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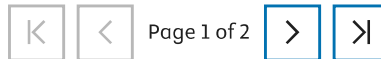
Research article  Abstract only

## Experimental and numerical study of a metal-friction hybrid damper

Weizhi Xu, Yijie Cai, Ye Liu, Tianyang Zhang, Yujie Lu

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# Stability design of cold-formed high and ultra-high strength steel thin-walled box sections using effective stress-strain model

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## ABSTRACT

This paper proposes an effective stress-strain model for integrated analysis and design of cold-formed steel structures with thin-walled sections. The study focuses on square and rectangular hollow sections made from high and ultra-high strength steel. Initially, a shell-finite element model (SFEM) was developed and validated using experimental data, specifically for cold-formed members subjected to axial compression. Subsequently, a comprehensive parametric study is conducted to establish the stress-strain relationship model through nonlinear finite element analysis. The proposed model incorporates material nonlinearity, cold-forming effect, local plate imperfection, and residual stresses into a unified stress-strain curve, leading to advanced structural analysis and design of cold-formed structures using simple one-dimensional beam-column element. Subsequently, the proposed method is then implemented in the conventional finite beam-column element analysis, demonstrating consistent agreement with both experimental tests and sophisticated finite shell element results. Finally, the robustness and validation of the proposed method are established, and its application is exemplified through the design of a modular integrated construction (MiC) structure. This study highlights the versatility and reliability of the proposed approach for the analysis and design of cold-formed steel structures.

## 1. Introduction

Cold-formed steel (CFS) structures have significantly influenced recent developments in steel construction, particularly in the context of Modular Integrated Construction (MiC) systems [1]. These structures offer numerous benefits, such as a high strength-to-weight ratio, ease of fabrication and mass production, rapid erection work, and excellent corrosion resistance [2]. It is worth noting that CFS members can exhibit enhanced strength compared to hot-rolled steel due to various manufacturing processes [3]. Rossi, et al. [4] have demonstrated that this strength enhancement is particularly notable in box sections (SHS and RHS), where the corner portions exhibit higher properties than the flat sections, rendering them particularly attractive in comparison to other CFS sections.

Research on the behavior of CFS box sections has reached a relatively advanced stage, with investigations of various steel grades. This observation is evident in the work of Gardner and Yun [5], who collated the results of the material property tests on various CFS grades. More recently, significant attention and efforts have been spent studying the

behavior of cold-formed high-strength steel (CFHSS) members with a minimum grade of S700 [6–8]. Generally, high-strength steel (HSS) has a yield strength in the range of 350 MPa to 700 MPa, while ultra-high-strength steel (UHSS) typically exhibits a yield strength above 700 MPa. Interestingly, the current international design codes, such as AISC-360 [9], AISI [10], and EC3 [11], have not specified structural design guidelines for steel grades beyond 700 MPa. Therefore, there is still an opportunity to propose a novel design method that will be more practical and straightforward for engineers.

Currently, there is a limited availability of alternative design procedures for CFHSS box sections, especially when accounting for sections made from high- and ultra-high-strength steel. Ma et al. [12,13] recommend the traditional Effective Width Method (EWM) and also assess the feasibility of the more practical Direct Strength Method (DSM) [14]. These methods establish a relationship between the ultimate member strength and the cross-section slenderness, but they do not fully exploit the strain-hardening behavior of the material. Lan, et al. [15] advocate the Continuous Strength Method (CSM), which was initially developed for stainless steel structures. This method maximizes the

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utilization of the ultimate member deformation beyond the ultimate member strength [15,16]. Those few available design proposals mainly focus on a member capacity-based design with the member imperfections embedded in the design equations. Meanwhile, the corresponding member force and deformation demands are quantified based on the (amplified) first-order analysis as one of the second-order analysis approaches. Thus, they fit into the common practice of steel structure design, which still treats the structural analysis separately from the design work.

The use of “Direct Analysis Method” (DAM) seems to have not been popular in the CFS design so far. While this method has been extensively introduced in the design of hot-rolled steel, as seen in the American code [9] and Eurocode [11], its adoption in CFS design is still limited. The American Iron and Steel Institute (AISI) [10] has included DAM in its stability analysis requirement, but the overall approach still follows AISI-360 [9]. DAM is also often associated with the advanced analysis method since it automatically considers the member imperfections and connection deformations in the structural analysis. The advanced analysis aims to integrate the stability analysis and design process [17]. It brings a more consistent approach than the traditional effective length method (ELM) [18]. However, the current advanced analysis is only limited to compact sections since it relies on the development of a full plastic capacity of a cross-section. Exploring slender sections in a consistent advanced analysis framework, Gardner et al. [19] applied CSM strain limits to analyze hot-rolled steel I-shaped sections under major-axis bending. Nevertheless, non-compact and slender sections are easily found in the CFS structures, which are typically failed due to local buckling with the ultimate resistance below the plastic limit. Formerly, the effect of local buckling on the beam-column analysis of box sections was studied by Shanmugam, et al. [20] and Chan, et al. [21]. In their nonlinear finite element analysis, a stress-strain relationship of a plate under compression was utilized to consider the local buckling. Thus, these studies treated a box section as per plate decomposition rather than a unified single cross-section behavior.

Recently, Modular Integrated Construction (MiC) has gained significant attention due to its prefabricated nature, enabling higher precision and faster erection compared to conventional frame-type structures [22–24]. For example, numerous MiC projects have been undertaken in Hong Kong, with a substantial portion consisting of steel MiC structures, primarily with less than six floors, serving as advanced housing solutions or nursing facilities [25–27]. However, the application of such structures in Hong Kong faces challenges due to transportation limitations. Given that the average weight of steel MiC structures is approximately 20 tonnes, this scenario highlights the judicious choice of utilizing high-strength cold-formed steel for low-rise MiC structures. The corner posts of such MiC structures are generally square hollow sections or cold-formed steel angles (3 mm to 4 mm) [28,29]. This variability in cold-formed steel sections allows for tailored utilization based on the specific module type, thereby affording design versatility and weight reduction.

To address the aforementioned challenges, this paper aims to promote the application of DAM for CFS structure. This method is suitable for both non-slender and slender cross-sections and incorporates considerations for local buckling within the proposed analysis framework. Firstly, an effective stress-strain material model was developed through a comprehensive parametric study focused on the CFHSS box sections under consideration. This study also adopted the principle of mimicking local buckling through a constitutive model. However, a much broader extension was implemented by taking into account the residual stress and cold-forming effect in the constitutive model. More importantly, the constitutive model was developed based on a unified single cross-section behavior rather than plate decomposition. Hence, the model is named an effective stress-strain relationship. The relationship is used to include the material nonlinearity in the DAM, which utilizes a line-based beam-column element.

## 2. Effective stress-strain relationship

Initially, the effective stress-strain relationship has been recommended to design a non-compact and slender concrete-steel composite member. Lai and Varma [30] developed the relationship to analyze a non-compact and slender concrete filled-tube (CFT) members. It was demonstrated that shell finite element models (SFEM) for CFT stub columns were developed to predict the normalized stress versus normalized strain relationship of rectangular and circular CFT. The sections had cross-section slenderness between 60 and 100, whereby the local buckling dominated the failure of the stub columns. Plate imperfection, residual stress, strain hardening, and concrete confinement were incorporated into the SFEM analysis. Therefore, the proposed relationship was named an effective stress-strain relationship.

Lai and Varma [30] used the developed model for a member analysis using the fiber sectioning method. The algorithm was created to prove that their proposed relationship and the numerical model of a CFT beam-column could match against the test results. In another study, Du, et al. [31] introduced the DAM for slender CFT sections by implementing Lai and Varma [30] stress-strain relationship to consider the material nonlinearity. Du, et al. [31] utilized the effective stress-strain relationship to account for distributed plasticity along the member length by using the fiber discretization technique. This technique is suitable for a second-order analysis using an advanced beam-column element, which was established by Du, et al. [17]. The outcome from the latter study has been added to the last version of NIDA software [32]. Hence, it can be concluded that an effective stress-strain model performs well in the analysis using the fiber discretization method.

Another application of an effective stress-strain model can be found in the numerical modelling for stability design of angle structures proposed by Abdelrahman, et al. [33]. This study generated the effective stress-strain model from shell finite element analysis (SFEA) results. Flexural and flexural-torsional buckling modes were considered and captured in the model. The proposed relationship has considered global member imperfection and residual stress. Stub column failure was excluded in the development since it seems rare to find this case in the application of angle structures. Local buckling failure mode was excluded therein since it is not intended to design a short column. With the proposed model, the analysis and design of angle structures can be unified without calculating the flexural torsional buckling capacity from a separate design equation. For the validation of the stress-strain model, the analysis results from Abaqus [34] using 1D-line and shell elements were compared with test results. The proposed effective stress-strain model was also used to analyze a truss structure wherein the results were also validated against test results. The results showed that the effective stress-strain model embedded in 1D-line element analysis predicted the outcome of shell element analysis well. Indeed, SFEA is more powerful since member imperfections and various failure modes (e.g., torsional-buckling) can be explicitly and effectively modelled. Such complexities and uncertainties may not be taken into account when using 1D line elements in the analysis. As such, LFEA (line finite element analysis) has relatively faster and cheaper computational efforts. Overall, Abdelrahman, et al. [33] proved that the effective stress-strain model could be implemented in available commercial software for a more advanced system-based analysis.

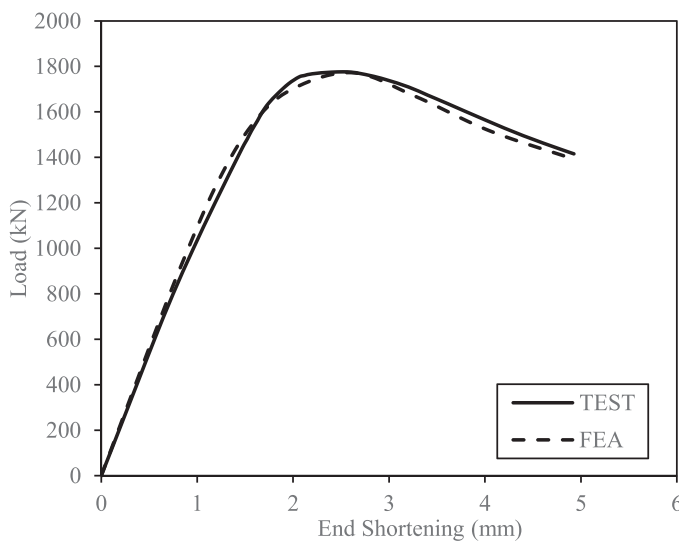
## 3. Finite element modeling

According to the existing studies [30,33], the SFEA was conducted as the first step to obtain an effective stress-strain model. Like Lai and Varma [30], SFEA of CFHSS stub columns was also developed in this study, simulating local buckling failure modes of a pure compression member. The FEA results were verified using the test result reported by Ma, et al. [35] and Wang, et al. [8]. The local buckling failure was dominant in these two test results, which was also reflected in the load versus deformation (corresponding to the stress-strain) curves generated



**Table 1**  
Ultimate strength ratio between experiment ( $P_{Exp}$ ) and FEA ( $P_{FEA}$ ) results.

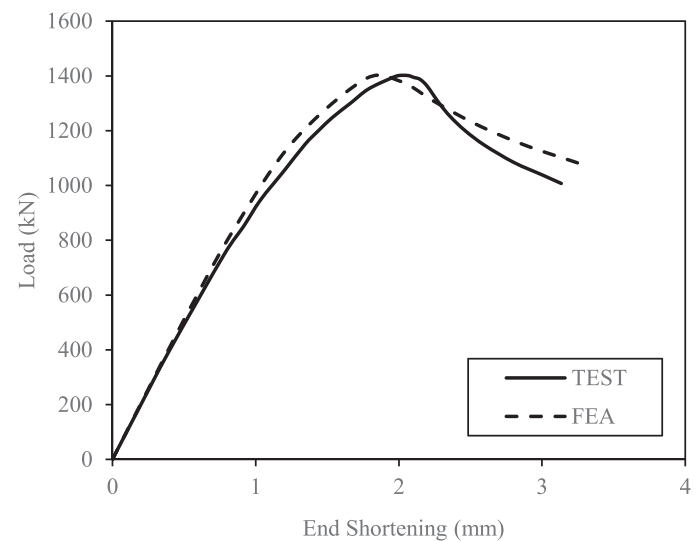
Reference	Specimen	Steel Grade	Imperfection magnitude				
			Actual measurement	$a/200$	$a/400$	Dawson and Walker[39]	
Ma, et al.[35]	H80 × 80 × 4	S700	1.05	1.08	1.05	1.04	
	H100 × 100 × 4	S700	1.03	1.10	1.05	1.02	
	H120 × 120 × 4	S700	0.99	1.08	1.02	0.99	
	H140 × 140 × 5	S700	1.02	1.06	1.01	1.01	
	H140 × 140 × 6	S700	1.00	1.05	1.01	0.99	
	H160 × 160 × 4	S700	1.03	1.04	1.02	1.02	
	H100 × 50 × 4	S700	1.01	1.01	1.00	0.98	
	H200 × 120 × 5	S700	1.00	1.02	1.00	1.00	
	V80 × 80 × 4	S900	1.09	1.11	1.07	1.07	
	V100 × 100 × 4	S900	1.03	1.06	1.00	1.01	
	V120 × 120 × 4	S900	1.03	1.05	1.01	1.02	
	<b>Mean</b>			1.03	1.06	1.02	1.01
	<b>CoV</b>			0.03	0.03	0.02	0.02
Wang, et al.[8]	SHS200 × 200 × 4	S500	0.97	0.99	0.97	0.97	
	SHS200 × 200 × 5	S500	1.06	1.09	1.05	1.03	
	SHS150 × 150 × 4	S700	1.00	0.97	0.94	0.95	
	SHS110 × 110 × 4	S700	1.09	1.08	1.02	1.01	
	SHS100 × 100 × 4	S960	1.11	1.02	1.01	1.00	
	SHS120 × 120 × 4	S960	1.01	1.00	0.98	0.99	
	SHS120 × 120 × 3	S960	0.97	0.96	0.97	0.97	
	SHS150 × 150 × 7	S960	1.31	1.25	1.19	1.16	
	<b>Mean</b>			1.04	1.03	1.00	1.00
<b>CoV</b>			0.05	0.05	0.04	0.04	



**Fig. 1.** Verification of load-end shortening curves for specimen H200 × 120 × 5 [35].

from FEA. The outcome of the proposed model from this study is expected to be used in conjunction with the force-based beam-column element that occupies the fiber discretization method.

The finite element model based on Abaqus [34] utilizes the shell element (S4R) due to its satisfactory performance in simulating the cross-sectional local buckling [13,36,37]. The element size was then determined based on the  $(B+H)/40$  value, where B and H were the flange and web widths of CFHSS, respectively. Measured material properties by Ma, et al. [6], and plate imperfections reported by Ma, et al. [35] were adopted in the FE model. Three amplitudes were used for initial geometric imperfections, as indicated by Yun and Gardner [38]. These included  $a/400$ ,  $a/200$ , and an empirical formula by Dawson and Walker [39]. The latter formula is shown in Eq. (1), wherein the updated critical local buckling stress from Seif and Schafer [40] (Eq. (2)) was used.



**Fig. 2.** Verification of load-end shortening curves for specimen V100 × 100 × 4 [35].

$$\omega_o = 0.068t \frac{f_y}{f_{cr}} \tag{1}$$

$$f_{cr} = 4 \left( \frac{B-t}{H-t} \right)^{1.7} \frac{\pi^2 E}{12(1-\nu^2)} \left( \frac{t}{B-t} \right)^2 \tag{2}$$

The effect of residual transverse residual stress was excluded in the SFEA as it was negligible based on several studies [12,15,41]. In contrast, bending residual stress was considered and incorporated into the material properties test. According to the proposed FEM of Ma, et al. [12], the stress-strain curve obtained from the corner tensile coupon test was assigned to the corner part with a  $2t$  (2 times the section thickness) extension into the flat portion of the box section. A fixed-ended boundary condition was applied at the two ends through a reference point. An Eigen buckling analysis was first conducted, and the resulting buckling modes were scaled as initial geometric imperfections within the nonlinear static RIKS analysis in the second step.

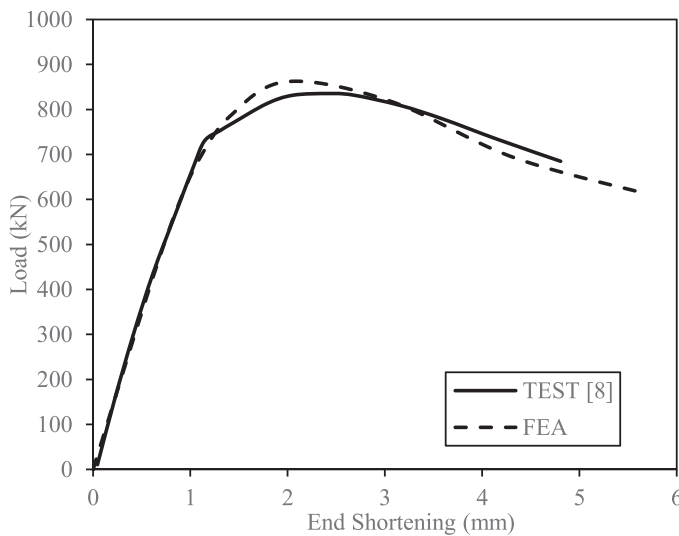


Fig. 3. Verification of load-end shortening curves for specimen SHS 120 × 120 × 3 [8].

The ultimate loads obtained from the SFEA were compared with the test results, as tabulated in Table 1. It is clearly seen that the predicted ultimate loads from SFEA were generally in good agreement with the test results. Moreover, the most accurate results were obtained when the imperfection magnitude from a modified Dawson and Walker [39] empirical formula is imposed. Meanwhile, the load-axial shortening curves from the FEA were sufficiently close to the test curves, as shown in Fig. 1, Fig. 2, and Fig. 3. In addition, Fig. 4 shows a comparison of the

typical failure mode obtained from the test and FEA. Overall, the developed FEM is reliable and can be used for a parametric study.

#### 4. Development of effective stress-strain model for CFHSS

##### 4.1. Scope and limitations

An extensive parametric study was conducted to develop an effective stress-strain model for CFHSS, involving 105 square hollow sections (SHSs) and 108 rectangular hollow sections (RHSs). Three sets of yield stress ( $f_y$ ) and Young’s modulus ( $E$ ) were selected from the test results of Ma, et al. [6], as collected in Table 2. Meanwhile, Table 3 presents the list of sections and the various parameters considered to develop the effective stress-strain model. The corner radius ( $r$ ) was equal to the thickness ( $t$ ) when  $t$  was smaller than 7 mm, and  $r$  was equal to  $1.5t$  for sections with  $t \geq 7$  mm. The normalised section slenderness ( $\lambda_n$ ) of a section was calculated from Eq. (3). This variable becomes a vital parameter to control the scope of the parametric study. Ma, et al. [13] claims that elastic local buckling failure will exhibit when  $\lambda_n$  value is higher than 1.28.

$$\lambda_n = \frac{b}{t} \sqrt{\frac{f_y}{E}} \tag{3}$$

Table 2  
Material properties for parametric study.

Steel Grade	$f_y$ (MPa)	$E$ (GPa)
S700	719	212
S900	982	208
S1100	1073	205

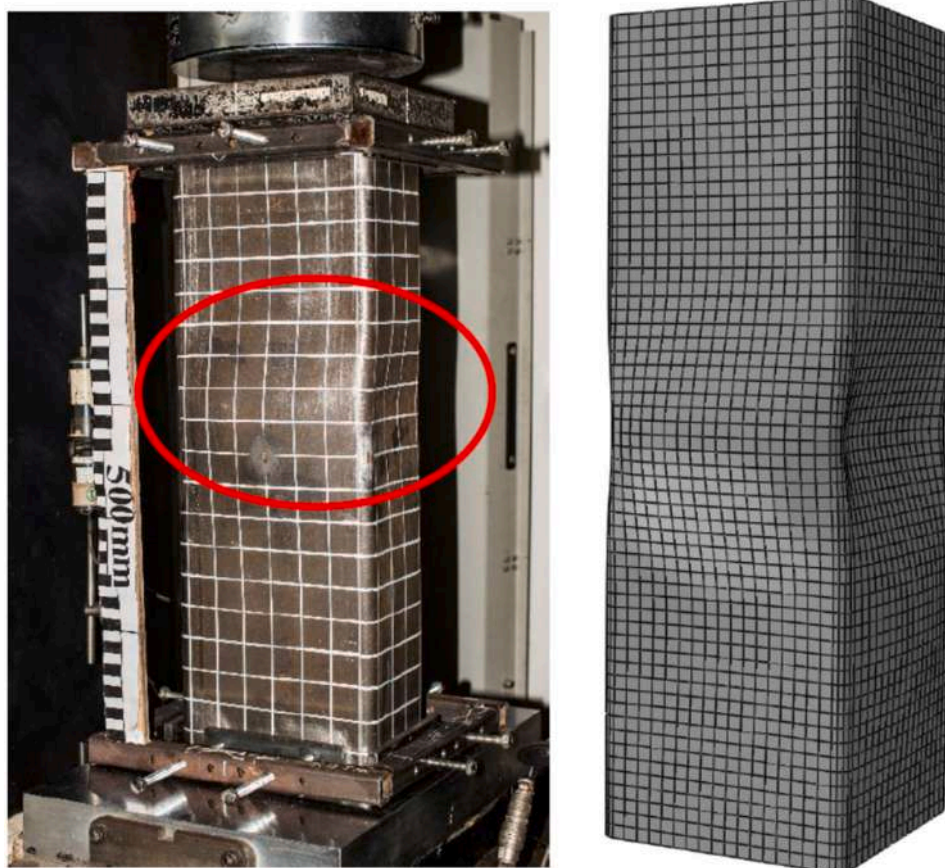


Fig. 4. Comparison of failure modes between a test result (left) [13] and FEA (right).

**Table 3**  
Parametric study of SHS and RHS.

Cross-section	$H \times B$ (mm)	$t$ (mm)	$\lambda_n$			
			S700	S900	S1100	
SHS	300 × 300	3, 3.5, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10	1.46 – 5.59	1.72 – 6.6	1.81 – 6.95	
		270 × 270	3, 3.5, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10	1.28 – 5.01	1.51 – 5.91	1.59 – 6.22
	250 × 250	3, 3.5, 4, 6, 8, 10	1.16 – 4.62	1.37 – 5.45	1.45 – 5.74	
		220 × 220	3, 4, 5, 10	0.99 – 4.04	1.17 – 4.76	1.23 – 5.02
	200 × 200	3, 3.5, 5, 6, 10	0.87 – 3.65	1.03 – 4.31	1.23 – 5.02	
	180 × 180	3.5, 10	0.76, 2.76	0.89, 3.26	0.94, 3.43	
	150 × 150	3.5, 10	0.58, 2.26	0.69, 2.67	0.72, 2.81	
	120 × 120	3.5, 6	0.93, 1.76	1.1, 2.08	1.16, 2.19	
	RHS	300 × 180	3, 3.5, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12	1.16 – 5.59	1.37 – 6.60	1.45 – 6.95
			270 × 150	3, 3.5, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10	1.28 – 5.01	1.51 – 5.91
250 × 120		3, 3.5, 4, 6	2.19 – 4.62	2.59 – 5.45	2.73 – 5.74	
		220 × 120	3, 4, 5, 10	0.99 – 4.04	1.17 – 4.76	1.23 – 5.02
200 × 100		3, 4, 5, 6, 10	0.87 – 3.65	1.03 – 4.31	1.23 – 5.02	
180 × 100		3.5, 10	0.76, 2.76	0.89, 3.26	0.94, 3.43	
150 × 100		3.5, 10	0.58, 2.26	0.69, 2.67	0.72, 2.81	
120 × 100		3.5, 6	0.93, 1.76	1.1, 2.08	1.16, 2.19	

In developing the effective stress-strain model, both studies [30,33] agreed that the proposed model had to be conservative. Furthermore, these studies [30,33] also stated that developing a model that precisely simulates all the loading conditions was impractical. The fundamental behavior of steel plates under pure compression was considered by analyzing the stub columns. An elastic-rigidly plastic model has been selected for the constitutive relationship on the tension fiber for tensile action.

4.2. Model development

The effective stress-strain model proposed in this study has considered the following aspects:

- Strength enhancement due to cold-working process.
- Bending residual stress.
- Elastic and inelastic local buckling.
- Geometric imperfections.

The model can be used to simulate material nonlinearity in the analysis in combination with the application of the 1D beam-column element developed by Du, et al. [17]. The idea behind this study was to bring the generalized results of shell FEA of a short member into the 1D finite element analysis of a long beam-column member.

The effective stress-strain model accounts for all sources of nonlinearity, including both material and geometric factors. The design obtained from the nonlinear analysis can optimize the structural performance even though the strength limit is achieved. With the proposed model, the design of a slender section can be more optimum due to the mobilization of post-buckling capacity. This principle differs from the current practice, which focuses on using first-order analysis and compact sections. The second-order effect is usually considered by using amplification and or additional notional loads. Meanwhile, material

nonlinearity is considered by using a reduction factor applied to Young’s modulus as specified in AISC-360 [9].

The recommended effective stress-strain model was extracted from results analyzed using four-node shell element S4R in ABAQUS. The load versus end-shortening curve from the analysis outcome was converted to a normalized compressive stress-strain relationship ( $\sigma - \epsilon$ ). Compressive stress ( $\sigma$ ) was obtained by dividing the load capacity with the cross-sectional area ( $A$ ), and the compressive strain ( $\epsilon$ ) was calculated by dividing the end-shortening with the stub column length ( $L$ ). Due to the consideration of short column failure,  $L$  was equal to three times the nominal section size ( $B$ ). For RHS, the average between larger ( $H$ ) and smaller ( $B$ ) section sizes was used to calculate  $L$ . Both compressive stress and strain values were then normalized to yield stress and yield strain, respectively. As a result, the normalized stress-strain for various slenderness ( $b/t$ ) and  $f_y$  is presented in Fig. 5.

From Fig. 5, it can be observed that as the section becomes more slender, the normalized compressive stress factor ( $\sigma/f_y$ ) significantly decreases and is well below 1. It was assumed that buckling took place once the ultimate load was achieved. Elastic local buckling would be the typical failure mode if a section buckled under the yield stress. In all figures, none of the sections reached inelastic local buckling. Apart from section slenderness, the effect from  $f_y$  was also seen. The ultimate compressive stress decreases when  $f_y$  increases. This trend was also similar to the finding in [33] and [30]. Finally, it was observed that the member’s buckling behavior was influenced by the  $b/t$  ratio. As the  $b/t$  ratio increased, the strength degradation became more gradual compared to the less slender section. It can be conjectured that the strength degradation correlated with the failure mode, as illustrated in Fig. 6. For the most slender section ( $b/t = 96$ ), local buckling was uniformly spread throughout the length, while for the most stocky section ( $b/t = 25$ ), local buckling was concentrated at the mid-length. For the three figures in Fig. 5, it was observed that the post-buckling strength degradation became gradually constant when the compressive strain reached four times the yield strain ( $4\epsilon_y$ ).

Based on the parametric study, the compressive stress-strain curve could be simplified into the trilinear curve, as illustrated in Fig. 7. Three critical points were marked in the curve comprised of the peak buckling stress ( $\sigma_p$ ), post-buckling stress limit ( $\sigma_2$ ), and secant modulus stiffness before buckling ( $E_s$ ), and plotted in a nondimensional format. These three variables are also recommended by Abdelrahman, et al. [33]. The secant modulus was chosen over a tangent modulus, as the model should be conservative and straightforward for application.  $E_s$  is used to calculate the strain at  $4\epsilon_y$ .

The normalized buckling stress from the FEA versus the  $\lambda_n$  is plotted in Fig. 8. From the figure, it can be observed that there was a consistent trend between the decreasing of buckling load with the increasing of slenderness. By using regression analysis, an equation of the trendline was formed. All of the equations were developed based on the “Power” format. This format was relatively simple and easy to maximize  $R^2$  value close to 1. The peak of normalised buckling stress for SHS and RHS sections is written in Eq. (4) and Eq. (5), respectively. For RHS sections, an additional variable was added to consider the aspect ratio.

$$\frac{\sigma_p}{f_y} = 1.19(\lambda_n^{-0.75}) \leq 1.0 \tag{4}$$

$$\frac{\sigma_p}{f_y} = 1.09(\lambda_n^{-0.67}) \left[ \frac{H}{B} \right]^{0.35} \leq 1.0 \tag{5}$$

For sections with  $\lambda_n$  less than 1.28, the peak buckling stress was limited to 1. The factor of 1.28 was a limit between elastic local buckling and inelastic local buckling based on Ma, et al. [35]. The peak stress was limited to yield stress for a conservative approach. Experiment results showed that when inelastic local buckling occurred, the failure stress would be higher than the yield stress. This can be seen in Fig. 8(a) and (b), whereby there were several peak stress values higher than 1 for  $\lambda_n$

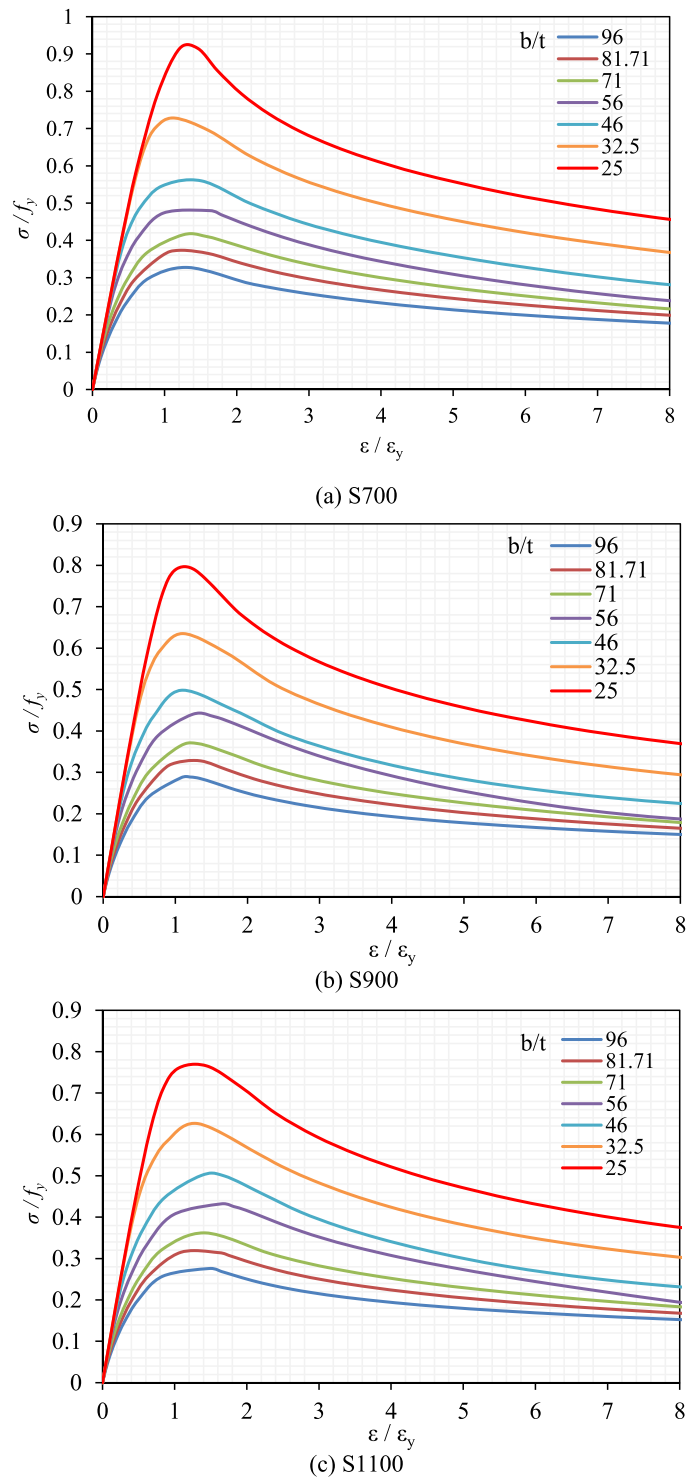


Fig. 5. Normalised compression stress-strain of SHS.

less than 1.28.

The strain at peak stress was approached by calculating the secant modulus of elasticity ( $E_s$ ) since it would be relatively simple because the original compressive stress-strain curve from FEA was nonlinear. The  $E_s$  was normalized to Young's modulus to have a consistent form with the other parametric equations. The trend of normalized  $E_p$  values with  $\lambda_n$  closed to the Eq. (6) and Eq. (7). The trendlines were drawn in Fig. 9, together with the results obtained from the parametric study. It was realized that the results were more scattered than the peak stress. However, Eq. (6) and Eq. (7) were the best results from the regression

analysis model;  $R^2$  is more than 0.79 for those equations.

$$\frac{E_s}{E} = 0.94(\lambda_n^{-0.78}) \tag{6}$$

$$\frac{E_s}{E} = 0.86(\lambda_n^{-0.68}) \left[ \frac{H}{B} \right]^{0.35} \tag{7}$$

Another important parameter in Fig. 7 is the post-buckling stress limit ( $\sigma_2$ ). As mentioned, the compressive stress would decrease slightly once the strain reached  $4\epsilon_y$ . Simply speaking, the stress would be



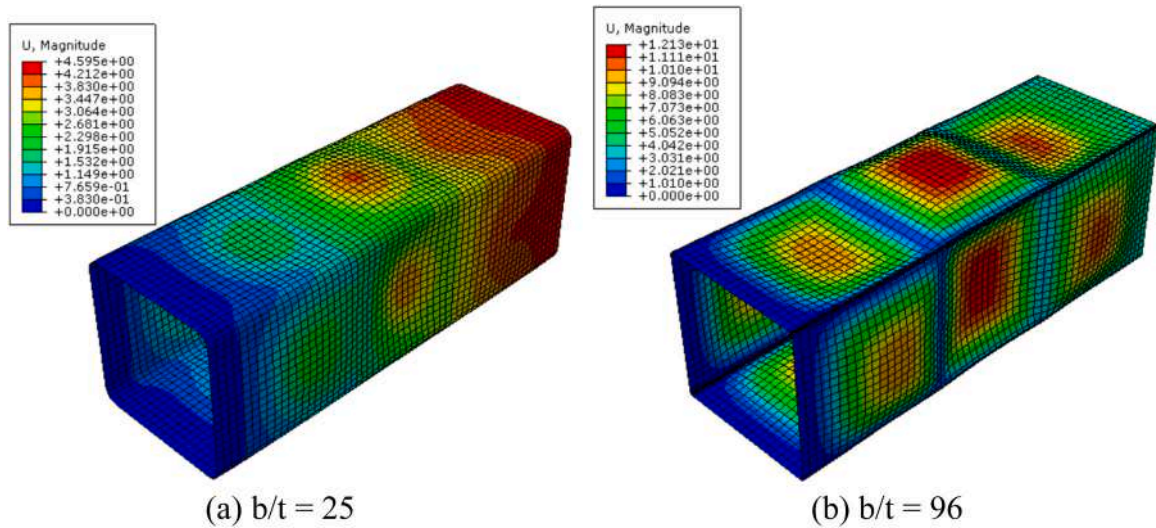


Fig. 6. Failure mode of a stub column.

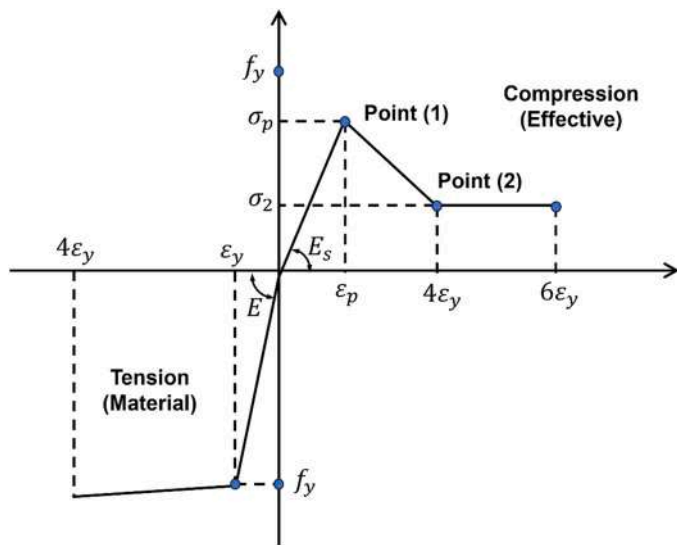


Fig. 7. Effective stress-strain model for CFHSS.

constant from this point onward. From the parametric study,  $\sigma_2$  was plotted against  $\lambda_n$  as described in Fig. 10. A trendline was drawn in the two figures, and an equation was formed. Eq. (8) and Eq. (9) were the trendline equations for the different cross-sections. Again, the stress obtained from these equations was constrained to  $f_y$  for conservative design, as it could potentially exceed  $f_y$  for stocky sections.

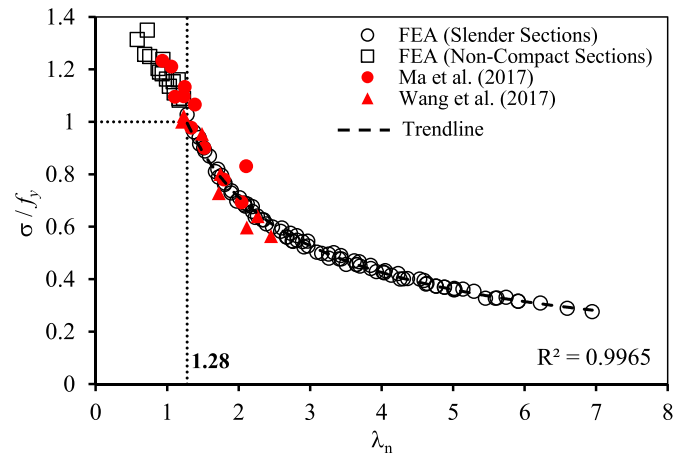
$$\frac{\sigma_2}{f_y} = 0.83(\lambda_n^{-0.75}) \leq 1.0 \tag{8}$$

$$\frac{\sigma_2}{f_y} = 0.93(\lambda_n^{-0.8}) \left[ \frac{H}{B} \right]^{0.3} \leq 1.0 \tag{9}$$

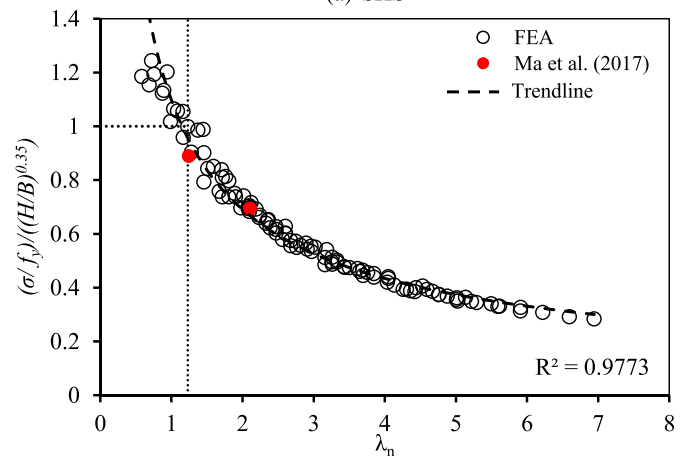
Since all the parameters in the proposed stress-strain model have been explored, the next stage is to calibrate the model with the experiment results. The application of the proposed model to the member design will also be presented in the following part. It is also interesting to verify the results with the member test results.

### 5. Application of effective stress-strain model

This section aims to validate the proposed stress-strain relationship



(a) SHS



(b) RHS

Fig. 8. Relationship between normalized buckling stress and  $\lambda_n$ .

for predicting the behavior of CFS box sections made from high-strength steel. Additionally, it explores the validity of the proposed 1D beam-column element approach for nonlinear collapse analysis of steel members with CFS box sections. Experimental results and those generated from sophisticated finite shell element models are used for

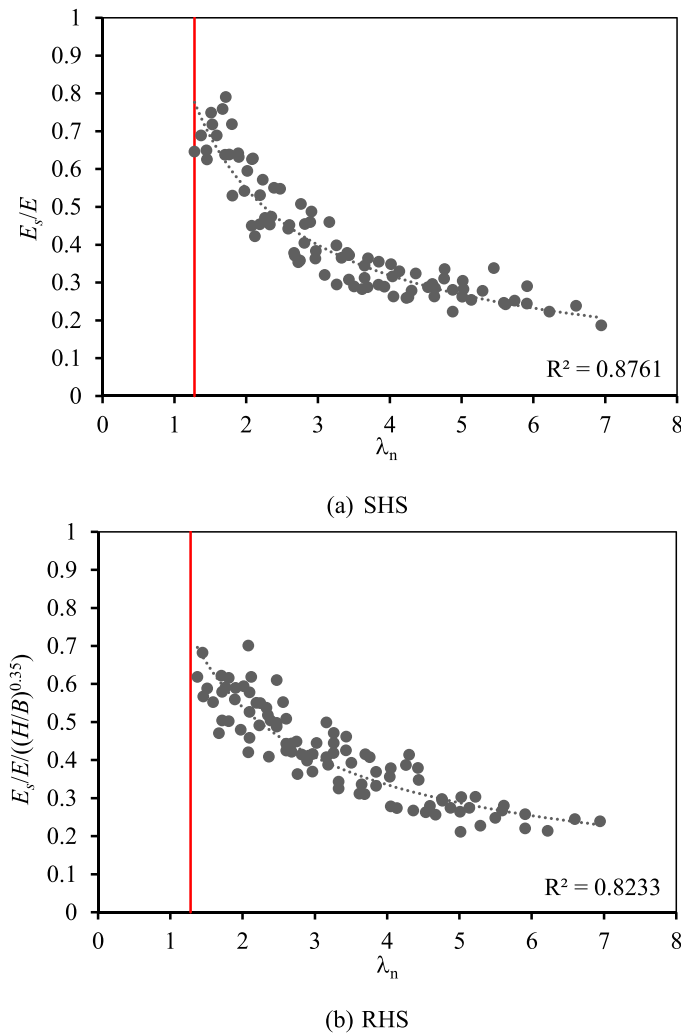


Fig. 9. Relationship between secant modulus ( $E_s$ ) and  $\lambda_n$ .

verifications and validations. With these purposes, the proposed stress-strain relationship is implemented within the B31 beam-column element in ABAQUS, using the scripting technique [42–44] that imposes the proposed curve as a constitutive material model.

In order to conduct comprehensive comparison studies, the following four sets of results are analyzed: 1) 1D line FE models with the proposed stress-strain relationship (implicitly accounting for imperfections), denoted as LFEMI; 2) 1D line FE models with the material stress-strain relationship (with no allowance for material or geometric imperfections), denoted as LFEM; 3) the sophisticated shell FE models (SFEM); and 4) the experimental tests.

Finally, a modular integrated construction (MiC) structure is designed to demonstrate the versatility and reliability of the proposed approach for the analysis and design of cold-formed steel structures.

5.1. Comparisons between the simplified 1D line element method and shell FE models

This example demonstrates comparisons between results obtained from sophisticated SFEM and the proposed LFEMI for collapse analysis of CFS members made from box sections. Herein, the analysis matrix includes a wide range of cross-section dimensions as summarized in Table 4: (a) cross-sectional width  $B = 70 - 400mm$ ; (b) width-to-thickness ratio  $B/t = 15 - 200$  for slender sections; (c) yield stress  $F_y = 500 - 1100MPa$  for high-strength steel; and (d) slenderness coefficient  $\lambda_n = 1.25 - 10$ . Note that the influence of initial imperfections is

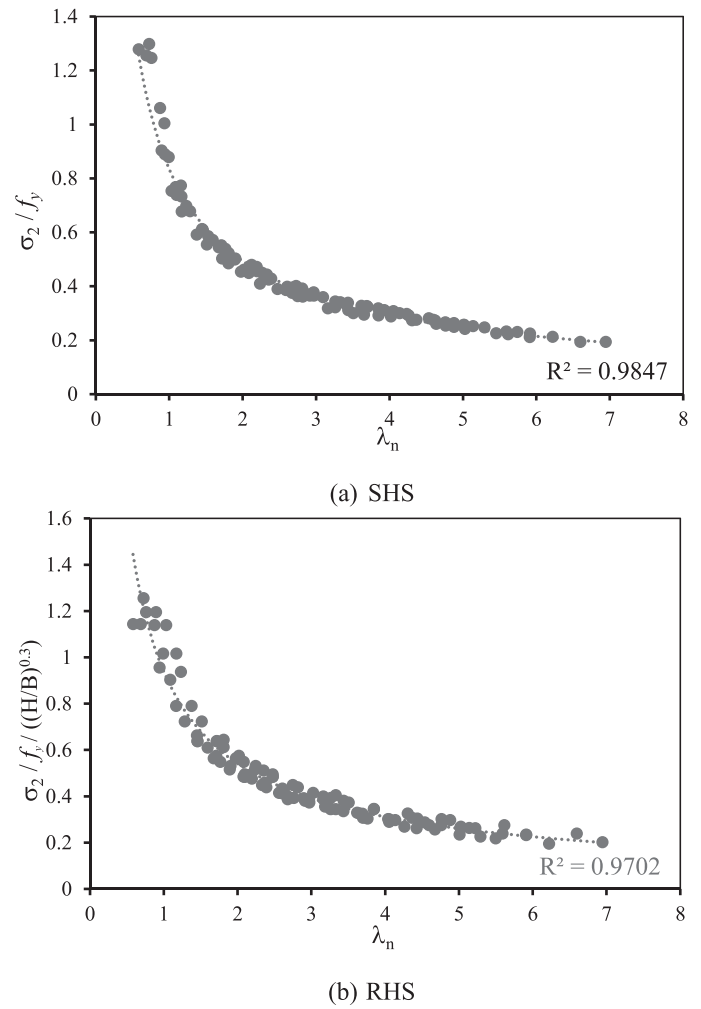


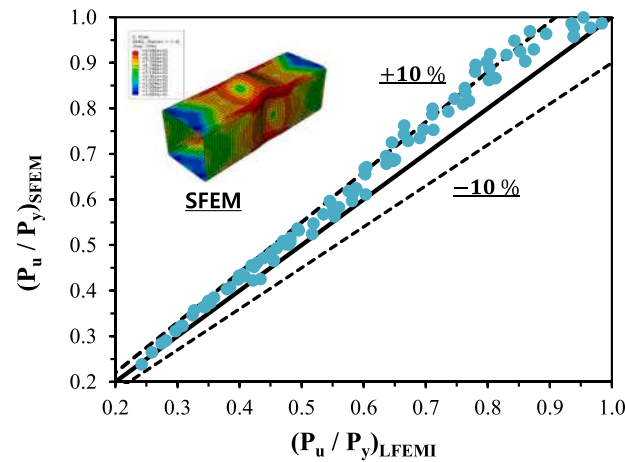
Fig. 10. Relationship between normalized  $\sigma_2$  and  $\lambda_n$ .

Table 4  
Analysis matrix for CFS hollow box sections.

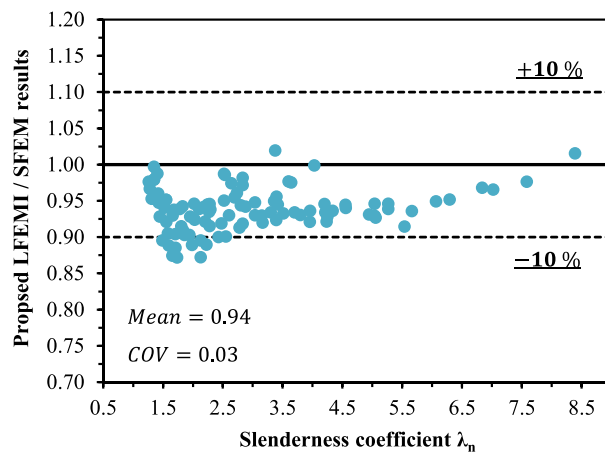
No. of specimens	$B(mm)$	$t(mm)$	$B/t$	$F_y(MPa)$	$\lambda_n = \frac{B}{t} \sqrt{\frac{f_y}{E}}$
100	70 to 400	1 to 9	15 to 200	500 to 1100	1.25 to 10

included via the proposed effective stress-strain model. The ultimate loads obtained from the two methods (i.e., SFEM and LFEMI) are normalized by dividing those loads by the corresponding squash load ( $P_y = A * F_y$ ); accordingly, they are plotted in Fig. 11(a) for comparison. Results from the LFEMI are within 10% below those obtained from sophisticated SFEM on the conservative side.

On the other side, showing that the analysis matrix includes a wide practical range of CFS members, Fig. 11(b) depicts the predicted LFEMI-to-SFEM ratios versus the slenderness coefficient ( $\lambda_n$ ). The slenderness coefficient mostly varies between 1 and 4.5, while a few members have a high  $B/t$  ratio for slender sections. The mean LFEMI-to-SFEM ratio is 0.94, with a relatively low coefficient of variance (COV) of 0.03. It becomes clear that developing an effective stress-strain relationship that implicitly accounts for cross-sectional geometric imperfections is crucial for more accurate results, thereby adopting LFEMI for a practical design of CFS structures comprising box sections. The proposed stress-strain relationship can precisely simulate the cross-sectional buckling



(a) Normalized ultimate loads obtained from LFEMI vs. SFEM



(b) LFEMI / SFEM results vs. slenderness coefficient  $\lambda_n$

Fig. 11. Comparisons between LFEMI results and SFEM.

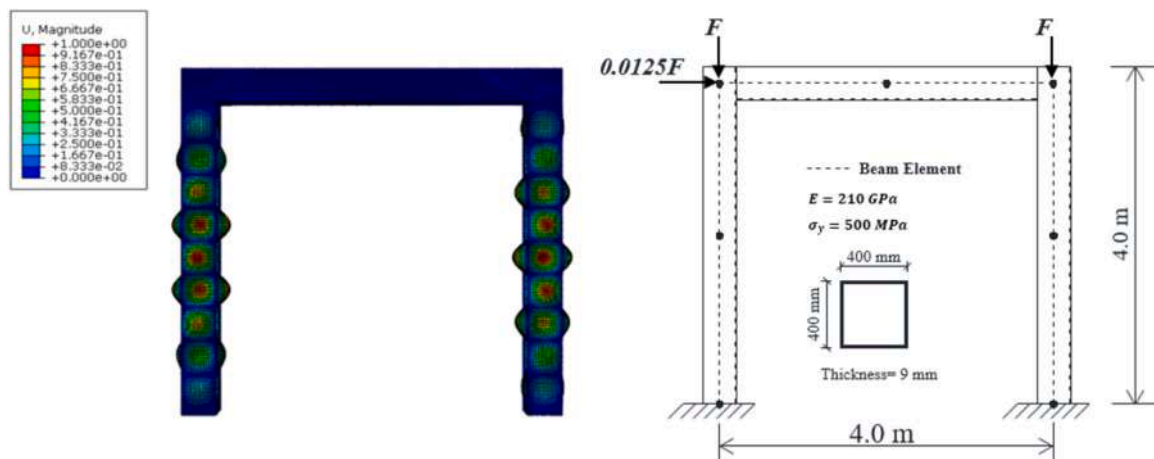


Fig. 12. The configuration of a single-span portal frame comprising CFS box sections.

behavior for advanced analysis.

To further examine the proposed approach for a second-order inelastic analysis of CFS structures comprising CFS box sections, the proposed stress-strain relationship is implemented within the LFEM to analyze a single-span portal frame subjected to vertical and lateral loads. The geometric configurations, including dimensions, loading, and

boundary conditions, are plotted in Fig. 12, together with the Eigen-buckling mode for geometric imperfections within SFEM. The portal frame is assembled with CFS square hollow sections (SHS) with outside dimensions of 400 mm and a wall thickness of 9.0 mm, making the cross-sectional slenderness  $B/t = 44.44$ , whereby the local buckling dominated the failure mode. The Young's modulus, Poisson's ratio, and

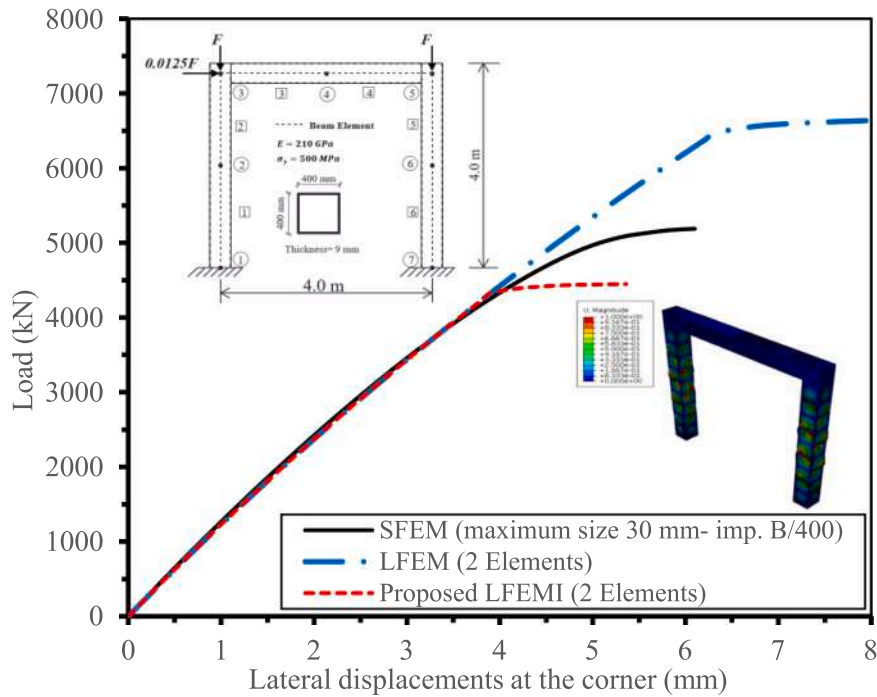


Fig. 13. Load-displacement curves for a portal frame comprising CFS box sections.

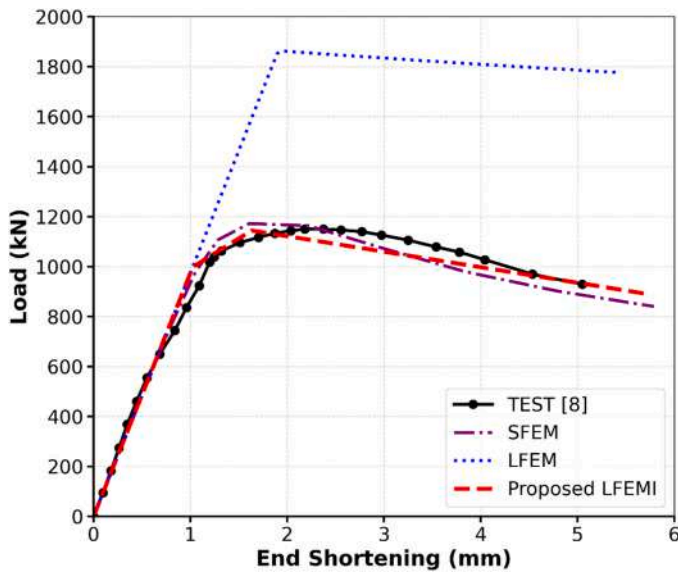


Fig. 14. Verification of load-end shortening curves SHS 120 × 120 × 3.

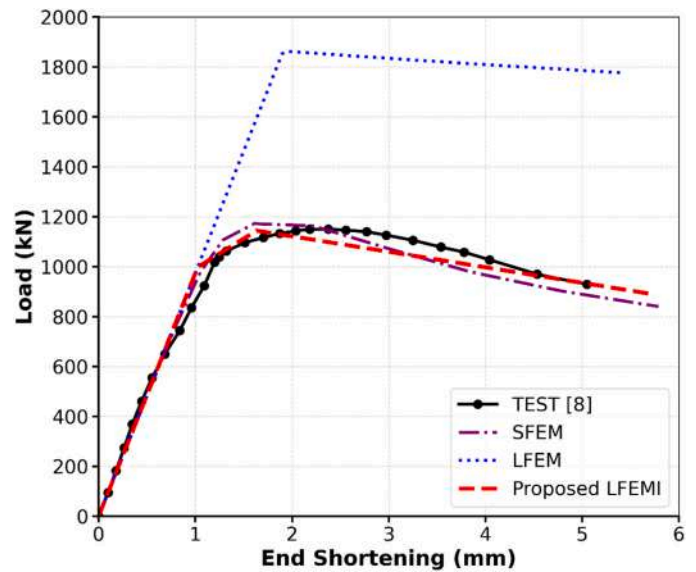


Fig. 15. Verification of load-end shortening curves SHS 150 × 150 × 4.

yield stress are 210 GPa, 0.3, and 500 MPa, respectively. The frame is subjected to two concentrated vertical loads,  $F$ , at the corners, and a lateral load of  $0.0125 F$ , as shown in Fig. 12. As aforementioned, the frame is analyzed adopting SFEM, LFEM, and the LFEMI.

Results obtained from sophisticated SFEM with initial geometric imperfections are plotted in Fig. 13. The first Eigen buckling mode is scaled with a maximum amplitude of  $B/400$ , where  $B$  is the outside width of the SHS. Besides, the load-displacement curves resulting from the LFEM and LFEMI are depicted for comparison. It can be clearly seen that adopting the LFEM and implementing the material stress-strain relationship overestimates the failure load compared to the SFEM results. However, adopting the proposed stress-strain relationship within the LFEMI can predict the buckling behavior of steel frames comprising CFS box sections on a conservative side. In conclusion, Figs. (11) and

(13) show the robustness and accuracy of the proposed approach in analyzing and designing CFS structures comprising box sections.

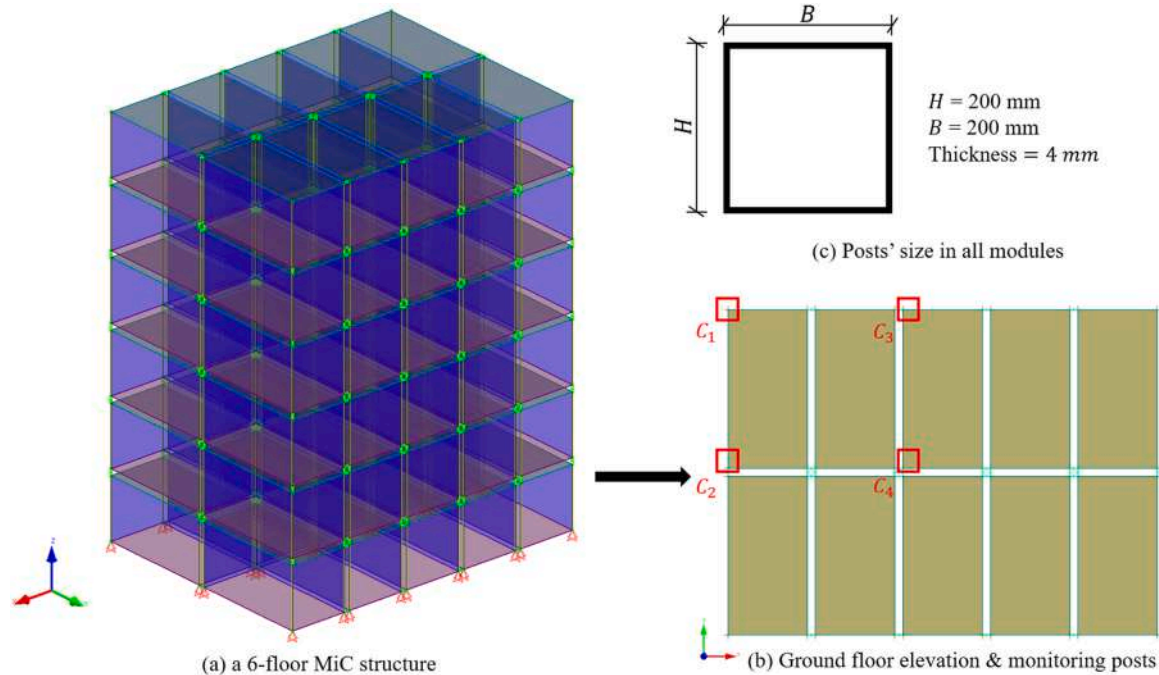
5.2. Comparisons between the proposed 1D line element method and experimental results

In this example, experimental results reported in Section 3 are further utilized to validate the proposed 1D line element approach for simulating columns with CFS box sections. Test results by Wang, et al. [8] which investigate the local buckling failure modes for such members, are plotted in Figs. 14 and 15. Two specimens (SHS 120 × 120 × 3 and 150 × 150 × 4) are modelled, while the material properties, loading configurations, and boundary conditions are adopted as reported in the test program. Load versus displacement curves for tested specimens are



**Table 5**  
Ultimate loads for tested specimens made from CFS box sections.

specimens	Test[8]	SFEM		LFEMI		LFEM	
	$P_u$ kN	$P_u$ kN	Dif. %	$P_u$ kN	Dif. %	$P_u$ kN	Dif. %
SHS 120×120×3	835.46	830.50	-0.59%	828.69	-0.81%	1529.59	83.08%
SHS 150×150×4	1150.23	1140.5	-0.85%	1144.44	-0.50%	1862.23	61.90%



**Fig. 16.** A six-story MiC structure; geometric configurations and cross-section dimensions.

compared, as aforementioned, with different numerical approaches (i.e., SFEM, LFEM, and LFEMI). The numerical incorporation of the proposed compressive effective stress-strain relationship and the material tensile stress-strain relationship (Fig. 7) within the line FE method in ABAQUS represents the results from LFEMI and LFEM, respectively. Further, results from the more realistic but sophisticated SFEM are depicted for comparison.

Moreover, the ultimate loads for the tested specimens are summarized in Table 5, wherein the differences between the various numerical methods and experimental results are presented. From the results illustrated in Figs. 14 and 15 and Table 5, it can be clearly seen that the LFEMI considering the member local imperfections, can predict the load-displacement behavior of such members and in good agreement with test results and SFEM. Conversely, the LFEM utilizing the material tensile stress-strain curve overestimates the ultimate loads observed from load-displacement curves in Figs. 14 and 15.

### 5.3. A design example of the 1D line element for the design of MiC structures

A design example utilizing the proposed advanced design method is demonstrated here. A six-story MiC structure, depicted in Fig. 16, was investigated, where each module is designed with the dimensions of 3.2 m (height) × 3 m (width) × 6 m (length). The dead load (DL) and live load (LL) for floor slabs are taken as 4.0 kPa and 2.5 kPa, respectively; while the dead load for module roof level is 0.9 kPa. The wind load (WL) is 2 kPa throughout the height. The critical design load combinations as following CoPHK [45] are considered, including 1.4DL + 1.6LL, 1.4DL + 1.4WL, and 1.2DL + 1.2LL + 1.2WL. The model is built using software NIDA [32], employing second-order nonlinear P- $\Delta$ - $\delta$  analysis to

determine the internal forces and moments in the structural members. The relevant beam-column element allowing for member initial imperfection as well as the co-rotational framework for nonlinear analysis can be referred to the references [46,47]. Both global frame and local member imperfections are considered. The global frame imperfection is taken as  $H/200$  while the member initial imperfection is taken as  $L/1000$  as recommended in CoPHK [45], where  $H$  is building height and  $L$  is member length. Subsequently, the traditional effective width method (EWM) as outlined in ANSI/AISC 360-16 [9] is employed to estimate the cross-sectional capacity of the four columns labeled ( $C_1 - C_4$ ), as shown in Fig. 16. Moreover, section capacity factors (SCF) were computed from two models: one utilizing the material stress curve (LFEM) and another incorporating the proposed effective stress-strain model (LFEMI) for comparison purposes.

The design results of four ground-floor columns were juxtaposed, comparing the application of the effective width method (i.e., AISC) with the advanced LFEM in NIDA, to showcase the efficiency and convenience of the proposed LFEMI. The modules are interconnected both vertically and horizontally through pin connections, as depicted in Fig. 16. The chosen column locations include building corners, the midpoints of both the long and short sides of the building and the center of the ground floor. These columns are constructed using cold-formed plates to form  $200 \times 200 \times 4$  sections, employing high-strength steel with  $f_y = 690$  MPa,  $E = 205$  GPa. The applied loads consist of a superimposed dead load of  $4 \text{ kN/m}^2$  on the floor and a roof load of  $0.9 \text{ kN/m}^2$ . Additionally, live loads for both the floor and roof are set at  $2.5 \text{ kN/m}^2$ . In this investigation, the load combination of 1.4DL + 1.6LL is utilized.

Referring to Eq. (4) and Eq. (8), for the proposed model's posts,  $\sigma_p$  and  $\sigma_2$  are computed to be 381 MPa and 265 MPa, respectively. Using the EWM, the sections' nominal axial and nominal flexural strengths are

**Table 6**  
Section capacity factors for columns using different design methods.

Column Mark	AISC <sup>1</sup>	LFEM <sup>2</sup>	Diff. <sup>2-1</sup>	LFEMI <sup>3</sup>	Diff. <sup>3-1</sup>	SFEM <sup>4</sup>	Diff. <sup>4-1</sup>
C1	0.729	0.427	-41%	0.772	6%	0.692	-5%
C2	0.590	0.342	-42%	0.619	5%	0.563	-4%
C3	0.687	0.400	-42%	0.725	5%	0.557	-6%
C4	0.587	0.328	-44%	0.594	1%	0.652	-5%

determined as 1030 kN and 89.577 kN.m, respectively. Then, the interactive equation, Eq. (10), is adopted for calculating the section capacity factor.

$$\frac{\bar{P}}{P_a} + \frac{\bar{M}_x}{M_{ax}} + \frac{\bar{M}_y}{M_{ay}} \leq 1.0 \quad (10)$$

where,  $\bar{P}$  is the required compressive axial strength,  $\bar{M}_x$  and  $\bar{M}_y$  are required flexural strengths,  $P_a$  is the available axial strength and  $M_{ax}$  and  $M_{ay}$  are available flexural strengths. The section capacities of the selected columns employing different design methods are shown in Table 6.

From these findings, several conclusions can be made. Firstly, the LFEM, without accounting for the local buckling of the cold-formed sections, overestimates the column capacities by up to 40%. Conversely, utilizing the EWM and the proposed LFEMI yields safer designs by considering local buckling. The difference between the proposed LFEMI method and the EWM is around 5%, and it is noticeable that for posts controlled by compression instead of bending, the difference is only 1%. The LFEMI method not only streamlines the design process by enabling simultaneous design and analysis but also ensures a secure design without unnecessary conservatism. Theoretically, the SFEM method using shell element can provide more accurate results. However, this method need much modelling effort with significant increase of computer time.

## 6. Conclusions

Cold-formed steel structures show many benefits in construction such as cost-effectiveness, lightweight, high design flexibility and fast speed of construction. In this paper, an effective stress-strain model is proposed for integrated analysis and design of cold-formed steel structures with thin-walled sections. The presented material model, named the effective stress-strain relationship, was generated from the 2-dimensional (2D) shell finite element analysis (SFEA) of stub columns to include the member imperfections and cold-forming effect. Thus, the material nonlinearity could be captured from the proposed material model and is suitable for the direct analysis method for frame structures constructed from slender sections. The validation of the proposed material model included two stages. The first was conducted by comparing the results of frame analysis using shell finite elements and 1D line elements. In addition, the second stage of the validation compared the results obtained from LFEMI with experimental results. Based on the analyses results and comparisons presented in this paper, the following conclusion can be drawn.

- It was shown that frame analysis using the 1D line elements combined with the proposed effective stress-strain relationship and initial member imperfection (LFEMI) offered more conservative results than the sophisticated SFEA. This finding can be conjectured due to simpler and less computational efforts from the typical frame analysis approach using 1D line elements.
- The analysis method using LFEMI provided accurate results due to the inclusion of geometric imperfection and material nonlinearity. The load versus shortening curve obtained from LFEMI analysis matches well the test curves. Hence, the proposed effective stress-strain relationship can be recommended for advanced frame

analysis, including the member imperfections for structures comprising members with slender sections.

- It was shown that the LFEMI is capable of facilitating both analysis and secure design. This approach finds applicability in various domains, including but not limited to full-scale structures, such as Modular Integrated Construction (MiC) systems. Notably, it holds promise for the advancement and proliferation of structural design involving the utilization of high-strength cold-formed steel sections.

## Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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