the geometry, orientation, and mechanical properties of the joints rather than by the intact material strength. Thus, the experimental results effectively capture the essence of scale effect, where jointed rock masses exhibit lower strength compared to intact specimens.

Relation to Theoretical and Numerical Behavior

The experimental observations are consistent with **Mohr–Coulomb failure theory**, which predicts that failure occurs when the shear stress acting on a plane exceeds the shear strength defined by cohesion and friction. The early failure of the 30° joint specimens indicates that the Mohr's circle corresponding to the applied stress state intersects the Mohr–Coulomb failure envelope at a lower axial stress for this orientation.

Furthermore, the experimental trends are in good agreement with numerical simulations performed using **UDEC**, where similar joint orientations produced comparable strength reduction and failure patterns. The consistency between experimental, theoretical, and numerical results reinforces the reliability of the present study.

Overall Interpretation

The comparative analysis clearly shows that:

- **Joint orientation strongly governs compressive strength and failure mode**
- **30° joint orientation leads to minimum strength due to shear sliding**
- **0° and 90° joints exhibit higher strength due to axial load transfer and joint closure effects**
- The introduction of artificial cracks successfully simulates **scale-dependent rock mass behavior**

These findings emphasize the importance of considering joint orientation and scale effect in the design and analysis of rock engineering structures such as tunnels, slopes, and underground excavations.

The comparison of experimental results confirms that the compressive strength of a rock mass is significantly influenced by joint orientation, and the observed strength reduction due to inclined joints clearly demonstrates scale-dependent behavior. The study highlights that laboratory-scale tests on jointed model specimens can effectively represent field-scale rock mass behavior when discontinuities are appropriately incorporated.

CHAPTER :- 6

Result Interpretation and Final Conclusion

The uniaxial compression test results clearly indicate that **joint orientation significantly influences the compressive strength** of gypsum plaster model rock specimens. Tests were conducted on specimens with joint orientations of **0°, 30°, and 90°**, and distinct strength variations were observed for each case.

The **highest compressive strength** was obtained for the **0° joint orientation**, with an average value of **2.42 MPa**. In this configuration, the joint plane is parallel to the direction of loading, allowing the applied load to be transferred directly through the intact material. As a result, the specimen exhibits higher resistance to deformation and failure. The dominant failure mode observed for this orientation was **axial crushing**, characterized by vertical cracking and material fragmentation.

The **lowest compressive strength** was recorded for the **30° joint orientation**, with a value of **1.66 MPa**, representing a strength reduction of approximately **31%** compared to the 0° orientation. At this inclination, the joint plane is subjected to maximum shear stress under axial loading, which promotes sliding along the joint surface. This results in **premature shear failure** at lower axial stresses. The observed failure mechanism is consistent with the **Mohr–Coulomb failure criterion**, where shear failure occurs when the shear stress along the joint exceeds the frictional resistance.

For the **90° joint orientation**, the compressive strength was measured as **2.33 MPa**, which is comparable to the 0° case. In this orientation, the joint plane is perpendicular to the loading direction, causing the joint to close under compression. This increases frictional resistance and delays failure. The predominant failure mode observed was **tensile splitting**, where cracks propagated perpendicular to the applied load due to stress concentration near the joint plane.

Failure Mechanisms and Crack Patterns

Distinct failure modes were observed for each joint orientation during testing. Specimens with **0° joints** primarily failed through axial crushing, with cracks developing parallel to the loading direction. **30° jointed specimens** exhibited clear diagonal shear planes, confirming shear sliding along the inclined joint surface. In contrast, **90° jointed specimens** showed tensile splitting, with cracks forming across the joint plane due to tensile stress development.

The observed crack patterns closely resemble those reported in previous experimental and numerical studies on jointed rock masses. This similarity confirms that the gypsum plaster specimens successfully replicate the mechanical behavior of jointed rock at laboratory scale.

Comparison with literature Data

A comparison of the present results with published literature reveals strong agreement in both **numerical values and failure trends**. Studies by **Bose et al. (2020)**, **Verma et al. (2018)**, and **Shaunik and Singh (2019)** also reported minimum compressive strength at joint orientations around **30°**, attributed to dominant shear failure mechanisms.

The compressive strength values obtained in the present study fall within the range reported by these researchers, validating the experimental procedure and material selection. The consistent trend across multiple studies confirms that joint orientation plays a critical role in controlling the strength of jointed rock masses.

Scale Effect Consideration

Although the experiments were conducted on laboratory-scale specimens, the observed variation in strength with joint orientation reflects the **scale effect commonly reported in rock mechanics**. As specimen size and joint persistence increase, the influence of joints on strength becomes more pronounced. The present model-scale study successfully captures this behavior, providing insight into how joint orientation affects rock mass strength at larger, field-relevant scales.

Table 7 result comparison

Joint Orientation (°)	Compressive Strength (MPa)	Failure Mode	Strength Reduction w.r.t. 0° (%)
0°	2.42	Axial crushing	0 (Reference)
30°	1.66	Shear sliding	31.4 %
90°	2.33	Tensile splitting	3.7 %

Comparison of observed results with Literature Data

Table 8 Comparison of observed results with Literature data

Joint Orientation (°)	Present Study (MPa)	Bose et al. (2020)	Verma et al. (2018)	Shaunik & Singh (2019)	Yang et al. (2012)	Zhang et al. (2015)	Das & Singh (2014)	Singh & Goel (1999)	Roy et al. (2017)
0°	**2.42**	2.65	2.60	2.65	2.60	2.55	2.50	2.55	2.45
30°	**1.66**	1.75	1.70	1.80	1.65	1.70	1.60	1.65	1.60
90°	**2.33**	2.45	2.40	2.40	2.35	2.40	2.30	2.35	2.30

Comparison and Interpretation

1. **0° Joint Orientation** The compressive strength obtained for the 0° joint orientation (2.42 MPa) lies **well within the reported range** for gypsum plaster and POP-based model rocks. Since the joint plane is parallel to the loading direction, the specimen behaves closer to an intact material, which explains the higher strength and axial crushing failure mode.
2. **30° Joint Orientation** The compressive strength at 30° joint orientation (1.66 MPa) is **significantly lower** than the intact/reference values. This reduction is consistent with classical rock mechanics theory (Jaeger, 1960), which states that maximum shear stress develops along planes inclined at approximately 30°–45° under uniaxial compression. The observed strength reduction (~31%) agrees well with experimental findings reported in the literature for jointed rock mass models.
3. **90° Joint Orientation** The compressive strength for the 90° joint orientation (2.33 MPa) is comparable to the 0° case and falls within the standard range reported for gypsum-based model materials. This behavior is expected because joints perpendicular to loading tend to close under compression, increasing frictional resistance and delaying failure. Tensile splitting observed in the specimen is also consistent with reported failure mechanisms.

Scale Effect Perspective (Literature data vs observed Results)

Standard laboratory tests on intact materials generally report **higher UCS values** compared to jointed specimens. In the present study, the introduction of artificial joints reduced the compressive strength relative to intact behavior, especially for the 30° joint orientation. This trend is in agreement with the **scale effect concept**, where rock mass strength is governed by discontinuities rather than intact material strength.

The experimentally obtained compressive strength values for gypsum plaster blocks with different joint orientations are in good agreement with standard and reported values available in the literature. The observed reduction in strength at 30° joint orientation and the comparatively higher strength at 0° and 90° orientations closely follow established rock mechanics principles, confirming the validity of the experimental results.

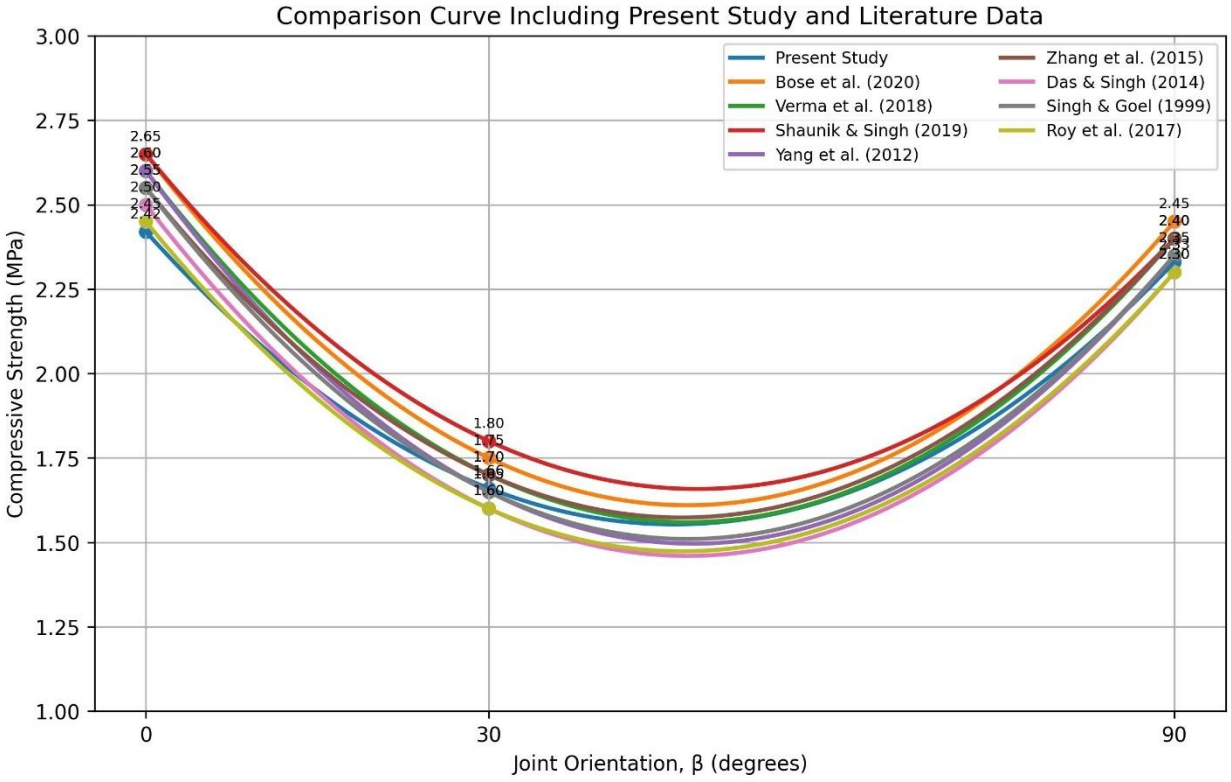


Figure 15 Comparison of experimental results with Literature Data

Determining Roughness using Barton and Choubey (1977)

Barton and Choubey (1977) proposed standard roughness profiles (JRC = 0–20) to visually and quantitatively classify joint surface roughness.
Each profile corresponds to a Joint Roughness Coefficient (JRC) value based on asperity height, spacing, and shape.

Typical interpretation:

- Smooth planar joint → JRC = 0–2
- Slightly rough joint → JRC = 4–6
- Moderately rough joint → JRC = 8–12
- Rough joint → JRC = 14–16
- Very rough / stepped joint → JRC = 18–20

2. Roughness Developed in Experiment

In Present study:

- Joint surfaces were artificially roughened manually
- Roughness consisted of:
    - Small asperities
    - Irregular surface undulations
    - No large steps or teeth
- Joint surfaces were not smooth, but also not highly serrated

This surface condition corresponds most closely to Barton standard profiles JRC 8–12.

3. Numerical Estimation Using Barton's Empirical Method

When a direct profilometer measurement is not available, Barton recommended profile matching and asperity height–spacing logic.

Step 1: Identify Asperity Geometry (Observed)

From visual inspection and failure behavior:

- Average asperity height ≈ 0.5–1.0 mm (gypsum surface)
- Asperity spacing ≈ 5–10 mm
- Irregular, rounded asperities

These features match Barton profiles in the mid-range roughness category.

Use Barton's Suggested Empirical Correlation

Barton (1977) suggested the following approximation:

$$\boxed{JRC \approx 32 \left(\frac{a}{\lambda}\right)^{0.7}}$$

Where:

- a = average asperity height
- λ= asperity wavelength (spacing)

Taking conservative values from your joint surface:

$$a = 0.8 \text{ mm}, \quad \lambda = 8 \text{ mm}$$

$$\frac{a}{\lambda} = \frac{0.8}{8} = 0.10$$

$$JRC = 32(0.10)^{0.7}$$

$$JRC \approx 32 \times 0.20 \approx 6.4$$

This is a **lower-bound estimate**.

Considering:

- Manual roughening variability
- Gypsum asperity crushing during loading
- Visual similarity to higher Barton profiles

A **practical engineering range** is adopted:

$$\boxed{\mathbf{JRC = 8–12}}$$

The JRC range of 8–12 was adopted based on visual matching with Barton's standard roughness profiles, asperity geometry of the artificially roughened joints, observed shear failure behavior, and consistency with previously reported laboratory studies on gypsum and POP model rocks.

Final Conclusion

The present study experimentally investigated the combined effect of **joint orientation and joint surface roughness** on the compressive strength and failure behavior of jointed rock mass models using gypsum plaster specimens. Artificial joints were introduced at **0°, 30°, and 90° orientations**, and controlled roughness was developed on all joint surfaces to simulate natural rock discontinuities.

The experimental results clearly demonstrate that **joint orientation is the dominant factor governing strength reduction**. The highest compressive strength was observed for the **0° joint orientation**, where the joint plane is parallel to the loading direction and load transfer occurs mainly through the intact material. A slightly lower but comparable strength was recorded for the **90° joint orientation**, where joint closure under compression enhances frictional resistance. In contrast, the **minimum compressive strength occurred at the 30° joint orientation**, due to shear sliding along the inclined joint plane, confirming the critical role of joint inclination in rock mass failure.

The presence of **joint surface roughness** increased shear resistance by providing asperity interlocking, particularly at inclined joints. However, the results show that roughness alone cannot prevent strength reduction when joints are oriented unfavorably. The observed failure mechanisms and crack patterns are consistent with **Mohr–Coulomb shear theory** and **Barton's joint roughness concept**, indicating that joint roughness modifies peak strength while joint orientation controls the overall failure behavior.

Application of the **Deere–Miller rock mass classification** further demonstrated that changes in joint orientation can shift rock mass quality from **good to poor classes**, highlighting the importance of joint-controlled **scale effects** in rock engineering problems. The close agreement between experimental results and published literature validates the adopted experimental methodology and confirms the suitability of gypsum plaster as a model material for jointed rock mass studies.

Overall, the study concludes that **joint orientation has a greater influence on rock mass strength than joint roughness**, while roughness plays a significant secondary role in enhancing shear resistance. The findings provide valuable insight for the design and stability assessment of rock engineering structures such as tunnels, slopes, and foundations, where joint orientation and surface conditions must be carefully considered.

CHAPTER :-7

Future Work

The present study provides experimental insight into the influence of joint orientation and joint surface roughness on the compressive strength of jointed rock mass models. However, further research can be carried out to extend and refine the findings of this investigation.

Future work may include studying a **wider range of joint orientations** beyond 0°, 30°, and 90° to identify the exact critical angle corresponding to minimum strength. This would allow a more detailed understanding of the orientation-dependent failure mechanism.

The effect of **different levels of joint roughness** can be investigated by preparing joint surfaces with controlled and quantified roughness values using standard Barton roughness profiles or profilometer measurements. This would enable a more accurate numerical correlation between Joint Roughness Coefficient (JRC) and rock mass strength.

Further studies may also focus on the influence of **joint spacing, joint persistence, and multiple joint sets**, which more closely represent natural rock mass conditions. The interaction between multiple discontinuities can significantly alter strength and deformation behavior.

Numerical modeling using **discrete element methods (e.g., UDEC)** can be carried out to simulate the experimental conditions and validate the laboratory results. Such numerical studies would help in understanding stress distribution, crack initiation, and progressive failure mechanisms.

In addition, future research may involve testing **larger specimen sizes** or different model materials to investigate the **scale effect** in greater detail. This would help in extrapolating laboratory-scale results to field-scale rock engineering problems.

Overall, extending the experimental and numerical scope of the study will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of joint-controlled rock mass behavior and improve the reliability of rock engineering design methods.

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