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Optimized Bolt Tightening Strategies for Different Sizes of Gasketed Flanged Pipe Joints

Muhammad Abid\textsuperscript{a}, Ayesha Khan\textsuperscript{b}, David Hugh Nash\textsuperscript{c}, Masroor Hussain\textsuperscript{d}, Hafiz Abdul Wajid\textsuperscript{e,f}

\textsuperscript{a} Director, Interdisciplinary Research Center, COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Wah Cantt, Pakistan (drabid@ciitwah.edu.pk)
\textsuperscript{b} Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, GIK Institute of Information Technology, Topi, Pakistan (ayesha@giki.edu.pk)
\textsuperscript{c} Department of Mechanical Engineering, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK (d.nash@strath.ac.uk)
\textsuperscript{d} Faculty of Computer Sciences and Engineering, GIK Institute of Engineering Sciences and Technology, Topi, Pakistan (hussain@giki.edu.pk)
\textsuperscript{e} Department of Electrical Engineering, Islamic University Medina, KSA (hawajid@iu.edu.sa)
\textsuperscript{f} Department of Mathematics, COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Lahore, Pakistan (habdulwajid@yahoo.com)

Abstract

Achieving a proper preload in the bolts of a gasketed bolted flanged pipe joint during joint assembly is considered important for its optimized performance. This paper presents results of detailed non-linear finite element analysis (FEA) of an optimized bolt tightening strategy of different joint sizes for achieving proper preload close to the target stress values. Industrial guidelines are considered for applying recommended target stress values with TCM (torque control method) and SCM (stretch control method) using a customized optimization algorithm. Different joint components performance is observed and discussed in detail.

Keywords: Bolted; flanged pipe joints; torque control; stretch control; finite element analysis; optimized

* Corresponding author: Email: drabid@ciitwah.edu.pk

Nomenclature

\textit{TCM} Torque control method
\textit{SCM} Stretch control method
\textit{2D} Two dimensional
\textit{3D} Three dimensional
\textit{SC} Stretching of bolts at one time during bolt tightening
\textit{DIFF} Differential rate in target stress variables
\textit{DR} Displacement rate for bolt up
\textit{UY} Axial displacement of bolts
\textit{CURS} Current stress during each iteration
\textit{ASME} American Society for Mechanical Engineers
\textit{B} Bolt number
\textit{G} Bolt group used during SCM
\textit{P} Pass number
\textit{M} Semi-automated algorithm
\textit{O} Fully automated algorithm
\textit{HF} Hub flange fillet location
1. Introduction

Gasketed bolted flange joints are extensively used in process industrial applications. Performance of a gasketed bolted flanged pipe joint is related to the proper joint assembly with all bolts tightened to the recommended target bolt stress values by ASME or industrial guidelines. However, based on factors including target stress values, tools, fitters training, gasket materials, bolts quality and others, sealing and strength of a joint cannot be ensured experimentally. Keeping in view these practical limitations, based on the availability of the computational power in the last decade, modeling and simulation has made it possible to visualize the behavior of individual components and as an assembly as a whole for its safe operation. Researchers including Cao and Xu [1], Takkaki and Fukuoka [2-5], Abid [6], Nagata et al [7], Tsuji and Nakano [8], Sawa et al [9], Fukuoka and Sawa [10], Zhang et al [11], Bouzid and Nechache [12], Shoji [13], Takkaki [14] and Brown and Warren [15] have performed detailed finite element studies keeping in view the limitations of experimental work. They used flange displacement at the bottom of the bolt by hit and trial methods target stresses in the bolts is achieved. Abid et al [6] have highlighted yielding at flange and crushing of the gasket during experimental work for one size only as it is impossible to test all sizes which again practically are impossible in field applications. Therefore Abid et al [6, 16-32] have performed detailed 2D and 3D numerical studies, but limitations are observed in terms of semi-automatic applications of algorithm and results recording at required locations using manual picking at different joint components concluding hectic and time consuming. Keeping in view the above limitations, a generalized algorithm is developed for accurate results for the required target stress, times saving for solution and result recording as required compared to the manual inputs and can be implemented to all different flange sizes and classes using both the TCM and SCM for recommended bolt stress values by Industrial guidelines. In this paper only results of different flange sizes for Class 900# class [33] (1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 20 inch) are only presented.

2. Finite Element Modeling, Meshing, Material Selection, Boundary conditions and Solution

Three dimensional models of different flange sizes are developed. Due to the rotational symmetry, a part of the flange, pipe, bolt and spiral wound gasket is modelled first and is then revolved to form full model. One bolt is modelled first while all others are generated using rotational symmetry. In this study elasto-plastic material model is used for all the flange sizes. Allowable stresses for flange and pipe are as per ASTM A350 LF2 and bolts are as per ASTM SA193 B7 taken from ref. [34] and are used in the industry. Gasket material properties and dimensions are used from Garlock [35]. Flange, pipe and bolts are modelled using Solid45 elements. Interface elements (INTER195) and TARGET170 and CONTA174 elements are used for gasket and contacts generation. In order to have flange rotation gasket and flange are free to move in the radial and axial direction, with symmetry conditions applied at the lower portion of the gasket. To observe bolt bending, bolts are constrained at mid-section in the tangential and radial direction. To apply preload, an axial displacement is applied in the downward direction at bolt bottom areas. ANSYS software is used for analysis [36]. Industrial [35] guidelines are used for torque control method (one bolt is tightened at one time) for flange sizes 1, 4, 5, 6, 8 inch. For stretch control method (a group of bolts is tightened at one time) for flange sizes 10 and 20 inch using SKF strategy [37]. Meshed model of gasketed joint with applied boundary conditions is shown in Fig. 1.

TCM uses torque wrenches to apply torque on bolts due to which nut or bolt is turned against the surface of the flange and bolt is stretched and bolt preload is calculated using Bickford and Nassar [38]. In SCM stud is stretched by applying hydraulic pressure to the tensioner; nut is coiled against joint face and then pressure is released after which tool is removed. As the pressure is released bolts act as spring and tension is created in the bolt and the bolt are elongated. In TCM, bolts are tightened in cross pattern (sequence-1) for first four passes and in clockwise pattern (sequence-2) in 5th pass. In SCM, bolts are tightened by stretching 100% (SC100), 50% (SC50) and 33% (SC33) of the bolts at a time. Details of tightening sequence, number of passes and percentage increment of target torque for TCM and tensioning for SCM are summarized in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively.
Figure 1: Meshed model of gasketed joint assembly and applied boundary conditions

Table 1: Pre stress values for 1, 4, 5, 6, and 8 inch flange size using TCM (Garlock [35])

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NS</th>
<th>Bolt dia(m)</th>
<th>Target Torque(Nm)</th>
<th>Pre-stress value for each pass (MPa)</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
<th>P4</th>
<th>P5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0222</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.0280</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.0320</td>
<td>1091</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.0285</td>
<td>896</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.0350</td>
<td>1359</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Torque Increments for 10 and 20 inch flange sizes using SCM (SKF [37])

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Bolts</th>
<th>Bolt tightening sequence</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Bolts Tensioning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 (10 inch) 20 (20 inch)</td>
<td>(1,5,9,13), (2,6,10,14), (3,7,11,15), (4,8,12,16) (1,5,9,13,17), (2,6,10,14,18), (3,7,11,15,19), (4,8,12,16,20)</td>
<td>G1~4</td>
<td>25 or 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 (10 inch) 20 (20 inch)</td>
<td>1,3,5,7,9,11,13,15 2,4,6,8,10,12,14,16 1,3,5,7,9,11,13,15,17,19 2,4,6,8,10,12,14,16,18,20</td>
<td>G1  G2  G1  G2</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 (10 inch) 20 (20 inch)</td>
<td>1 to 16 1 to 20</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Optimization Algorithms

A generalized optimization algorithm to achieve bolt up stress values within range defined by ASME and industry is presented in Fig. 2 for both the TCM and SCM. Target stress variables are defined including differential rate (DIFF) and displacement rate (DR) for bolt up and directional variable for increment/decrement in the displacement (UY) value to keep the target stress in range. Current stress (CURS) is defined to indicate the value of stress for each iteration. Differential rate is for the initial jump to reach the required target stress value quickly and is returned to zero after the first iteration while the subsequent iterations are continued with the increment in DR only. Minimum and maximum stress values are saved in LOW_TARGETS and MAX_TARGETS variables respectively, for each pass. Maximum iterations are kept up to 600 to achieve required target stress before loop ends. As soon as target stress value is achieved in the bolt, results of all required stresses i.e. of flange, bolts and gasket are saved in the output file and are called using macros to avoid repetitions. According to the specified tightening sequences and bolt preload values, during bolt up, yielding is observed at hub flange fillet in different flange sizes, resulting in their failure. Area of hub flange fillet is selected around 360° after which elements attached to this area are selected. Finally nodes attached to these elements are selected.
and grouped in a component to check stress value in them. To avoid yield, variable for flange yield’s stress is defined. When yield value defined in this variable is achieved the iteration is stopped and moved to the next step, ignoring whether the target stress is achieved or not.

4. Results and discussions

In this section results are discussed in detail only for 8 inch flange size of Class 900#, whereas results are summarized for flange sizes of 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 20 inch.

4.1. Comparison of optimized results of manually input and automated algorithm

In this section results of flange of size 8 inch are presented. Target bolt stress variation and stress variation at hub flange fillet were observed. Comparison of optimized target bolt stress results of manual input and automated algorithm are summarized in Table 3. Maximum stress at hub flange fillet using manual input and automated algorithm observed is 218MPa and 264MPa respectively for no yielding case whereas allowable stress value is 248 MPa. As target bolt stress values are 65MPa, 135MPa and 205MPa for 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th pass respectively, however, using manual inputs and automated algorithms, stress variation from target bolt stress of 40 MPa and 3 MPa respectively are observed.

Table 3: Comparison of manual and optimized target stress values
4.2. Comparison of TCM and SCM for all flange sizes

Different flange sizes are compared on the basis of axial bolt stress variation, gasket stress distribution and flange hub stress variation for 1, 4, 5, 6, 8 inch sizes using TCM and for 10 and 20 inch sizes using SCM.

4.3. Axial bolt stress variation:

Fig. 3 shows the comparison of stress variation at the end of last pass for 1, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 20 inch flange sizes. In case of 8 bolts flange size stress variation is higher for 4 inch size as compared to 5 inch size. In case of 12 bolt flange size stress variation is higher in 6 inch size compared to 8 inch. In case of 10 and 20 inch sizes tightened according to SCM stress variation is less as compared to all other sizes. In case of 1, 4 and 5 inch flange sizes maximum variation is 32MPa, 42MPa, 48MPa respectively while in case of 10 and 20 inch sizes maximum difference is 6MPa and 7MPa respectively.

4.4. Gasket Stress distribution:

Fig. 4 shows the comparison of gasket stress distribution for different flange sizes at the end of last pass. 1 inch flange size shows highest variation but gasket stress is uniform as the flange size increases such as 8 inch flange size using TCM. In case of 10 and 20 inch sizes it is observed uniform using SCM. Maximum difference in case of 1, 4 and 5 inch flange sizes is 50MPa, 40MPa and 22MPa respectively and in case of 10 and 20 inch flange sizes maximum difference is 0.1MPa and 0.4MPa respectively which is almost negligible difference.

4.5. Hub flange stress variation:

Fig. 5 shows hub flange stress variation for different flange sizes. In case of 4, 5, 6, and 8 inch sizes hub flange variation is taken along 0° for all passes. In case of 10 and 20 inch sizes stress variation is taken at HF-1. Maximum hub flange stress variation is observed in 4 inch flange size and minimum variation is observed in 20 inch flange sizes. However, stress variation is uniform at the end of each pass but in case of 1 inch flange size there is variation in the last pass as well. Maximum flange stress in case of 4 inch size is 385MPa and in case of 20 inch size it is 253MPa.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SQ</th>
<th>P1(M)</th>
<th>P1(O)</th>
<th>P2(M)</th>
<th>P2(O)</th>
<th>P3(M)</th>
<th>P3(O)</th>
<th>SQ1</th>
<th>P4(M)</th>
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<td>47</td>
<td>61</td>
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</table>
Figure 3: Axial bolt stress variation of different flange sizes

Figure 4: Gasket stress distribution for different flange sizes

Figure 5: Hub flange stress variation for different flange sizes
5. Conclusions

It is concluded that using customized algorithms developed in this study, bolt target stress values are observed almost close to the defined target stress as errors are minimized to 0-5MPa compared to manual hit and trial values of 0-50MPa. Creating macros for writing required values in output file and setting bolt preload values automatically, saves significant computational time as compared to manual method. In addition simultaneous simulations can be run at a time as desired without any manual interaction. With an increase in the flange size there is less variation in bolts, gasket and flange stresses. However, in small flange sizes these variations are comparatively large. Hub flange fillet stress value remains less than yield value (248MPa) of flange using customized optimization code for no yielding along 360° location and should be adopted. Gasket stress in all cases for all target torques does not exceed the maximum allowed stress of 206MPa. Therefore, gasket crushing does not occur. However, if yielding is avoided probable leakage is achieved in 4, 5 and 6 inch sizes because of gasket stress, which is less than minimum defined stress. Comparative behavior of all the sizes concludes SCM better than the TCM for axial bolt stress variation, bolt bending, gasket stress distribution and maximum stress at hub flange fillet.

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