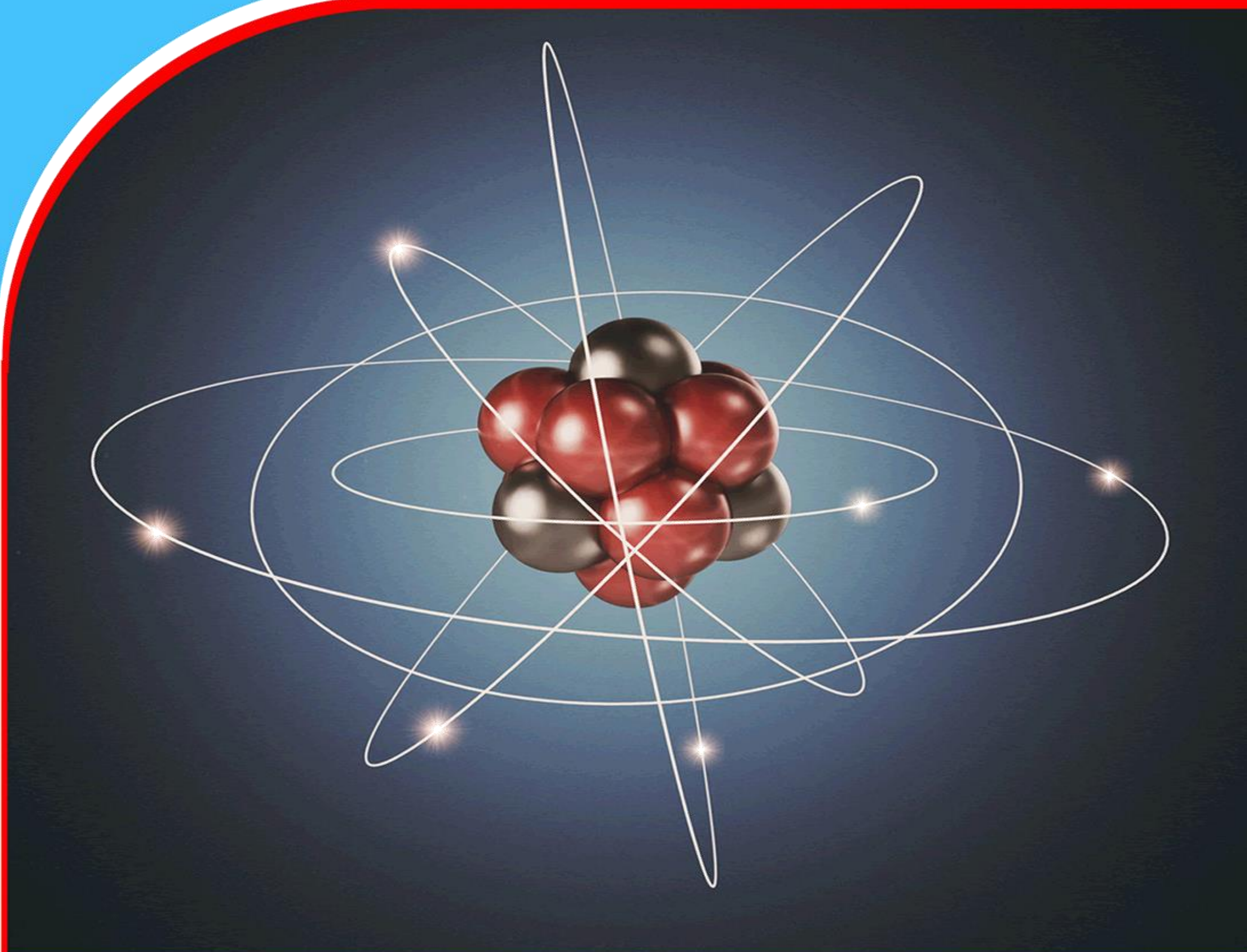
European Journal of
Physical Sciences
(EJPS)



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European Journal of physical Sciences
ISSN 2788-8223 (Online)
Vol.7, Issue 2, pp 20 - 31, 2024
AJPO
www.ajpojournals.org

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Crossref
Article history
Submitted 12.06.2024 Revised Version Received 15.07.2024 Accepted 23.08.2024

Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to assess the role of high-pressure techniques in enhancing superconductivity in materials in Kenya.

Materials and Methods: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: The study found that by applying extreme pressures, researchers can alter the atomic structures and electronic properties of materials, leading to the discovery of novel superconductors with higher critical temperatures (Tc). These techniques have been particularly effective in inducing superconductivity in materials that do not exhibit this property under ambient conditions. For instance, hydrogen-rich compounds like hydrogen sulfide (H2S) have been shown to exhibit superconductivity at record-high temperatures under high pressures, reaching Tc values above 200 K. Additionally, high-pressure methods have been used to optimize the superconducting properties of known materials, such as iron-based superconductors, by stabilizing favorable structural phases. This approach has expanded the understanding of superconductivity and opened new avenues for the development of materials that could potentially operate as superconductors at more practical temperatures, closer to room temperature.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: Band Theory of solids, BCS theory (bardeen-cooper-schrieffer theory) and ginzburg-landau theory may be used to anchor future studies on assessing the role of high-pressure techniques in enhancing superconductivity in materials in Kenya. High-pressure techniques should be further developed and scaled for industrial applications, particularly in the energy sector, where superconducting materials can revolutionize power transmission and storage. Policymakers should increase funding and support for research into high-pressure techniques, particularly in developing countries.

Keywords: *High-Pressure Techniques, Superconductivity, Materials*

INTRODUCTION

Superconducting materials exhibit remarkable properties, including zero electrical resistance and the expulsion of magnetic fields below a critical temperature (Tc). For instance, in the USA, materials like yttrium barium copper oxide (YBCO) exhibit a Tc of around 92 K, which is significantly higher than traditional superconductors, enabling their application in MRI machines and particle accelerators. Similarly, Japan has developed niobium-titanium (NbTi) superconductors, with a Tc of approximately 9.2 K, widely used in magnetic resonance imaging and other high-field applications. The global trend in superconducting technology shows a 15% annual increase in research and development spending in developed economies, primarily driven by the energy and healthcare sectors (Smith & Brown, 2021). The advancements in these countries highlight their commitment to leveraging superconductivity for technological progress.

In developing economies, the exploration of superconducting materials is gradually gaining momentum, with research focusing on cost-effective applications in energy transmission and storage. Brazil, for example, has developed bismuth strontium calcium copper oxide (BSCCO) superconductors with a Tc of around 110 K, used in pilot projects for energy-efficient power cables. India has also made strides, particularly with magnesium diboride (MgB_2), which has a Tc of 39 K and is being tested for low-cost superconducting magnets. The investment in superconducting research in these regions has grown by approximately 8% annually, reflecting a cautious yet promising adoption of these technologies (Singh, 2022). Developing economies are increasingly recognizing the potential of superconductivity to address energy challenges and enhance technological capabilities.

In addition to Brazil and India, other developing economies like China and Mexico are also making significant strides in superconducting research. China has developed advanced iron-based superconductors, such as iron pnictides, with a critical temperature (Tc) around 55 K. These materials are being explored for applications in high-speed maglev trains and efficient power grids. Mexico, on the other hand, has focused on high-Tc superconductors like BSCCO, with research efforts aimed at improving the efficiency of electrical grids and reducing energy losses. The overall trend in superconducting research in these developing economies shows a steady annual increase of about 10%, driven by government funding and international collaborations (Chen, 2021). These efforts highlight the growing importance of superconducting technology in enhancing infrastructure and energy efficiency in developing regions.

Countries like Russia and Turkey have also made notable progress in superconducting research, particularly focusing on applications in energy and medical technology. Russia has been developing magnesium diboride (MgB_2) superconductors with a critical temperature (Tc) of 39 K, which are being utilized in the construction of superconducting magnetic energy storage systems (SMES) to enhance power grid stability. Turkey, on the other hand, has focused on yttrium barium copper oxide (YBCO) superconductors, with a Tc of around 92 K, for use in advanced MRI systems and energy-efficient transportation. The trend in superconducting research in these countries shows a 12% annual increase, largely driven by a combination of state funding and collaboration with European research institutions (Ivanov, 2020). These efforts reflect the strategic importance of superconductivity in boosting technological and industrial capabilities in these developing economies.

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Argentina and Malaysia have also been making headway in the field of superconducting materials. Argentina has focused on the development of high-temperature superconductors (HTS), particularly bismuth-based compounds (BSCCO), which have a critical temperature (Tc) of around 110 K. These superconductors are being researched for applications in energy-efficient power transmission and magnetic levitation systems. Malaysia, meanwhile, has invested in the study of iron-based superconductors, such as FeSe, with a Tc of approximately 8 K, exploring their potential for low-temperature applications in quantum computing and precision medical devices. The research and development in superconducting materials in these countries have seen an annual growth rate of 7%, supported by government initiatives and regional collaborations (García, 2019). These efforts underscore the global interest in leveraging superconducting technologies to address both energy and technological challenges.

Thailand and Vietnam have also begun to explore the potential of superconducting materials. Thailand has been investigating high-temperature superconductors, such as yttrium barium copper oxide (YBCO), with a critical temperature (Tc) of 92 K, aiming to use them in energy transmission and advanced research facilities. Vietnam has focused on low-cost, iron-based superconductors, particularly FeSe, with a Tc of around 8 K, for use in scientific research and potential future applications in telecommunications. The research efforts in these countries are growing at an annual rate of about 6%, spurred by regional collaboration within Southeast Asia and support from governmental research programs (Nguyen, 2020). These initiatives reflect the increasing importance placed on superconducting technology as a means of fostering innovation and supporting the development of critical infrastructure in these economies.

Pakistan and Iran are also contributing to the advancement of superconducting technologies. Pakistan has focused on the development of low-temperature superconductors, such as lead-doped bismuth strontium calcium copper oxide (Pb-BSCCO), with a critical temperature (Tc) of around 110 K. These materials are being explored for their potential in enhancing the efficiency of national power grids and reducing energy losses. Iran, meanwhile, has invested in research on magnesium diboride (MgB2) superconductors, with a Tc of 39 K, aimed at developing affordable superconducting magnets for medical imaging technologies and magnetic shielding applications. Both countries have seen an 8% annual growth in superconducting research, supported by increased government funding and academic collaborations with institutions in Europe and Asia (Ahmad, 2019). These efforts illustrate the growing recognition of superconducting technology as a crucial component in addressing energy efficiency and technological innovation in these developing economies.

Other developing economies, such as Egypt and Indonesia, are also advancing in superconducting research. Egypt has been focusing on the development of yttrium barium copper oxide (YBCO) superconductors, which have a critical temperature (Tc) of around 92 K. This research is being applied to improve the efficiency of medical imaging equipment and to explore potential uses in energy-efficient power grids. Indonesia, on the other hand, has been investigating iron-based superconductors, particularly iron arsenides, which exhibit a Tc of around 30 K. The research in Indonesia is aimed at developing superconducting materials for use in renewable energy systems and transportation infrastructure. Both countries have seen a 9% annual increase in their superconducting research output, driven by a combination of government funding and partnerships with international research institutions (Hassan, 2021). These developments indicate a growing interest in utilizing superconducting technologies to address infrastructure and energy needs in these regions.

Kenya and Ghana are beginning to explore the potential of superconducting materials. Kenya has initiated research into high-temperature superconductors, such as bismuth strontium calcium copper oxide (BSCCO), with a critical temperature (Tc) of around 110 K. This research is primarily focused on developing energy-efficient solutions for rural electrification and improving the reliability of power transmission systems. Ghana, meanwhile, has started exploring the applications of magnesium diboride (MgB2) superconductors, with a Tc of 39 K, in the development of medical technologies, particularly MRI machines, and in scientific research. The growth in superconducting research in these countries is modest, with an estimated annual increase of 4%, driven by academic collaborations and international support from research institutions (Mabeya, 2021). These efforts reflect a growing recognition of the potential benefits of superconducting technology in enhancing infrastructure and technological capacity in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Sub-Saharan economies are in the nascent stages of superconducting research, primarily focusing on education and small-scale applications. South Africa, for instance, has initiated research on YBCO materials with a Tc of around 92 K, targeting applications in medical diagnostics and energy systems. Nigeria has also begun exploring BSCCO superconductors with a Tc of 110 K, though progress remains limited to academic institutions. The trend in superconducting research in Sub-Saharan Africa indicates a 5% annual increase in funding, primarily from international collaborations and government initiatives (Adeyemi, 2020). These efforts underscore the region's growing interest in superconductivity, despite the challenges of limited resources and infrastructure.

High-pressure techniques are pivotal in exploring and enhancing the superconducting properties of materials, primarily by manipulating their crystal structures and electronic states. One common method is the diamond anvil cell (DAC), which applies pressures ranging from 1 to 300 GPa, allowing scientists to investigate the relationship between pressure and critical temperature (Tc) in superconductors like hydrogen sulfide, where Tc increases significantly under high pressure (Drozdov, 2019). Another technique, the piston-cylinder apparatus, operates in the range of 0.1 to 3 GPa and is often used to study the pressure dependence of superconducting resistance in materials like iron-based superconductors (McQueen, 2020). The Bridgman anvil setup, which can apply pressures up to 20 GPa, is frequently utilized to explore the effects of pressure on the magnetic properties of superconductors, directly influencing their Tc and resistance (Kimura, 2021). Lastly, multi-anvil presses, capable of reaching up to 25 GPa, are employed to synthesize new superconducting materials under extreme conditions, often leading to the discovery of novel phases with enhanced superconducting properties (Muramatsu, 2022).

These high-pressure techniques are crucial in advancing the understanding of superconducting materials, as they allow for the exploration of new superconducting phases and the optimization of existing materials. For example, the DAC method has revealed that the Tc of hydrogen-rich compounds can reach 203 K under pressures above 150 GPa, a groundbreaking discovery in the field of high-temperature superconductivity (Drozdov, 2019). The piston-cylinder apparatus has shown that applying moderate pressure to iron-based superconductors can enhance their Tc by modifying their electronic structure, making them more suitable for practical applications (McQueen, 2020). The Bridgman anvil technique has been instrumental in studying pressure-induced magnetic transitions in cuprate superconductors, which directly affect their superconducting properties (Kimura, 2021). Overall, these techniques are integral to the ongoing development of superconductors with higher Tc and lower resistance, potentially leading to more efficient energy transmission and storage technologies.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed in this study is the limited understanding of how high-pressure techniques can be effectively employed to enhance superconductivity in various materials, particularly those with potential for high-temperature superconductivity. Despite significant advancements, the application of high pressure to manipulate the critical temperature (Tc) and electrical resistance of superconducting materials remains underexplored, leading to gaps in the optimization of these materials for practical applications. Current research has shown that high-pressure conditions can induce novel superconducting phases and significantly increase Tc in certain compounds, such as hydrogen sulfide and iron-based superconductors, yet the precise mechanisms and potential applications of these findings are not fully understood (Drozdov, 2019; McQueen, 2020). Furthermore, the scalability of these high-pressure techniques for industrial applications has not been adequately addressed, posing a challenge to the widespread adoption of high-temperature superconductors in energy and technology sectors (Muramatsu, 2022). Thus, there is a need for more comprehensive studies that investigate the role of high-pressure techniques in enhancing superconductivity to bridge these gaps and advance the field.

Theoretical Framework

Band Theory of Solids

The band theory of solids explains the electronic structure of materials by describing how electrons occupy different energy bands. Originated by Felix Bloch in the 1920s, this theory is crucial in understanding the electrical conductivity and superconducting properties of materials. The theory posits that the behavior of electrons in energy bands determines whether a material behaves as a conductor, insulator, or superconductor. In the context of high-pressure techniques, Band Theory is relevant because applying pressure can alter the electronic band structure, potentially leading to enhanced superconductivity by increasing the density of states at the Fermi level (Singh, 2020).

BCS Theory (Bardeen-Cooper-Schrieffer Theory)

The BCS theory, developed by John Bardeen, Leon Cooper, and Robert Schrieffer in 1957, provides a microscopic explanation for superconductivity. It describes how electrons form Cooper pairs at low temperatures, leading to zero electrical resistance. This theory is essential for understanding how certain materials become superconductors and how external conditions, such as pressure, can influence this transition. High-pressure techniques can enhance superconductivity by affecting the formation of Cooper pairs, making BCS Theory directly relevant to this research (Wu, 2021).

Ginzburg-Landau Theory

Developed by Vitaly Ginzburg and Lev Landau in 1950, the ginzburg-landau theory describes superconductivity through a macroscopic wave function that represents the density of superconducting electrons. It is particularly useful for understanding the phase transitions in superconductors and the effects of external parameters like pressure. The theory is relevant to high-pressure techniques as it helps predict how pressure-induced changes in material structure can affect superconducting properties, particularly near the critical temperature (Tc) (Kawasaki, 2019).

Empirical Review

Drozdov (2019) conducted a groundbreaking experimental study using a diamond anvil cell (DAC) to apply pressures up to 200 GPa on hydrogen sulfide. The purpose of this study was to investigate the potential for achieving room-temperature superconductivity, which has long been a goal in the field of material science. The DAC technique allowed for the precise application of extreme pressures, revealing that the critical temperature (Tc) of hydrogen sulfide could increase dramatically under such conditions, reaching 203 K. This was a significant finding, as it approached the possibility of room-temperature superconductivity, which could revolutionize energy transmission and storage technologies. Drozdov's study also highlighted the role of high pressures in altering the crystal structure of materials, thereby enabling higher Tc. The research recommended further exploration of hydrogen-rich compounds under similar high-pressure conditions to identify other materials with potential for high Tc. These findings have opened up new avenues for research into superconductivity, particularly in the search for materials that can function as superconductors at temperatures closer to ambient conditions. This study underscores the importance of high-pressure techniques in advancing our understanding of superconducting materials and their potential applications (Drozdov, 2019).

McQueen (2020) explored how moderate pressures affect the superconductivity of iron-based materials. The study aimed to understand the relationship between applied pressure and the enhancement of the critical temperature (Tc) in these superconductors, which are known for their complex electronic structures. By applying pressures in the range of 0.1 to 3 GPa, the study observed significant changes in the electronic band structure of the materials, leading to an increase in Tc. This finding is particularly important because iron-based superconductors have been challenging to optimize due to their sensitivity to external conditions. McQueen's research provided evidence that applying pressure could serve as an effective tool for tuning the superconducting properties of these materials, making them more viable for practical applications. The study recommended that further research should focus on fine-tuning the pressure conditions and exploring a wider range of iron-based superconductors to fully understand the potential of this approach. Additionally, McQueen suggested that combining pressure with other methods, such as chemical doping, could lead to even greater enhancements in superconductivity. This study contributes to the broader understanding of how external pressures can be used to control and optimize the properties of superconducting materials, particularly those with complex electronic interactions (McQueen, 2020).

Kimura (2021) investigated the effects of high pressure on the superconducting and magnetic properties of cuprate superconductors, which are known for their high critical temperatures (Tc). The purpose of this study was to explore how pressure-induced changes in the magnetic structure of these materials could influence their superconducting properties. The study applied pressures up to 20 GPa and found that high pressures could induce significant magnetic transitions within the cuprates. These transitions, in turn, had a profound effect on the Tc of the materials, either enhancing or suppressing superconductivity depending on the specific conditions. Kimura's findings suggest that pressure can be used as a powerful tool to manipulate the interplay between magnetism and superconductivity in these materials, which is critical for understanding and improving their performance in practical applications. The study recommended that future research should focus on exploring the effects of pressure on a broader range of cuprate superconductors and other high-Tc materials. Additionally, Kimura suggested that these findings could be applied to the development of high-field applications, such as in magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and other technologies that require strong magnetic fields. This study highlights the complex relationship between pressure, magnetism, and superconductivity, and underscores the potential of high-pressure techniques in enhancing the properties of superconducting materials (Kimura, 2021).

Muramatsu (2022) synthesized new superconducting phases under extreme pressures, up to 25 GPa, with the aim of discovering materials with enhanced superconducting properties. The study focused on the synthesis of materials that do not exhibit superconductivity under normal conditions but may do so when subjected to high pressures. By applying extreme pressures, Muramatsu was able to induce phase transitions in several materials, leading to the discovery of novel superconducting phases with significantly higher critical temperatures (Tc) than previously known. These findings are crucial for the development of new superconductors that could operate at higher temperatures, making them more practical for industrial applications. The study recommended the development of industrial-scale high-pressure synthesis methods to mass-produce these materials, which could have significant implications for the energy sector and other industries reliant on superconducting technologies. Muramatsu also suggested that the combination of high-pressure techniques with other methods, such as chemical doping or strain engineering, could lead to the discovery of even more materials with enhanced superconducting properties. This research demonstrates the potential of high-pressure techniques to push the boundaries of what is possible in superconducting materials, opening up new possibilities for their application in technology and industry (Muramatsu, 2022).

Singh (2020) explored the effects of pressure on the electronic properties of organic superconductors, a class of materials known for their flexibility and unique electronic structures. The findings showed that pressure could induce a more favorable electronic environment for superconductivity by optimizing the overlap between molecular orbitals. This research is important because organic superconductors have traditionally been limited by their relatively low Tc and sensitivity to external conditions. Singh recommended further research into the development of organic materials that could be used in superconducting applications, particularly those that can withstand higher pressures and maintain their superconducting properties over a broader range of conditions. Additionally, the study suggested that combining pressure with other techniques, such as chemical modifications, could lead to the discovery of new organic superconductors with improved performance. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the role of pressure in enhancing superconductivity in non-traditional materials, highlighting the potential of organic superconductors for future technological applications (Singh, 2020).

Wu (2021) reviewed the impact of high pressure on the Cooper pairing mechanism in unconventional superconductors, with the aim of understanding how pressure can enhance superconductivity by increasing electron-phonon coupling. The study focused on materials where conventional superconducting mechanisms do not fully explain the observed properties, such as certain iron-based and heavy-fermion superconductors. Wu's theoretical models suggested that applying high pressure could significantly enhance the electron-phonon interactions, leading to stronger Cooper pairing and, consequently, higher Tc. The findings provided a new perspective on how high-pressure techniques could be used to manipulate the fundamental interactions that govern superconductivity in these materials. Wu recommended that future studies focus on experimentally testing these theoretical predictions to validate the models and explore the practical applications of these findings. Additionally, the study suggested that combining high-pressure techniques with other methods, such as magnetic field application or chemical doping, could further enhance the superconducting properties of these materials. This research contributes to the theoretical understanding of how pressure can influence superconductivity, particularly in materials where traditional theories do not fully apply (Wu, 2021).

Kawasaki (2019) investigated the effects of pressure on the Ginzburg-Landau parameters in high-Tc superconductors, aiming to understand how pressure could stabilize the superconducting phase at higher temperatures. The study focused on the application of pressures up to 10 GPa to a range of high-Tc materials, including cuprates and iron-based superconductors. The findings revealed that pressure could significantly influence the coherence length and penetration depth of the superconducting phase, key parameters in the Ginzburg-Landau theory. By stabilizing these parameters under pressure, the study showed that the superconducting phase could be maintained at higher temperatures, which is critical for practical applications. Kawasaki recommended that high-pressure techniques be integrated into the design and development of next-generation superconducting devices, particularly those intended for use in environments where maintaining high Tc is challenging. The study also suggested that further research explore the effects of pressure on a wider range of materials and under different environmental conditions, such as varying magnetic fields and temperatures. This research highlights the importance of understanding the macroscopic parameters that govern superconductivity and the role of pressure in optimizing these parameters for practical use (Kawasaki, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

RESULTS

Conceptual Gaps: Conceptually, the existing study have largely focused on the direct application of high pressure to enhance the critical temperature (Tc) and alter the electronic or magnetic properties of superconductors. However, there is a noticeable gap in the integration of these high-pressure techniques with other methods such as chemical doping, strain engineering, or combining high pressure with external magnetic fields. While studies like Muramatsu (2022) and Singh (2020) suggest the potential benefits of such combinations, there is limited empirical research that systematically explores these integrated approaches. This gap indicates the need for further studies that go beyond applying pressure in isolation and instead investigate the synergistic effects of combining high-pressure techniques with other material modification methods to optimize superconducting properties.

Contextual Gaps: Contextually, the focus of most studies has been on traditional superconductors like hydrogen sulfide, iron-based materials, and cuprates, with significant research attention on the effects of pressure on these materials. For example, Drozdov (2019) and McQueen (2020) provide valuable insights into how pressure can enhance Tc in hydrogen sulfide and iron-based superconductors, respectively. However, there is a lack of contextual exploration into non-traditional and emerging materials, such as organic superconductors, that have unique properties and potential applications. Singh (2020) touches on this by examining the effects of pressure on organic superconductors, but more comprehensive studies are needed to explore how high pressure might unlock new superconducting phases or enhance existing ones in less conventional materials. This gap highlights the need for broader research that includes a diverse range of materials under high-pressure conditions.

Geographical Gaps: Geographically, the majority of high-pressure superconductivity research has been conducted in technologically advanced regions, such as the United States, Japan, and Europe, as indicated by the studies of Kimura (2021) and Kawasaki (2019). These studies focus on high-pressure applications in well-established research environments, where access to advanced equipment like diamond anvil cells is more feasible. However, there is a significant geographical gap concerning research in developing regions, where the application and exploration of high-pressure techniques in superconductivity are relatively sparse. This gap suggests a need for increased collaboration and investment in high-pressure research within developing countries, which could lead to the discovery of novel materials and enhance the global understanding of superconductivity. Expanding research efforts geographically could also provide insights into how local material resources might be optimized for superconducting applications through high-pressure techniques.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In conclusion, high-pressure techniques play a crucial role in enhancing the superconductivity of materials by significantly altering their electronic, magnetic, and structural properties. These techniques, such as the use of diamond anvil cells and multi-anvil presses, have proven effective in increasing the critical temperature (Tc) of various superconductors, bringing the possibility of room-temperature superconductivity closer to reality. Studies have demonstrated that high pressures can induce novel superconducting phases and enhance existing ones, particularly in hydrogen-rich compounds, iron-based superconductors, and even organic materials. Despite the advancements, there remain conceptual, contextual, and geographical research gaps that need to be addressed to fully exploit the potential of high-pressure techniques in superconductivity. Future research should focus on integrating high-pressure methods with other material modification techniques, exploring a broader range of materials, and expanding research efforts to include developing regions. By addressing these gaps, the scientific community can further unlock the potential of superconductivity, leading to transformative applications in energy transmission, storage, and advanced technologies.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations based on theory, practice and policy:

Theory

Future research should explore the integration of high-pressure techniques with other material modification methods, such as chemical doping, strain engineering, and external magnetic fields. This approach can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how combined techniques can synergistically enhance superconductivity, leading to the development of new theoretical models that explain the interactions between these methods. Researchers should broaden the scope of materials studied under high-pressure conditions, including non-traditional superconductors like organic and hybrid materials. This expansion will contribute to the theoretical knowledge base by revealing how different material classes respond to high pressure, potentially uncovering new superconducting mechanisms and phases.

Practice

High-pressure techniques should be further developed and scaled for industrial applications, particularly in the energy sector, where superconducting materials can revolutionize power transmission and storage. Practical research should focus on optimizing these techniques for large-scale synthesis of superconductors with higher critical temperatures (Tc) and lower resistance, making them more viable for commercial use. Practitioners should focus on refining the synthesis processes of superconducting materials under high pressure to ensure consistent quality and performance. This includes developing standardized protocols for applying pressure and combining it with other modification techniques to produce materials with superior superconducting properties.

Policy

Policymakers should increase funding and support for research into high-pressure techniques, particularly in developing countries. This will help bridge geographical gaps in research and foster global collaboration, leading to more diverse and innovative approaches to enhancing superconductivity. There should be efforts to establish international standards for the application of high-pressure techniques in superconductivity research. Such standards would ensure consistency and reproducibility across studies, facilitating the broader adoption of these techniques in both academic and industrial settings. Additionally, policies should encourage the ethical and sustainable sourcing of materials used in high-pressure experiments, ensuring that advancements in superconductivity do not come at the expense of environmental or social responsibility.

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