

Comparative Study of Transverse Vibration and Mechanical Properties of Aluminum, Al 7020 Alloy, and MWCNTs Reinforced Aluminum Nanocomposites

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ABSTRACT

Alloys that mostly composed aluminum are widely used in structural engineering especially in the aircraft industry. But the cyclic vibration may generate microcracks and then failure. Mechanical vibration is one of most popular issues that exist in any working machine. Also, the vibration energy may transfer to the other portion of the structure as any mechanical waves causing noises, loose parts, heat, and wear. Structure damping and vibration isolation are the main two solutions to solve this problem. Metals behave like viscoelastic materials that made them a candidate to serve as dampers. So that, it had been investigate the transverse vibration and mechanical properties of aluminum, Al7020 alloy (Al-Zn-Mg alloy) and Aluminum-Multi-walled carbon nanotubes Al-MWCNTs nanocomposites. They were prepared using open mold casting approach with flex. Experimental comparative study of dynamic behavior and mechanical characteristics for the prepared samples were investigated. Transverse vibration test at different frequencies (motor rotating speed 0-3000 rpm) with and without loading, tensile test, flexural bending, and Vickers hardness tests were determined. Surface morphology and chemical analysis of as a cast prepared samples were characterized utilizing scanning electron microscope SEM with energy dispersive spectroscopy EDS, and optical microscope. The obtained results revealed different dynamic behavior and mechanical properties of prepared samples due to the different microstructure effect generating from the materials addition (alloying element and reinforcing materials). Al7020 alloy showed the highest ultimate tensile strength, axial stiffness, flexural strength, bending modulus, fracture toughness, and hardness compared with the other samples. Al-MWCNTs nanocomposites revealed minimum ultimate tensile strength, axial stiffness, and elongation% at break, bending modulus, fracture toughness and maximum deflection. Also dynamic behavior of all samples is dissimilar under transverse vibration test when applied load and frequency were changed. The Al-MWCNTs nanocomposites exhibited the most stable structure under transverse vibration test at maximum applied load and higher frequencies.

Keywords: Transverse vibration, Al 7020 alloy, Aluminum, MWCNTs, Nanocomposites.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nanotechnology is a newly discovered field, which describes and manipulates the unique properties of material in nanoscale, to enhance their capabilities with science, engineering, and medicine applications [1,2]. The nanocomposite is one of the most widespread applications of nanotechnology. The nanocomposite is solid material involving at least one phase or more has one, two or dimensions less than 100 nm, or consist of structures having distances between the different phases in nano-scale [3].

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Numerous researches and versatile applications dealt with the nanocomposites utilizing metal, polymer, and ceramics as a matrix reinforced with different structures of nanomaterials. Organic and nonorganic nanoparticles can be used as reinforcing filler. Due to the interesting of current work on aluminum in the damping system, many studies related to aluminum as a pure, alloy and nanocomposites have taken into account when executed this work.

Mechanical vibrations are some of the issues which usually happen during machines working. The vibration sound transfers to the structure causing noises, loose parts, wear, and other problems. High-frequency vibration or long-term weak frequency vibration can cause machinery failure. Internal vibration damping (structure damping) and vibration isolation are the main two approaches to reduce the vibration [4,5]. Structure damping is self-damping of vibration that means energy dissipates through materials itself as dislocations or other type of defects. It is considered as an important design parameter especially for structures in the airplane, oil and automobile industry [6]. The cyclic oscillation has the main role of vibration theory when potential energy transforms into kinetic energy and returns cyclically [7]. Vibration dampers are mainly metals and polymers, due to their viscoelastic character [8]. Metallic materials for damping applications involve smart alloys, ferrous alloys and other [9]. Ferromagnetic alloys include those based on iron (cast iron, steel, Fe-Ni-Mn, Fe-Al). While damping alloys, the damping mechanism attributed to microstructural, which considered the most used damping metals due to low cost like aluminum alloyed with (germanium, cobalt, zinc, copper, silicon, or alloys 6061, 2017, 7022 and 6082), zinc alloys, lead alloys, tin alloys, titanium alloy, nickel super alloys, zirconium alloys, copper and magnesium alloys. In addition, metal-matrix composites can be considered one kind of damping metals like (Al/SiC, Al/graphite, Mg/carbon, and NiAl/AlN). Metal composites provide vibration damping due to the interface between reinforcement and matrix, leading to enhance the damping capacity and stiffness which is responsible for vibration reduction [8]. Aluminum alloy and composites have found considerable applications in aerospace, automotive and transportation industries due to its high mechanical properties compared with pure aluminum [9-13].

Rohatgi *et al.* (1976) enhanced damping capacity and machinability of cast pure aluminum and its alloy by adding graphite particles. Torsion pendulum was utilized to determine damping capacity at constant strain. The results showed that graphite increased the damping capacity; the rises of damping increases with graphite content reaching to cast iron damping behavior at higher content of graphite [14]. Crawley *et al.* (1987) studied damping behavior in as a cast aluminum beam and aluminum matrix composites. Al2024, Al6061, graphite/Al6061 and graphite/AZ91C magnesium matrix were tested with different frequencies and stresses. It has found that alloys behavior differs from the predicted results by Zener Modal [15]. Kuzumaki *et al.* (1998) incorporated carbon nanotubes CNTs in aluminum by hot-press and hot-extrusion methods. From TEM observations, it had been shown that the CNTs in Al composite are not damaged during preparation. Also, the ultimate tensile strength of the nanocomposites was slightly affected by the annealing time at 873 K, while pure aluminum was significantly decreased with time [16]. Deng *et al.* (2007) published two papers about 2024Al and nanocomposites. They prepared aluminum reinforced with CNTs using isostatic pressing then hot extrusion. They noticed that CNTs react with Al forming Al₄C₃ phases when heated above 656.3 °C. The CNTs adding enhanced mechanical properties of nanocomposites significantly and tensile strength and Young's modulus was better than pure 2024 Al alloy. The results revealed CNTs enhance the high damping capabilities of metal matrix at an elevated temperature without losses in the mechanical strength of a metal matrix [17,18]. Also, Hussain *et al.* (2017) founded that composites' density and hardness improved with the increasing of CNTs amount into pure aluminum matrix [19]. Zhou *et al.* (2017) enhanced load transfer between MWCNTs and Al matrix using interfacial reactions by heat treatment forming aluminum carbide which acts as

anchor hinder of slippage [20]. Numerous reviews were reported that focuses on properties and application of metals matrix composites and nanocomposites [21].

Aluminum has been widely utilized in structural engineering and aircraft manufacturing due to lightweight, ductile, and corrosion resistance. But aluminum is not tough enough during vibration as stainless steel. Therefore numerous different alloys and composite were created during the last decades. Many different factors affect the damping of metals and alloys. Some of them are environmental like temperature, frequency, stresses, and fatigue cycles. While intrinsic factors that relate to the material structure itself also have a significant influence on internal damping like grain size, pore size, and content, miscibility of alloy phases, bonding strength among amount composite components etc. Therefore in this study, it was utilized the same matrix (aluminum) in three different cases (pure aluminum, 7074 aluminum alloy, and CNT reinforced aluminum) to show the effect of internal material structure on the transverse vibration and mechanical properties.

This work aims to make comparative study of dynamic behavior and mechanical properties of Al, 7020 Al alloy and Al-MWCNTs composites. Transverse vibration at different load, tensile test, flexural test and hardness are determined. Energy dispersive spectroscopy EDS, scanning electron microscope SEM and optical microscope are also utilized for characterization.

2. EXPERIMENTAL WORK

2.1 Materials

Commercially pure aluminum wire and 7020 Al alloy plates were purchased from public market. Chemical specification was investigated by EDS as shown in Figure 1. Non-functionalized multi-walled carbon nanotubes were pre-prepared using water assisted chemical vapor deposition (WACVD) with specification shown in Table 1 and SEM and TEM characterization as shown in Figure 2.

Table 1 Specification of pre-prepared MWCNTs

MWCNT	Description
Production method	CVD
Available form	Black powder
Diameter	Outer diameter: 20-40nm
Length	< 10 μ m
Purity	>97%
Metal particles	<2%
Amorphous carbon	<1%
Specific Surface Area	212 m ² /g

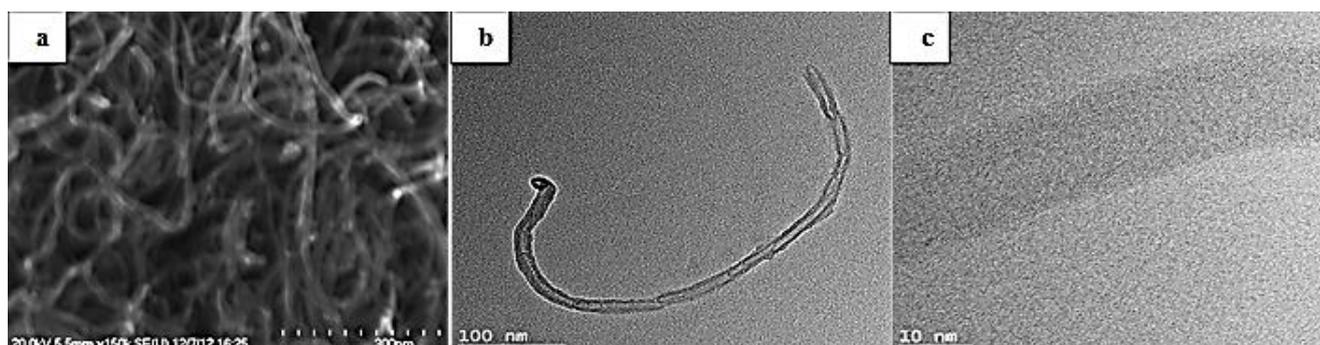


Figure 1. a) SEM and b, c) TEM images of MWCNTs.

Element **Wt.%**

Note: Accepted manuscripts are articles that have been peer-reviewed and accepted for publication by the Editorial Board. These articles have not yet been copyedited and/or formatted in the journal house style.

Mg **1.28**

Al **91.10**

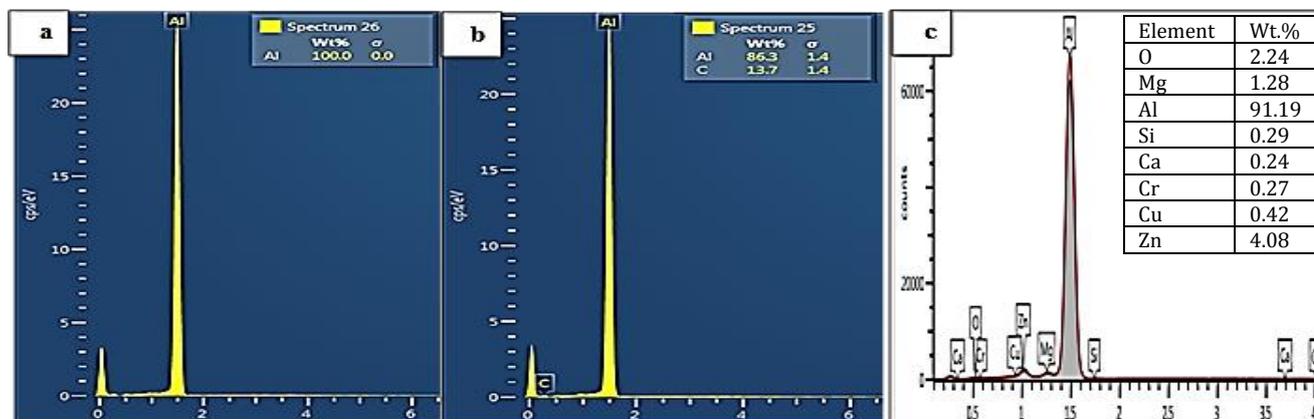


Figure 2. EDS of prepared samples; a) Al, b) Al-MWCNTs and c) Al7020 alloy.

2.2 Casting

Pure aluminum and Al7020 alloy was melted in a graphite crucible separately using gas fired open furnace (see Figure 3a). The melt was superheated to 1000 °C with flex materials (or/and 1 wt% CNTs powder put on closed aluminum foil and charged through the molten). Stainless steel impeller blade was used for mechanical stirring [14]. The melt was then cast into pre-heated (400 °C) stainless steel mold of the required dimensions (see Figure 3b). Sample of transverse vibration and mechanical test were machined from the cast bars. It is noticed significantly that Al7020 alloy is easiest one in machining with finest discontinued chips followed by pure aluminum. While MWCNTs/Al composite exhibit difficult machinability and produced long chips and suffer from high ductility during machining.

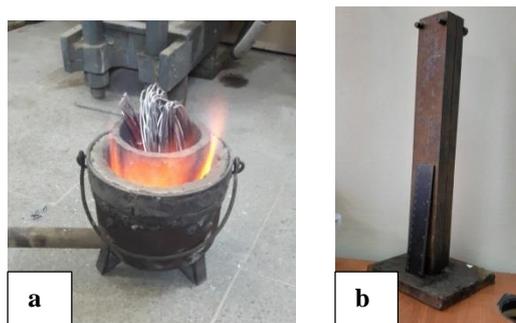


Figure 3. a) gas fired open furnace; b) casting mold.

2.3 Surface morphology

Scanning electron microscope (SEM) image was also taken for the samples using VEGA3 SCAN with electron voltage 20kV and magnification 1.0kX. Olympus microscope was utilized to determine the sample morphology using etching solution (applying cotton swab in mixture then swapped the very well pre-polished surface for about 10 s, then rinsed and dried to examine [22]. Aluminum alloys and composite responded faster than pure aluminum).

2.4 Transvers Vibration Test

TQ Universal Vibration Apparatus TM16 (see Figure 4) was utilized to investigate the $(30 \times 1.25 \times 1.20)$ mm³ bar samples. Loaded (1.6 and 3.6 kg) and unloaded samples were tested with different frequencies (0-50 Hz). The data was collected and relationship between amplitude and frequency was plotted.

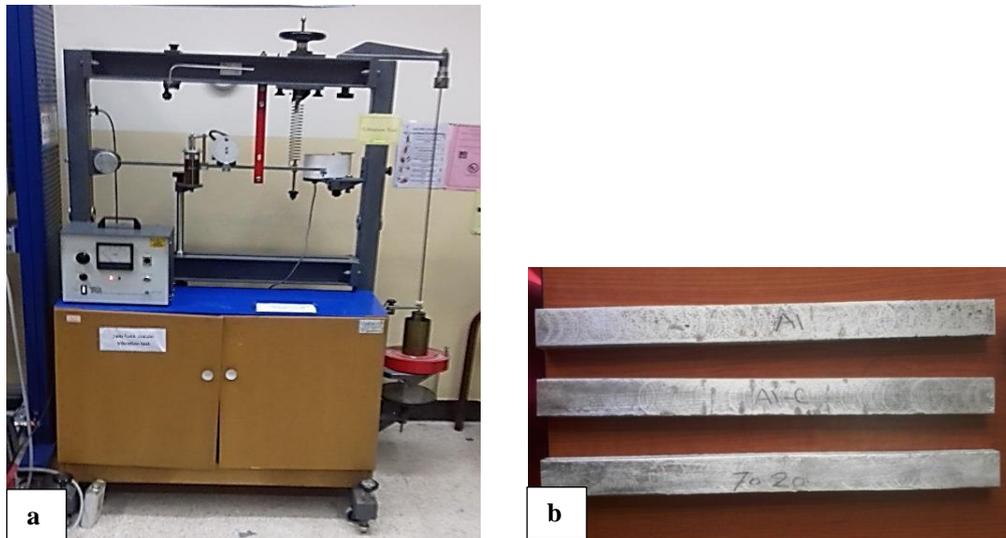


Figure 4. a) TQ Universal Vibration Apparatus (TM16); b) vibration samples.

2.5 Mechanical Tests

Tensile and three points bending tests were executed to the prepared samples according to ASTM E8 and ASTM E290 respectively using Wp 300 universal material tester [23,24]. The tests were executed at room temperature. The ductility of the composites was determined as percentage elongation. So after successful testing, samples' hardness was also determined utilizing Vickers hardness apparatuses according to ASTM E18 [25]. Figure 5 shows the samples before and after testing.

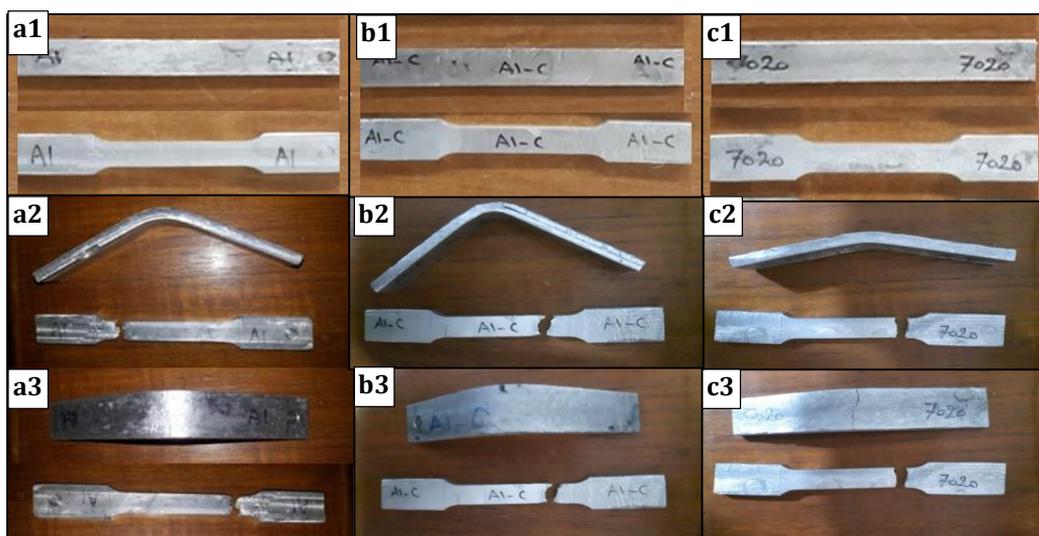


Figure 5. Tensile and bending samples;
 a,b,c) Al, Al-MWCNTs, Al7020 alloy respectively,
 a1,b1,c1) Al, Al-MWCNTs, Al7020 alloy before testing;
 a2,b2,c2) after testing (side view), a3,b3,c3) after testing (top view).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Surface morphology of prepared samples was investigated by SEM with EDS and optical microscope. Figure 6 (a1,b1,c1) shows the SEM images of Al, Al7020 and Al/MWCNTs composites respectively. Also Figure 6 (a2,b2,c2) shows the optical microscopic of the same samples. Different spectrum spot was taken to analyze the surface chemically by EDS; the Table 2 and 3 illustrates the results of EDS for Al7020 and Al/MWCNTs composite respectively. It can be noticed clearly the variety of microstructure between of Al, alloy and composite. So the pure aluminum surface revealed the grain boundaries and pitting corrosion groves due to the etching solution and with no traces of phases. While the Al7020 topography showed the other phases due to alloying the aluminum with the other elements (Zn, Mg, Cu, Si, Cr, Ca and others). These phases acquire materials the stiffness and the hardness when impeding the dislocations to move [26]. The SEM and optical microscope images of Al/MWCNTs composite are significantly showed the homogenous distribution of MWCNTs through the Al matrix grain boundaries which act as self-lubricant materials leading to increasing the ductility, increment of stiffness and hardness [27].

Table 2 EDS results of Al7020 alloy

Result Type	Weight %								
Spectrum Label	O	Mg	Al	Si	Ca	Cr	Cu	Zn	Total
Spectrum 1	2.24	1.28	91.19	0.29	0.24	0.27	0.42	4.08	100.00
Spectrum 2	1.36	0.77	94.31	0.32	0.01	0.32	0.20	2.72	100.00

Table 3 EDS results of Al/MWCNTs composite

Result Type	Weight %	
Spectrum Label	Al	C
Spectrum 1	81.14	18.60
Spectrum 2	77.76	22.24
Spectrum 3	100	0

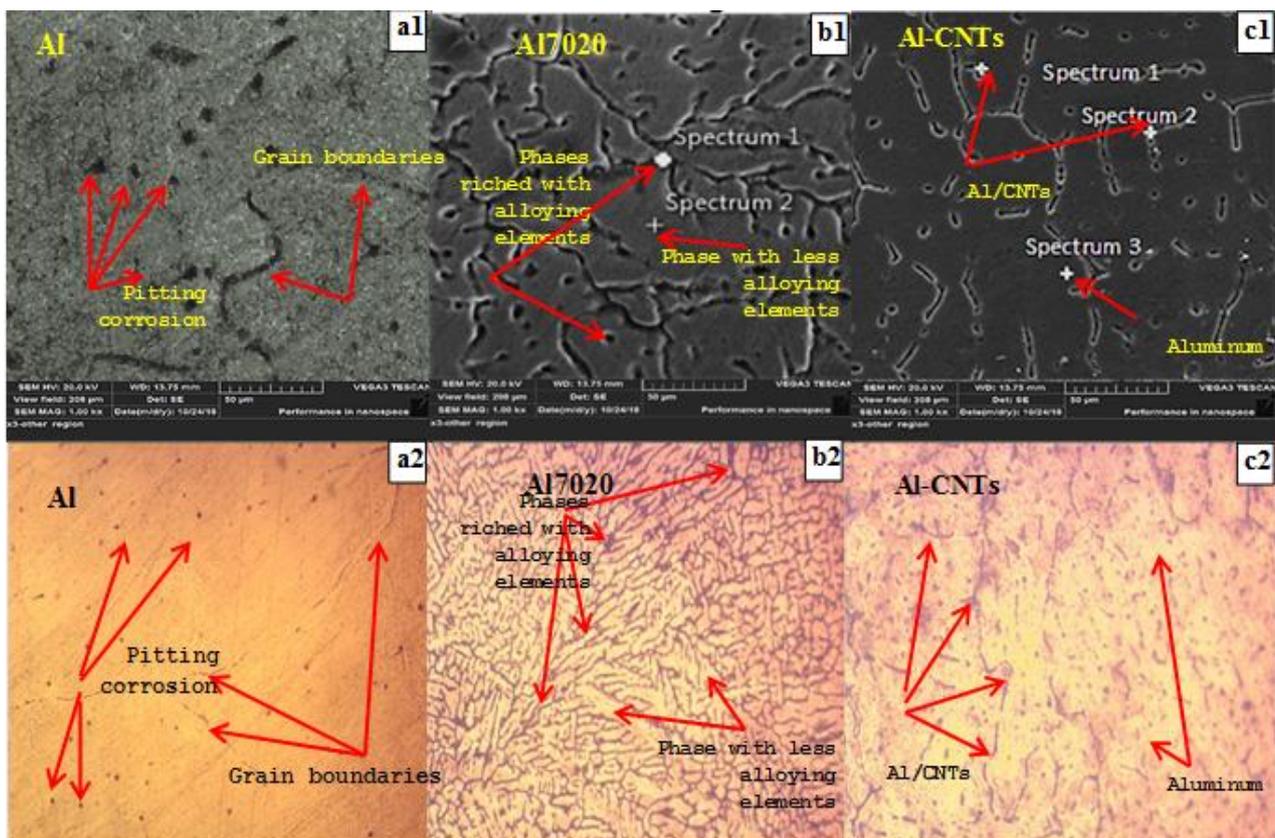


Figure 6. SEM and optical microstructures a) Al, b) Al/MWCNTs, c) Al7020 alloy respectively.

From tensile test results, stress-strain curves were plotted (see Figure 7 a,b,c). It can be observed that the tensile strength of Al7020 was enhanced (229 MPa) in comparison with pure aluminum (66 MPa). Ultimate tensile strength and elongation at break of standard Al7020 at thickness ≤ 100 mm is about ≥ 280 MPa and $\geq 10\%$ respectively, which was decreased when cast and found to have is 229MPa and 8.8% due to the samples processing conditions (casting and machining) definitely differs from ideal conditions. Whereas the addition of 1wt% of MWCNTs to the aluminum matrix, the ultimate tensile strength of the composite decremented by 50% relative with matrix. So that the composite became lower stiff (see Table 4) due to the carbon presence in the composite. This table illustrates the values of tensile properties of the prepared samples. It can be seen significantly that Al7020 yield before pure Al and Al-MWCNTs composites and showed very narrow elastic region compared with plastic deformation region, followed by pure Al and finally Al-MWCNTs composite. Failure surface of Al7020 behaved as brittle fracture with no necking stage whereas the Al and composite have ductile fracture. The ductility was also decremented for alloy and composites relative with pure aluminum due the materials discontinuity. Aluminum stiffness was also impacted by alloying and compositing, so the Al-MWCNTs revealed lower value than Al stiffness whereas Al7020 exhibited higher value than aluminum. These results agreed with [14] and disagreed with others [16,17,27] which they obtained hard aluminum carbide through Al/CNTs structure leads to increase tensile strength of Al matrix.

Table 4 Tensile test properties

Sample	Yield strength (MPa)	Ultimate tensile strength (MPa)	Young Modulus E(GPa)	Axial Stiffness K (kN/mm)	Elongation% at break
Al	16.9	66.2	3.8	4.1	11.4
Al-MWCNTs	17.0	32.6	3.6	3.4	7.5
7020Al	15.0	229.3	3.0	5.9	8.8

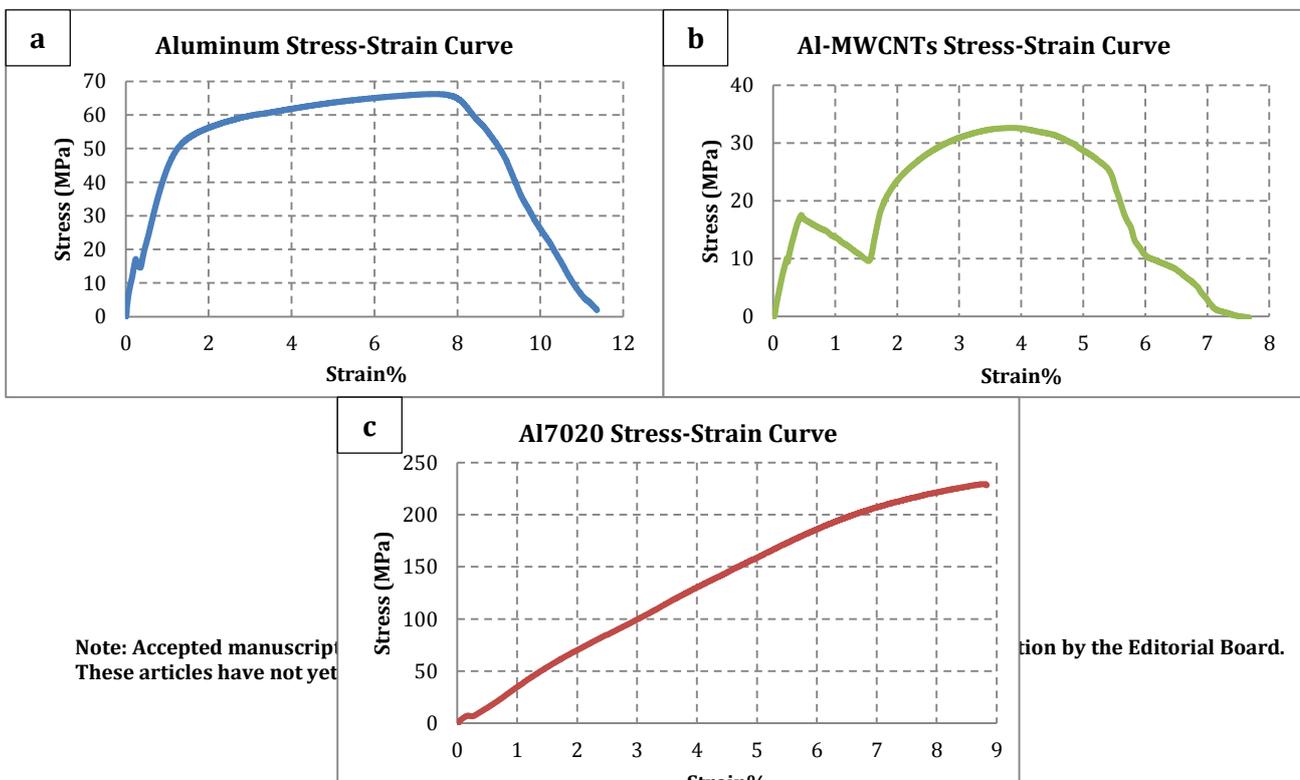


Table 5 illustrated the bending properties of prepared Al, Al7020 and Al-MWCNTs composites. Also Figure 8 revealed the mechanical behavior of materials under bending force. From these results, it was noticed significantly that flexural strength and fracture toughness of aluminum base was enhanced when adding alloying elements (i.e. Al 7020) or by reinforcing materials (i.e. MWCNTs). While bending modulus of aluminum decremented when MWCNTs was added exhibiting maximum deflection under bending (73.498 %), so that CNTs acts as a self-lubricant material due to carbon layers (Graphene) slippage through grain boundaries. Al7020 showed other behavior under bending, so the bending modulus incremented, while the deflection decremented as compare with aluminum base. This is due to the hard grain boundary phases which formed during solidification of alloying element with each other and/or aluminum base [26].

Table 5 Bending test properties

Sample	Flexural strength (MPa)	Bending Modulus E_b (GPa)	Fracture Toughness U (J)	Maximum Deflection%
Al	96	38.5	12.737	57.716
Al-MWCNTs	99	32.0	15.174	73.498
7020Al	430	42.0	23.583	24.886

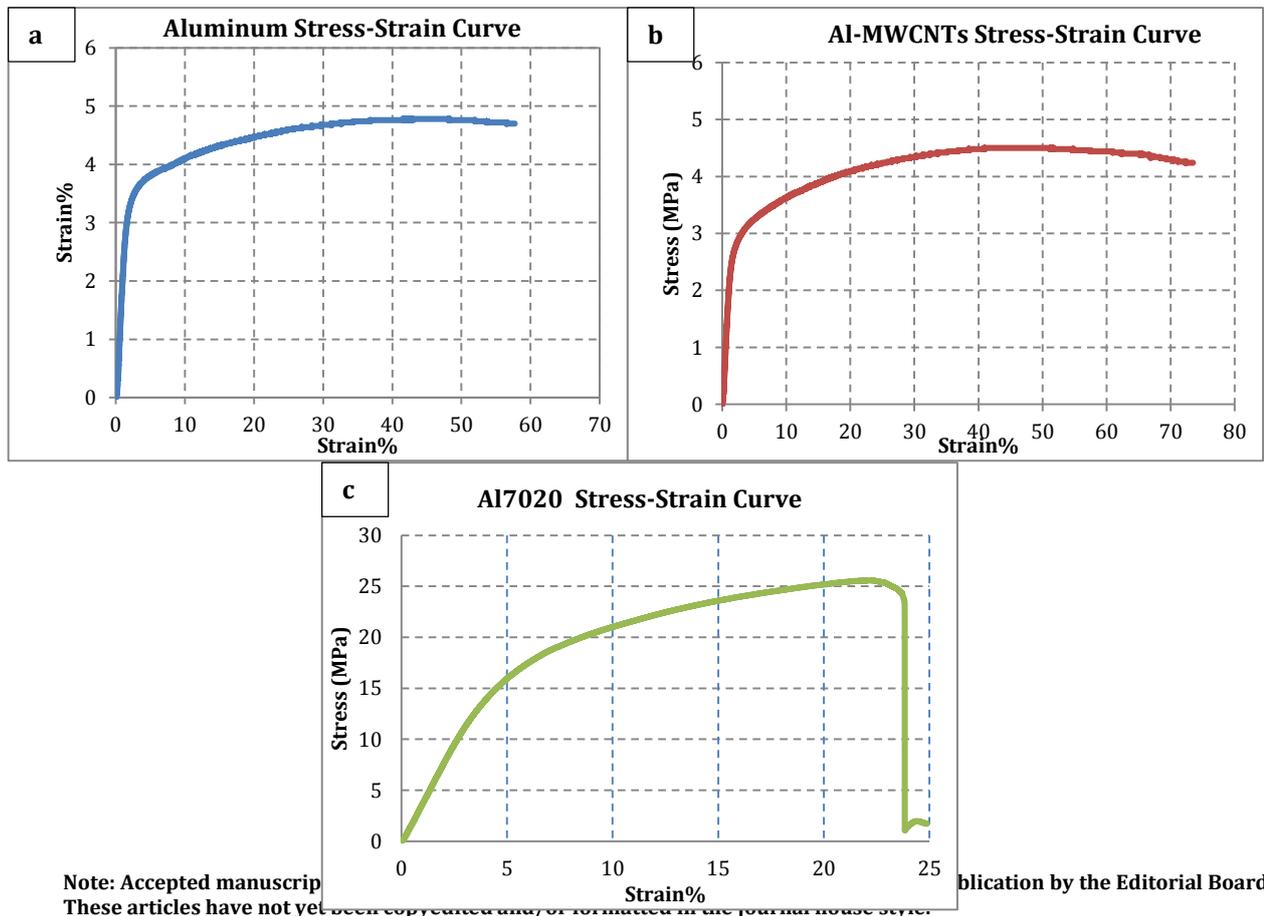


Figure 8. Three-points bending stress-strain curves for a) Aluminum, b) Al-MWCNTs, and c) Al7020.

The histogram in Figure 9 showed the Vickers hardness of the prepared samples. Alloying element addition to aluminum base (i.e. Al 7020) improves surface resistance to penetration by approximately 34%, which attributed to forming different phases hardened matrix impeding dislocation to move or slip. Whereas MWCNTs addition to aluminum base deteriorates the surface hardness due to the easy slippage of carbon layers over each other's which agglomerated in grain boundaries encountering dislocations slippage.

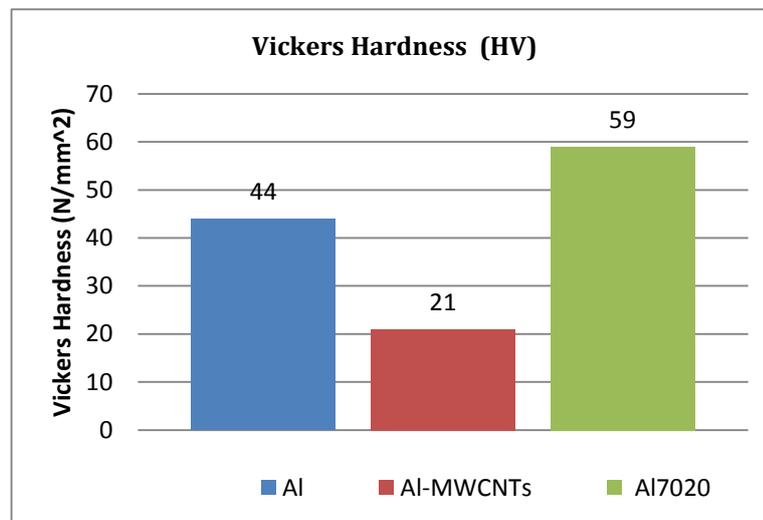


Figure 9. Vickers Hardness vs. mass of the prepared samples.

The response of the Al, A-MWCNTs and Al7020 under loading (1.6 and 3.2 kg) and unloading transverse vibration at different rotating speed (500-3000 rpm) using TQ Universal Vibration Apparatus (TM16) was plotted in Figure 10. It can be observed clearly that vibration response for each material is difference for each other due to the stiffness and ductility effect on this response. This response was also changed with frequency and load. So the pure aluminum at loaded and loaded cases showed the most damping effect (lowest amplitude fluctuating) along most frequencies range. But at maximum load (3.2 kg) and at higher frequency (33.33-50 Hz) or (2000-3000 rpm), other behavior was observed. Al-MWCNTs composites showed the most damping behavior relative with Al and Al7020. Because at higher frequency and maximum load the material will vibrate with more stability and approaches to realty fluctuating. Al-MWCNTs composite has lowest stiffness and hardness with higher deflection leading to better vibration damping.

According these results, other experiments were executed to investigate the mass effect on vibration frequency. Figure 11 was graphed between squared frequencies reciprocal versus mass (0-3200 g). From this figure, it is found that Al-MWCNTs composite exhibited the most damping effect along mass ranges, then Al and Al7020. Due to the lowest stiffness that is considered as a main material property which inversely affects the damping effect [28]:

$$\text{Natural frequency (Hz)} = \frac{1}{2\pi} \sqrt{\frac{\text{Stiffness}}{\text{mass}}}$$

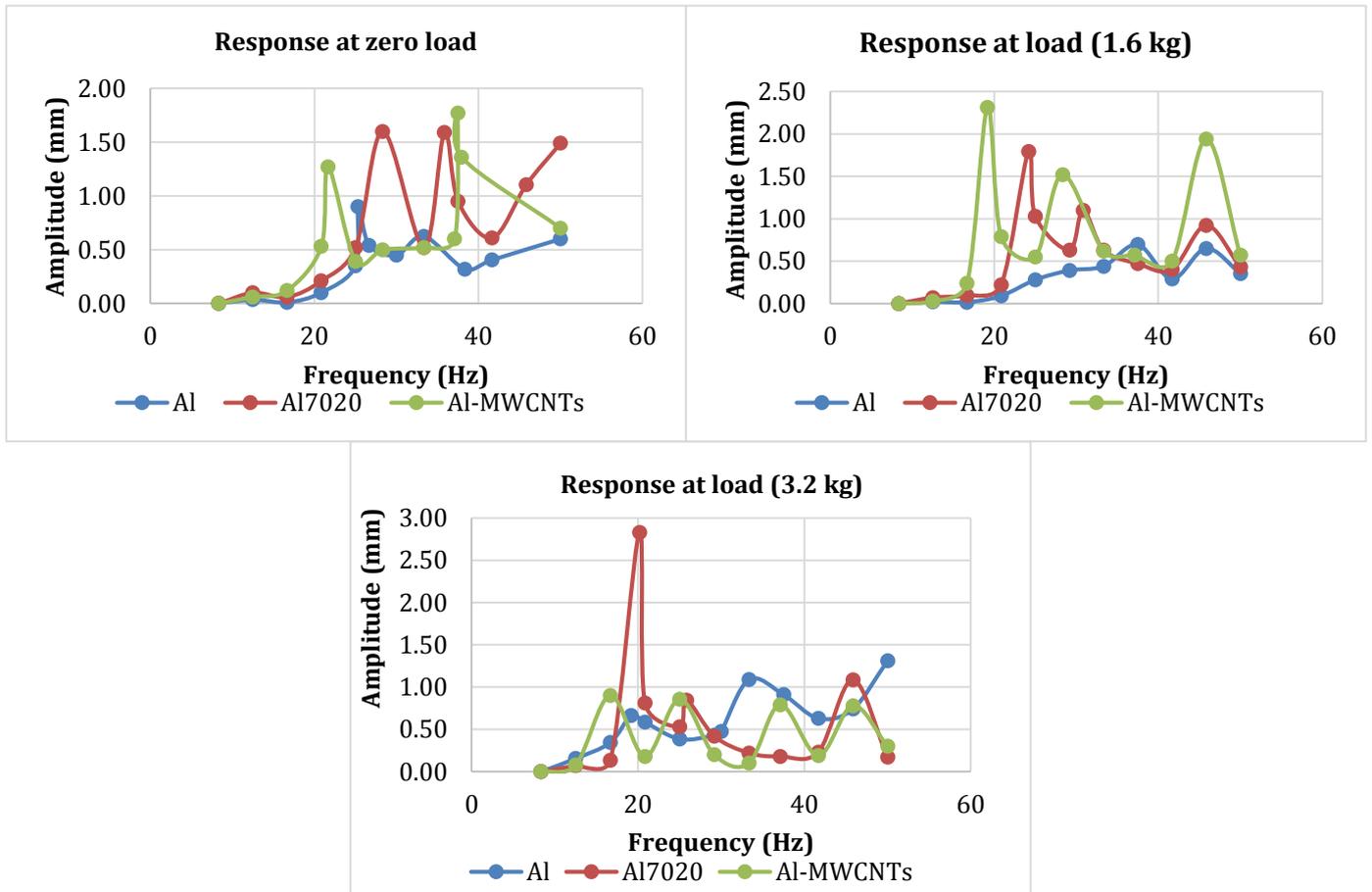


Figure 10. Transverse vibration response at different load.

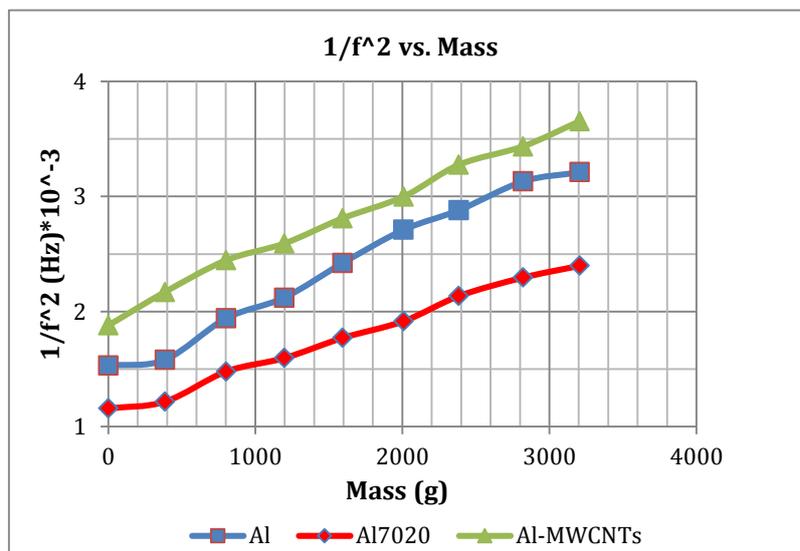


Figure 11. Reciprocal of squared frequency vs. mass of the prepared samples.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Aluminum, Al7020 alloy and Al-1wt% MWCNTs nanocomposites were prepared. Transverse vibration, mechanical characteristics and surface morphology were determined. The obtained results revealed different dynamic behavior and mechanical properties of prepared samples. It was concluded that the different microstructure with different phases through matrix base has the main role of these variety. Alloying element in Al7020 alloy act as dislocations impeder make the alloy so hard, stiff and tough. While carbon nanotubes act as self-lubricant materials encourage the dislocations and defects to move easily. Due to this reason the Al-MWCNTs nanocomposite showed minimum ultimate tensile strength, axial stiffness, and elongation% at break, bending modulus, fracture toughness with maximum deflection. Also dynamic behavior of all samples is dissimilar under transverse vibration test when applied load and frequency were changed. The Al-MWCNTs nanocomposites exhibited the most stable structure under transverse vibration test at maximum applied load and higher frequencies.

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