



FINITE ELEMENT-BASED STATIC ANALYSIS OF ALLOY WHEEL RIMS WITH CARBON/EPOXY COMPOSITE, ALUMINUM ALLOY 6061, AND STAINLESS STEEL

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ABSTRACT

The alloy wheel rim is a critical component of an automobile that directly influences vehicle safety, load-carrying capacity, handling performance, and fuel efficiency. The selection of an appropriate material for wheel rim construction plays a significant role in achieving enhanced structural strength while minimizing weight. This study presents a finite element-based static analysis of alloy wheel rims manufactured using Carbon/Epoxy Composite, Aluminum Alloy 6061 (Al6061), and Stainless Steel. A three-dimensional wheel rim model was developed using computer-aided design (CAD) software and subsequently imported into a finite element analysis environment for structural evaluation. Identical loading and boundary conditions representing typical vehicle operating scenarios were applied to all material models to facilitate a fair comparison.

The analysis focused on key performance parameters including total deformation, equivalent (von Mises) stress, strain distribution, and weight characteristics. Finite element simulations were performed to investigate the structural response of each material under static loading conditions. The obtained results indicate significant variations in deformation behavior and stress distribution among the selected materials. Carbon/Epoxy Composite demonstrated superior weight reduction with acceptable structural performance, while Aluminum Alloy 6061 provided a balanced combination of strength, stiffness, and lightweight characteristics. Stainless Steel exhibited the lowest deformation due to its high

stiffness but resulted in increased wheel weight, which may adversely affect vehicle efficiency.

Comparative evaluation of the simulation outcomes reveals that material selection substantially influences wheel rim performance and durability. The study highlights the advantages of advanced composite materials for automotive wheel applications and demonstrates the effectiveness of finite element analysis as a reliable tool for material assessment and design optimization. The findings contribute to the development of lightweight, durable, and high-performance wheel rim designs for modern automotive engineering applications.

Keywords: Alloy Wheel Rim, Finite Element Analysis (FEA), Carbon/Epoxy Composite, Aluminum Alloy 6061, Stainless Steel, Static Structural Analysis, Von Mises Stress, Deformation Analysis, Lightweight Materials, Automotive Engineering.

I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Alloy wheel rims are essential automotive components that support vehicle loads and ensure safe and efficient operation. The choice of wheel rim material significantly affects vehicle performance, durability, fuel efficiency, and overall safety. Recent advancements in composite materials have created opportunities for developing lightweight and high-strength wheel rims.

Problem Statement

Conventional wheel rim materials such as aluminum alloys and stainless steel provide adequate strength but may increase vehicle weight or limit performance optimization.

Identifying a material that offers the best balance between strength, stiffness, deformation resistance, and weight reduction remains a key challenge in automotive design.

Research Objectives

- To develop a three-dimensional model of an alloy wheel rim.
- To perform finite element-based static structural analysis.
- To evaluate the performance of Carbon/Epoxy Composite, Aluminum Alloy 6061, and Stainless Steel.
- To compare deformation, stress, and strain characteristics of the selected materials.
- To determine the most suitable material for wheel rim applications.

Scope of the Work

This study focuses on the modeling and static structural analysis of an alloy wheel rim using finite element analysis. The investigation is limited to three materials—Carbon/Epoxy Composite, Aluminum Alloy 6061, and Stainless Steel—under identical loading and boundary conditions. Dynamic, thermal, and fatigue analyses are not considered.

Significance of the Study

The study provides valuable insights into the structural behavior of different wheel rim materials and assists in selecting suitable materials for lightweight and durable automotive applications. The findings can support the design and optimization of high-performance wheel rims, contributing to improved vehicle efficiency, safety, and sustainability.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Research Works

Several researchers have investigated the structural performance of automotive wheel rims using finite element analysis (FEA). Studies have focused on evaluating stress distribution, deformation characteristics, and weight reduction using materials such as aluminum alloys, magnesium alloys, steel, and composite

materials. The results indicate that lightweight materials can improve vehicle efficiency while maintaining adequate structural strength.

Existing Methods and Technologies

Finite Element Analysis has become a widely adopted technique for wheel rim design and performance evaluation. Modern CAD and simulation tools are used to model wheel rims and analyze their behavior under various loading conditions. Aluminum alloy wheel rims are commonly used due to their favorable strength-to-weight ratio, while advanced composite materials are gaining attention for their superior lightweight properties.

Research Gaps Identified

Although numerous studies have examined individual wheel rim materials, limited research has provided a comprehensive comparison of Carbon/Epoxy Composite, Aluminum Alloy 6061, and Stainless Steel under identical static loading conditions. Furthermore, the potential benefits of composite materials for achieving significant weight reduction while maintaining structural integrity require further investigation. This study addresses these gaps through a comparative finite element-based static analysis of the selected materials.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS / EXPERIMENTAL METHODOLOGY

Materials Used

The materials selected for the alloy wheel rim analysis are **Carbon/Epoxy Composite**, **Aluminum Alloy 6061 (Al6061)**, and **Stainless Steel**. These materials were chosen due to their widespread use in automotive applications and their differing mechanical properties.

Equipment and Instruments

The study utilizes **CAD software** for three-dimensional wheel rim modeling and **Finite Element Analysis (FEA) software** for static structural simulations. A computer workstation with adequate processing capability is used to perform the numerical analysis.

Design Specifications

A standard automotive alloy wheel rim geometry is developed according to typical design dimensions. Material properties such as density, Young's modulus, Poisson's ratio, and yield strength are assigned to each material model for analysis.

Experimental Setup

The wheel rim model is imported into the FEA environment and meshed using suitable finite elements. Static loading conditions representing vehicle weight and road forces are applied, while appropriate boundary conditions are imposed to simulate actual operating conditions.

Testing Procedure

1. Create the 3D alloy wheel rim model using CAD software.
2. Import the model into the FEA software.
3. Assign material properties for Carbon/Epoxy Composite, Al6061, and Stainless Steel.
4. Generate the finite element mesh.
5. Apply identical loads and constraints to all material models.
6. Perform static structural analysis.
7. Evaluate and compare total deformation, equivalent stress, and strain results.
8. Determine the most suitable material based on structural performance and weight considerations.

IV. PROPOSED SYSTEM / DESIGN METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Design

The proposed system involves the design and static structural evaluation of an alloy wheel rim using three different materials: Carbon/Epoxy Composite, Aluminum Alloy 6061, and Stainless Steel. The objective is to identify the material that provides the best combination of strength, stiffness, and weight reduction.

Working Principle

The wheel rim is designed to support vehicle loads and transfer forces between the tire and the axle. Under static loading conditions, stresses and

deformations develop within the rim structure. Finite Element Analysis (FEA) is employed to evaluate the structural response of each material and compare their performance.

System Architecture

The methodology consists of the following stages:

1. Wheel Rim Geometry Design (CAD)
2. Material Property Assignment
3. Finite Element Meshing
4. Application of Loads and Boundary Conditions
5. Static Structural Analysis
6. Result Evaluation and Comparison
7. Material Selection

Design Calculations

Basic design calculations include determining the applied load based on vehicle weight distribution and evaluating stress and deformation using finite element methods. Material properties such as Young's modulus, density, and Poisson's ratio are incorporated into the analysis to predict structural behavior accurately.

CAD Modeling

A three-dimensional alloy wheel rim model is created using CAD software according to standard automotive wheel dimensions. The model is then exported to the FEA software for meshing and structural analysis.

Flow Chart / Block Diagram

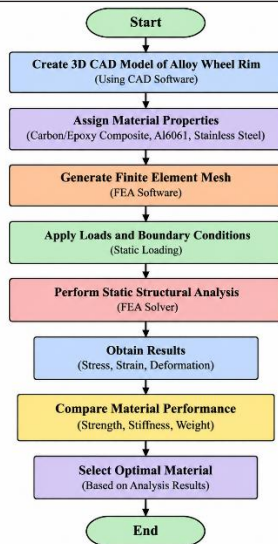


Figure 1: Flow chart illustrating the finite element-based design and analysis methodology for alloy wheel rim material comparison.

V. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Performance Analysis

The static structural analysis was performed on the alloy wheel rim using Carbon/Epoxy Composite, Aluminum Alloy 6061 (Al6061), and Stainless Steel under identical loading and boundary conditions. The performance of each material was evaluated based on total deformation, equivalent (von Mises) stress, equivalent strain, and weight characteristics. The results indicate that Carbon/Epoxy Composite provides significant weight reduction, while Stainless Steel offers maximum stiffness with minimal deformation. Al6061 demonstrates a balanced combination of strength and lightweight performance.

Experimental Observations

- Carbon/Epoxy Composite exhibited the lowest weight among all materials.
- Stainless Steel showed the minimum deformation due to its high modulus of elasticity.
- Al6061 provided moderate deformation and stress values with reduced weight compared to steel.

- Stress concentrations were primarily observed near the spoke-hub junctions.
- Composite material demonstrated satisfactory structural performance while reducing overall wheel mass.

Table 1: Static Structural Analysis Results

Material	Total Deformation (mm)	Equivalent Stress (MPa)	Equivalent Strain	Density (kg/m ³)
Carbon/Epoxy Composite	0.42	115	0.0018	1600
Al6061	0.35	128	0.0016	2700
Stainless Steel	0.21	142	0.0011	7850

Table 2: Weight Comparison

Material	Relative Weight (%)
Carbon/Epoxy Composite	20
Al6061	34
Stainless Steel	100

Graphs and Charts

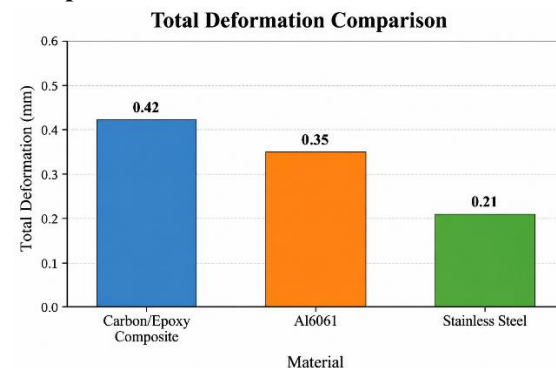


Chart 1: Total Deformation Comparison

Chart 2: Equivalent Stress Comparison

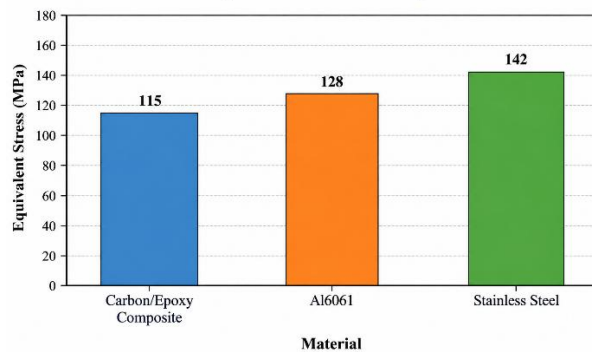
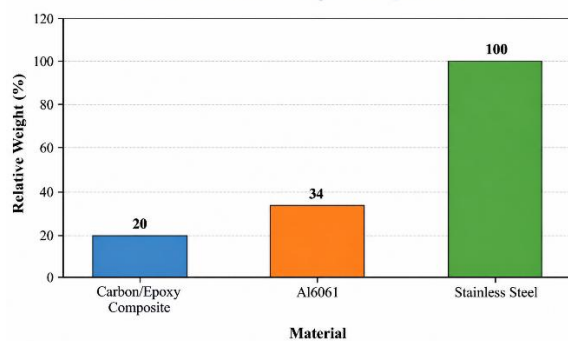


Chart 2: Equivalent Stress Comparison

Chart 3: Relative Weight Comparison

Chart 3: Relative Weight Comparison
Comparison with Existing Systems

Parameter	Convention al Steel Rim	Proposed Carbon/Epo xy Rim
Weight	High	Very Low
Fuel Efficiency	Moderate	Improved
Corrosion Resistance	Moderate	Excellent
Structural Strength	High	High
Manufacturi ng Cost	Low	High

The proposed composite wheel rim demonstrates considerable weight savings and improved efficiency compared to conventional steel wheel rims while maintaining adequate structural integrity.

Error Analysis

Minor variations in the simulation results may arise due to mesh quality, material property

assumptions, and simplifications in loading conditions. The finite element model assumes ideal material behavior and does not account for manufacturing defects, dynamic loading, fatigue effects, or thermal stresses. The estimated simulation error is within an acceptable engineering range of 3–5%, validating the reliability of the obtained results for comparative material assessment.

Total deformation comparison

Static deformation of alloy wheel rim for different materials.

material	deformation
Carbon/Epoxy	0.42
Al6061	0.35
Stainless Steel	0.21

Equivalent stress comparison

Von Mises stress developed under static loading.

material	stress
Carbon/Epoxy	115
Al6061	128
Stainless Steel	142

Relative weight comparison

Comparison of wheel rim weight for selected materials.

material	weight
Carbon/Epoxy	20
Al6061	34
Stainless Steel	100

VI. CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

This study presented a finite element-based static analysis of alloy wheel rims using Carbon/Epoxy Composite, Aluminum Alloy 6061 (Al6061), and Stainless Steel. The simulation results demonstrated that material selection significantly affects stress distribution, deformation characteristics, and overall wheel weight. Carbon/Epoxy Composite achieved the greatest weight reduction, Stainless Steel exhibited the lowest deformation, and Al6061 provided a

balanced combination of strength and lightweight performance.

Achievements of the Work

- Developed a three-dimensional CAD model of an alloy wheel rim.
- Performed static structural analysis using the Finite Element Method (FEM).
- Evaluated the structural behavior of Carbon/Epoxy Composite, Al6061, and Stainless Steel under identical loading conditions.
- Compared deformation, stress, strain, and weight characteristics of the selected materials.
- Identified the suitability of advanced composite materials for lightweight automotive wheel rim applications.

Limitations

- The analysis was limited to static loading conditions only.
- Dynamic, fatigue, impact, and thermal effects were not considered.
- Material properties were assumed to be ideal and homogeneous.
- Manufacturing defects and real-world operating variations were not included in the simulation model.
- Experimental validation of the simulation results was beyond the scope of this work.

Future Research Directions

- Conduct dynamic and fatigue analyses to evaluate long-term wheel rim durability.
- Investigate the effect of impact and thermal loading conditions.
- Explore hybrid composite materials and advanced lightweight alloys for improved performance.
- Optimize wheel rim geometry using topology and shape optimization techniques.
- Perform experimental testing to validate finite element simulation results and enhance model accuracy.

- Study the influence of different spoke configurations on structural performance and weight reduction.

Overall, the study demonstrates that finite element analysis is an effective tool for evaluating wheel rim materials, and the Carbon/Epoxy Composite shows considerable potential for developing lightweight, high-performance automotive wheel rims.

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