

1 **Optimum Mix Design for Internal Impregnated Concrete with Crystallising Material to Enhance**
2 **Hydrophobicity**

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17 **ABSTRACT**

18 In this research, a Silica-based crystallising protective material was integrated into a fresh concrete mix to evaluate
19 its efficacy in reducing water absorption while preserving the compressive strength level of the mixture. An
20 optimum concrete mix design was determined, by producing several concrete mixes with different water to cement
21 ratios of 0.32, 0.37, 0.40, and 0.46, and treated with 2% and 4% of the crystallising admixture. Water absorption
22 and the mechanical properties of the treated and control mixes were measured, using the Initial Surface Absorption
23 Test (ISAT) and the compressive strength and the flexural strength tests respectively. Results showed that it is
24 possible to obtain a water-resistant concrete without compromising its compressive strength if the right w/c ratio
25 was used and the proper dosage of the crystallising material was added. In addition, results revealed that treatment
26 is beneficial only in the case of producing concrete with a low w/c ratios of 0.32 and 0.37 and treated with the
27 crystallising material. The compressive strength can increase up to 42% and with a significant drop in water
28 absorption reaches 65%. Treated concrete was analysed thoroughly under the SEM and XRD instruments to show
29 the development of crystals with time and their interaction with the concrete mix. Also, the hydrophobicity, in

1 terms of contact angle measurement, of all the mixes were evaluated to support outcomes from the mechanical
2 and water resistant tests.

3

4 *Keywords:* Fresh concrete, Concrete pavement, Hydrophobic treatment, Crystallising material, Compressive
5 Strength, Flexural Strength, Permeability, Water absorption, Mix design

1 **1. Introduction**

2 In recent years, concrete is regaining importance in infrastructure engineering for being more energy efficient
3 material as it consumes less fuel, its life is longer than other materials, and it needs fewer maintenance works [1].
4 Large-scale use of concrete in infrastructure engineering is to build bridges and concrete pavement for roads,
5 airports, ports and in industrial ground floors. In the United Kingdom alone there are more than 61,000 highways
6 and road bridges, most of them are made of reinforced concrete [2]. In the United States, there are more than
7 158,000 miles of highways and road networks, which are constructed from concrete [3]. Although these structures
8 were designed and built to withstand deterioration, they still need to be counted for some maintenance procedures,
9 as they are affected by the surrounding environment [4].

10 The cost of repairing and maintaining concrete bridges, for example, is highly expensive and needs high
11 financial support from highway authorities. As a result, and to reduce the expenses of repairing bridges and any
12 other concrete structure, Purvis et al. (1994) believe that the most cost-effective solution will be through taking
13 some actions at the construction level [5]. In this regard, protecting concrete by adding protective materials at the
14 mixing stage may result in a cost-effective solution for concrete deterioration and distresses.

15 Protective materials have been under investigation for a long time as a result of the need for adequate
16 concrete protection against probable distresses that would develop in the future due to atmospheric and
17 environmental conditions. A lot of materials with different properties and way of functioning were tested along
18 the previous years, like cementitious coatings, moisture blockers, crystallising materials, and a lot more [6, 7 and
19 2]. The majority of research conducted in the 1990s and following years concentrated more on silane and siloxane
20 based materials as they have proven their efficacy in protecting concrete and enhancing its durability [8-12].
21 However, these protective materials have been proven to have harmful effects on the environment as they are
22 made from solvent materials. In addition to that, most research, conducted on this type of materials, focused more
23 on the depth of penetration that silane-based materials could reach [13]. This drove many research institutes and
24 companies to look for more environmentally friendly materials, and to study other materials where the penetration
25 depth of these treatments is not a significant problem [14, 2]. Some of these materials fall under the green
26 treatments, extracted from natural products, like vegetable oils and fatty acids [16-18], and animal blood and fats
27 [19].

28 When it comes to highways, treating hardened concrete would involve some inconvenient procedures
29 like closing the roadway to traffic to allow concrete pavement to be impregnated [20]. From this point, researchers
30 started to look for new solutions to escape from such inconveniences which are also more cost-effective. Internal

1 impregnation of waterproofing materials into the concrete mix, at mixing stage, was the most appropriate solution
2 for this issue. Many research were carried out on this discipline, and most of them focused on using silane and
3 siloxane based materials as internal impregnants but with different compositions [21-26]. However, most of these
4 treatments negatively affected the compressive strength of the treated concrete regardless of their waterproofing
5 effect. Adding to that, the environmental risks, mentioned previously, that this kind of materials represents due to
6 the existence of solvent agents in their components. From this point, the world started to avoid using such materials
7 and trends toward utilising some environment-friendly materials like crystallising, silicate risen, and
8 fluoropolymer admixtures, to drive down environment deterioration [2, 14]. Pazderka and Hájková (2016)
9 managed to decrease concrete permeability by using a commercially available crystalline material. However, a
10 small reduction in compressive strength was observed when adding the material to the mix [27]. In a recent
11 research, former researchers found that the maximum efficacy of a crystalline material in reducing water
12 absorption will be reached after 12 days from applying the material [28].

13 Despite the fact that most of research conducted on internal impregnation of fresh concrete reached a
14 high level of waterproofing, compressive strength values were dropped down. Furthermore, all these research
15 were performed only on high water to cement ratio mixes.

16 This research, which is a continuation to a previous study by authors [14, 15], jumps from the need to
17 test new eco internal impregnants that provide high protection against water ingress without compromising the
18 compressive strength of treated concrete.

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20 **2. Research Objectives**

21 This study emerges from the need to find an optimum mix that combines both; waterproofing and high
22 compressive strength, and to overcome the problem of decreased strength when fresh concrete is internally
23 impregnated to waterproof.

24 The objectives of this research are:

25 (1) Study the performance of a Silica-based crystallising impregnant added to the concrete mix at early
26 mixing stages, in terms of strength and water permeability.

27 (2) Evaluate the performance of different percentages of the crystallising material, and their effect on
28 concrete slump when produced with different water to cement ratios.

(3) Produce an optimum concrete mix that contains the optimum w/c ratio and proportion of crystallising material, to reach the maximum possible waterproofing level without negatively affecting the compressive strength.

3. Experimental Work

3.1 Materials

Concrete mixes, with different w/c ratios; 0.32, 0.37, 0.40, 0.46, were produced following the British standards BS 1881-125 [29]. During the process of mixing the essential concrete ingredients, the Silica-based crystallising hydrophobic material MNR, which conforms to BS EN 1504-2 [30], were added to the mix with two different proportions of 2% and 4%. The mix design proportions for the different mixes are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - Adopted Mix Design for Different W/C Ratios

Ingredient	Amount (Kg/m ³)			
	W/C=0.32	W/C=0.37	W/C=0.40	W/C= 0.46
Cement	513	491	450	457
Water	164	182	180	210
Fine aggregate	658	660	678	660
Coarse aggregate	1068	1070	1092	1073

The characteristics and main components of MNR admixture are listed in Table 2.

Table 2 – Characteristics and Constituent of MNR Hydrophobic Admixture

Constituent	Physical and Chemical Properties	
Silica	Specific gravity	1.6
Proprietary Alkaline Earth Compound	Appearance	Powder
Portland Cement	Boiling point	104 °C
⋮	Freezing point	-4 °C
⋮	pH	12 (in water)

	Solubility	Partially soluble
	Relative density	1.6
	Toxicity	None

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It is noteworthy that the 2% and 4% proportions of material MNR were added to the total amount of each mix, as stated in the manufacturer instructions, without affecting the proportions of the original mix design.

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All the treated mixes were tested to check their resistance to absorb water, and their capability to conserve the compressive strength without dropping down. A control mix, with 0% additive, was produced for each mix for comparisons reasons. The description and coding of each mix are mentioned in Table 3.

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Table 3 - Coding of the Different Concrete Mixes and the Accompanying Tests

Code	W/C ratio	Material percentage	Testing
32/0MNR	0.32	0%	<u>Fresh mixture:</u> Slump test for consistency <u>Cured specimens:</u> Initial Surface Absorption (ISAT) Compressive strength Flexural strength Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) X-Ray Diffractometer (XRD) Contact Angle
32/2MNR		2%	
32/4MNR		4%	
37/0MNR	0.37	0%	
37/2MNR		2%	
37/4MNR		4%	
40/0MNR	0.40	0%	
40/2MNR		2%	
40/4MNR		4%	
46/0MNR	0.46	0%	
46/2MNR		2%	
46/4MNR		4%	

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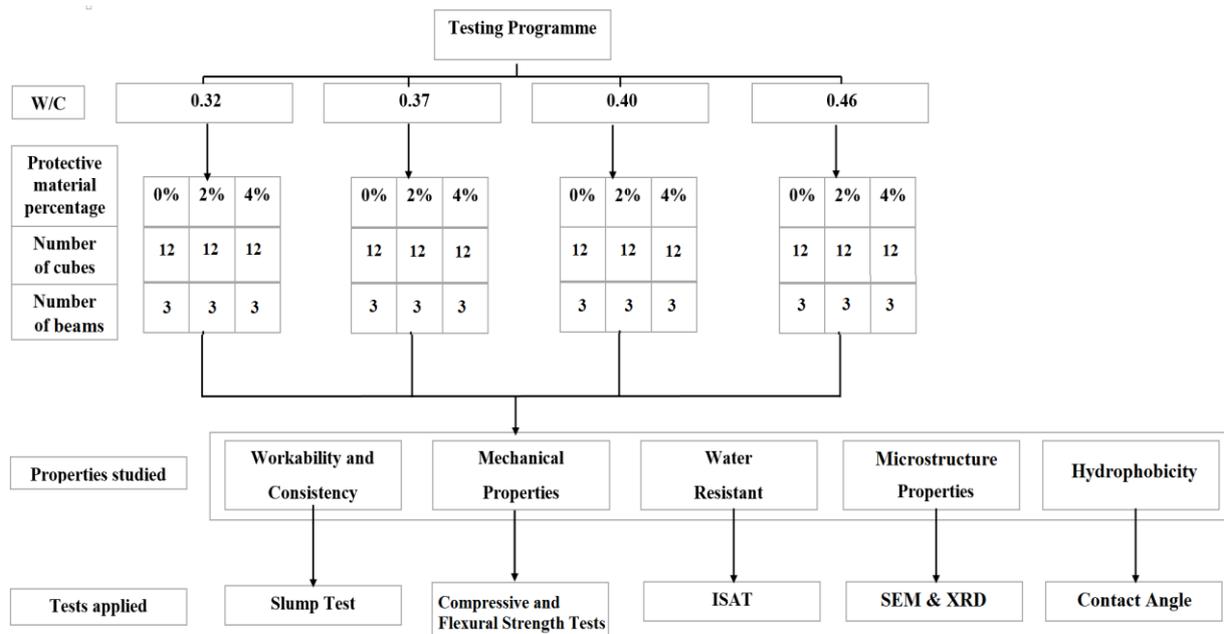
10 **3.2 Procedure**

11 For the purpose of testing concrete under the proposed objectives, 144 concrete cubes, with 100mm x 100mm x
 12 100mm size, were produced; 48 cubes used as a control mix, 48 cubes treated with 2% of MNR, and 48 cubes
 13 treated with 4% of MNR. All the produced cubes were conventionally cured in a water tank at a 20 °C temperature

1 for 7, 14 and 28 days before testing them at these periods. In addition, 36 concrete beams with 100mm x 100mm
 2 x 500mm size were produced and cured in the same aforementioned conditions; 12 beams used as a control mix,
 3 12 beams treated with 2% of MNR, and 12 beams treated with 4% of MNR.

4 Figure 1 represents an outline of the test specifications, including the number of cubes used for each mix
 5 and the tests that were used to assess their performance.

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8 **Figure 1 - Testing map for assessing the performance of treated and control concrete mixes.**

9

10 In the beginning, concrete consistency of the treated mixes was evaluated by using the slump test,
 11 following the BS EN 12350-2 [31]. Moreover, as shown in the chart, water permeability was tested using the
 12 Initial Surface Absorption Test (ISAT) which complies with BS EN 1881-208 [32]. This test was carried out after
 13 finishing the 7, 14 and 28 days curing periods and removing the cubes from the water bath, and placing them in
 14 the lab under a temperature of 20°C to dry until they achieve a constant mass. After ISAT test, the same samples
 15 were used to test the compressive strength of each mix following the BS EN 12390-3 [33], as the ISAT is a non-
 16 destructive test. Also, flexural strengths of all mixes were determined by testing the beams using the two-point
 17 loading method, following BS EN 12390-5 [34]. Finally, the degree of hydrophobicity of treated and control
 18 samples was evaluated by measuring the contact angle (θ) between the surface of concrete and the sessile drop
 19 (sitting drop) of water [35]. This test was run by using the goniometer device which includes a video recorder and
 20 an image processing software [35].

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4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Slump Outcomes

Results from this test are outlined in Table 4 with some observations noted after 28 days of curing.

Table 4 - Concrete Workability for Different Treated Concrete Mixes

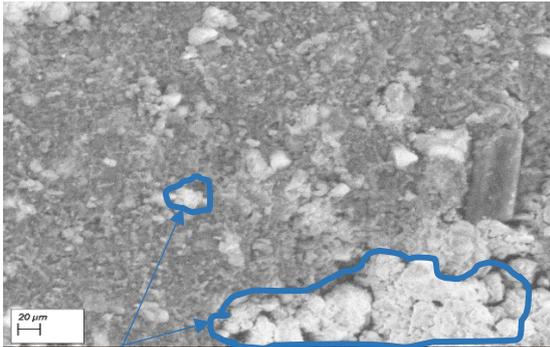
Concrete mix	Slump (mm)	Comments
32/2MNR	0	No cracks observed
32/4MNR	0	No cracks observed
37/2MNR	5	No cracks observed
37/4MNR	20	No cracks observed
40/2MNR	15	No cracks observed
40/4MNR	70	No cracks observed
46/2MNR	50	No cracks observed
46/4MNR	160	No cracks observed

Although the slump value for the 46/4MNR mix was very high, this mix did not develop any cracks through the 28 days of curing. Also, like the other mixes, no segregation was observed at all.

In the case of 32/2MNR and 32/4MNR, concrete was hard and, as obvious, the slump values for both mixes were zero. However, despite the difficulties in compacting such mix, a very well compacted concrete was produced with no apparent cracks.

4.2 Microstructure Study

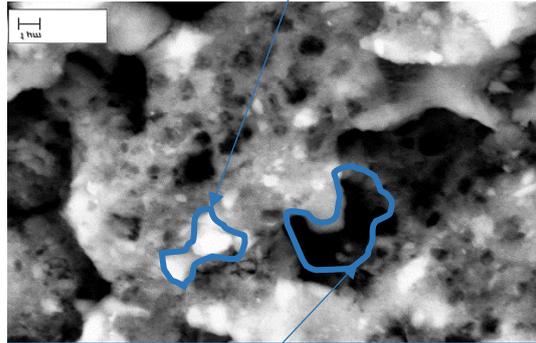
Treated concrete specimens were studied under the Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) at different magnifications ranging between 500X and 12000X, after day one, day three and day seven of casting to evaluate the development and distribution of the crystals, and their interaction with the essential concrete ingredients. Figure 2 illustrates the growth and allocation of crystals with time inside the concrete mix.



Uniform dispersion, full-grown crystals, rough texture

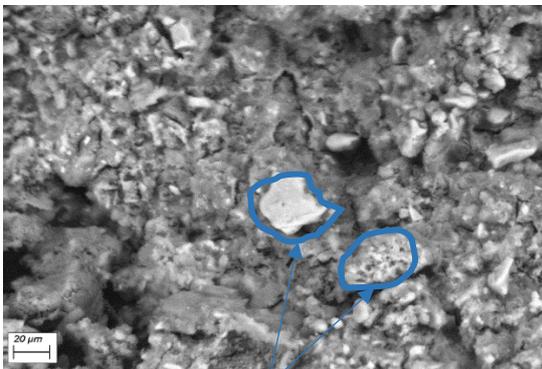
(a)

Fully developed crystals, integrated within concrete, lining the pores



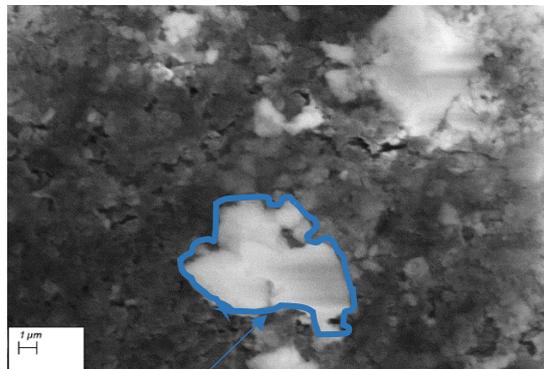
Pores in the concrete mix with approximately larger sizes than the crystals

(b)



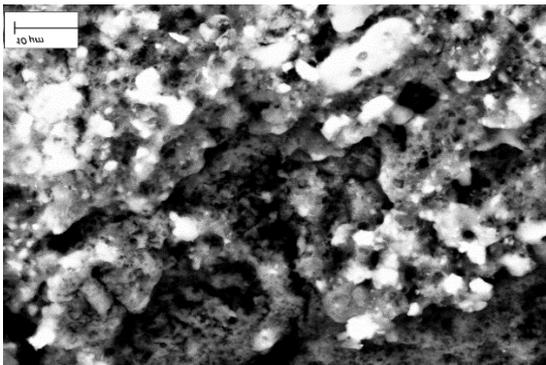
Distribution of crystals within the concrete structure

(c)

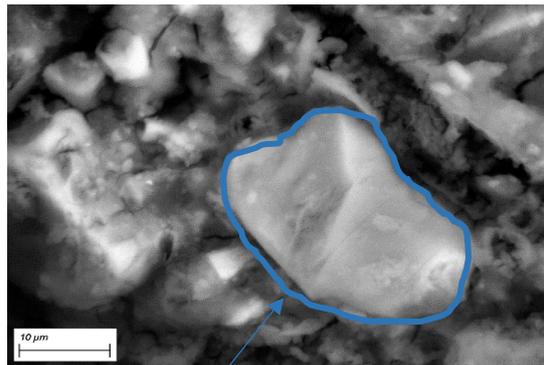


Fully-developed crystals

(d)



(e)



A high magnified view for a crystal

(f)

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1 **Figure 2 - An SEM analysis for the interaction between MNR admixture and concrete after (a) 1 day**
 2 **under 500X magnification (b) 1 day under 5000X (c) 3 days under 1000X magnification (d) 3 days under**
 3 **5000X magnification (e) 7 days under 5000X magnification (f) 7 days under 12000 magnification.**

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 5 MNR material absorbs some of the water used in the concrete mix to form its crystals. These crystals
 6 grow and develop within the first 24 hours of casting concrete, and they integrate within the concrete ingredients
 7 in a very early age. This could be noticed from Figures 2 a-f, where the sequence of the pictures taken from day
 8 1 until day 7, show that the size and distribution of the crystals maintained the same throughout the tested period.

9 In parallel, treated concrete was tested under the X-Ray Diffractometer (XRD) instrument and analysed
 10 by using Scherrer equation to identify the size of crystals, and to check if there is any change in the size during
 11 the time [36];

$$D = \frac{K \cdot \lambda}{\beta \cos \theta}$$

12
 13 Where,

14 D: the crystal size

15 λ : X-ray wavelength

16 β : the width of the peak (radians)

17 θ : Bragg angle

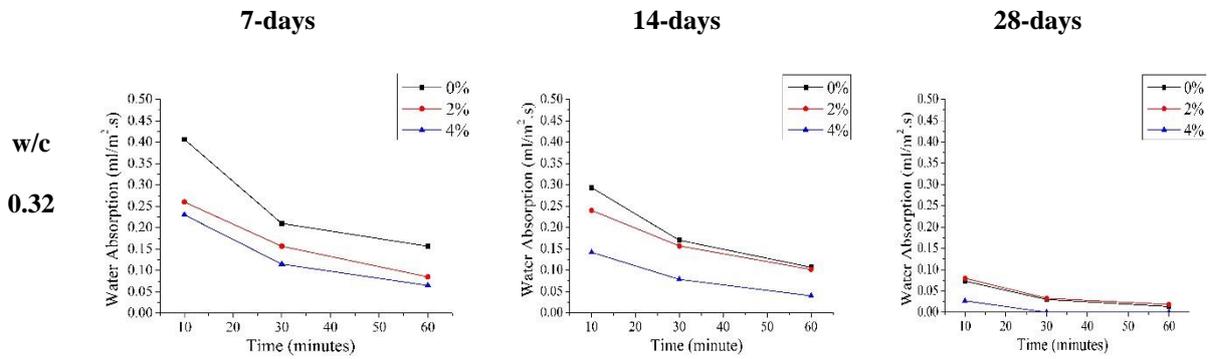
18 K: Scherrer constant

19 Testing was progressed for 28 days, and results showed that the growth of the crystals stops after the first 24 hours
 20 with a minimum size of 95 nm and maximum size of 200 nm. This range of crystal sizes when compared with the
 21 pores of concrete, they were smaller than the macro-pores (>1000 nm), most of the capillary pores (100-1000
 22 nm), most of the meso-pores (10-10000 nm), and some of the transitional pores (10-100 nm) [37, 38]. It is
 23 witnessed that pores with sizes larger than 10 μ m have the greatest effect on compressive strength [39]. This
 24 indicates that MNR can merge easily within the concrete structure, filling most of the existing voids and prevents
 25 the formation of more micro-cracks, and preserves concrete's compressive strength.

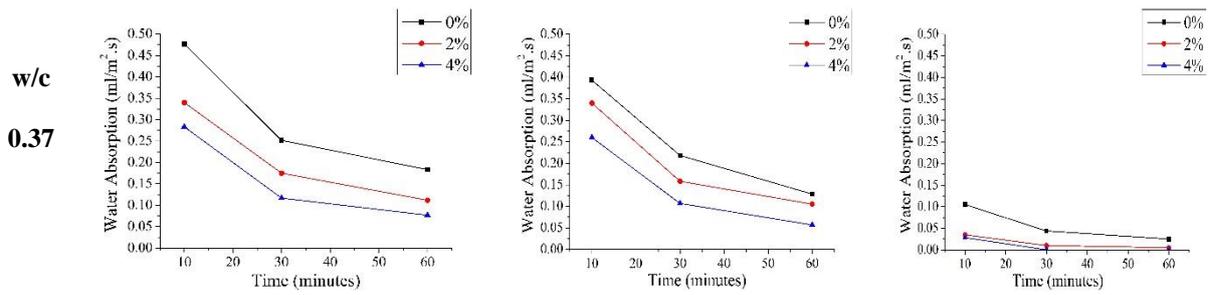
26 27 **4.3 Permeability Outcomes**

28 Following the BS EN 1881-208 standardised ISAT test [32], water absorption of the different concrete mixes,
 29 treated with 0%, 2% and 4% MNR admixture, were tested after 7, 14 and 28 days of curing in a water bath. Figures

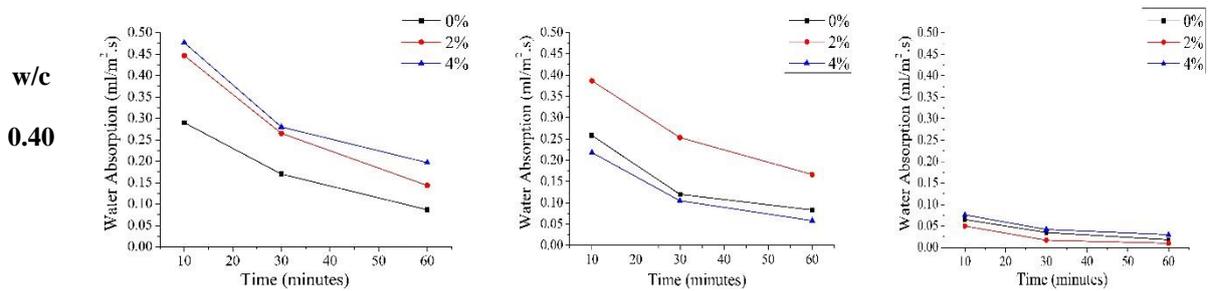
- 1 3 a-d shows the average water absorption rates for 10 minutes, 30 minutes, and 1-hour periods of testing concrete
 2 with the ISAT method at 7, 14 and 28 days periods.
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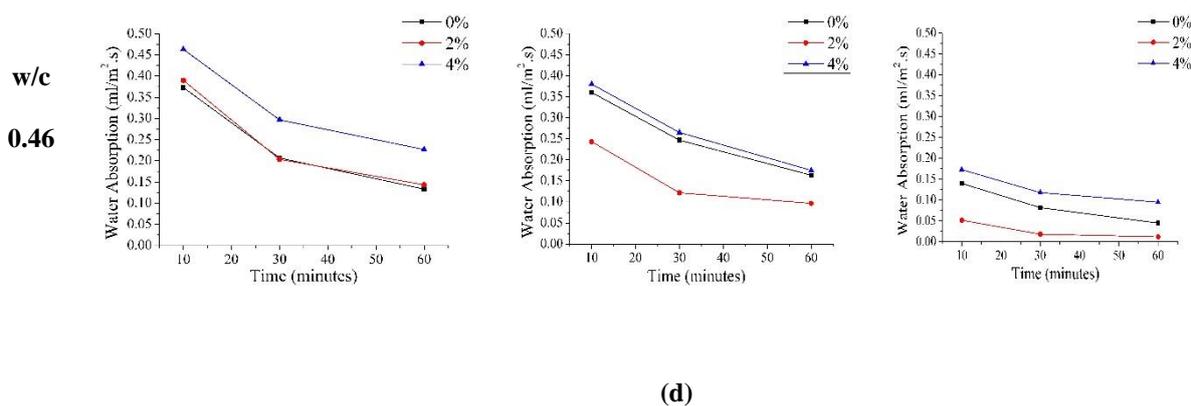
(a)



(b)



(c)



1

2 **Figure 3 - Sorptivity of concrete mixes at 7, 14 and 28 days treated with 0%, 2% and 4% MNR admixture**
 3 **with w/c ratios of: (a) 0.32, (b) 0.37, (c) 0.40, and (d) 0.46.**

4

5 Water absorption of all the different mixes, either treated or not, can be noticed to decrease with time but

6 with different efficacies. 32/4MNR mix has shown the least absorption rate amongst all mixes during the 7, 14

7 and 28 days periods with zero absorption rates after 30 minutes and 60 minutes of testing on 28 days. This

8 treatment enhanced the performance of the mix by reducing water absorption by 55% of its control mix at the age

9 of 28 days. Also, 37/4MNR mix showed a proximate performance to the previous mix, with an absorption rate of

10 0 ml/m².s at 60 minutes on 28 days, with a total reduction of 65% in water absorption compared to its

11 corresponding control. On the other hand, concrete with 46/4MNR revealed the worst performance between all

12 the mixes at all times and periods with absorption rate varies from 0.23 ml/m².s at 7 days to 0.10 ml/m².s at 28

13 days (both after 60 minutes of testing). Moreover, in the case of the 0.46 and 0.40 mixes the control mix has

14 performed better than the treated ones with 4% MNR at 28 days and after 60 minutes of testing, with a difference

15 in performance of 53% and 40%, respectively, between the treated mixes and the control. The high absorption

16 rates in these treated mixes, in reference to their control, come from the high water quantity used in the mix,

17 compared to the 0.32 and 0.37 mixes, which resulted in high slump values, as shown in Table 4. This high slump

18 indicates the high workability of both mixes resulting from adding the crystallising material. The crystallising

19 material is a dual functioning material that works on absorbing some of the water to form crystals that line the

20 pores of the concrete, and after the formation of these crystals, they work on repelling excess water. Repelling

21 this excess water reduces the amount of water needed to complete the hydration process, which results in the

22 formation of micro-cracks inside the treated concrete. Accordingly, higher absorption rates will be expected for

23 treated concrete like the 46/4MNR and 40/4MNR mixes. On the other hand, a minor improvement in water

1 impermeability was observed in the 0.40, and 0.46 w/c ratio mixes when treated with 2% MNR and at the age of
2 28 days.

3

4 **4.4 Compressive Strength Outcomes**

5 Results from the 7, 14 and 28 days compressive strength tests for all concrete mixes, either treated or untreated,
6 are illustrated in Table 5. It also includes the difference between the compressive strengths of treated concrete and
7 its reference control mix, and the variability in individual cubes.

8

9

Table 5 - Average Compressive Strength Results for Control and Treated Concrete

	W/C	MNR %	Compressive strength (MPa)		Changes in Strength (%)
			Average	Standard Deviation	
7-days	0.32	0%	34.8	1.97	-
		2%	32	1.15	-8.0%
		4%	33.8	1.68	-2.9%
	0.37	0%	30.9	0.94	-
		2%	24.6	1.67	-20.4%
		4%	27	1.90	-12.6%
	0.40	0%	28.6	3.77	-
		2%	24.8	1.79	-13.3%
		4%	26.1	0.70	-8.7%
	0.46	0%	30.1	0.51	-
		2%	20.6	0.56	-31.6%
		4%	19.2	0.64	-36.2%
	0.32	0%	39.2	0.63	-
		2%	32.8	1.00	-16.3%
		4%	31.4	4.22	-19.9%
	0.37	0%	35.2	2.25	-
		2%	25.9	1.11	-26.4%
		4%	25.7	0.72	-27.0%

14-days	0.40	0%	38.2	0.95	-
		2%	27.5	2.33	-28.0%
		4%	27	0.78	-29.3%
	0.46	0%	32.8	1.38	-
		2%	26.1	0.64	-20.4%
		4%	20.4	1.24	-37.8%
28-days	0.32	0%	42	2.15	-
		2%	47.5	1.68	+13.1%
		4%	55.2	3.00	+31.4%
	0.37	0%	37.4	1.03	-
		2%	45.3	1.89	+21.1%
		4%	53.2	4.12	+42.2%
	0.40	0%	54.6	3.63	-
		2%	43.8	1.49	-19.8%
		4%	40.7	3.93	-25.5%
	0.46	0%	47.8	1.68	-
		2%	36.9	4.66	-22.8%
		4%	32.5	2.48	-32%

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As shown in Table 5, a reduction in compressive strength was observed in all treated mixes that were tested at the age of 7 and 14 days. At the 7 and 14 days periods, more water would be available compared to the 28 days period so that the hydration process will be faster during those periods. With the presence of the crystallising material in the mix, more water will go to activate the crystals which will decrease the total amount of water needed to accelerate the hydration process. This will result in slowing down the hydration process at the 7 and 14 days periods. 46/4MNR concrete at the 7 and 14 days periods suffered the most significant loss in strength due to the high amount of water in this mix which supports the previous claim.

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At the age of 28 days, 32/4MNR concrete has achieved the highest compressive strength between all treated mixes, with a total enhancement of 31.4% of the related control mix. Also, 37/4MNR concrete delivered similar performance to 32/4MNR mix and increased the compressive strength of the mix by 42.2%. On the other hand, the treated mix 46/4MNR experienced the highest strength loss between all mixes with 32% deficiency of

11

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1 the related control mix. Moreover, all treated mixes with w/c ratio of 0.40 and 0.46 suffered from a strength loss
 2 that ranges between 19.8% and 32% related to their control mix. This could be correlated to the high slump values
 3 that these mixes delivered (Table 4), which increased their workability, in view of the high w/c ratio of these
 4 mixes. Nevertheless, all remaining treating regimes have shown moderate improvement in compressive strength
 5 that ranges between 13% and 21%.

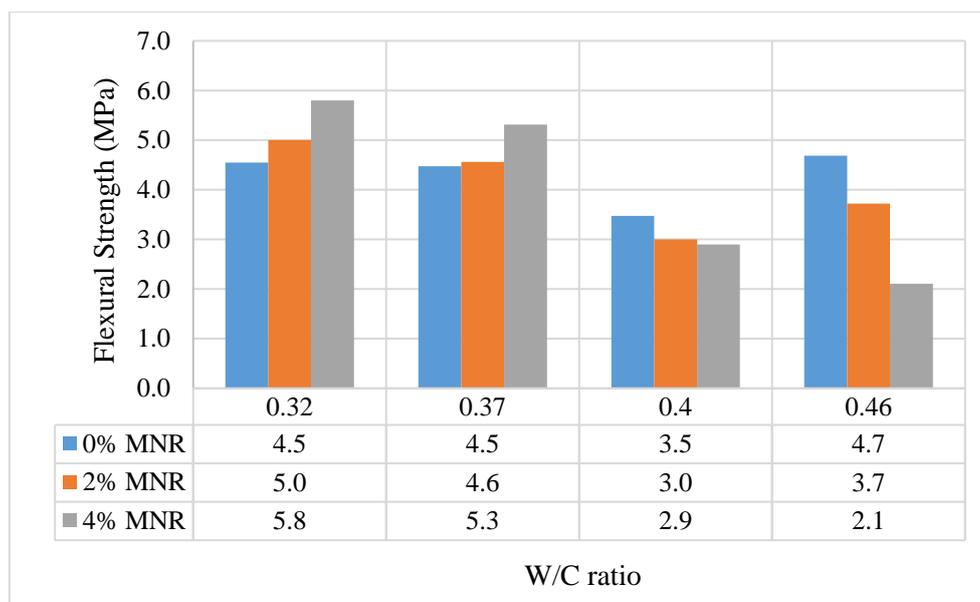
6 Statistical analysis of compressive strength values shows a moderately close cluster of data around the
 7 average values.

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9 *4.5 Flexural Strength Outcomes*

10 Figure 4 shows the results from the two-point loading flexural test for the concrete beams treated with MNR
 11 material along with their reference samples and cured for 28 days.

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14 **Figure 4 - Average 28 days flexural strength values for treated and control concrete beams.**

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16 Results from the flexural strength test support the outcomes of both the compressive strength and ISAT
 17 tests. It is clear from the figure that treating a 0.46 and 0.40 w/c ratio mixes with any of the proposed concentrations
 18 of the crystallising material, would result in losing the flexural strength of the mix without any enhancement or
 19 even preserving the original flexural strength. 32/4MNR and 37/4MNR achieved the highest flexural strength
 20 values between all the mixtures with a total improvement of 29% and 18% respectively to their control mixes.

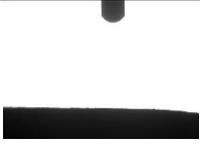
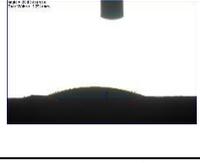
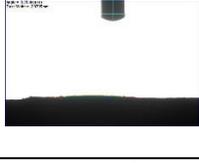
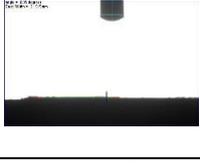
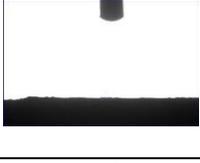
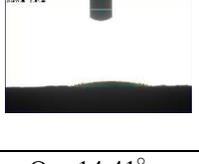
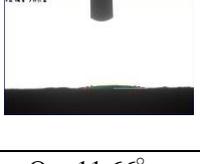
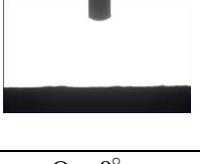
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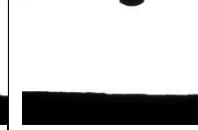
1 **4.6 Hydrophobicity**

2 Results from the contact angle test, for treated and control samples, are shown in Table 6. Readings were recorded
 3 for a total duration of 2 minutes with 30 seconds interval between them, following the procedure of Li and
 4 Neumann (1992) but with increasing the total duration to 2 minutes instead of 1.5 minutes [40].

5

6 **Table 6 – Contact angle for untreated concrete and concrete treated with MNR crystallising material**

	T = 0 sec	T = 30 sec	T = 60 sec	T = 90 sec	T = 120 sec
Control					
	$\Theta = 34.89^\circ$	$\Theta = 16.20^\circ$	$\Theta = 5.24^\circ$	$\Theta = 0^\circ$	$\Theta = 0^\circ$
32/2MNR					
	$\Theta = 20.85^\circ$	$\Theta = 10.19^\circ$	$\Theta = 5.95^\circ$	$\Theta = 2.35^\circ$	$\Theta = 0^\circ$
32/4MNR					
	$\Theta = 73.83^\circ$	$\Theta = 54.47^\circ$	$\Theta = 48.98^\circ$	$\Theta = 41.87^\circ$	$\Theta = 37.63^\circ$
37/2MNR					
	$\Theta = 34.77^\circ$	$\Theta = 20.77^\circ$	$\Theta = 14.41^\circ$	$\Theta = 11.66^\circ$	$\Theta = 0^\circ$
37/4MNR					
	$\Theta = 40.12^\circ$	$\Theta = 24.80^\circ$	$\Theta = 20.80^\circ$	$\Theta = 16.74^\circ$	$\Theta = 12.98^\circ$
40/2MNR					
	$\Theta = 34.76^\circ$	$\Theta = 20.82^\circ$	$\Theta = 15.97^\circ$	$\Theta = 11.95^\circ$	$\Theta = 7.15^\circ$

40/4MNR					
	$\Theta = 21.48^\circ$	$\Theta = 15.65^\circ$	$\Theta = 12.60^\circ$	$\Theta = 9.99^\circ$	$\Theta = 6.34^\circ$
46/2MNR					
	$\Theta = 21.55^\circ$	$\Theta = 10.76^\circ$	$\Theta = 7.71^\circ$	$\Theta = 3.54^\circ$	$\Theta = 0^\circ$
46/4MNR					
	$\Theta = 35.97^\circ$	$\Theta = 17.44^\circ$	$\Theta = 6.43^\circ$	$\Theta = 0^\circ$	$\Theta = 0^\circ$

1

2 Outcomes from this test supports the previously obtained results from the ISAT and the mechanical testing.

3 Results show that concrete with 0.32 and 0.37 w/c ratios and treated with 4% MNR exhibited the highest

4 hydrophobicity degrees between all treated and control samples; the contact angle of 32/4MNR started with 73.83°

5 at 0 seconds and decreased gradually to 37.63° at 120 seconds, and the contact angle for 37/4MNR started with

6 40.12° at 0 seconds and ended with 12.98° after 120 seconds. Comparing these values with the contact angle of

7 control and other treated samples, the hydrophobicity of the 32/4MNR mix was two-times higher than that of the

8 control mix and three-times higher than these of most of other treated mixes. The same applies on the 37/4MNR

9 mix but with lower values than the 32/4MNR mix.

10 The high contact angles of the 32/4MNR and 37/4MNR mixes, compared to other mixes, reveal their high efficacy

11 in repelling water particles out of the pores.

12

13 **4.7 Optimum Mix Design**

14 The aim from the performed tests was to determine the optimum concrete mix that includes the right w/c ratio and

15 the optimum dosage of the protective treatment, in terms of compressive strength and water absorption. ISAT

16 results, for instance, revealed that a mix design with 0.37 w/c ratio and a dosage of 4% of the crystallising material

17 would offer a very high protection level against water ingress with a drop in water absorption of 65% when

18 compared to the corresponding untreated mix. The same treated mix increased the compressive and flexural

19 strengths by 42% and 18% respectively when compared to control. A higher increase in compressive and flexural

1 strengths was observed in the 0.32 w/c ratio mix treated with 4% MNR, with a rise of 55% and 29% respectively.
2 On the other hand, this mix enhanced water impermeability with an efficacy of 55% compared to its control.

3 In the case of concrete with high w/c ratios of 0.40 and 0.46 and treated with the crystallising material, a
4 destructive effect was noticed in terms of compressive and flexural strengths. However, water absorption has only
5 increased when treating these mixes with 4% MNR, and a little reduction in water absorption has occurred when
6 the 2% MNR treatment is applied. This means that there is no point in treating concrete mixes with high w/c ratios
7 especially if the treatment works on reducing the desired compressive strength.

8 The usefulness of this kind of treatment should also be investigated regarding chloride penetration to
9 validate its efficacy.

10

11 **5. Summary and Conclusions**

12 Two different dosages, 2% and 4%, of the Silica-based crystallising material MNR, were internally impregnated
13 into different fresh concrete mixes with different w/c ratios, to investigate its ability to reduce water absorption
14 and preserve the compressive strength of the original mix. Significant conclusions and observations were drawn
15 from this research are;

16 (1) Impregnating the crystallising material into fresh concrete reduced the water absorption, tested by
17 ISAT, significantly. A 2% MNR dosage relatively reduced water absorption of the 0.40 and 0.46 w/c ratio mixes.
18 Also, a 4% MNR dosage in the 0.37 and 0.32 mixes dramatically decreased their water permeability.

19 (2) The 0.37 w/c ratio mix along with the 0.32 w/c ratio mix, both treated with 4% admixture, showed
20 the best performance, regarding water absorption resistance, among all the mixes. They both prevented water
21 ingress at 30 minutes and 60 minutes testing periods. Additionally, the 0.37 w/c ratio mix treated with 4%
22 admixture showed a significant reduction in water absorption levels close to 65%, and the 0.32 w/c ratio mix
23 treated with 4% admixture reduced water absorption levels by 55%.

24 (3) Regardless of the positive impact of treating 0.46 w/c ratio mix with 2% MNR on waterproofing, a
25 parallel damaging effect has emerged that reduced the 28-days compressive strength of the mix by 23% of the
26 control. Similarly, a reduction of 20% in the 28-days compressive strength was observed in the 0.40 w/c ratio mix
27 treated with 2% admixture.

28 (4) Results from the 0.46 and 0.40 w/c ratios may suggest the impracticality of treatment, as the
29 compressive and flexural strengths of untreated mixes were less than those treated with 2% admixture, despite the

1 improvement in the impermeability that treatment has achieved. Adding to that, the damaging effect that the 4%
2 dosage has shown on both strength and water absorption.

3 (5) An optimum mix design could be obtained by treating the 0.32 and 0.37 w/c ratio mixes with 4%
4 admixture. Water absorption has dropped by more than 55% and 65%, respectively, of their untreated mixes, and
5 compressive strength increased by more than 31% and 42%, respectively, above the initially designed strength.
6 Furthermore, an increase of 29% and 18%, respectively, in flexural strength was observed in those two mixes.

7 (6) Based on the previously tested conditions, treatment with MNR crystallising material is considered
8 useful only in the case of producing concrete with low w/c ratios that range between 0.32 and 0.37.

9 (7) Analysing treated concrete under the SEM showed that crystals are formed and settled within the
10 detailed texture during the first 24 hours of casting. Also, XRD analysis showed that the size of the shaped crystals
11 is smaller than most of the voids of a normal concrete, making their integration inside the concrete easily.

12 (8) Results from contact angle analysis endorsed outcomes from mechanical and water resistant tests.
13 Both optimum mixes had the highest contact angle between all mixes indicating improved hydrophobicity.

14

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