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## Theoretical Investigation of the Flexural Behavior of Concrete Beam Containing Internal Steel Plates

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**Abstract:** The main objective of this paper is to investigate the flexural behavior of simply supported RC beams strengthened internally with steel plates with three configurations. This investigation was done by using the ABAQUS program version 2017. The main parameter in this investigation was the configuration of steel plates (flat, curve, and round). For supporting Finite Element (FE) results, four RC beams were cast with a rectangular cross-section of 200mm×150mm and a total length of 1200mm, one of these beams was a control beam, and three other beams were strengthened with 2mm steel plate with three different configurations (flat, curve and round). The experimental and numerical results showed that using steel plates as internal strengthening enhanced the load-carrying capacity for all tested beams, with a range of 15-24 % from the ultimate load of the reference beam. Furthermore, a specimen strengthened with a flat steel plate exhibited the highest increase in ultimate load. A parametric study was conducted to investigate the effect of concrete thickness and compressive strength, yield strength of steel plates, and the existence of a hole in steel plates.

**Keywords:** steel plate, flexural behavior, internal strengthening, finite element, ABAQUS.

### 内含钢板混凝土梁抗弯性能的理论研究

**摘要:** 本文的主要目的是研究三种配置的钢板内部加固简支钢筋混凝土梁的弯曲行为。

本次调查是使用

ABAQUS程序2017版完成的。本次调查的主要参数是钢板的配置(平面、曲线和圆形)。为支撑有限元结果,浇筑了四根截面为200毫米×150毫米、总长度为1200毫米的钢筋混凝土梁,其中一根梁为控制梁,另外三根梁采用2毫米钢板加固,具有三种不同的配置(平面、曲线和圆形)。实验和数值结果表明,使用钢板作为内部加固增强了所有测试梁的承载能力,范围为参考梁极限载荷的15-

24%。此外,用平板钢板加固的试样表现出最大的极限载荷增加。进行了参数化研究,以研究混凝土厚度和抗压强度、钢板的屈服强度以及钢板中是否存在孔洞的影响。

**关键词:** 钢板, 弯曲性能, 内部强化, 有限元, ABAQUS。

## 1. Introduction

Improving the performance of the concrete members needs some techniques such as servicing and strengthening progress, recovering and increasing concrete strength and stiffness, refining of the concrete surface appearance, rising water tightness, preventing the use of corrosive materials for the reinforcement, and refinement the total durability of the concrete

members [1]. Well-designed RC systems show excellent behavior through many decades. Nevertheless, many factors influence the RC structures that reduce the load-carrying capacity, principally the mechanical and environmental factors [2]. Moreover, only slight studies deal with the concept of steel plates reinforcement [3-5]. The effect of replacing the longitudinal reinforcement with an equivalent cross-

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sectional area of checker steel plates was studied in [6]. The test results concluded that each crack, yield, and ultimate loads of steel-plated beams were lower than the reference beams due to the higher rebar yield strength than steel plate. Also, the observation of beams at the failure stage increased the crack width and decreased the number of cracks.

On the other hand, ductility increased when the cross-sectional area of the steel plate was increased. The shear performance of RC wide beams was investigated experimentally on three-wide beams reinforced by vertical shear steel plates. The fourth beam with web reinforcement was considered a reference beam [7]. The flexure mode in failure had been restricted to allow for the shear failure mode in all specimens. The results show that the direction of the steel plates enhanced the shear capacity, and the use of transverse hollow steel plates improved the ductility and shear capacity. Also, the ultimate displacement was increased using transverse hollow steel plates and deflecting the longitudinal vertical hollow and solid steel plates. Bolt arrangement was studied in [8] to connect the steel plate with concrete for strengthening, with a single row and stagger rows of bolts to connect the plates with concrete. The study showed the effect of the arrangement modes. Also, the research objective was to know the effect of steel plates on flexural capacity, which is affected by the arrangement of bolts. ANSYS software was used as a finite element tool. In general, the results showed improved carrying capacity of beams by using steel plates. However, the stagger arrangement was the best mode for improving the load-carrying capacity, yield load, and ductility. The effect of some parameters on the strength and ductility behaviors of plate reinforced composite coupling beams was investigated depending on the nonlinear finite element model (FEM) [9]. The research parameters were the geometry of steel plates, the ratios of steel reinforcement in beams, and the ratio of span to depth. The results found that the ratio of span to depth controls the anchorage length of the steel plates, and the most effective ratio was about 2. The insufficient anchorage length of the plate resulted from beam stiffness and strength.

The literature stated that utilizing steel plates for external strengthening of RC beams improved their flexural strength. Moreover, the literature demonstrates that the shear performance of RC beams was significantly enhanced by using internal steel plates instead of stirrups. In general, to the author's knowledge, minimal research was conducted to investigate the flexural behavior of RC beams internally strengthening with steel plates. Thus, this study numerically investigated RC beam flexure behavior strengthened by steel plates using the ABAQUS program version 2017. In this study, nine RC beams were modeled, and the FE results were verified with the experimental results. Also, a

parametric study has been conducted to investigate the effect of thickness of steel plates, compressive strength of concrete, yield strength of steel plates, and the existence of holes in steel plates.

## 2. FE Modeling

Figure 1 shows the details of primary and secondary reinforcement using nonlinear FEM by the ABAQUS program conducted in this study on four models.

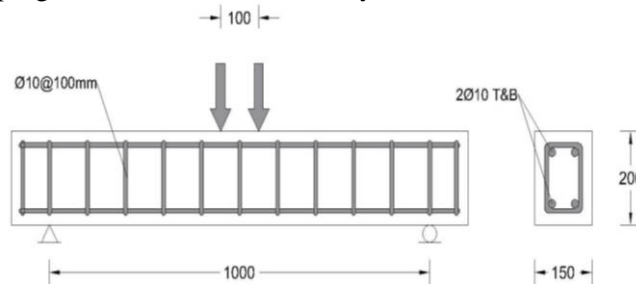
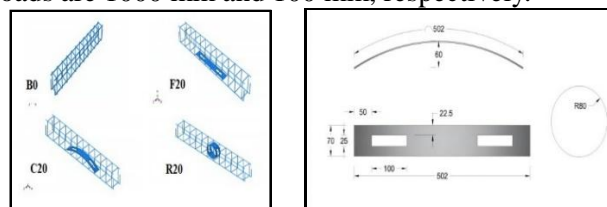


Fig. 1 Details of the reference beam

### 2.1. A Brief Introduction to the Testing

A reference beam and three strengthening beams with (2 mm) steel plate thickness, and three different configurations of steel plate were used to verify the accuracy of the finite element program. The geometry and strengthening details of specimens are shown in Figure 2. At 28 days of curing, the average compressive strength of concrete was 27 MPa. All properties of reinforcement and steel plates are shown in Tables 1 and 2, respectively. All specimens are tested under four-point bending with a maximum capacity of 150 kN. The clear span and distance between point loads are 1000 mm and 100 mm, respectively.



a) Details of the four specimens  
b) Details of steel plates (all dimensions in mm)  
Fig. 2 Geometries and strengthening details of specimens

Table 1 Properties of steel reinforcement bars

Type of steel	Diameter (mm)	Average yield stress (N/mm <sup>2</sup> )	Average ultimate stress (N/mm <sup>2</sup> )	Average Elongation (%)
Grade 60	10	590	800	12.33

Table 2 Yield and ultimate tensile strengths and elongations of steel plates

The thickness of the tested steel plate (mm)	Average of yield tensile strength (MPa)	Average of the ultimate tensile strength (MPa)	% Elongation at ultimate stress
6	230	355	27
4	260	385	24
2	290	375	20.5

## 2.2 Numerical Modeling

### 2.2.1. Developing the Material Model Using Concrete Damaged Plasticity

It is well known that the behavior of concrete is brittle, but under stress reflection, the tensile cracks may be closing, so the broken parts are being converged. Subsequently, the best way to describe the behavior of concrete is damage models. Therefore, and because of the opposite behavior of concrete and steel, the reinforced concrete structures have complex behavior that is difficult to describe. Thus, the Concrete Damage Plasticity Model (CDP) is the best model to define concrete for all reasons above [10, 11]. This model is mostly very suitable for presenting the modes of failures that depend on compression crushing and tensile cracking [10]. The CDP model was designed in [12] and developed in [13]; it was the most popular model to simulate concrete in the ABAQUS program. CDP model is designed to handle applications whose materials were exposed to dynamic, monotonic, or cyclic loading. Therefore, it allows recovering the stiffness during load reflections [14]. As shown in Figure (3), the unloaded response of the concrete specimen appears to be attenuated because of the material damage or degradation of elastic stiffness. The damage variables  $d_t$  and  $d_c$ , represent the amount of damage or loss of strength (Figure 3). The values of these variables range from 0 to 1, where 0 refers to undamaged material, and 1 refers to total loss of strength [14].

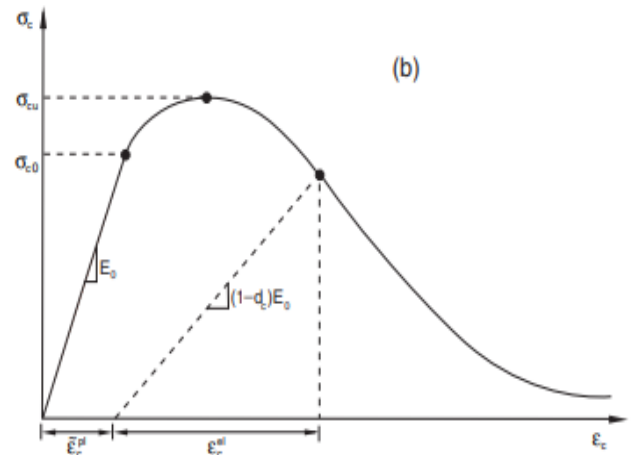
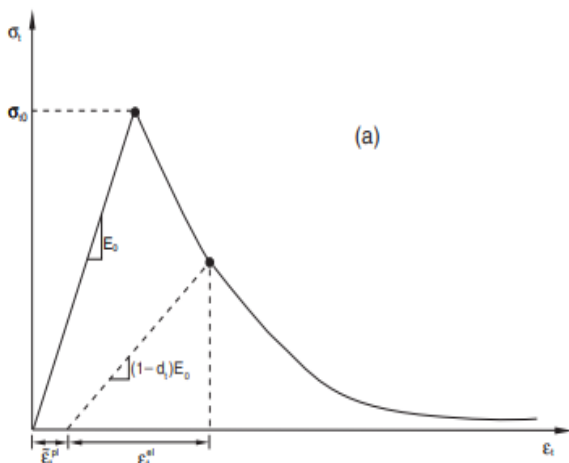


Fig. 3 Concrete response to uniaxial loading in (a) tension, (b) compression [14]

For compressive behavior, the definition of concrete material required the data of stress, inelastic strain, all equations used in the definition of concrete from the ABAQUS theory manual [14]. Inelastic or crushing strain is calculated according to Eq. 1.

$$\varepsilon_c^{\text{inel}} = \varepsilon_c - \varepsilon_{0c}^{\text{el}} \quad (1)$$

where:

$$\varepsilon_{0c}^{\text{el}} = \sigma_c / E_0 \quad (2)$$

$\varepsilon_c^{\text{inel}}$  - inelastic strain

$\varepsilon_c$  - total strain

$\varepsilon_{0c}^{\text{el}}$  - plastic strain

$\sigma_c$  - the stress of concrete

$E_0$  - undamaged elastic modulus

In addition, the compression damage parameter is calculated as in Eq. 3.

$$d_c = 1 - \frac{\sigma_c}{\sigma_c^{\text{max}}} \quad (3)$$

for  $\sigma_c \geq \sigma_c^{\text{max}}$ ,  $d_c = 0$  for  $\sigma_c < \sigma_c^{\text{max}}$

where:

$d_c$  - damage parameter in compression.

On the other hand, the data for tension behavior and damage was calculated as in Equations 4, 5, and 6.

$$\varepsilon_t^{\text{crk}} = \varepsilon_t - \varepsilon_{0t}^{\text{el}} \quad (4)$$

$$\varepsilon_{0t}^{\text{el}} = \sigma_t / E_0 \quad (5)$$

$$d_t = 1 - \frac{\sigma_t}{\sigma_t^{\text{max}}} \quad (6)$$

where:

$\varepsilon_t^{\text{crk}}$  - cracking strain;

$d_t$  - damage parameter of tension.

Figure (4) shows the properties of concrete for compression and tension behavior utilized in the CDP model, where:

Dilation angle,  $\psi$ , is measured in the plane of p-q at confining pressure with a high level. The value depends on the study [15].

Flow potential eccentricity  $\epsilon$  is a small positive value that defines the hyperbolic voltage ratio approached by its asymptote.

Stress ratio,  $f_{b0} / f_{c0}$ : is the ratio of the elementary equi-biaxial compression yield stresses to the elementary uniaxial compressive yield stress.

The second stress invariant,  $K$ , is the ratio of the invariants of second stress on the tension meridian to that on the compression meridian at an initial yield of any value of the pressure invariants.

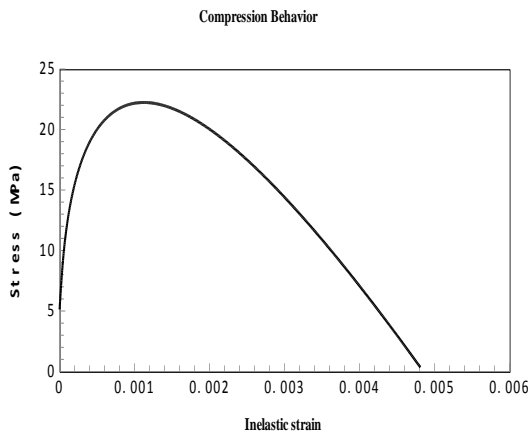
Viscosity parameter,  $\mu$ : As part of the CDP material behavior, the default value is zero in Abaqus/Standard, but it is not proper for nonlinear analysis. So it depends on the value from previous studies [16].

Table 3 Properties of concrete at elastic stage

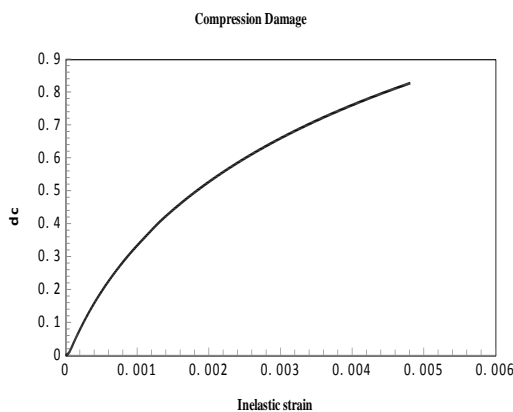
Modulus of elasticity (MPa)	Poisson's ratio
15900	0.18 (assumed)

Table 4 Plastic parameters of concrete

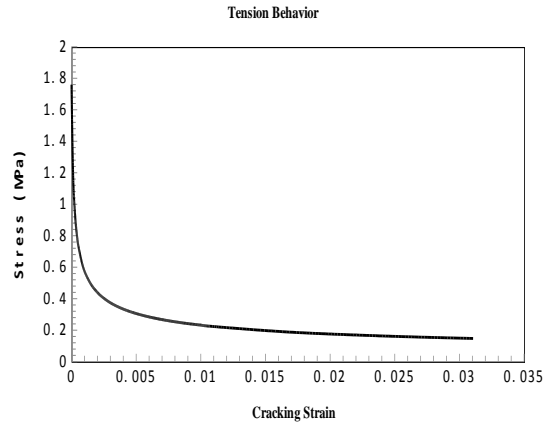
Dilatation angle (degree)	Eccentricity	$f_{b0} / f_{c0}$	$K$	Viscosity parameter
37	0.1	1.16	0.667	0.0005



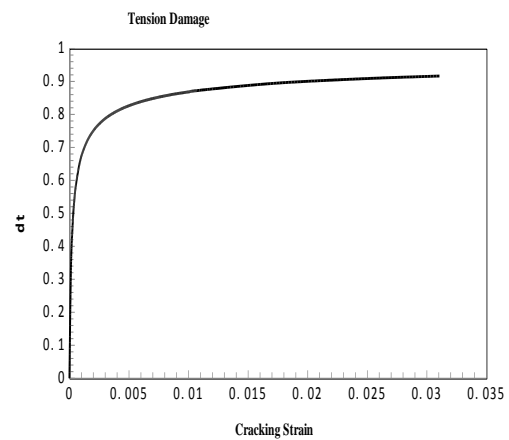
a)



b)



c)



d)

Fig. 4 Properties of concrete in the CDP model: a) Compression behavior; b) Compression damage; c) Tension behavior; d) Tension damage

### 2.2.2. Steel

There are two stages to define the properties of the material of steel: elastic and plastic. For elastic behavior, specify the modulus of elasticity and Poisson's ratio as 200000MPa and 0.2, respectively. An engineering stress-strain curve usually illustrates the test of the tension of steel, so to define the steel in ABAQUS, the engineering stress-strain curve must be converted to a true curve according to Ramberg-Osgood theory (Figure 5) [17].

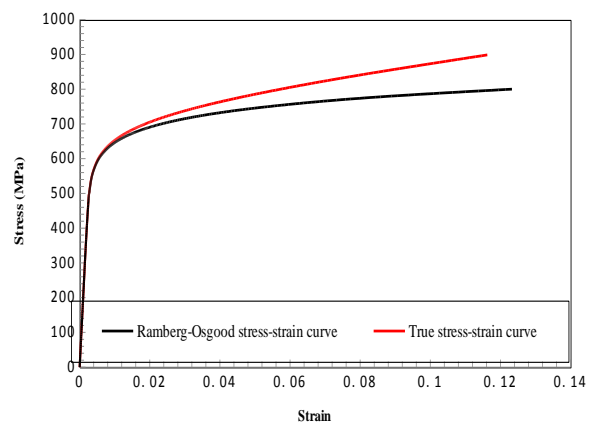


Fig. 5 Stress-strain curve of rebar

### 2.2.3 Parts, Assembly and Mesh Modules

Some partitions must be established to model the specimens. Therefore, all specimens consist of the following parts: the body of beam (concrete), longitudinal reinforcement (primary and secondary), transverse reinforcement (stirrups), bearing plate, and finally, the focus of this research is the steel plate in different configurations. Then, assembled these parts to form the complete model. Generally, in modeling the parts of specimens, there are two types of elements used: C3D8R: An 8- linear node brick, reduced integration, hourglass control; this element is used for solid parts (beam, bearing, and steel plates), T3D2: A 2-node linear 3-D truss, this one was utilized for all types of reinforcement. After defining all properties of the materials used in models, assemble parts to establish a model, and each model consists of one assembly. In finite element analysis, the accuracy of results depends on the size of the selected mesh. By the theory of FEM, a simulated model with a tiny mesh size gives accurate results but longer computational time [18]. There was a convergence study conducted to choose the appropriate mesh size, so the mesh size chosen was 15 mm in each part of the model. Figure 6 shows the mesh of assembly.



Fig. 6 Mesh of assembly

### 2.2.4 Boundary Condition and Details of Surface Interactions

The beams are supported simply; therefore, two support steel plates are modeled in a part module and given steel properties to simulate the supports. The original constraints are illustrated along the width of steel support, specifically on the partition line, as in Figure 7.

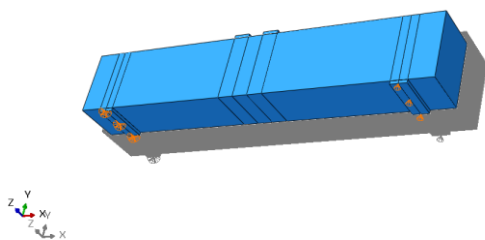


Fig. 7 Boundary condition

In ABAQUS, constraints permit modeling kinematic relationships between surfaces and points.

The interaction module can define the contact between two surfaces and other functions [19]. This study used three types of constraints: embedded element, tie connection, and coupling interaction. The embedded element technique is used to assign a single or group of elements embedded into a host element group whose response will be utilized to constrain the translational DOFs of nodes of embedded elements. This technique is more appropriate to define the interaction between steel reinforcement and concrete, according to [11]. The tie constraints permit to merge of two regions together, although the created meshes on the surfaces of merged regions are different. A tie means connecting two discrete surfaces together. Therefore, there is no relative movement between them [19]. Coupling constraints mean that they couple the movement of a group of nodes on any surface to a movement of a reference node lying on the same surface [19]. In each model, a reference point should be constructed in the center of each bearing plate to be the loading point and used displacement control method by applying 50 mm translation in the y-direction of the reference points. This value is greater than the larger value of experimental tests. The displacement is applied through the analysis step. Compared with load control, the displacement control advantages are to overcome the convergence troubles and the modes of rigid body jointly, while a couple of bodies disconnected in connect pairs and obtain/follow the downward section of load-deflection and stress-strain curves [20].

## 3. Comparison Between Experimental and FE Results

### 3.1. Modes of Failure and Crack Pattern

The development of cracks represented the general modes of failure of all RC specimens. In flexural members, the crack develops when the tensile stresses in the extreme tension fiber exceed the modulus of rupture of concrete. Meanwhile, some micro flexural cracks started to appear early at the maximum positive bending moment region during the loading process. With overloading, these cracks were spread and widened, and then the diagonal cracks appeared at higher load. In all specimens, the failure began by yielding tensile steel reinforcement, and the crush of concrete in the compression zone was the final failure of all specimens.

Figure 8 shows the failure mode of all specimens. This figure noted that the flexure pattern failure is dominant for all beams except beam R20 that fail due to flexure and lack of bond pattern. There is a good agreement in crack patterns between experimental and numerical models concerning FEA. The results have concluded that the use of steel plates delayed the appearance of the initial crack, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Experimental and FE results

y	Experimental results								FE results		Exp. $P_u$ / FE $P_u$
	Crack state		Yield state		Ultimate state		Failure state	% Increase in $P_u$	$P_u$	$\delta_{max}$	
	$P_{cr}$ (kN)	$\delta_{cr}$ (mm)	$P_y$ (kN)	$\delta_y$ (mm)	$P_u$ (kN)	$\delta_u$ (mm)					$\delta_{max}$ (mm)
B0	9	0.509	51.538	3	61.894	10.179	10.37	-	62.542	9.215	0.989
F20	12	0.513	62.85	3.35	76.658	9.45	33.09	23.854	78.94	14.011	0.971
C20	11	1.05	61.16	3.9	74.6	9.391	30	20.53	77.14	15.302	0.967
R20	12	0.5	60.945	3.33	71.262	10	31.5	15.14	74.77	17.07	0.953

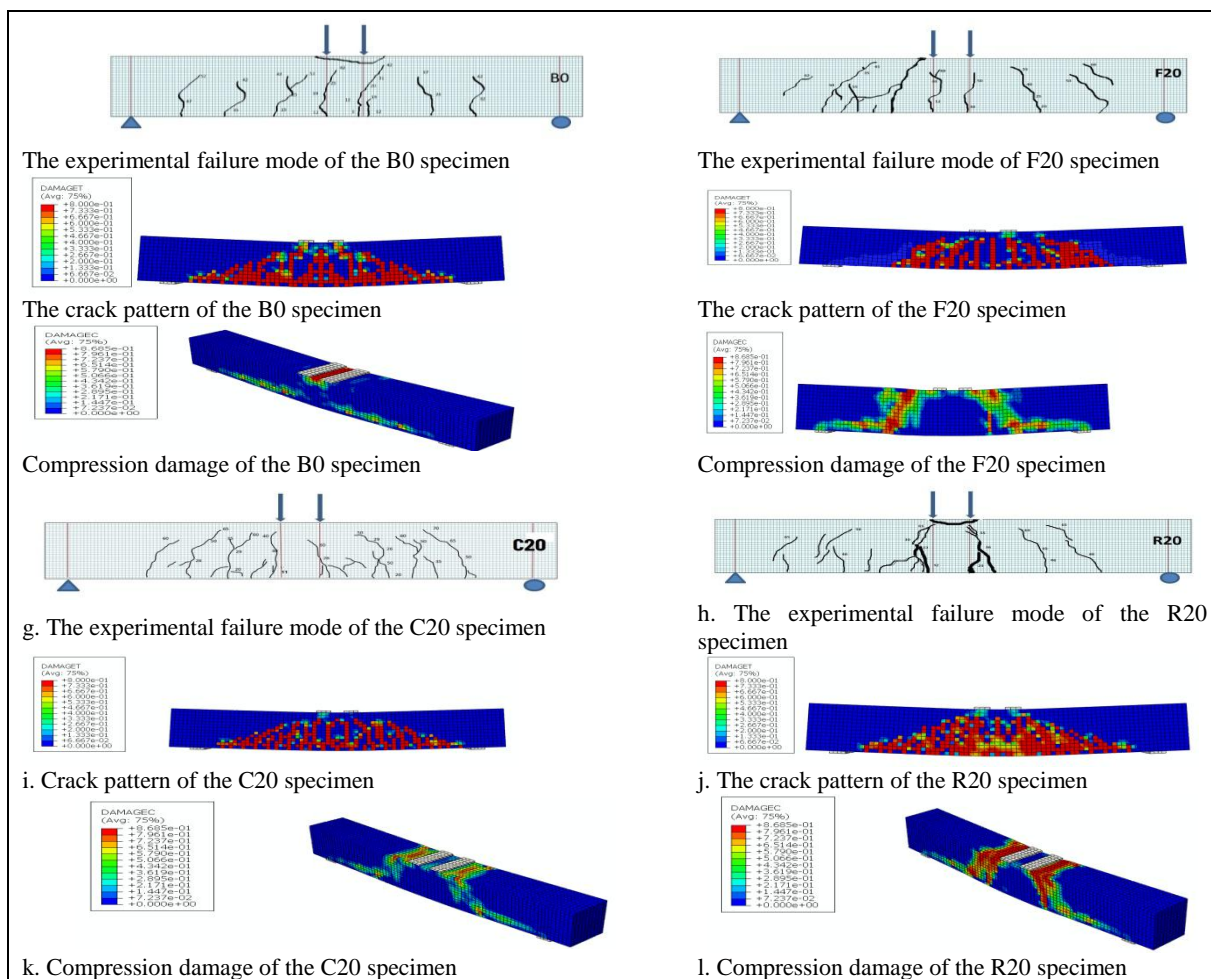


Fig. 8 Failure modes of all specimens, experimentally and numerically

### 3.2. Load-Deflection Curves

The values of mid-span deflection versus load at the crack, yield, and ultimate stages had been obtained in Table 5. The test results showed that the yield and ultimate loads increased in all beams strengthened with steel plates. In addition, the increase of load-carrying capacity was ranged between 15-24 % from the ultimate load of the reference beam (B0). It was also noted that the highest increase in ultimate load for the F20 specimen was due to the configuration of the steel plate, which lies in the maximum positive moment zone. Figure 9 displays the experimental and FE load-deflection curves for all beams. Figure 9 demonstrates that the FE curves exhibited stiff behaviors after first cracking compared to the corresponding experimental

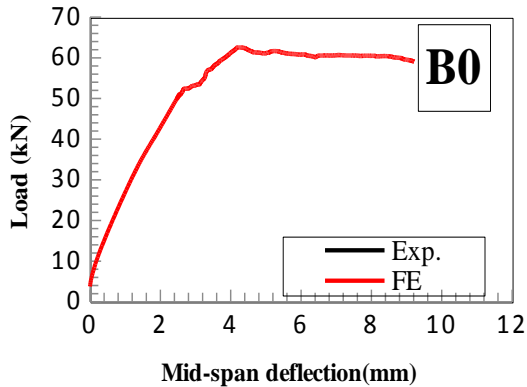
curves. The reason is to disperse infinite freedom structure to limited freedom. This fact leads to an increase in load and decrease in deflection, which makes the FE curves ascend with more slope than experimental curves. Although all hints mentioned in [21] were considered, there was a difference between the experimental and FE results with a 4.7% as a maximum difference in ultimate load. The reason for the mismatch was that FE programs designed to analyze under perfect conditions are quite the opposite of what happens in real works. As stated before, the comparison between experimental and FE ultimate loads showed very close values with a maximum error of 4.7%. As a result, the proposed FE model will be used to conduct a parametric study on an effective

variable that might affect the flexural behavior of the strengthened beams.

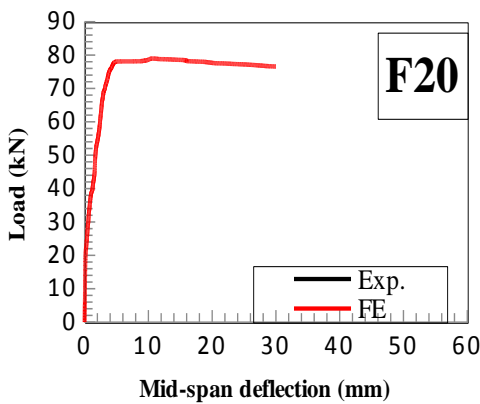
### 4. Parametric Study

#### 4.1. Effect of Steel Plate Thickness

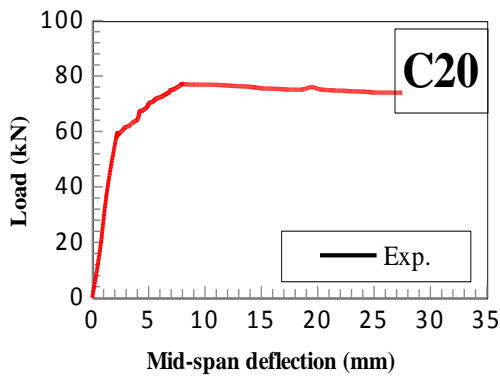
Each experimental specimen has been modeled with three steel plate thicknesses to investigate the effect of thickness on flexure capacity. Each steel plate has different properties for various thicknesses, as shown in Table 2. The numerical analysis results show that the flexural capacity was enhanced as thickness increased, but this concept does not apply to the round steel-plated models. In the stated models, the increase was slight because the plate does not fully utilize at the maximum bending moment. Since the yield stress for the 2mm thickness plate is higher than other thicknesses, the thickness does not work in current properties. Figure 10 shows the effect of steel plate thickness on load versus deflection curves at mid-span.



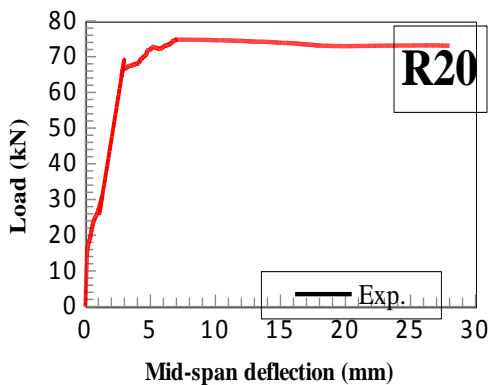
a. Load – deflection curves of B0



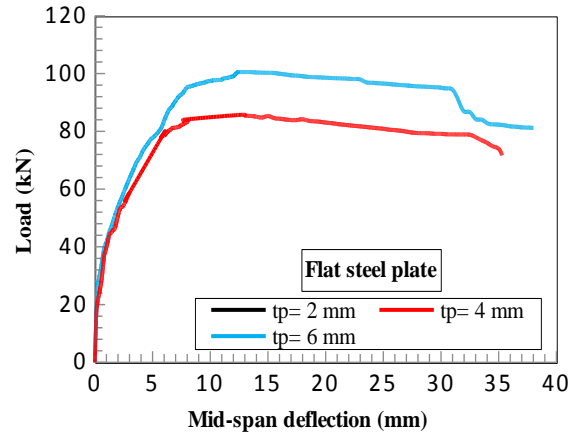
b. Load – deflection curves of F20



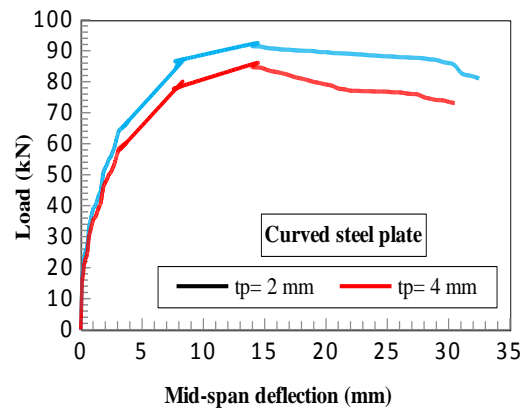
c. Load-deflection curves of C20



d. Load-deflection curves of R20

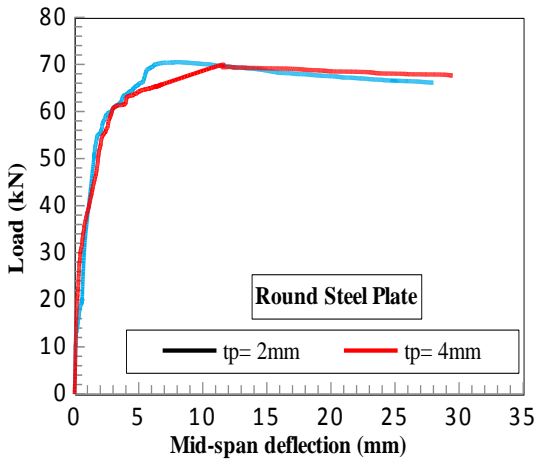


a. Load-deflection curves of flat steel-plated specimens



b. Load-deflection curves of curved steel-plated specimen

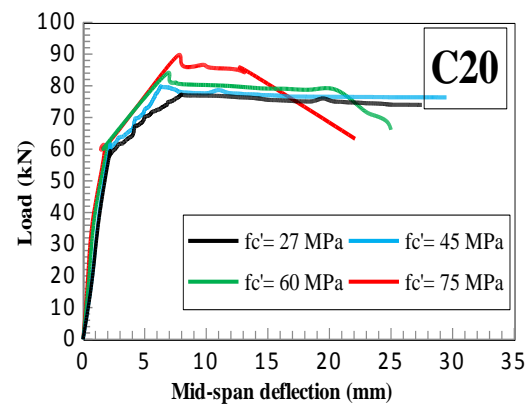
Fig. 9 Experimental and FE load-deflection curves of beams strengthened with steel plates



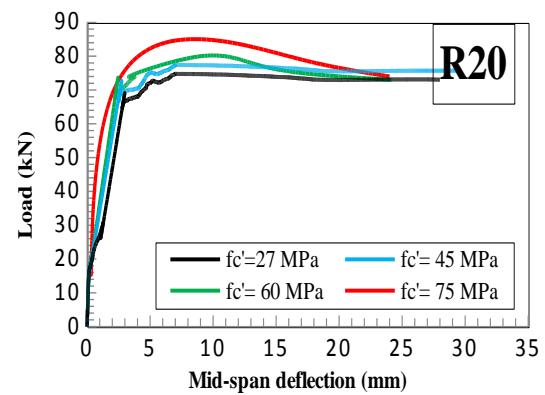
c. Load-deflection curves of round steel-plated specimens  
Fig. 10 FE load-deflection curves for all models

#### 4.2. Effect of Compressive Strength of Concrete

Three different compressive strengths of concrete (45 MPa, 60 MPa, and 75 MPa) have been considered to investigate the effect of compressive strength of concrete on the flexure behavior of RC beams which strengthened with different configurations of steel plate. From Figure (11), it was observed that the increase of compressive strength of concrete leads to an increase in ultimate load. Also, the curves behave stiffer with the increase of  $f_c'$ , especially after 50 MPa. Finally, the stated figure revealed that the deflection was decreased with the increase of  $f_c'$ , and specimens no longer resisted the applied load and failed in a brittle manner (i.e., after  $f_c' = 50$  MPa).

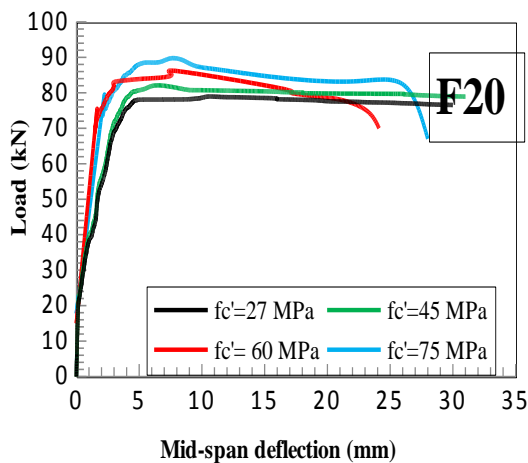


b. Load-deflection curve with different compressive strength of concrete of specimen C20



c. Load- deflection curve with different compressive strength of concrete of specimen R20

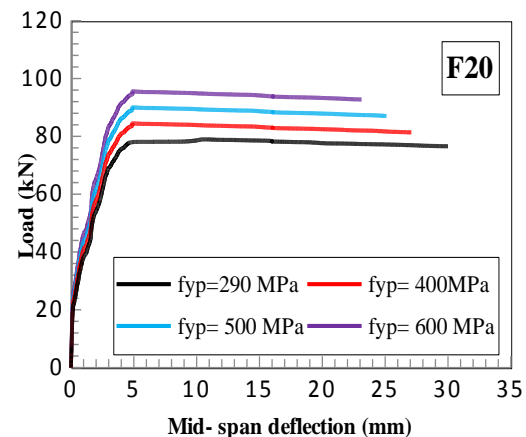
Fig. 11 Load-deflection curves with different compressive strengths of concrete



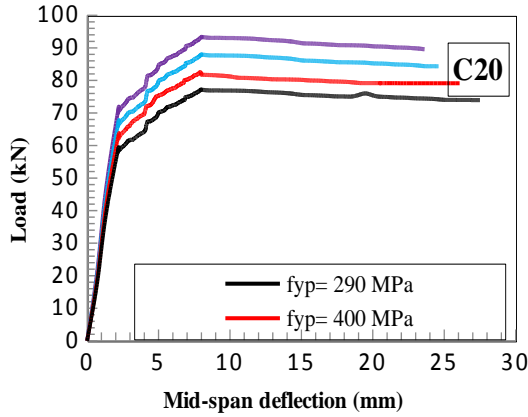
a. Load-deflection curves with different compressive strength of concrete of specimen F20

#### 4.3. Effect of Yield Strength of Steel Plate

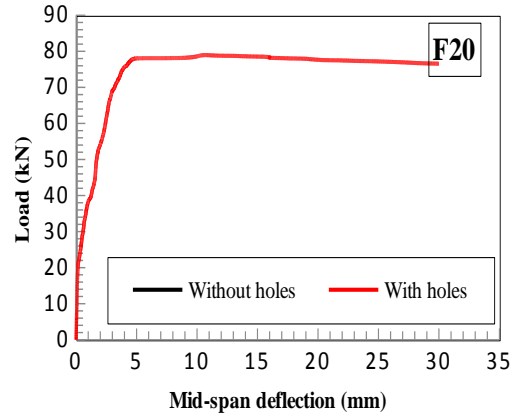
The effect of different yield strength levels of steel plates on flexure capacity was studied by considering three values (400 MPa, 500 MPa, and 600 MPa). Figure 12 concluded that the ultimate carrying capacity increased with the increase of yield strength of steel plates for all beams. Also, the deflection was decreased, but the slopes of curves and modes of failure were almost unchanged.



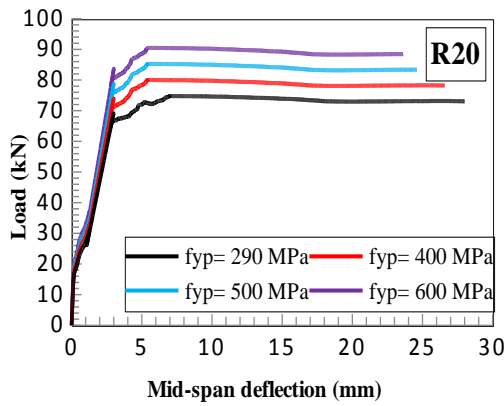
a. Load- deflection curves with the different yield strength of steel plate of specimen F20



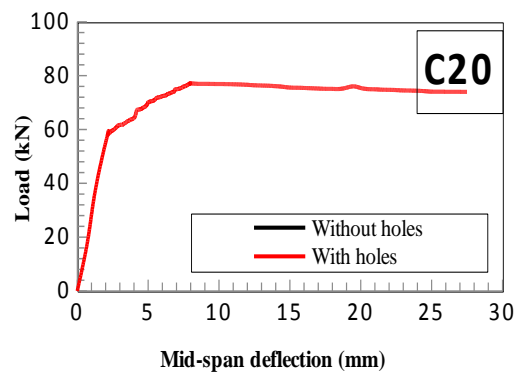
b. Load- deflection curve with the different yield strength of steel plate of specimen C20



a. Load – deflection curves with two cases of existence of holes in steel plate of F20 specimen



c. Load- deflection curve with the different yield strength of steel plate of specimen R20

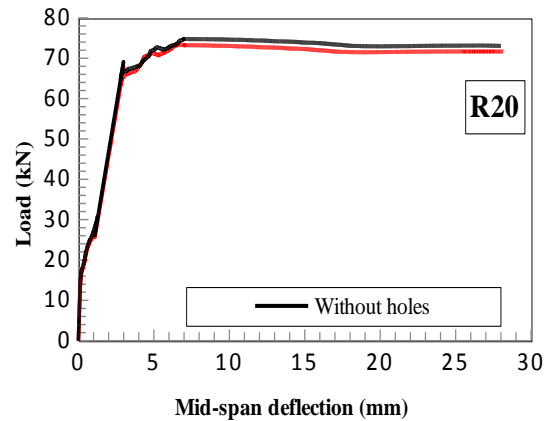


b. Load – deflection curves with two cases of existence of holes in steel plate of C20 specimen

Fig. 12 Load-deflection curves with the different yield strengths of steel plate

**4.4. Effect of Holes in Steel Plates**

The effect of holes in steel plates was investigated. The holes have been removed from steel plates in all specimens. Figure 13 shows that using solid steel plates decreased the flexure capacity of the strengthened beams because of a lack of interlock between steel plates and concrete, leading to a decrease in bond effect that reduced flexure capacity. On the other hand, the highest decrease in ultimate load has been recorded in the F20 specimen. The reason is that this configuration achieved the highest area of steel plate in the zone of maximum bending moment. Otherwise, the drop in ultimate load was slightly in C20 and almost negligible in R20 because of the previous reason.



c. Load – deflection curves with two cases of existence of holes in steel plate of R20 specimen

Fig. 13 Load-deflection curves with two cases of holes in steel plate

**5. Conclusion**

The main objective of this paper is to investigate the flexural behavior of simply supported RC beams strengthened internally with a steel plate with three configurations. Each configuration has three thicknesses, and the FE program did this investigation. The following suggested conclusions can be noted from experimental and numerical results:

- Using steel plates enhanced the load-carrying capacity for all tested beams. The load-carrying

capacity increased between 15-24 % from the ultimate load of reference beam B0, and the highest increase in ultimate load was recorded for the F20 specimen.

- The effect of configuration on delaying the appearance of cracks has been approximately closed with values.

- From the results of numerical analysis, it noted that the flexural capacity enhanced as the thickness of the steel plate increased, except in round steel-plated models, the increase was slight.

- There is a good agreement between experimental and FE works with 4.7 % as a higher difference in ultimate load.

- The increase of compressive strength of concrete leads to an increase in ultimate load and deflection. Also, the modes of failure are almost unchanged.

- The ultimate carrying capacity increased with the increase of yield strength of steel plates. Also, the deflection was decreased, but the slopes of curves and modes of failure were almost unchanged.

- Beams containing steel plates with holes show higher ultimate loads than solid steel-plated beams, resulting from the improvement of the bond strength between the steel plate and concrete.

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