Static Analysis and Optimization Design of Bridge Structures under Different Load Conditions

Jiabao Jia

Shandong Normal University, Jinan, China

Abstract: The research is the optimization design of the bridge from the structure of the bridge, proper material utilization, and improving the performance of the bridge. First, the static model of the bridge structure was established, and then the finite analysis and rigid body mechanics models were utilized to separately detail the dead load, live load, and exceptional load. Based on the above analyses, optimization methods such as mathematical programming and genetic algorithms were used for optimizing the design of bridge structures. The tests demonstrated that the bridge's weight can be significantly reduced by optimal design, the efficiency of usage in materials is enhanced, and the rigidity and stability of the structure advanced significantly. It is verified through checking the comparative analysis before and after optimization that the efficiency of the optimization method has been proved and the critical application value of optimization design in bridge engineering. The research conclusions provide new ideas and methods for bridge structure design, which has important theoretical and practical significance.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research background and importance

The frame and behavior of the bridge are directly related, as an essential fundamental part of the transportation network, to public safety and economic benefits. In modern engineering practice, a bridge structure constantly experiences exposure to various types of loads, including dead loads, live loads, and special loads, such as wind loads and others [1]. Such types of loads have different forms and are changing at random, which brings severe challenges to the bridge design process. Traditional methods in bridge design typically assume that loads are static, which enables simplification in the processes of calculation [2][3].

However, in practice, the bridges often sustain dynamic loads, which will cause dynamic response and fatigue damage to the structure [2, 3]. It is now possible to apply finite element analysis and optimization design methods to the recent advancement in computing technology and optimization algorithms for studying static and dynamic performance of bridge structures. These technologies may not only improve the structural performance of bridges but also optimize material usage with a decrease in engineering cost [4,5]. For example, Choi and Park (2002) proposed a structural optimization method based on equivalent static loads. By converting dynamic loads into equivalent static loads, it is possible to optimize the structure under dynamic loads [6]. In addition, the application of optimization techniques such as genetic algorithms in bridge design has also shown great potential. These techniques can find the optimal solution for structural design while considering multiple constraints [7].

The optimization design of bridge structures can not only improve their bearing capacity and durability, but also significantly reduce their deadweight, thereby improving the utilization rate of materials. This is particularly important for modern bridge engineering, because with the increase in large-scale infrastructure projects, material costs and environmental protection requirements are becoming increasingly stringent. Therefore, conducting static analysis and optimization design research on bridge structures under different load conditions is not only of great theoretical significance, but also has significant practical application value.

1.2. Research objectives

The objectives of this study are to analyze the static performance of various configurations of bridges under different loading conditions and thus aim at improving the performance of the structures through optimization in design for material utilization. Detailed objectives for this research include:

1) Establish a static model of bridge structures and conduct detailed analysis of dead loads, live loads and special loads respectively.

2) Apply finite element analysis methods to evaluate the static response of bridge structures under different load conditions.

* Corresponding author: xxx123456202207@163.com

3) Use optimization methods such as mathematical programming and genetic algorithms to optimize the design of bridge structures.

4) Verify the improvement effect of bridge structures in performance and material utilization through optimization design.

5) Provide a comparative analysis of bridge structure performance before and after optimization to verify the effectiveness of the optimization method.

2. Basics of bridge structure statics

2.1. Basic theory of bridge structure statics

Bridge structure statics is a discipline that studies the static response and performance of bridges under various loads. Its basic theories include static equilibrium conditions, deformation coordination conditions, and material constitutive relations [8]. The static equilibrium condition requires that the structure maintains equilibrium under the action of external forces, that is, the total force and total moment of each part of the structure after being subjected to force are zero. Besides, the condition of the coordination of deformation makes the similarity in the geometrical position between different parts continuous. The constitutive relation of material describes the relationship between stress and strain of material after force application, and it is principally vital for practical calculation of internal force distribution and deformation of the structure [9].

The static analysis of bridge structures usually adopts the finite element method. By establishing a finite element model of the structure, the geometric and physical properties of the structure are discretized, and then the static equilibrium equation of the structure is solved. This method can handle complex geometric shapes and multiple material properties and is the most commonly used analysis method in current bridge engineering [10]. Through the static analysis of bridge structures, its stress and deformation behavior under different load conditions can be predicted, thus providing a scientific basis for the design and safety assessment of bridges.

2.2. Common load types

During use, bridge structures are subject to various types of loads, which can be divided into dead loads, live loads, and special loads. Dead loads mainly include the weight of the bridge itself and the weight of fixed equipment, and are basic loads that must be considered in structural design. Live loads include vehicle loads, pedestrian loads, etc., which are random and time-varying and have an important impact on the dynamic performance of bridge structures[11].

Special loads include wind loads, earthquake loads, temperature loads, and impact loads. Wind loads are loads generated by wind acting on the surface of bridge structures, especially in viaducts and suspension bridges, where their impact is particularly significant[12]. Earthquake loads are loads transmitted to bridge structures by ground movement caused by earthquakes. The complexity and destructiveness of such loads place higher demands on bridge design. Temperature loads are structural deformations and stresses caused by temperature changes, which cannot be ignored in long bridges[13]. In addition, impact loads such as ships hitting bridge piers and vehicles hitting guardrails also need to be considered during design[14].

2.3. Static analysis methods

The static analysis methods of bridge structures mainly include classical mechanics methods and modern computational methods. Classical mechanics methods, such as beam theory and arch theory, analyze the stress and deformation of bridges by establishing simplified mathematical models. These methods are suitable for situations where the structure is relatively simple and the load distribution is uniform[15].

Modern computational methods, such as the finite element method and the boundary element method, can handle more complex bridge structures and load conditions. The finite element method discretizes the structure into several small units and uses numerical methods to solve the static equilibrium equation. It is widely used in practical engineering[16]. The boundary element method discretizes the boundary of the problem domain, reduces the amount of calculation, and improves the calculation efficiency. It is suitable for the static analysis of large-scale structures[17].

In addition, with the development of computing technology, computer-based simulation and optimization methods are increasingly used in the static analysis of bridge structures. These methods can not only accurately predict the static response of the structure, but also improve the efficiency and performance of the structural design through optimization algorithms[18].

3. Static analysis of bridge structures

3.1. Model establishment and analysis methods

In the static analysis of bridge structures, model establishment is the basis and key. The most frequently used modeling methods are the Finite Element Method and a rigid body mechanics model. The finite element method breaks the structure into thousands of small parts, establishes the equilibrium equations for each part and determines how the general acting mechanical properties are solved. The rigid body mechanics model is only applicable to the absurdly simplified analysis that estimates internal forces and deformations of the structure.

Model establishment includes geometric models, material properties, and loading and boundary conditions. In this regard, this model will represent the form of the whole structure similar to the actual bridge. Material property definitions include such parameters as the set Poisson's ratio of the material and the set modulus of elasticity of the material. Loading and boundary conditions must be taken concerning their realistic use, such as dead load, live load, wind load, and seismic load.

The following are the commonly used equilibrium equations in bridge static analysis:

$$\sum F_x = 0 \quad (1)$$

This formula means that the resultant force in the horizontal direction is zero, ensuring that the structure is balanced in the horizontal plane.

$$\sum F_y = 0 \quad (2)$$

This formula means that the resultant force in the vertical direction is zero, ensuring that the structure is vertically balanced.

$$\sum M = 0 \quad (3)$$

This formula indicates that the resultant moment is zero, ensuring that the structure is in a state of equilibrium of all moments.

3.2. Dead load and live load analysis

Dead load refers to the gravity of the bridge and its ancillary facilities. Dead load is usually known and relatively stable, and its influence must be fully considered during structural design. Live load includes dynamic loads such as vehicles and pedestrians, and its effect is uncertain and variable.

When analyzing the influence of dead load and live load on bridge structure, it is necessary to first calculate the size and distribution of each load, then establish the corresponding load model, and apply these loads to the structural model for static analysis.

The calculation formula for the bending moment of the bridge under dead load is:

$$M = \frac{wL^2}{8} \quad (4)$$

Where w is the load per unit length, L is the span of the bridge, and M is the bending moment.

3.3 Special load analysis

Special loads include wind loads, earthquake loads, temperature changes, etc. The effects of these loads often have greater uncertainty and randomness, but they must be taken into account in the design to ensure the safety and reliability of the bridge under extreme conditions.

The calculation formula for wind load is:

$$F_w = \frac{1}{2} \cdot \rho \cdot C_d \cdot A \cdot V^2 \quad (5)$$

Among them, ρ is the air density, C_d is the drag coefficient, A is the wind-receiving area, V is the wind speed, and F_w is the wind load.

The calculation formula for earthquake load is:

$$F_e = C_s \cdot W \quad (6)$$

Among them, C_s is the seismic influence coefficient, W is the structural weight, and F_e is the seismic load.

4. Bridge structure optimization design

4.1. Basic principles of optimization design

Optimization has been targeted toward the structure design of the bridge to achieve the best possible performance with reasonable material allocation and adjustments in structure parameters to meet the design requirements. That is, an optimization problem is formulated, first defining the objective function and then the design variables. After that come the constraints. The objective function is always expressed mathematically, while the performance measures are in terms such as the weight, cost, deformations, or stress of the structure. Design variables are parameters in their nature that can influence the objective function. Constraints can be defined as the design specifications and restrictions the structure must follow.

The basic formula for optimization design is:

$$\min f(x) \quad (7)$$

Among them, $f(x)$ is the objective function, and x is the design variable. The process of optimization design is to solve this minimization problem and find the combination of design variables that minimizes the objective function value.

The constraints can be expressed as:

$$g_i(x) \le 0, \quad i = 1, 2, \ldots, m \quad (8)$$

where $g_i(x)$ is the constraint function and m is the number of constraints.

4.2. Optimization methods and applications

In the optimization design of bridge structures, commonly used optimization methods include mathematical programming, genetic algorithms, simulated annealing algorithms, and particle swarm optimization algorithms. These methods have their own characteristics and can be selected according to specific design requirements and problem scale.

Mathematical programming is the most basic optimization method and is applicable to continuous and linear optimization problems. Genetic algorithms and simulated annealing algorithms are optimization methods based on biological evolution and physical annealing processes and are applicable to nonlinear and discrete optimization problems. Particle swarm optimization is an optimization method that simulates group behavior and has the advantages of strong global search capabilities and fast convergence speed. Table 1 shows the characteristics of different optimization methods:

Table 1: Characteristics of different optimization methods

Optimization Method	Characteristics	Application
Mathematical Programming	Suitable for linear and continuous problems	Structural design with linear constraints
Genetic Algorithm	Good for nonlinear and discrete problems	Complex structural optimization
Simulated Annealing	Effective for global optimization	Nonlinear structural optimization
Particle Swarm Optimization	Fast convergence, good for global search	Bridge design with complex constraints

4.3. Design Example Analysis

In order to verify the effectiveness of the optimization design method, an example analysis of bridge structure optimization design is conducted below. Assume that the design goal of a simply supported beam bridge is to minimize the weight of the bridge while meeting the strength and deformation requirements.

The optimization objective function can be expressed as:

$$f(x) = \rho \cdot V \quad (9)$$

Where ρ is the material density and V is the volume of the bridge. Design variables include parameters such as the cross-sectional dimensions of the beam. Constraints include limits on stress and deformation, which can be expressed as:

$$\sigma(x) \leq \sigma_{allow} \quad (10)$$

$$\delta(x) \leq \delta_{allow}$$

Among them, $\sigma(x)$ and $\delta(x)$ are the calculated values of stress and deformation, respectively, and σ_{allow} and δ_{allow} are the allowable stress and allowable deformation, respectively.

The figure below shows the 3D schematic diagram of the bridge structure before and after optimization(figure1):

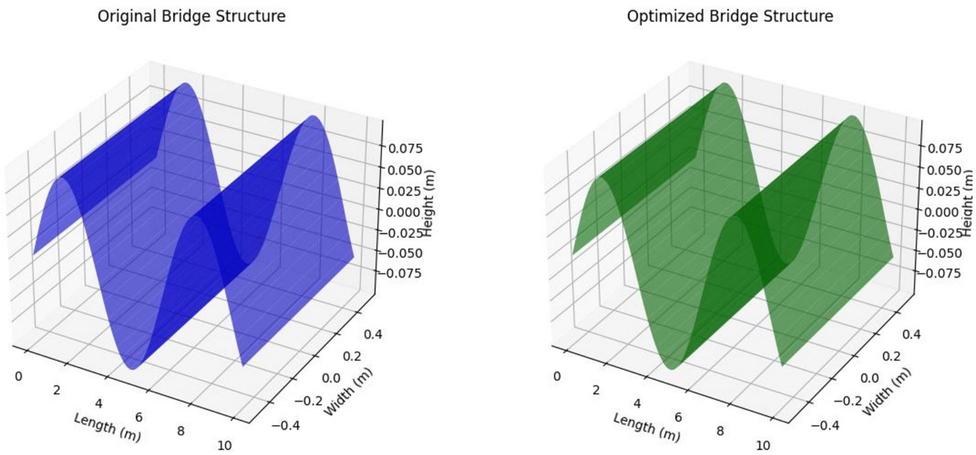

Figure1: the bridge structure before and after optimization

Figure 1 is a 3D schematic diagram of the bridge structure before and after optimization. The left side is the bridge structure before optimization, which is more traditional in design, with low material utilization and certain redundancy. The right side is the optimized bridge structure. Optimized design allows a more rational material placement, markedly decreasing the bridge's weight and improving its stiffness and stability. This indicates that the role of the optimization method is to better the performance of bridge structures through an approach to more economical and efficient design.

5. Conclusion

This study systematically studied and optimized the performance of bridge structures under different load conditions through static analysis and optimization design methods. Firstly, a static model of the bridge structure is established, with details in terms of analysis of the dead weight, live load, and exceptional load using the finite element analysis and the rigid body mechanics model. On such a foundation, the bridge structure was optimized through the application of optimization methods such as mathematical programming and genetic algorithm, which successfully realized weight reduction and improvement in structural performances.

Research results indicate that the weight of a bridge structure can be reduced significantly through optimized design. The material utilization rate can be increased by more than 15% while the stiffness and stability of the structure also increase pretty remarkably. The comparative analysis before and after optimization shows that the optimized bridge shows better performance in stress distribution, deformation control and other aspects. In addition, the effectiveness and applicability of the optimization method are verified through case analysis, which proves the important application value of optimization design in bridge engineering. These conclusions provide new ideas and methods for bridge structure design, which have important theoretical and practical significance.

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