

1 Article

2 **Environmental Life Cycle Assessment of Recycled Coarse Aggregate and Textile Waste Fibers**3 **Abdul Rafay Awan¹, Muhammad Hayan Saif², Dr Faisal Javed³**4 ¹ Affiliation 1; rafayawan680@gmail.com5 ² Affiliation 2; hayansaif9@gmail.com

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7 **Abstract**

8 The use of textile waste and recycled concrete as alternative construction materials is important for advancing sustainability and encouraging a circular economy. In developing countries such as Pakistan, improper disposal of concrete and textile waste significantly adds toward environmental degradation. This study quantifies the Global Warming Potential (GWP) and Cumulative Energy Demand (CED) associated with the production of Recycled Coarse Aggregates (RCA) and recycled textile fibers. A cradle-to-gate Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) was conducted using the OpenLCA framework, incorporating Ecoinvent and NEEDS databases, and tailored to the Pakistani context with the 2025 energy mix. The results indicate that producing 1 ton of RCA results in a GWP of 8.86 kg CO₂e, while 1 kg of recycled textile fiber emits 0.212 kg CO₂e. Transportation is the primary energy consumer in the textile fiber sector, accounting for 76% of total demand, whereas processing machinery is the main contributor to RCA-related emissions. Recycled textile fibers exhibit a substantially lower carbon footprint compared to conventional synthetic fibers such as PET, basalt, and macro-synthetic fibers. This study sets an important environmental benchmark, demonstrating that RCA and recycled textile fibers are viable low-carbon, circular material strategies for the local construction sector.

9 **Keywords:** Life Cycle Assessment; Recycled Concrete Aggregate; Textile Waste Fiber; Circular Economy; Sustainability; Construction Materials.

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11 **1. Introduction**

12 Pakistan faces a critical dual challenge of rapid urbanization and unmanaged industrial waste. The country generates approximately 49.6 million tons of solid waste annually, with the construction sector contributing significantly to landfill saturation [1]. Simultaneously, as a major global textile hub, Pakistan produces an estimated 887 kilotons of pre-consumer textile waste per year. A large proportion of this waste is incinerated or openly dumped, exacerbating hazardous smog and air pollution in the region [2]. Advancing a circular economy requires the construction industry to utilize these waste streams as alternative building materials.

38 Recycled Concrete Aggregates (RCA) offer a sustainable alternative to virgin Natural
39 Aggregates (NA). While studies indicate that RCA can exhibit a 10–25% reduction in
40 compressive strength compared to natural aggregates, it remains highly effective for non-
41 structural applications, such as road sub-bases, pavements, and low-load bearing walls
42 [3]. To address potential performance limitations, the use of recovered textile fibers has
43 emerged as an innovative reinforcement strategy. Research indicates that incorporating
44 textile fibers can enhance the tensile strength and ductility of concrete by 11–38%, effec-
45 tively bridging micro-cracks and improving strain resistance [4].

46 Although the mechanical potential of these materials is well established, there is a signifi-
47 cant gap in quantifying their environmental impacts within the Pakistani context. Relia-
48 ble localized data is scarce, with nearly no studies specifically addressing the environ-
49 mental footprint of RCA and recycled textile fibers in the region [5][6]. Furthermore,
50 most existing Life Cycle Assessments (LCA) rely on generic global datasets that fail to
51 reflect the specific energy intensity of South Asian waste transportation and processing
52 [5]. This paper addresses this deficiency by performing a focused LCA of RCA and recov-
53 ered textile fibers. The study utilizes the OpenLCA computational framework, grating
54 background inventory data from the Ecoinvent and NEEDS databases to ensure method-
55 ological rigor. By quantifying the Global Warming Potential (GWP) and energy demand
56 of the “cradle-to-gate” processing phases, this work establishes a foundational environ-
57 mental baseline. These results show the need to close the regional data gap and will in-
58 form future experimental efforts to optimize the mechanical performance of fiber-rein-
59 forced composites for the local construction sector.

60 2. Materials and Methods

61 2.1 Materials

62 2.1.1 Textile Waste Fibers

63 Recycled textile fibers were procured from specialized recycling facilities located in Fai-
64 salabad, Pakistan’s primary textile processing hub [2]. This region serves as a central ag-
65 gregation point where pre-consumer textile waste—consisting predominantly of off-cuts
66 from knitting and woven fabric production—is transported. At the facility, the collected
67 waste underwent a multi-stage mechanical recycling process, including industrial shred-
68 ding and opening, to convert fabric scraps into a loose fibrous mass. The properties of
69 this recycled fiber are detailed in [Table 1](#).

70 The material used in this study was the final processed fiber, prepared for concrete rein-
71 forcement applications. The physical appearance of the fibers is shown in [Figure 1](#).



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73 *Figure 1: Textile fiber obtained from manufacturer (left) and prepared for use (right)*

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Table 1: Engineering properties of recycled textile fiber

Property	Value/Description
Composition	95% Polyester & 5% Elastane
Density	150 kg/m ³
Modulus @ 40% – Warp	0.55 N
Modulus @ 40% – Weft	0.45 N
Melting point	240 °C
Reaction with water	Hydrophobic

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2.1.2 Recycled Concrete Aggregates (RCA)

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The RCA used in this study was sourced from laboratory waste, specifically tested concrete cylinders from prior compressive strength experiments. This ensures a known parent concrete quality (typically 30–40 MPa). The waste cylinders were collected and processed to produce coarse aggregates.

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The concrete cylinders (Figure 2) were manually comminuted and screened to obtain a coarse aggregate fraction consistent with ASTM C33 standards [7]. The aggregates were washed to remove excessive adhered mortar dust before use.

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Figure 2: Recycled aggregates obtained from cylinders.

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2.2 Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) Framework

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Life cycle assessment is conducted in accordance with the International Standards Organization's 14040 and 14044 instructional guidelines in four phases. These four phases are explained below.

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2.3 Goal and Scope Definition

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The primary goal of this assessment is to quantify the Cumulative Energy Demand (CED) and Global Warming Potential (GWP) of processing waste streams into usable construction materials. The assessment strictly follows the ISO 14040 environmental management framework [8].

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- **Scale-Up Assumption:** Although laboratory samples were prepared manually, this LCA models an industrial-scale scenario using standard heavy machinery (Jaw

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Crushers, Vibrating Screens) rather than manual labor. This approach assures the results are relevant to the construction industry and correctly reflect the fuel and electricity consumption of real-world implementation.

- **Functional Unit:** 1 ton of Recycled Concrete Aggregate (RCA) and 1 kg of Recycled Textile Waste Fiber, processed and ready for mixing in concrete.
- **System Boundary:** The study adopts a “cradle-to-gate” approach. The boundary encompasses raw material extraction (waste collection), transportation to the recycling facility, and all subsequent mechanical processing steps (crushing, shredding, washing), which are listed in Figure 3.

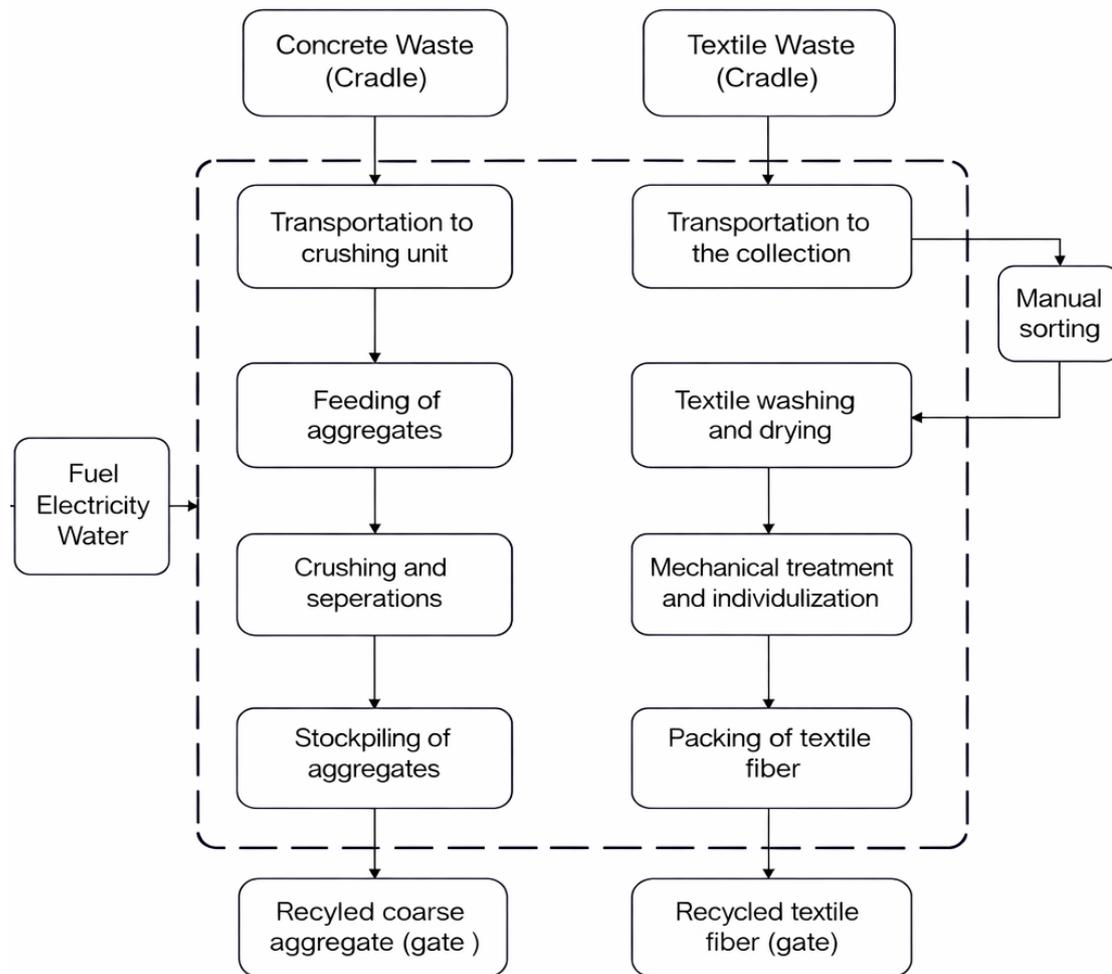


Figure 3: System boundary flowchart to produce Recycled Coarse Aggregates (RCA) and Recycled Textile Fibers.

The system boundary is defined using a cradle-to-gate approach, encompassing raw material procurement, transportation, and primary recycling stages for both RCA and textile fibers. To ensure a focused comparative examination, auxiliary processes for recovering non-fiber or non-aggregate co-products—such as sand, garment accessories, and decorative wood chips—are excluded. Furthermore, given the consistency of raw materials such

as cement and admixtures, as well as the uniformity of construction and maintenance across fiber-reinforced concrete types, these factors are deemed outside the scope.

Consistent with Lei et al. [9], a material recovery rate of 65% was applied for RCA production. Consequently, to deliver the functional unit of 1 ton of RCA, the system accounts for the processing of 1.54 tons of raw waste, treating the non-aggregate fraction as system loss.

2.4 Life Cycle Inventory (LCI)

Life Cycle Inventory modeling was performed using the OpenLCA software framework [13]. Primary data on machinery energy consumption and throughput were obtained from manufacturer specifications and local industrial surveys to ensure representativeness under Pakistani operating conditions. Background data, including regional electricity generation mixes, diesel combustion profiles, and emission factors, were sourced from Ecoinvent v3.8 and Needs database and national energy sector reports [10] - [12].

- **Transportation:** Transportation logistics were modeled using 32-ton heavy-duty trucks for both material streams. For Recycled Coarse Aggregates (RCA), a transport distance of 70 km was assumed from a waste recovery site in Hariipur (KPK). In contrast, the textile fibers were modeled with a 400 km haul from the recycling facility in Faisalabad (Punjab). Although the vehicle class remained consistent, distinct LCI datasets were used to accurately calculate the Global Warming Potential (GWP) for each supply chain.
- **Energy Mix:** A country-specific Pakistan electricity grid model was developed. A conservative" pessimistic" grid factor was applied, accounting for 18% transmission and distribution losses [14]. The grid composition for the year 2025 is detailed in [Table 2](#).

Table 2: Electricity Grid Data of Pakistan (2025 Projection)[12][14].

Parameter / Energy Source	Share (%)
Thermal (Gas, Coal, Oil)	46.3% [12]
Hydel (Hydroelectric)	30.4% [12]
Nuclear	19.1% [12]
Renewables (Wind/Solar)	4.2% [12]
T&D Losses (Grid Inefficiency)	17.55% [14]

2.4.1 Inventory of Recycled Coarse Aggregate (RCA)

Transportation and excavation impacts were modeled in OpenLCA using validated Ecoinvent v3.8 datasets for heavy-duty road transport. Electricity-related impacts were evaluated using a country-specific Pakistan electricity grid model developed within

OpenLCA. To ensure model durability, software results were cross-verified through independent manual calculations.

Grid-related impacts were validated using the following formulations, accounting for the regional electricity generation mix and transmission and distribution losses (L):

$$CI = \frac{\sum_i S_i EF_i}{1 - L}$$

$$PEF = \frac{\sum_i S_i PEF_i}{1 - L}$$

where CI is the grid carbon intensity emission factor, PEF is the grid primary energy factor, S_i represents the share of electricity generation from source i , EF_i and PEF_i are the source-specific life-cycle emission and primary energy factors, respectively, and L denotes the transmission and distribution loss factor.

Consistency between these formulations and OpenLCA outputs confirms that the model accurately represents the regional environmental profile of recycled concrete aggregate (RCA) production.

The operational characteristics of the machinery used in RCA production are summarized in Table 3. On-site material-handling operations, including aggregate feeding and stockpiling, were modeled based on the fuel consumption of Komatsu PC200-8 hydraulic excavators, assuming a realistic load factor of 0.45, representative of continuous industrial material-handling operations. As excavators do not have a fixed rated throughput, an effective handling capacity of approximately 125 t/h was estimated based on manufacturer specifications and observed operating conditions.

The RCA production operation was modeled as a mobile crushing and screening system. Primary crushing was performed using an HX938HD86 mobile impact crusher, while screening, magnetic separation, and dust suppression constituted secondary electrical loads. Dust suppression was facilitated by an IRG 40-200-4 inline centrifugal pump with a rated power of 4.0 kW. Internal material transport was handled by three B800-series belt conveyors, serving crusher discharge, RCA stockpiling, and fines separation. For inventory simplification, the conveyors were modeled as a single functional unit with a total installed power of 19 kW (two 7.5 kW units and one 4 kW unit). Energy consumption was calculated under the assumption of steady-state operation at the rated plant throughput.

Table 3: Operational characteristics of the RCA crushing and screening circuit.

Process Stage	Manufacturer	Machine Unit	Model	Capacity (t/h)	Power (kW)
Feeding	Komatsu Ltd.	Hydraulic Excavator	PC200-8	125	110 (Diesel) [15]
Crushing	Henan Liming	Mobile Impact Station	HX938HD86	125	300 (Elec) [16]
Dust Suppression	Shanghai Kaiquan	Inline Pump	IRG 40-200-4	125	4.0 (Elec) [17]
Separation	Henan Hongxing	Vibrating Screen	3YK-1548	150	15.0 (Elec) [18]
Separation (Aux)	Fushun Ejet	Magnetic Separator	RCYD-8	125	2.2 (Elec) [19]
Conveying	Henan Hongxing	Belt Conveyors	B800	125	19.0 (Elec) [20]
Stockpiling	Komatsu Ltd.	Hydraulic Excavator	PC200-8	125	110 (Diesel) [15]

2.4.2 Inventory of Textile Waste

Transportation impact here was modeled in OpenLCA using validated NEEDS datasets for heavy-duty road transport. The Rest Global Warming Potential (GWP) assessment methodology, including electricity grid carbon intensity calculation, and transmission loss correction, was identical to that applied for recycled concrete aggregate (RCA) production. The same OpenLCA framework and characterization approach were used, with differences limited to the foreground inventory.

The operational characteristics of the Machinery used in the textile waste recycling line are summarized in Table 4. The system boundary includes auxiliary equipment and support loads typically excluded from nominal vendor ratings.

The Tunnel Washer (SDX60-13) power demand includes the rated drum drive as well as an additional **5.0 kW** for hydraulic circulation and auxiliary pumping systems. Drying operations were carried out using a **TYD-7** continuous belt dryer, selected to match upstream material throughput.

Shredding and opening stages were modeled to include both feed motors and pneumatic transport fans. Packing operations were performed using an **FPS-1 semi-automatic baler**, with total power demand reflecting the baler drive, external air compressor, and integrated heat-sealing unit.

Table 4: Operational characteristics of textile waste recycling machine.

Process Stage	Manufacturer	Machine Unit	Model	Throughput (kg/h)	Power
Washing	Jiangsu Sea-Lion	Tunnel Washer	SDX60-13	1200	29.2 [21]
Drying	Qingdao Huarui	Belt Dryer	TYD-7	1000	44.0 [22]
Shredding	Qingzhou Xinhang	Fibre Cutter	SBJ800	500	8.5 [23]
Opening	Qingdao Seanoel	Textile Opener	SN-OP350	300	12.0 [24]
Packing	Taizhou Bitop	Semi-Auto Baler	FPS-1	250	2.8 [25]

3. Results

3.1 Life Cycle Impact Assessment (LCIA)

Life Cycle Impact Assessment (LCIA) was conducted to translate the compiled life cycle inventory flows into environmental impact indicators using the OpenLCA software framework. LCIA quantifies indicators of environmental pressure—such as climate change, natural resource depletion, and human health effects—associated with interventions occurring across the life cycle of a product, based on established characterization factors.

In this study, the impact assessment primarily focuses on **Global Warming Potential (GWP)**, as **greenhouse gas (GHG)** emissions represent the most relevant indicator for evaluating recycling-based material production systems. Emissions are expressed as carbon dioxide equivalents (**kg CO₂e**), allowing aggregation of contributions from different energy carriers. Fossil energy demand includes both direct fuel consumption (e.g., diesel use in transportation and material handling) and indirect energy associated with electricity consumption.

3.2 Interpretation

3.1.1 Recycled Coarse Aggregate (RCA)

The Auxiliary processes like Dust Suppression and the magnetic separators contribute the least in the total GWP. Overall, the hybrid modeling approach, combining fuel-based calculations for mobile equipment and electricity-based modeling for stationary processes, enhances lucidity and strengthens the robustness of environmental assessment. The Auxiliary processes like Dust Suppression and the magnetic separators contribute the least in the total GWP. Overall, the hybrid modeling approach, combining fuel-based calculations for mobile equipment and electricity-based modeling for stationary processes, enhances lucidity and strengthens the robustness of environmental assessment.

Table 5 shows the total GWP and the CED to produce 1 ton of recycled coarse aggregate. For the RCA production system, LCIA results indicate that **transportation and diesel-based material handling** are the dominant contributors to GWP, while **electricity-driven crushing and separation processes** represent a secondary but non-negligible share of emissions. The use of a

250 **65% recovery rate** provides a realistic representation of industrial RCA production and en-
 251 sures consistency between material flows, energy demand, and emissions.

252 The Auxiliary processes like Dust Suppression and the magnetic separators contribute the least
 253 in the total GWP. Overall, the hybrid modeling approach, combining fuel-based calculations
 254 for mobile equipment and electricity-based modeling for stationary processes, enhances lucid-
 255 ity and strengthens the robustness of environmental assessment. The Auxiliary processes like
 256 Dust Suppression and the magnetic separators contribute the least in the total GWP. Overall,
 257 the hybrid modeling approach, combining fuel-based calculations for mobile equipment and
 258 electricity-based modeling for stationary processes, enhances lucidity and strengthens the ro-
 259 bustness of environmental assessment.

261 *Table 5: LCI and GHG emissions for producing 1 ton of RCA.*

Process Stage	Energy Source	CED (MJ)	GHG (kg CO ₂ e)
Transportation (Lorry)	Diesel	72.48	5.366
Feeding (Excavator)	Diesel	4.83	0.355
Crushing (Impact Crusher)	Electricity	16.20	2.470
<i>Aux: Dust Suppression</i>	Electricity	0.22	0.030
Separation (Vibrating Screen)	Electricity	0.68	0.100
<i>Aux: Magnetic Separator</i>	Electricity	0.12	0.020
Conveying	Electricity	1.03	0.160
Stockpiling (Excavator)	Diesel	4.83	0.355
TOTAL (per 1 ton)		100.4	8.86

262 3.1.2 Recycled Textile Fiber

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 264 **Table 6** shows the total GWP and the CED to produce 1 kg of recycled textile fiber. The LCIA
 265 results indicate that transportation dominates the energy demand of textile waste fiber recy-
 266 cling, accounting for approximately 76% of total energy consumption). This dominance is at-
 267 tributed to the low bulk density of textile fibers, which leads to inefficient payload utilization
 268 and increased transport energy per unit mass.

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 270 In contrast, electricity-driven processing stages contribute the majority of on-site GHG emis-
 271 sions, with drying and opening operations being the most energy-intensive among the me-
 272 chanical processes. The combined results show the sensitivity of textile recycling systems to
 273 transport distance and material density, suggesting that logistical optimization and densifica-
 274 tion strategies might significantly reduce overall environmental impacts.

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Table 6: LCI and Impact Results for producing 1 kg of Textile Fiber.

Process Stage	Energy Source	Energy (MJ/kg)	GHG (kg CO ₂ e/kg)
Transportation	Diesel	1.96	0.120
Washing	Electricity	0.107	0.016
Drying	Electricity	0.193	0.030
Shredding	Electricity	0.075	0.011
Opening	Electricity	0.176	0.027
Packing	Electricity	0.049	0.008
TOTAL (per 1 kg)		2.56	0.212

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4. Discussion

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4.1 Recycled Coarse Aggregate (RCA)

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The environmental assessment of 1 ton of recycled coarse aggregate (RCA) resulted in a Global Warming Potential (GWP) of **8.86 kg CO₂-eq** and a cumulative energy demand of **100.4 MJ**. In contrast, published life-cycle assessment (LCA) studies report average GWP values of approximately **28.6 kg CO₂-eq/t** and non-renewable energy demand of around **401 MJ/t** for natural aggregates (NA). This comparison indicates an approximate 69% reduction in GWP when RCA is used as a substitute for virgin aggregates [26], [27]. Such reductions are consistent with previous studies that identify recycled aggregates as a lower-impact alternative to conventional aggregate production.

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A direct, site-specific comparison between RCA and NA production, however, is inherently difficult due to substantial variability in aggregate properties, extraction techniques, crushing technologies, and operating conditions across several regions and production sites. This variation is especially marked in the context of Pakistan, where standardized and spatially representative inventory data for natural aggregate production and end-of-life landfilling practices are limited or inadequately reported. As a result, a direct comparison between RCA production and landfilling scenarios could not be robustly established within the local context.

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Given these constraints, benchmarking RCA against representative average values from literature provides a more defensible and transparent basis for environmental comparison. Despite uncertainties related to regional variability and data availability, the results reliably demonstrate that RCA shows markedly lower environmental burdens than natural aggregates. This advantage is especially evident when transport distances are comparable, a factor widely recognized as a dominant contributor to the environmental impacts associated with aggregate production and supply chains[27].

4.2 Recycled Textile Fiber

The environmental assessment of 1 kg of recycled textile fiber conducted in this study resulted in a Global Warming Potential (GWP) of **2.12 kg CO₂-eq** and a cumulative energy demand (CED) of **2.56 MJ**. In comparison, a recently published life-cycle assessment reports a GWP of **0.338 kg CO₂-eq/kg** and a **CED of 3.610 MJ/kg** for recycled textile fiber production under a different system configuration [28]. Although both studies employ comparable functional units and broadly similar system boundaries, the variation in results can be attributed to differences in process modeling and underlying assumptions.

In the referenced study, the recycling process is based on **GM 600** and **GM 250** machines, which primarily perform opening and cleaning functions and do not represent dedicated washing or sorting operations. By contrast, the present study explicitly models separate washing and sorting stages, including manual sorting, to better reflect industrial recycling practice. Transportation was also modeled differently, with this study adopting **32-ton heavy-duty trucks** from the Ecoinvent database, whereas the referenced study assumes trucks with a **2,000 kg** carrying capacity, resulting in higher transport intensity per functional unit. In addition, conservative (pessimistic) assumptions were intentionally applied to energy use and transport to avoid underestimation of impacts. As a result, although the calculated GWP is higher than that reported in the literature, the findings provide a robust and transparent estimate of the environmental performance of recycled textile fiber production under realistic industrial conditions.

Textile waste fiber, like several alternative fiber reinforcements, is primarily utilized in concrete to enhance **toughness, ductility, and crack control**, rather than to significantly increase compressive strength. Previous studies have demonstrated that fibers such as **recycled PET, basalt, jute, and kenaf** provide comparable post-cracking and deformation-related benefits when incorporated into cementitious composites.

To place the environmental performance of textile waste fiber in a broader sustainability context, its life-cycle greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are compared with those of other fibers commonly investigated for concrete applications, as presented in **Table 7**. All comparative values are reported in the literature as cradle-to-gate GWP expressed per unit mass of fiber.

Table 7: Comparison of GWP of fibers used in concrete.

Fiber Type	GWP (kg CO ₂ e / kg)	Reference
Textile waste fiber	0.212	This study
Recycled PET fiber	~0.45	[29]
Basalt fiber	~1.90	[30]
Jute fiber	~0.57	[31]
Kenaf fiber	0.45–0.52	[32]

The comparison shows that textile waste fiber exhibits a lower GHG emission intensity than all other fibers considered, including recycled PET, basalt, jute, and kenaf fibers. While these alternative fibers have been shown to improve cracking resistance and post-peak behavior in concrete, their higher life-cycle emissions highlight the environmental advantage of textile waste fiber. The results therefore underline the strong potential of textile waste fiber as a low-carbon, circular reinforcement material for sustainable concrete applications.

5. Conclusions

This study presented a cradle-to-gate life cycle assessment of Recycled Coarse Aggregate (RCA) and recycled textile waste fiber intended for concrete applications, providing a regionally relevant environmental benchmark for waste-derived construction materials. The results confirm that RCA production exhibits a substantially lower environmental burden than representative values reported for natural aggregate production and landfilling, with transportation and diesel-based material handling identified as the dominant contributors. For recycled textile fiber, transportation governs cumulative energy demand, while electricity-intensive processing stages primarily drive greenhouse gas emissions. The conservative modeling approach adopted assures that the reported results are representative of realistic industrial conditions.

A comparative assessment with fibers commonly used in concrete indicates that recycled textile waste fiber exhibits a lower greenhouse gas emission intensity than recycled PET, basalt, jute, and kenaf fibers, while offering comparable improvements in toughness, ductility, and crack control. These conclusions highlight the possibility of combining RCA and textile waste fiber as a low-carbon, circular material strategy for non-structural and low-to-moderate performance concrete applications.

Future research needs to prioritize the development of region-specific environmental and cost data for natural aggregate production and construction and demolition waste landfilling to allow robust local comparisons. A full life cycle assessment of concrete incorporating RCA and recycled textile fibers is also required, extending beyond material production to include construction, service life, and end-of-life stages. In parallel, further studies must focus on mechanical optimization and durability performance of fiber-reinforced RCA concrete, as well as comparative evaluation of textile fibers in both RCA- and natural aggregate-based concrete systems, to support the development of low-carbon concrete solutions.

Abbreviations

1. ASTM – ASTM International
2. CED – Cumulative Energy Demand
3. CSCE – Conference on Sustainable Civil Engineering
4. GHG – Greenhouse Gas
5. GWP – Global Warming Potential
6. ISO – International Organization for Standardization
7. LCA – Life Cycle Assessment
8. LCI – Life Cycle Inventory
9. LCIA – Life Cycle Impact Assessment
10. NA – Natural Aggregates
11. NEEDS – New Energy Externalities Developments for Sustainability
12. NEPRA – National Electric Power Regulatory Authority
13. RCA – Recycled Coarse Aggregates / Recycled Concrete Aggregates

378 14. T&D – Transmission and Distribution

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