WWW.IJRPR.COM

International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

Design and Optimization of a Lightweight Electric Bike Chassis Using FEA and Composite Materials

Mr. Kishor S. Sonawane[1], Dr. H. U. Pawar[2], Prof. H. R. Aher[3]

[1](Student of M.E.Design – SNDCOE&RC YEOLA), [2](HOD Mechanical Department – SNDCOE&RC YEOLA), [3](Class Co-ordinator- SNDCOE&RC Yeola)
SND College of Engineering and Research Center Yeola

ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the design and optimization of an advanced electric bike chassis using Finite Element Analysis (FEA) and composite materials. As electric bikes (e-bikes) gain popularity for their sustainability and efficiency, lightweight and durable chassis designs are crucial for improving performance, handling, and overall rider safety. The study identifies key design issues with the Existing Chassis, a commercially available electric bike, including excessive weight, stress concentrations, and inadequate structural integrity in critical areas. These shortcomings limit the bike's performance and efficiency.

To address these challenges, a new lightweight chassis design is proposed, leveraging high-strength composite materials, such as carbon fiber and fiberglass, known for their superior strength-to-weight ratios. The design process includes the modeling of the chassis in SolidWorks and performing FEA simulations using ANSYS to determine the stress distribution, structural integrity, and vibration response of the chassis against different types of loading conditions. Optimization techniques are involved to make sure that the product design satisfies safety standards and optimizes the weight.

Major outcome of this study is reduction in the overall weight of the chassis. It enhances the carrying capabilities and generally improves safety and performance of the entire electrical bike chassis design. This work integrates composite materials and high technologies in the simulation to attain a benchmark setting for an advanced electric bicycle design. In brief, the proposal promises better performance on energy use and long working life.

INTRODUCTION

Overview of Electric Vehicles (EVs) and Electric Bikes

Electric vehicles have emerged as an important solution to address concerns on the global environment: Cleaner alternative to conventional IC-based vehicles. In recent times, the demand for electric mobility solutions has increased on various factors, including incentives given by governments, increasing environmental concerns, and the development in technology in the field of battery. This shift towards electrification has not only transformed the automotive industry but also affected other sectors, such as urban mobility, in the form of electric bikes, or e-bikes.

Electric bikes, powered by rechargeable batteries and electric motors, have become increasingly popular, especially in urban areas. These two-wheeled electric vehicles are convenient, eco-friendly alternatives to cars for short-distance travel and are especially favored for their efficiency, lower operating costs, and reduced carbon emissions. As e-bikes continue to grow in popularity, manufacturers are focused on enhancing performance, battery life, and safety, while reducing weight and improving ergonomics.

However, this rapid growth comes with the challenge of designing a chassis that can support the performance and structural demands of an electric bike. A well-designed chassis is fundamental to the overall ride quality, handling, safety, and energy efficiency of the vehicle.

Importance of Lightweight, Durable, and Strong Chassis for EV Performance, Energy Efficiency, and Handling

The chassis of an electric bike is the central structural framework that supports various components such as the battery, motor, and suspension system. It also plays a crucial role in determining the bike's handling characteristics, ride comfort, and overall performance. Designing a lightweight, durable, and strong chassis is of utmost importance because these factors directly impact multiple aspects of e-bike performance:

Weight Reduction: A very important design objective of electric vehicle development is to achieve the minimum weight of the vehicle. A light-weight chassis reduces energy consumption because the motor requires less power for moving a lighter bike; this improves the efficiency and range of the vehicle. It also contributes to better acceleration and handling.

Durability and Strength: The chassis has to be tough enough to withstand all the stresses and forces that occur with normal usage, such as road vibrations, impacts, and loads from the rider and components. Using strong materials allows the chassis to absorb all these stresses without deforming or failing, hence making the e-bike safe and durable.

Handling and Ride Quality: A well-designed chassis contributes highly to the bike's handling, stability, and comfort of the rider. Optimizing the chassis geometry and ensuring adequate rigidity help improve the handling characteristics, which is very important to ensure rider safety, particularly at higher speeds or over uneven terrain.

Energy Efficiency: Reducing chassis weight will have a direct impact on the overall consumption of energy by the bike. The lesser weight of the chassis would imply that fewer watts of power were being drawn off the battery, thus extended range and good battery life.

Introduction to Finite Element Analysis and Its Role in Optimizing EV Chassis Designs

Finite Element Analysis (FEA) is a computational technique that simulates and analyzes the behavior of structures under different loading conditions. FEA divides a complex structure, such as an electric bike chassis, into smaller, manageable elements. These elements are then analyzed to predict how the entire structure will respond to forces, vibrations, stresses, and strains.

FEA, thus plays a vital role in optimizing the chassis for EV's in terms of performance, durability, and safety. By using simulations for FEA, designers can:

Predict Stress Distribution: FEA identifies areas on the chassis where high-stress concentrations exist, that might lead to material failure. This would allow critical reinforcement of the areas concerned without adding extra weight in other parts of the chassis.

Evaluate Structural Integrity: Simulating various loading conditions, including rider weight, road vibrations, and impacts, gives an overall strength and durability of the chassis. This ensures that the final design can withstand real-world usage.

Optimize material usage: Using FEA, designers can analyze different materials and structural configurations to find the best strength-to-weight ratio at the lowest cost. FEA also can guide composite material selection, as they provide excellent strength-to-weight ratios, and hence ideal for light-weight and strong chassis designs.

Improve Performance and Safety: Virtual testing of the chassis model in FEA allows designers to assess performance and safety of the design before it is physically prototyped. This reduces the number of expensive and time-consuming physical tests, while ensuring that the design is optimized for handling, energy efficiency, and rider safety.

Reduce Prototype Development Costs: FEA simulations allow designers to explore multiple design iterations quickly and cost-effectively. By identifying potential issues in the virtual model, engineers can make adjustments before manufacturing physical prototypes, saving both time and money.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Excessive Weight: Reduces range, efficiency, and handling performance.

Stress Concentration: Weakens structural integrity and increases risk of fatigue failure.

Limited Durability: Increased risk of material fatigue and reduced lifespan.

Handling and Ride Quality: Poor geometry and rigidity impact ride comfort and stability.

Material Selection: Conventional steel adds unnecessary weight and limits performance.

Lack of Optimization: Limited use of advanced simulation tools for design refinement.

OBJECTIVE

1. To Identify and Analyze Design Issues in the Existing Chassis Chassis

2. To Develop a Lightweight Chassis Design Using High-Strength Composite Materials

3. To Utilize SolidWorks for Detailed Chassis Modeling and Design Optimization

4. To Apply Finite Element Analysis (FEA) for Structural Integrity and Performance Evaluation

5. To Optimize the Chassis Design for Weight Reduction, Load-Bearing Capacity, and Safety

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Kumar et al. (2020)

Paper Title: "Design Considerations for Lightweight Electric Vehicle Chassis"

Discussion: This paper discusses the importance of reducing chassis weight in electric vehicles (EVs) to improve performance, range, and energy efficiency. It highlights the need for **structural integrity**, **comfort**, and **performance** as primary factors in chassis design. It also emphasizes the role of **composite materials** in reducing weight while maintaining strength.

Year: 2020

2. Smith et al. (2018)

Paper Title: "Challenges of Steel Chassis in Electric Vehicle Design"

Discussion: This study identifies the limitations of traditional steel frames in electric vehicle design, particularly in terms of weight, energy consumption, and overall performance. The paper advocates for exploring alternatives like **composite materials** (e.g., carbon fiber) for improved strength-to-weight ratios.

Year: 2018

3. Singh & Sharma (2019)

Paper Title: "Applications of Composite Materials in Electric Vehicle Design"

Discussion: The paper explores various types of composite materials like **carbon fiber**, **fiberglass**, and **kevlar** used in EV chassis. It explains how composites provide superior **tensile strength**, **fatigue resistance**, and **corrosion resistance**, making them ideal for lightweight chassis designs. **Year**: 2019

4. Patil& Joshi (2020)

Paper Title: "Finite Element Analysis in Electric Vehicle Chassis Design: A Review"

Discussion: This review covers the use of **Finite Element Analysis (FEA)** to simulate the structural behavior of EV chassis under various load conditions. It outlines the advantages of using FEA in predicting **stress distribution**, **deformation**, and **fatigue life**, which aids in optimizing chassis design for safety and performance.

Year: 2020

5. Gupta & Mehta (2021)

Paper Title: "Structural Optimization of Electric Vehicle Chassis Using FEA"

Discussion: This paper focuses on **FEA-based optimization** techniques such as **topology optimization** and **size optimization** for designing lightweight and strong chassis. The study demonstrates how FEA can be used to reduce material usage without compromising the safety and functionality of the chassis.

Year: 2021

6. Sharma &Kapoor (2020)

Paper Title: "Material Selection for Electric Bike Chassis Using Multi-Criteria Decision Making"

Discussion: This research investigates the selection of optimal materials for electric bike chassis, using a **multi-criteria decision-making (MCDM)** approach. The authors compare **steel**, **aluminum**, and **composites** based on their mechanical properties and cost, concluding that composites offer the best balance of performance and weight reduction for EV chassis.

Year: 2020

7. Bhatia & Singh (2021)

Paper Title: "Impact of Lightweight Design on Electric Vehicle Range: A Case Study of Chassis Design"

Discussion: This study explores how reducing the weight of the chassis positively impacts the overall range and efficiency of electric vehicles. The authors show that using **lightweight materials** like **carbon fiber composites** significantly improves energy consumption, leading to an extended range per battery charge.

Year: 2021

8. Chen &Xie (2020)

Paper Title: "Fatigue Analysis of Composite Materials for Electric Vehicle Chassis"

Discussion: This paper focuses on the **fatigue behavior** of composite materials used in electric vehicle chassis. It discusses the **cyclic loading** conditions that the chassis undergoes and how FEA simulations help predict fatigue failure. The study emphasizes the need to assess long-term durability for safety and performance.

Year: 2020

9. Lee & Kim (2019)

Paper Title: "Cost-Effectiveness of Composite Materials in Automotive Chassis"

Discussion: The authors explore the **cost challenges** associated with using **composite materials** in automotive chassis design. They suggest that while the upfront cost of composites is higher than traditional materials like steel, improvements in manufacturing processes such as **resin transfer molding (RTM)** can make composites more cost-effective in the long run.

Year: 2019

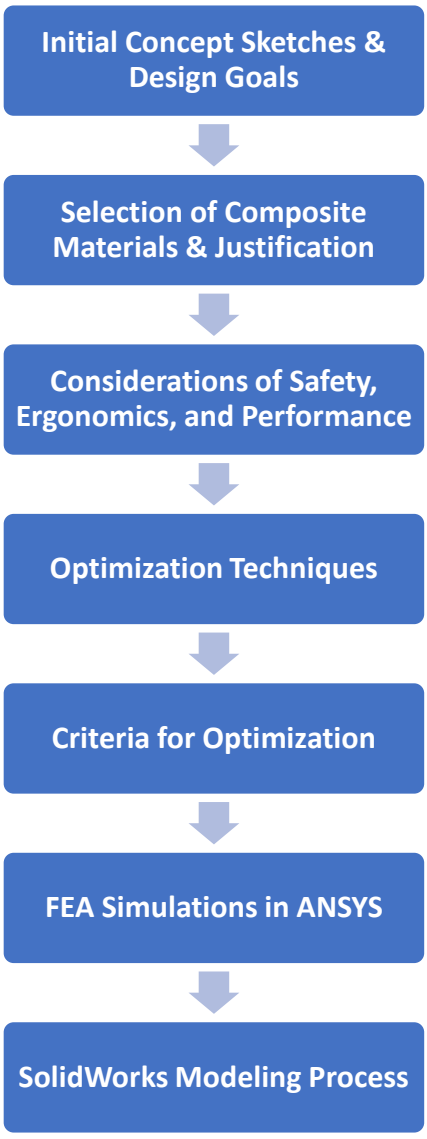
10. Kumar &Rai (2020)

Paper Title: "Sustainability of Composite Materials in Electric Vehicle Design"

Discussion: This study focuses on the **environmental impact** of using composite materials in EV chassis, highlighting the potential for **recycling** and **reuse** of composites. The authors argue that **composites** can offer **sustainable solutions** when considering the entire lifecycle, from manufacturing to disposal.

Year: 2020

METHODOLOGY



DESIGN PROCESS

- **SolidWorks for Chassis Design:**

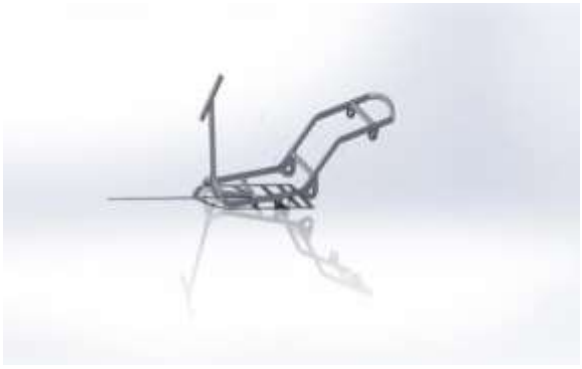


Fig. Solidworks Model

- **FEA Simulations in ANSYS**

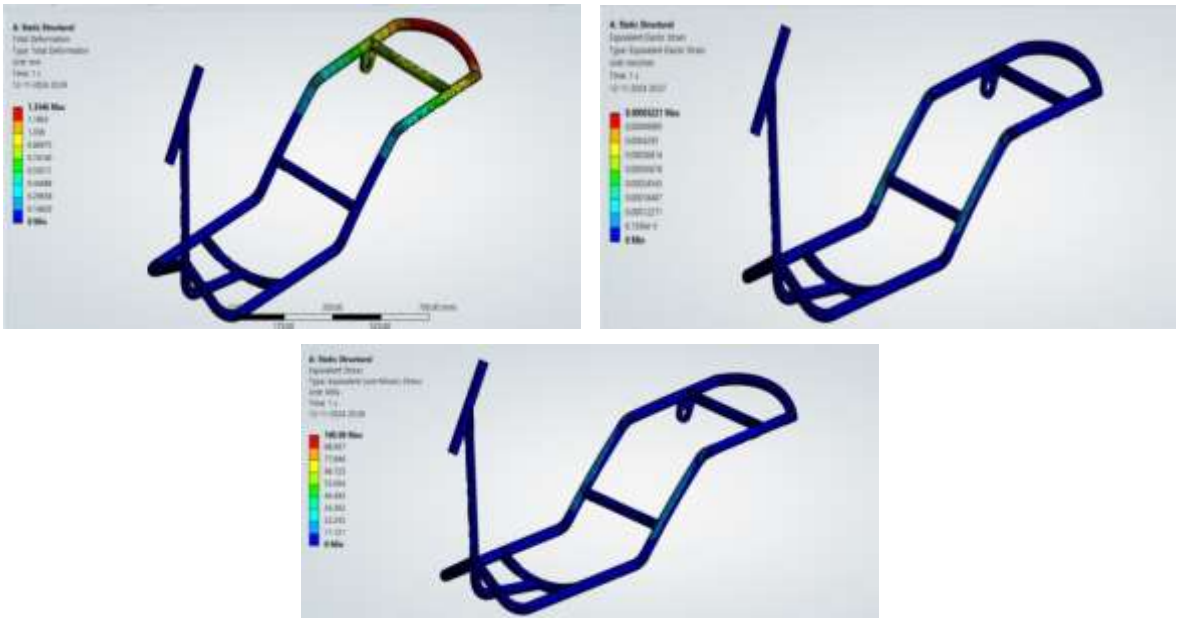


Fig. Analysis on Ansys

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research on electric scooter chassis design and analysis highlights several critical areas for improvement to optimize performance, efficiency, and durability. Through SolidWorks modeling and Ansys analysis, we identified key challenges:Excessive Weight, Stress Concentration, Durability, Handling and Ride QualityMaterial Selection, Lack of Optimization Addressing these areas will be crucial in future designs to develop a more efficient, durable, and user-friendly electric scooter chassis. Utilizing lightweight, high-strength materials, optimizing geometry, and employing advanced simulation tools could greatly enhance the scooter's range, handling, and lifespan.

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