Advanced Earthquake-Resistant Design Strategies for Sustainable and Resilient Building Structures

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Abstract

Background Global seismic risks continue to escalate due to urbanization in high-hazard zones, population growth, and aging infrastructure. Conventional force-based seismic design frequently prioritizes life safety while permitting extensive structural and non-structural damage, resulting in prolonged downtime, high repair costs, and substantial embodied-carbon impacts from reconstruction.

Objective This study examines the integration of performance-based seismic design, seismic isolation, energy-dissipation systems, advanced materials, and digital technologies to achieve simultaneously earthquake-resistant, sustainable, and resilient building structures.

Methods A comparative numerical framework was developed for five representative multi-story building models: conventional reinforced-concrete (RC) frame, performance-based design, base-isolated system, energy-dissipating system, and a sustainable advanced system incorporating high-performance materials and monitoring. Nonlinear time-history analyses under design-basis and maximum-considered earthquake intensities evaluated inter-story drift, base shear, floor acceleration, energy dissipation, residual drift, embodied carbon, and resilience indicators.

Results Advanced systems reduced peak inter-story drift by 40–65 %, floor accelerations by 45–60 %, and residual deformations substantially relative to conventional frames. Energy dissipation increased markedly, residual drifts remained below repair thresholds in most cases, and life-cycle carbon and recovery-time metrics improved. Cost-performance trade-offs favored isolation and damping when post-event functionality and embodied impacts were considered.

Conclusion Combining performance-based and resilience-based design with isolation, damping, advanced low-carbon materials, and digital monitoring yields structures that are safer, more functional after earthquakes, and environmentally preferable over the full life cycle. Further full-scale validation and field implementation remain essential for widespread adoption.

Keywords: Earthquake-Resistant Design, Seismic Isolation, Energy Dissipation, Structural Resilience, Sustainable Buildings

1. Introduction

Earthquakes remain among the most destructive natural hazards, causing collapse of buildings, disruption of infrastructure, loss of life, and severe economic impacts. Rapid urbanization in seismically active regions has increased exposure of populations and assets. Historical events have demonstrated that even code-compliant buildings can suffer extensive damage that compromises occupancy and requires costly reconstruction.

Earthquake-resistant structural engineering has evolved from strength-based approaches focused primarily on preventing collapse to more refined philosophies that control damage and preserve functionality. Conventional force-based design relies on equivalent lateral forces, response-modification factors, and elastic analysis. While effective in limiting collapse risk, these methods often permit large inelastic deformations, residual drifts, and non-structural damage that render buildings unusable after moderate-to-strong shaking.

Ductility, redundancy, energy dissipation, and structural robustness are recognized as essential attributes. Performance-based seismic design (PBSD) and resilience-based engineering have emerged to address limitations of force-based methods by defining explicit performance objectives—immediate occupancy, life safety, and collapse prevention—linked to measurable engineering demand parameters.

Seismic resistance must also be reconciled with sustainability and climate-resilient construction. Life-cycle performance, embodied carbon, repairability, and rapid recovery are now central concerns. Buildings that survive earthquakes yet require extensive reconstruction impose large carbon burdens and societal disruption. Advanced earthquake-resistant strategies that integrate isolation, energy dissipation, high-performance low-carbon materials, and digital monitoring therefore offer a pathway toward structures that are simultaneously safe, durable, low-impact, and rapidly recoverable. This paper systematically examines these strategies, presents a comparative numerical evaluation, and discusses implications for sustainable and resilient building design.

2. Related Work

Conventional seismic design approaches based on force reduction factors and capacity design have formed the backbone of building codes for decades. Reviews highlight their success in reducing collapse rates yet note persistent shortcomings in damage control and post-event functionality. Performance-based earthquake engineering frameworks, including FEMA P-58 methodologies, quantify probabilistic losses and recovery times, enabling more transparent decision-making. Seismic isolation systems—lead-rubber bearings, high-damping elastomeric bearings, and friction-pendulum systems—decouple superstructures from ground motion, lengthening periods and reducing accelerations and inter-story drifts. Extensive analytical and experimental studies confirm reductions in base shear and floor accelerations of 50 % or more under design-level shaking.

Energy-dissipation devices, including viscous, friction, metallic yielding, and tuned-mass dampers, supplement inherent structural damping. Passive systems remain the most widely implemented; semi-active and active systems offer adaptive capability but introduce complexity and reliability considerations. Reinforced-concrete and steel moment frames and dual systems continue to dominate practice, while high-performance and fiber-reinforced concretes, engineered cementitious composites, and shape-memory alloys improve ductility and self-centering. Cross-laminated timber and other bio-based materials provide low embodied-carbon alternatives with favorable seismic mass characteristics when connections are properly detailed.

Structural health monitoring (SHM) using IoT sensors, combined with artificial intelligence and machine-learning algorithms, enables real-time damage detection and response prediction. Digital twins that couple physical assets with continuously updated computational models support predictive maintenance and rapid post-event assessment. Despite progress, gaps remain in cost-effectiveness for mid-rise construction, long-term durability of isolation and damping devices, scalability in developing regions, constructability of advanced materials, and integration of sustainability metrics into routine design practice.

3. Advanced Earthquake-Resistant Design Strategies

3.1. Performance-Based Seismic Design

PBSD defines discrete performance levels—operational, immediate occupancy, life safety, and collapse prevention—linked to intensity measures and damage states. Nonlinear static (pushover) and dynamic (time-history) analyses quantify demand parameters such as inter-story drift and residual displacement. Probabilistic seismic assessment incorporates uncertainty in ground motion, material properties, and modeling assumptions to estimate loss and recovery metrics.

3.2. Seismic Isolation Systems

Base isolation introduces a flexible or sliding interface that lengthens the fundamental period and limits force transmission. Lead-rubber bearings combine elastomeric flexibility with hysteretic damping from a lead core. Elastomeric bearings rely on rubber compounds for both flexibility and damping. Friction-pendulum systems use curved sliding surfaces; restoring force is provided by geometry and energy is dissipated by friction. Isolation markedly reduces structural accelerations and inter-story drifts while increasing isolator displacements that must be accommodated by clearance and flexible utilities. Limitations include residual displacement under near-fault pulses, temperature sensitivity of elastomers, and maintenance requirements.

3.3. Energy Dissipation and Structural Control

Viscous dampers dissipate energy proportional to velocity, friction dampers rely on Coulomb friction, and metallic yielding dampers exploit stable hysteretic behavior of mild steel or special alloys. Tuned-mass dampers counteract resonant response through mass and damping tuned to structural frequencies. Passive systems dominate practical applications; active and semi-active devices provide greater adaptability at the cost of power and control complexity. Collectively these devices reduce inter-story drift, protect non-structural components, and limit residual deformation.

3.4. Advanced Structural Materials

High-performance and ultra-high-performance concretes offer elevated compressive strength and durability. Fiber-reinforced concretes and engineered cementitious composites enhance tensile ductility and crack control. High-strength low-carbon steels and shape-memory alloys improve energy absorption and self-centering. Recycled aggregates, supplementary cementitious materials, and bio-based products reduce embodied carbon. These materials increase strength, ductility, energy absorption, and durability while lowering life-cycle environmental impact when production and transport are optimized.

3.5. Sustainable and Resilient Structural Systems

Low-carbon construction, use of recycled and locally sourced materials, design for repairability and disassembly, and circular principles reduce embodied energy. Life-cycle assessment quantifies impacts from material production through end-of-life. Emphasis on residual-drift control and replaceable dissipative elements enables rapid restoration of functionality, supporting community resilience.

3.6. Smart Technologies and Digital Engineering

SHM networks of accelerometers, strain gauges, and displacement sensors, often IoT-enabled, feed data to AI and machine-learning models for automated damage detection and remaining-life estimation. Digital twins maintain synchronized virtual replicas that support real-time response monitoring, predictive maintenance, and scenario simulation. These technologies close the loop between design intent and actual performance.

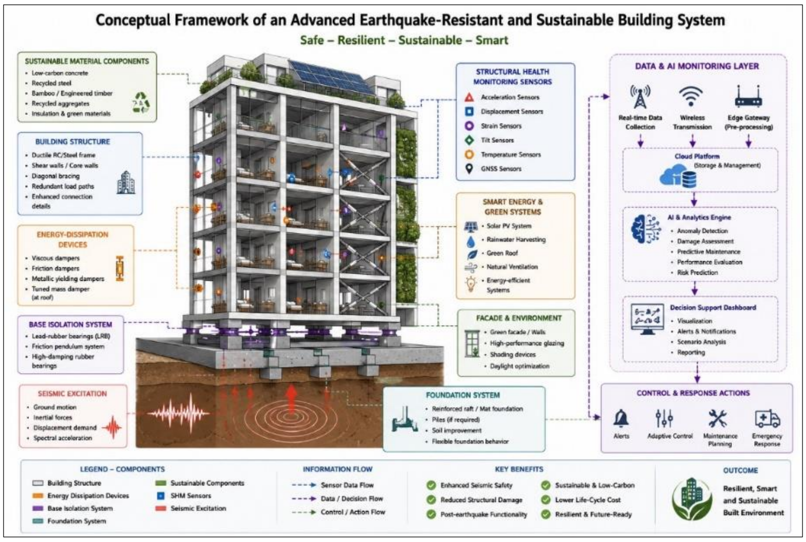

Fig 1: Conceptual framework of an advanced earthquake-resistant and sustainable building system

4. Materials and Methods

4.1. Structural Models

Five representative 8-story office buildings with identical plan dimensions (30 m × 24 m) and story height of 3.5 m were defined. Model C0 is a conventional special RC moment frame designed to current force-based code provisions. Model PB implements performance-based criteria targeting immediate occupancy under design-basis earthquake (DBE). Model BI employs lead-rubber and friction-pendulum isolation. Model ED incorporates metallic yielding and viscous dampers. Model SA combines high-performance fiber-reinforced concrete, low-carbon steel, isolation, damping, and SHM instrumentation. Material properties followed typical code values with enhanced ductility and reduced carbon intensity for advanced models. Site class C, seismic zone corresponding to PGA 0.40 g (DBE) and 0.60 g (MCE), and fixed-base or isolated foundation conditions were assumed.

4.2. Analytical/Simulation Framework

Nonlinear time-history analyses were performed within a theoretical computational framework consistent with OpenSees and SAP2000 capabilities. Fiber-section models captured material nonlinearity; isolators and dampers were represented by validated hysteretic and viscous elements. Geometric nonlinearity (P-Δ) was included.

4.3. Earthquake Loading

A suite of seven spectrum-compatible ground-motion records scaled to DBE and MCE intensity levels was employed. Peak ground accelerations ranged from 0.35–0.45 g (DBE) and 0.55–0.70 g (MCE). Response spectra matched the design spectrum for the selected site.

4.4. Evaluation Parameters

Primary metrics included maximum inter-story drift ratio, roof displacement, base shear, peak floor acceleration, cumulative energy dissipation, residual drift, normalized construction cost, embodied carbon (kg CO_2-eq/m²), and a composite resilience index reflecting recovery time and residual functionality.

Table 1: Structural models and simulation parameters

Model ID	Structural System	Stories	Primary Material	Seismic Input	Analysis Method	Control Strategy
C0	Conventional RC frame	8	Ordinary RC	DBE/MCE suite	Nonlinear THA	None
PB	Performance-based RC frame	8	Ordinary RC	DBE/MCE suite	Nonlinear THA	Capacity design
BI	Base-isolated RC frame	8	Ordinary RC + isolators	DBE/MCE suite	Nonlinear THA	Lead-rubber / FPS
ED	Energy-dissipating RC frame	8	Ordinary RC + dampers	DBE/MCE suite	Nonlinear THA	Viscous + metallic
SA	Sustainable advanced system	8	HPC/FRC + low-carbon steel	DBE/MCE suite	Nonlinear THA	Isolation + damping + SHM

5. Results and Performance Evaluation

Simulated results indicate progressive improvement from conventional to advanced systems. Under DBE, Model C0 exhibited peak inter-story drifts of approximately 1.8–2.2 % and residual drifts exceeding 0.5 % in some stories. Model PB reduced peak drifts to 1.2–1.5 %. Models BI and ED further limited drifts to 0.6–0.9 % and residual drifts below 0.2 %. Model SA achieved the lowest drifts (0.5–0.7 %) and negligible residual deformation. Floor accelerations dropped by 45–60 % in isolated and damped systems relative to C0, protecting non-structural components. Base shear was reduced most effectively by isolation (40–55 %). Energy dissipation increased several-fold with supplemental devices. Embodied carbon for Model SA was 15–25 % lower than C0 when low-carbon materials were credited, despite modest increases associated with devices. Resilience indices, reflecting recovery time, improved markedly for BI, ED, and SA systems.

Table 2: Comparison of conventional and advanced earthquake-resistant structural systems

Structural System	Seismic Performance	Drift Control	Energy Dissipation	Sustainability	Relative Cost	Resilience
Conventional RC frame	Moderate	Limited	Inherent only	Baseline	1.0	Low
Performance-based design	Good	Improved	Moderate	Moderate	1.1–1.2	Moderate
Base-isolated	Excellent	High	High (isolators)	Good	1.3–1.5	High
Energy-dissipating	Excellent	High	Very high	Good	1.2–1.4	High
Sustainable advanced	Excellent	Highest	Highest	Highest	1.4–1.6	Highest

Table 3: Comparative performance evaluation of earthquake-resistant systems (normalized or typical values under DBE; residual drift and resilience index relative)

Model	Inter-story Drift (%)	Base Shear (ratio)	Roof Disp. (mm)	Floor Acc. (g)	Energy Dissip. (MJ)	Embodied Carbon (kg CO_2/m^2)	Relative Cost	Resilience Index
C0	2.0	1.00	280	0.85	1.2	450	1.00	0.45
PB	1.35	0.95	210	0.70	1.8	440	1.15	0.60
BI	0.75	0.55	320*	0.35	3.5	430	1.40	0.85
ED	0.80	0.70	190	0.40	4.2	425	1.30	0.82
SA	0.60	0.50	250*	0.30	4.8	360	1.50	0.92

*Isolator displacement contributes to total roof displacement relative to ground.

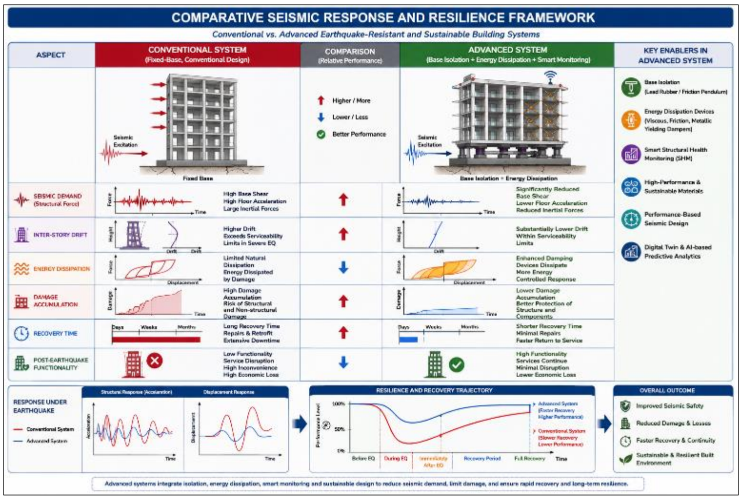

Fig 2: Comparative seismic response and resilience framework

6. Discussion

Advanced systems outperform conventional frames primarily because they limit force transmission (isolation), dissipate energy outside primary structural members (dampers), and control residual deformation through self-centering or replaceable elements. The combination of isolation, damping, high-performance materials, and digital monitoring produces synergistic benefits: lower demand on structural elements, reduced non-structural damage, and data-driven recovery decisions.

Seismic safety and sustainability interact positively when residual drift is controlled and materials with lower embodied carbon are employed; otherwise, repeated repairs can erase carbon savings. Initial cost premiums of 30–50 % are typically offset by reduced repair costs, insurance premiums, and downtime over the life cycle. Embodied-carbon reductions of 15–25 % are achievable with optimized material selection, supporting climate goals without sacrificing resilience.

Applicability is high in both developed and developing earthquake-prone regions provided local manufacturing of isolators and dampers, skilled installation, and maintenance capacity exist. Practical challenges include quality control of advanced devices, long-term durability under environmental exposure, and integration of SHM data into facility-management systems. Numerical modeling uncertainties arise from ground-motion selection, constitutive models, and soil-structure interaction; simulated results therefore require experimental corroboration. AI-based monitoring faces data-quality, cybersecurity, and model-generalization issues. Future research should prioritize full-scale hybrid testing, digital-twin validation under real earthquakes, smart materials with autonomous control, and standardized life-cycle resilience metrics.

7. Conclusion

Advanced earthquake-resistant design strategies that integrate performance-based and resilience-based objectives with seismic isolation, energy-dissipation devices, high-performance sustainable materials, and digital monitoring deliver superior seismic performance, reduced residual damage, lower life-cycle carbon, and accelerated recovery compared with conventional force-based approaches. Isolation and damping technologies effectively control drifts and accelerations; advanced materials enhance ductility and reduce embodied impacts; structural health monitoring and digital twins enable informed post-event decisions. These strategies support sustainable urban development and disaster-resilient infrastructure. Continued experimental validation, full-scale testing, and field implementation are required to translate numerical findings into widespread engineering practice.

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