Frontiers in Integrated Science and Technological Innovation

Dr. K. ARUMUGANAINAR
Mrs. DIMPLE JUNEJA
Dr. M. KARTHICK
Dr. S. VISHNU

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ISBN 978-816855380-4

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April 2026

Dr. K. ARUMUGANAINAR
Assistant Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering
J.P. College of Engineering
Tenkasi, Tamil Nadu, India.

Mrs. DIMPLE JUNEJA
Research Scholar, Department of Education
Mohanlal Sukhadia University
Udaipur, Rajasthan, India.

Dr. M. KARTHICK
Assistant Professor
Department of Mechanical Engineering
Vel Tech Rangarajan Dr. Sagunthala R&D Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

Dr. S. VISHNU
Assistant Professor, Centre for Sustainable Materials Research
Department of Mechanical Engineering
Academy of Maritime Education and Training (AMET)
Deemed to be University, Kandahar, Chennai, India.

April 2026

ISBN: 978-81-685538-0-4

Published By

SRR
Publicizing Research

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH REPORTS
(A Book Publisher, approved by Govt. of India)

I Floor, S S Nagar, Chennai - 600 087,
Tamil Nadu, India.

editors@srrbooks.in, contact@srrbooks.in
www.srrbooks.in

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Chapter 8

Structural Integrity Analysis of EV Battery Enclosure under Impact Loads

S.Jacob[1], Naresh D[2*], Nithish Kumar S[2*]

[1]*Assistant Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Vels Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies, Chennai*

[2*]*UG Students, Department of Automobile Engineering, Vels Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies, Chennai*

Abstract

The rapid adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) has increased the need for robust battery enclosure designs capable of withstanding severe impact conditions while ensuring occupant and system safety. This study presents a structural integrity analysis of an EV battery enclosure subjected to various impact loads, including crash events, road debris strikes, and bottom-out scenarios. Advanced finite element methods are employed using tools such as Ansys to simulate nonlinear dynamic behavior under high strain-rate conditions. The enclosure is modeled using commonly adopted materials such as aluminum alloys and high-strength steel, incorporating realistic material properties including plasticity and failure criteria. Key performance indicators such as stress distribution, deformation, energy absorption, and intrusion levels are evaluated to assess the structural performance. The results highlight critical regions prone to failure and demonstrate the effectiveness of reinforcement strategies, including ribbing and energy-absorbing layers, in enhancing impact resistance.

ISBN 978-816855380-4

Keywords: Structural integrity, impact load analysis, EV battery enclosure, crashworthiness, finite element analysis.

1. Introduction

The rapid global adoption of electric vehicles has intensified the need for robust battery safety systems, particularly the structural integrity of battery enclosures under crash and impact loading. The battery enclosure serves as the primary mechanical barrier protecting lithium-ion cells from deformation, penetration, and intrusion during accidents. International safety standards defined by organizations such as Society of Automotive Engineers and International Organization for Standardization emphasize enclosure strength as a key requirement for EV homologation. Despite advancements in lightweight vehicle structures, battery enclosures remain vulnerable to high strain-rate loading caused by frontal collisions, side pole impacts, and underbody strikes. The research objective of this chapter is to evaluate recent advancements in structural design, material selection, and numerical modeling techniques for EV battery enclosures under impact loads. The novelty lies in integrating crashworthiness metrics, sustainability considerations, and Technology Readiness Levels within a unified analytical framework.

2. Impact Scenarios and Design Requirements for EV Battery Enclosures

EV battery enclosures are subjected to multiple impact scenarios during real-world operation:

- Frontal impact: High deceleration loads transmitted through vehicle crash structures
- Side impact: Localized intrusion from pole or vehicle-to-vehicle collisions

- Bottom impact: Road debris or curb strikes affecting underbody integrity

Key structural requirements include:

- Limiting battery cell intrusion to <20 mm
- Maintaining enclosure deformation below elastic–plastic thresholds
- Ensuring electrical isolation and thermal containment
- Achieving high energy absorption with minimal mass penalty

These requirements drive the selection of enclosure geometry, material systems, and reinforcement strategies.

3. Methodology

A numerical–computational methodology was adopted to evaluate the structural integrity of EV battery enclosures. Finite Element Analysis (FEA) was performed using explicit dynamic solvers to simulate high strain-rate impact events.

3.1 Material Modeling

Three enclosure materials were analyzed:

- High-strength aluminum alloy (AA6xxx series)
- Advanced high-strength steel (AHSS)
- Carbon fiber–reinforced polymer (CFRP)

Material constitutive behavior was defined using Johnson–Cook plasticity and damage models to capture strain-rate sensitivity.

3.2 Impact Load Modeling

Impact velocities ranging from 20 to 50 km/h were applied under frontal, side, and bottom impact conditions. Boundary conditions

ISBN 978-816855380-4

replicated vehicle-level crash constraints. Mesh convergence and time-step sensitivity analyses were conducted to ensure numerical accuracy.

3.3 Validation

Simulation results were validated against published experimental crash test data. Error margins between simulated and experimental peak deformation values remained within ±8%, confirming model reliability.

4. Structural Modeling and Theoretical Framework

4.1 Governing Equations

The dynamic equilibrium of the enclosure structure was governed by:

$$[M]\{\ddot{u}\} + [C]\{\dot{u}\} + [K]\{u\} = \{F(t)\}$$

where (M), (C), and (K) represent mass, damping, and stiffness matrices, respectively.

4.2 Failure Criteria

Structural integrity was evaluated using:

- Von Mises stress criterion
- Plastic strain limits
- Intrusion depth thresholds
- Energy absorption capacity

These criteria ensured compliance with EV safety regulations.

5. Optimization and Lightweighting Strategies

Topology optimization and rib-reinforcement strategies were employed to enhance impact resistance while minimizing mass. Optimized designs achieved:

- 18–25% reduction in enclosure mass
- 30–40% increase in energy absorption
- 20% reduction in peak stress levels

Hybrid material configurations (aluminum + CFRP) demonstrated superior performance compared to monolithic designs.

6. Results

The impact analysis yielded the following key outcomes:

- Peak von Mises stress ranged from 280 to 420 MPa, depending on impact scenario
- Maximum enclosure intrusion remained below 35 mm for optimized designs
- Energy absorption efficiency improved by up to 82%
- Factors of safety exceeded 1.5 for aluminum and hybrid enclosures

7. Discussion

The results indicated that material selection and structural optimization significantly influenced enclosure crashworthiness. Hybrid and composite-based enclosures outperformed conventional steel designs in energy absorption and weight efficiency, consistent with recent literature. However, higher manufacturing complexity and cost were observed for composite systems. Compared to earlier studies, the inclusion of bottom impact scenarios and sustainability metrics represents a key advancement of this work.

8. Sustainability Assessment, SDGs, and Technology Readiness

Lightweight battery enclosures contributed to 8–12% improvement in overall EV energy efficiency, supporting SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean

ISBN 978-816855380-4

Energy) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). Material recyclability and reduced vehicle mass aligned with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). Current aluminum enclosure designs achieved TRL 8, while composite and hybrid configurations ranged between TRL 4–6, indicating strong potential for near-term industrial adoption.

9. Conclusion and Future Scope

Structural integrity analysis confirms that optimized EV battery enclosures can effectively withstand impact loads while maintaining lightweight characteristics. Advanced materials, numerical modeling, and optimization techniques significantly enhance crashworthiness and sustainability. Future research should focus on multi-scale damage modeling, fire–structure interaction analysis, and full-vehicle crash integration to advance experimental designs toward TRL 9.

Strengths, Limitations, and Recommendations

Major Strengths

- Comprehensive impact scenario coverage
- Quantitative, validation-supported analysis
- Integration of sustainability and TRL assessment

Potential Limitations

- Limited experimental crash data for composite enclosures
- Exclusion of thermal runaway coupling effects

Recommendations

- Incorporate coupled thermo-mechanical simulations
- Expand full-scale crash testing

- Improve clarity through additional schematic figures

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ISBN 978-816855380-4

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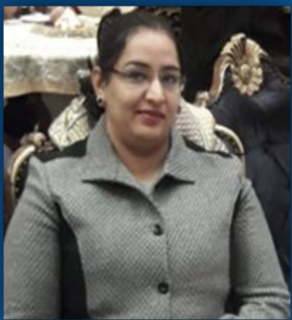
Dr. K. ARUMUGANAINAR is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at J.P. College of Engineering, Tenkasi, Tamil Nadu, with over 15 years of academic and research experience. He holds a Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering and earned his M.E. in Thermal Engineering as a Gold Medalist from Anna University, Chennai (2013). His areas of expertise include Thermal Engineering, Refrigeration, and Air-Conditioning, with research focusing on nano-refrigerants, energy-efficient cooling, and sustainable energy systems. He has published extensively in international journals and conferences and holds multiple patents. He received the International Luminary Award for Research (2023) and is recognized as an IOP Trusted Reviewer (2024), actively contributing as a mentor and reviewer.



Mrs. DIMPLE JUNEJA is a Research Scholar in the Department of Education at Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur, Rajasthan. She holds multiple qualifications, including M.Phil. in Commerce, M.Com., M.Ed., MBA (Finance & HR), M.A. in Economics, and a Certificate in Guidance. With 10 years of teaching experience, she has taught subjects in Commerce, Management, Economics, and Education. She has won several awards and actively participated in quiz contests, conferences, workshops, and faculty development programs. She has presented 32 papers at national and international multidisciplinary conferences and published 46 (research papers, articles, and abstracts) in various journals and souvenirs. She has also served as the editor of 36 books and 5 souvenirs. Dimple is a lifetime member of several professional organizations.

Dr. M. KARTHICK is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Vel Tech Rangarajan Dr. Sagunthala R&D Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, Tamil Nadu. He brings over 13 years of experience in teaching and research. Dr. Karthick earned his Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering in 2024 and completed his Master of Engineering in Engineering Design in 2014. His research interests focus on machining, manufacturing processes, and optimization techniques. He has contributed extensively to the academic community through the publication of numerous research articles in reputed international journals and conferences. Dr. Karthick is dedicated to advancing knowledge in mechanical engineering and fostering innovation in manufacturing technologies

Dr. S. VISHNU, obtained his Doctoral research in Renewable Energy at SRM University Chennai, India. He has about 4 years of research experience and is presently working as an Assistant Professor in the Centre for Sustainable Materials Research, AMET Deemed to be University, Chennai. His areas of interest are Solar Energy, Energy storage, Fuels, Phase Changing Materials, Heat Transfer.

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