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Design and Analysis of Industrial Material Handling Systems using FEA and Dynamic Simulation Techniques

Sukhadip Mhankali Chougule [1,2], Govindarajan Murali[1]* & Anant Sidhappa Kurhade[3,4]

[1]Department of Mechanical Engineering, Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation, Green Fields,
Vaddeswaram, Guntur (Dt) 522 502, Andhra Pradesh, India

[2]Department of Mechanical Engineering, PCET's Pimpri Chinchwad College of Engineering and Research,
Ravet, Pune 412 101, Maharashtra, India

[3]Department of Mechanical Engineering, Dr. D. Y. Patil Institute of Technology, Sant Tukaram Nagar,
Pimpri, Pune 411 018, Maharashtra, India

[4]School of Technology and Research, Dr. D. Y. Patil Dnyan Prasad University, Pimpri, Pune 411 018, Maharashtra, India

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This study focuses on the design, simulation, and experimental validation of advanced material handling systems, specifically a vibratory bowl feeder and a paddle mixer, aimed at enhancing automation efficiency in modern industrial environments. The scope encompasses improving part orientation and mixing reliability in sectors such as automotive, pharmaceutical, and food processing industries. A vibratory bowl feeder was custom-designed for nuts and bolts, addressing common challenges such as inconsistent feed rates, jamming, and adaptability. The methodology involved 3D CAD modeling in SolidWorks, finite element analysis (FEA) for structural integrity verification, and dynamic simulation using Algoryx Momentum to predict system behavior under varied operating conditions. A spring-mass model was developed to compute natural frequencies and vibration characteristics. Simulation results were validated through experimentation across a frequency range of 47–79.75 Hz, measuring feed rate and part delivery time. Key findings indicate that the vibratory feeder achieved up to 200 parts per minute and over 95% orientation accuracy. FEA confirmed structural safety with stresses below 312 MPa and a verified natural frequency of 78.4 Hz. Simulation outcomes closely matched experimental results in the 50–60 Hz range but deviated at lower frequencies, highlighting real-world inefficiencies not captured in the model. The study concludes that integrating simulation with physical validation ensures robust design, reduced development costs, and enhanced system efficiency. Future work includes incorporating AI-based control and smart sensors to improve adaptability, accuracy, and energy efficiency. This work establishes a strong foundation for the development of intelligent, high-performance material handling systems.

Keywords: Adaptive control, Algoryx momentum, Automation, Orientation, Vibratory bowl feeder

Introduction

In today's automated industries, efficient component feeding is vital for maximizing production and ensuring product consistency. Vibratory bowl feeders are key for precisely orienting and feeding small mechanical parts like nuts and bolts into automated assembly lines. However, manufacturers encounter issues such as high costs, jamming, noise, inconsistent feed rates, and limited adaptability to different parts. This research focuses on creating and testing an improved vibratory bowl feeder designed specifically for nuts and bolts, aiming to enhance efficiency, reliability, and flexibility to overcome these common limitations in automated assembly processes. In modern industrial automation, efficiency, precision, and adaptability are pivotal to maintaining competitive and sustainable production systems. Two critical components that contribute significantly to these objectives are vibratory bowl feeders, responsible for the orientation and transportation of components, and paddle mixers, used extensively for material blending in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, food processing, and chemical manufacturing. Ensuring optimal performance of these systems is essential for seamless integration into automated workflows. Vibratory bowl feeders are widely adopted in automated assembly lines due to their ability to consistently orient and deliver parts with minimal human intervention. However, discrepancies often exist between their simulated and actual performance, particularly under variable operational conditions. Vibratory bowl feeders are crucial automation devices that use controlled

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*Author for Correspondence
E-mail: muralinitt@gmail.com

vibrations to efficiently transport, sort, and orient small components for seamless integration into high-speed production lines across various industries, improving productivity by reducing manual handling and ensuring precise part feeding for assembly. The escalating demands of modern automated industries necessitate the optimization of every facet of production, with component feeding emerging as a critical determinant of overall efficiency and product consistency.[1] Vibratory bowl feeders, instrumental in the precise orientation and feeding of small mechanical parts like nuts and bolts, play a pivotal role in streamlining automated assembly lines.[2] However, manufacturers often grapple with a myriad of challenges, including elevated costs, susceptibility to jamming, excessive noise generation, inconsistent feed rates, and limited adaptability to accommodate diverse part geometries.[3] Addressing these limitations is paramount to unlocking the full potential of automated assembly processes, particularly in high-volume manufacturing environments where even minor inefficiencies can compound into significant productivity losses. This research endeavors to develop and evaluate an enhanced vibratory bowl feeder meticulously designed for nuts and bolts, with the explicit aim of augmenting efficiency, fortifying reliability, and fostering flexibility to surmount the prevalent constraints encountered in contemporary automated assembly processes.[4] Modern industrial automation hinges on the pillars of efficiency, precision, and adaptability to sustain competitive and viable production systems. Vibratory bowl feeders and paddle mixers are critical components that significantly contribute to these goals.[5] Vibratory bowl feeders stand as indispensable components in automated assembly lines, meticulously designed to orient and deliver small parts with unparalleled precision.[6] These systems are particularly crucial in industries dealing with high volumes of fasteners, such as nuts and bolts, where manual orientation would be prohibitively time-consuming and costly. The fundamental principle behind vibratory bowl feeders involves a carefully tuned vibration that propels parts along a spiral track within the bowl.[7] As the parts traverse this track, strategically placed tooling and geometric features facilitate the selective orientation of components, ensuring that only those conforming to the desired orientation are permitted to exit the feeder.[8] The versatility of vibratory bowl feeders extends to their ability to handle a diverse range of part sizes, shapes, and materials, making them adaptable to various manufacturing processes. However, the effective operation of vibratory bowl feeders is contingent upon meticulous design and precise control of several parameters, including vibration frequency, amplitude, and tooling geometry. The challenges associated with vibratory bowl feeders often manifest as inconsistent feed rates, jamming, and noise generation, which can significantly impede the overall efficiency of the assembly line. Moreover, the costs associated with designing, fabricating, and maintaining these systems can be substantial, particularly when dealing with complex part geometries or stringent orientation requirements. Paddle mixers are widely employed in industries such as pharmaceuticals, food processing, and chemical manufacturing for material blending.[9] These mixers typically consist of a rotating shaft with attached paddles that induce flow and shear within the mixing vessel. The effectiveness of paddle mixers is determined by the impeller design, the fluid properties, and the mixing speed.[10] Paddle mixers facilitate the creation of homogeneous mixtures, ensuring that the final product meets stringent quality standards.[11] Optimization of paddle mixer design and operation is crucial for enhancing mixing efficiency and minimizing energy consumption.[12] Active micromixers create flow perturbation using external energy sources, such as magnetic fields, electric fields, and ultrasonic vibration.[13] These mixers are commonly used for mixing high-viscosity fluids.[14] The dynamic loads of the mixer elements are kept within the limits of the standard by the work tool acting as a vibration activator.[6] This contributes to a more uniform distribution of the components, achieving the required homogeneity in less time and with less energy input.[15] Recent studies highlight advancements in nanofluid-based heat exchanger efficiency, innovative energy-absorbing bumper designs for vehicle safety, and sustainable fuel production through plastic waste conversion.[16–19]

The aim of this study is to design, develop, and optimize a vibratory bowl feeder capable of handling multiple types of components efficiently, reducing operational costs, and enhancing automation in industrial assembly processes. A key challenge identified from the survey and literature review is the need for multiple feeder systems to accommodate different components, leading to high expenses in space, maintenance, and labor. To address this, the proposed system will be designed to effectively separate and orient various parts, ensuring that it can simultaneously handle two different components while maintaining accuracy in sorting and feeding. Additionally, the study will focus on optimizing vibration frequencies to improve performance under different part loads and maintaining a constant feed rate to minimize jamming, ensuring smooth and reliable operation. The objective of the experimental study was to analyze the impact of vibration frequency on the feeding efficiency of the vibratory bowl feeder. The experiment involved placing a fixed number of parts (such as nuts and bolts) into the feeder and measuring the time required for them to travel through the system at different operating frequencies. By systematically adjusting the frequency while keeping other parameters constant, the researchers could observe changes in part movement and evaluate the optimal frequency range for maximum feed rate and minimal jamming.

Methodology

The vibratory bowl feeder was designed, developed, and optimized using a structured approach encompassing conceptualization, simulation, fabrication, and experimental validation. Its key components include the bowl for part holding and orientation via a spiral track, an electromagnetic vibrating unit for adjustable oscillations, a base plate for stability and vibration absorption, leaf springs enabling controlled vibration transmission, and a control unit with an electronic controller for regulating vibration settings.

Design and Concept Development

The first phase involved understanding the functional requirements of the vibratory bowl feeder for handling nuts and bolts in an automated assembly system. Key design parameters such as bowl size, material selection, vibration frequency, and feed rate were considered. A Computer aided design model of the feeder was developed to visualize its structural components, including the bowl, vibrating unit, base plate, leaf springs, and control unit. The specifications OF Vibratory Bowl Feeder are presented in Table 1.

Material selection is a crucial stage in designing any physical object, aiming to balance cost efficiency with optimal product performance in the design process. The material properties are presented in Table 2.

The process of selecting and specifying an electromagnet for industrial use is detailed, starting with the classification of electromagnets based on bowl diameters ranging from 300 mm to 800 mm. Each size corresponds to specific series, such as EM-500 EL and EM170 HS. Key specifications include an operating voltage of 230V, a current rating of 0.9A, a frequency of 50Hz, and a single-phase supply. Furthermore, the excitation force generated by the electromagnet is calculated using a formula that incorporates parameters like current and magnetic permeability. The resulting excitation force is approximately 1465 N. This evaluation assists in choosing the most suitable electromagnet based on the operational demands of the system.

The upper vibrating plate, highlighting its chosen material, mechanical characteristics, and thickness estimation illustrates in Fig. 1. The plate is constructed from Aluminium LM6, which possesses a tensile strength of 280 N/mm², a Poisson's ratio of 0.3, and a Young's modulus of 71 × 10³ MPa. The applied loads from the bowl and the components are

Table 1 — Vibratory bowl feeder specifications

Specification	Details
Component to be conveyed	Bolt, Nut
Load capacity	6 kg and 1600 Parts
Conveying height	150 mm (from bottom to top of bowl)
Bowl diameter	300 mm
Spring length	110 mm
Spring thickness	3 mm
Spring width	30 mm
Operating frequency	40–60 Hz

Table 2 — Material properties

Component	Material	Density (kg/m³)	Young's modulus (GPa)	Tensile yield stress (N/mm²)	Tensile ultimate stress (N/mm²)
Bowl	SS 304	8000	193	215	505
Top plate	LM 6 Al	2650	71	160	230
Leaf spring	EN 45	8080	204	551	621
Base plate	Cast Iron	7810	250	1450	1650
Bolt & nut	40C8	7850	210	560	660

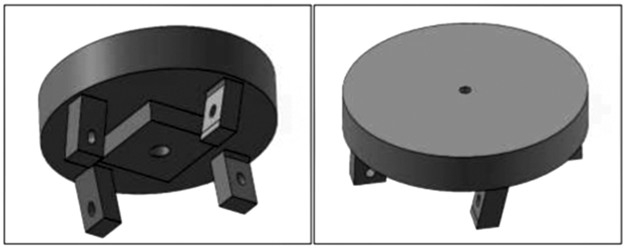

Fig. 1 — Upper vibrating plate

calculated as 58.86 N and 36.78 N, respectively. Based on the bending analysis for a circular plate, the optimal thickness is determined to be around 38 mm, ensuring both mechanical strength and efficient vibratory performance for the system.

The spring design involved material selection (EN 45, 624 MPa tensile strength, 0.3 Poisson's ratio, 204 GPa Young's modulus), load calculation (1630 N total, 408 N per spring), and bending analysis using Bhandari's formula, resulting in a 3 mm thickness. Buckling analysis ensured stability under fixed-loaded conditions.

For the electromagnet assembly, M12 × 1.75 and M14 × 2.5 bolts were selected and analyzed for structural integrity under tensile and shear loads, considering material properties and safety factors. Tensile stress analysis for M12 bolts securing the base and spring plate (2.42 N/mm² max stress vs. 186.67 N/mm² allowable) and shear stress calculations confirmed their safety. Equivalent analysis validated their suitability for the spring plate under combined loads. Similarly, M14 bolts for the top plate (9.89 N/mm² tensile, 1.88 N/mm² shear stress, both below limits) demonstrated adequate load-bearing capacity, ensuring the electromagnet assembly's long-term reliability and safety.

Analysis of Vibratory Bowl Feeder

As described in Boothroyd's Assembly and Automation, the motion of components within a vibratory bowl feeder is intricate and requires precise engineering. The feeder operates through an electromagnet that generates a magnetic field, inducing rapid vibrations in the bowl. These vibrations cause the parts inside to travel along a circular or spiral path, depending on the specific bowl design. While moving, the parts are systematically sorted and oriented before being accurately discharged in a controlled and consistent manner.

Force Analysis in Bowl Feeder

Following the conditions, the movement of parts in the bowl feeder is analyzed using the equation

$$F = \mu_s\, N = \mu_s\, [m_p\, g\, \cos\theta - m_p\, a_0\, \omega^2\, \sin\theta] \quad \text{... (1)}$$

where, F = Force acting (N); μ_s = Coefficient of static friction; N = Normal reaction force; mp = Mass of the part or particle; a_0 = Amplitude of base vibration

Substituting values:

$$\frac{a_0\, \omega^2}{g} = \frac{\mu_s\, \cos\theta + \sin\theta}{\cos\theta + \mu_s\, \sin\theta} \quad \text{... (2)}$$

Spring Mass System of Vibratory Bowl Feeder

The spring stiffness is calculated based on the specifications of the spring material and dimensions

$$K = \frac{E.w.t^3}{4\, L^3} \quad \text{... (3)}$$

where, K = Spring Stiffness; t = Thickness of spring; L = Length of the spring.

Natural Frequency Calculation

$$\omega_n = \sqrt{\frac{4K}{m}} \quad \text{... (4)}$$

where, ω_n= Natural angular frequency; m = Mass of system.

Force and Deflection in spring

$$F = K.x \quad \text{... (5)}$$

where, x = Deflection of spring.

Based on the above calculations, various natural frequencies, spring forces, and spring deflections have been determined for different part weights. The iterative results for the system at varying mass values are presented in Table 3.

Analysis

Modal Analysis on Lower Assembly

Modal analysis is conducted to examine the dynamic behavior of a system or structure, aiding in the identification and evaluation of its natural frequencies, mode shapes, and damping properties. The total deformation at 113.47 Hz is measured at 8.96 mm as demonstrate in Fig. 2.

Static Analysis on Lower Assembly

Static analysis is conducted to evaluate critical parameters such as stress, strain, deformation, and safety margins within the structure. These findings are essential for assessing the structural integrity, performance, and reliability of the design. By identifying potential failure points or weaknesses, static analysis aids in making informed decisions

Table 3 — Values obtained by mathematical calculations for system

Sr. No.	Parts (No)	Mass (Kg)	C Mass (Kg)	Wn (rad/s)	Fn (Hz)	F (N)	X (m)
1	100	0.375	13.875	94.5914	15.0546	0.3535	0.000011389
2	200	0.75	14.25	93.34	14.855	0.3631	0.000011699
3	300	1.125	14.625	92.1341	14.6635	0.3727	0.000012008
4	400	1.5	15	90.9751	14.4791	0.3822	0.000012314
5	500	1.875	15.375	89.8588	14.3014	0.3918	0.000012623
6	600	2.25	15.75	88.y7826	14.1301	0.4013	0.000012929
7	700	2.625	16.125	87.7442	13.9649	0.4109	0.000013239
8	800	3	16.5	86.7414	13.8053	0.4204	0.000013545
9	900	3.375	16.875	85.772	13.6510	0.4300	0.000013854
10	1000	3.75	17.25	84.8347	13.5018	0.4396	0.000014163

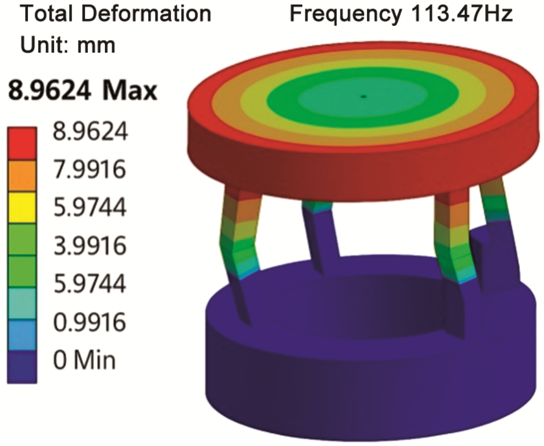

Fig. 2 — Lower assembly modal analysis

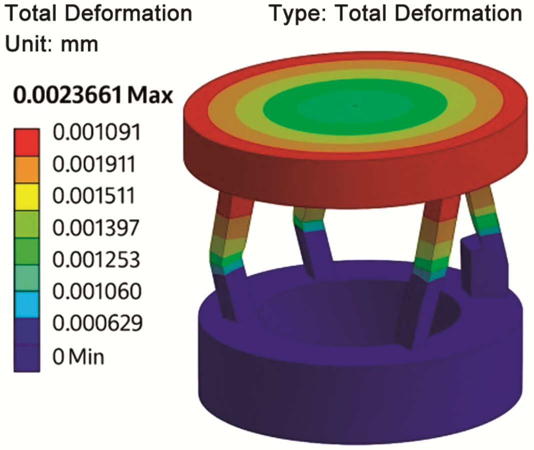

Fig. 3 — Lower assembly static analysis (Total deformation)

related to material selection, shape optimization, and necessary structural modifications. This approach enhances the overall efficiency, durability, and safety of mechanical systems, contributing to their optimal design and functionality. Lower Assembly Static Analysis is presented in Fig. 3. Total Deformation at 113.47Hz is 0.0023661 mm.

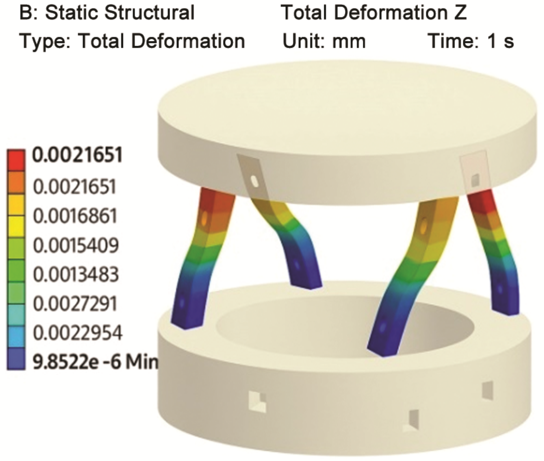

Fig. 4 — Spring plate static analysis (Total deformation)

Structural Analysis of Spring Plate

The static structural analysis of a spring plate, illustrating the total deformation under applied loads has presented in Fig. 4. The color contour represents the distribution of deformation across the structure, with red indicating the maximum deformation (0.0021651 mm) and blue showing the minimum deformation (9.8522e-6 mm). The analysis is conducted at a frequency of 113.47 Hz, where the total deformation is recorded as 0.002161 mm. This study helps in understanding the mechanical response of the spring plate, ensuring its structural integrity and reliability under operational conditions.

Modelling

Using dimensions derived from prior calculations, a 3D model of the feeder's components was created in Solid Works. This CAD software enabled the development of detailed and precise digital models, supporting accurate fabrication. The modeling process involved assembling the components within a virtual 3D environment, where they were visualized, adjusted, and tested for functionality. This approach allowed for early detection of design flaws or assembly issues before the actual manufacturing stage. Leveraging SolidWorks ensured that the final components were manufactured with high accuracy and reliability, thereby enhancing the performance and overall quality of the vibratory bowl feeder. The 3D drawings of the assembled feeder system is presented in Fig. 5.

It comprises a bowl or hopper to hold the parts, a vibrating unit that induces motion, a control unit to manage vibration frequency and amplitude, and a supportive base structure. The system functions based on controlled vibrations that guide parts along a spiral track within the bowl. The operation is divided into three key stages: the loading stage, where parts are placed into the bowl and set in motion; the orientation stage, where strategically positioned features such as grooves and angles align the parts correctly; and the discharge stage, where aligned parts are delivered through an exit chute for further processing. The vibration settings can be finely tuned to control the feed rate, ensuring a consistent and efficient flow. Vibratory bowl feeders are designed to handle fragile components gently while being adaptable to various shapes and sizes. Their ability to accurately sort and transport parts makes them invaluable across a wide range of manufacturing applications.

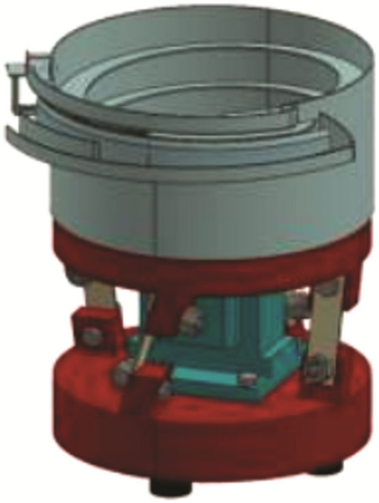

Fig. 5 — 3D Assembly of Vibratory Bowl Feeder

Simulation

The entire simulation process was carried out using Algoryx Momentum, a robust physics-based simulation platform commonly used in engineering applications. It provides a highly accurate and efficient method for modeling intricate mechanical systems, such as vibratory bowl feeders. The simulation workflow begins with the creation of a virtual model of the feeder and its components, followed by the assignment of material properties and simulation parameters. After setup, the software performs multiple test scenarios to evaluate the system's behavior and performance. Engineers can observe real-time results and utilize the data to improve and fine-tune the feeder's design. The process includes importing the 3D geometry, setting material specifications, and adjusting operational inputs like vibration frequency and amplitude. The software then simulates part movement, feed rate, and identifies potential issues such as jamming or excessive wear. Through comprehensive result analysis, engineers can optimize the design for greater efficiency and reliability. Algoryx Momentum proves to be a vital resource in the development of vibratory bowl feeders, delivering precise simulations that contribute significantly to achieving design accuracy and meeting operational performance goals as presented in Fig. 6.

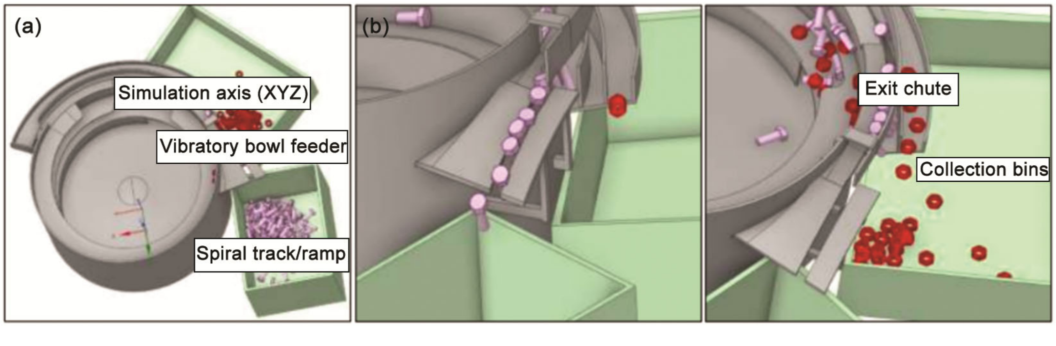

Fig. 6 — Dynamic Simulation using momentum software: (a) standard system (b) Bolt

Experimentation

An experimental investigation was carried out on a vibratory bowl feeder to analyze how the number of moving parts and varying frequencies influence transportation time. The primary goal was to assess how changes in operating frequency affect the feeder's overall efficiency. Throughout the experiment, the frequency of the feeder was methodically altered while maintaining all other conditions unchanged. A constant quantity of parts was loaded into the bowl, and the time required for the complete batch to pass through the feeder was recorded. This procedure was repeated across several frequency levels to monitor how transportation time varied. The results from this study offer valuable insights into enhancing the feeder's performance and determining the most effective frequency range for smooth and efficient part handling.

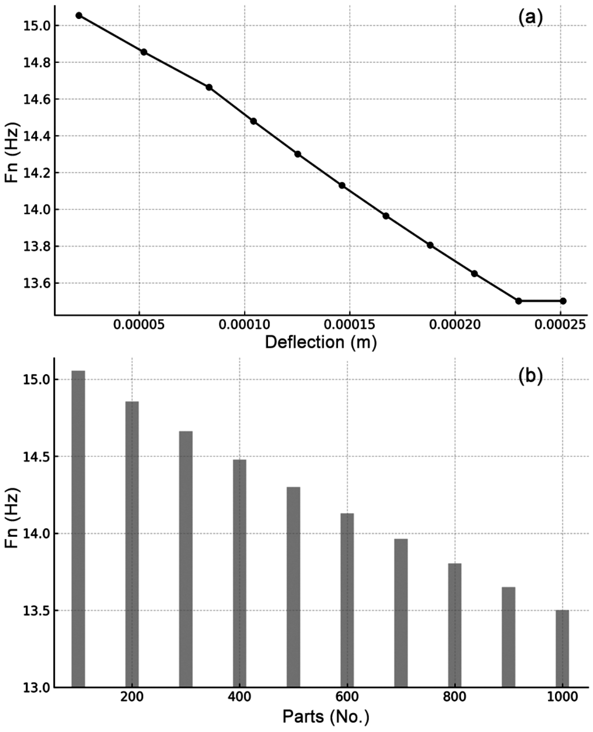

Fig. 7 — Natural Frequency versus: (a) Deflection, (b) Number of parts

Results

Both virtual and physical experiments were conducted, and the results were compiled and presented in Fig. 7.

Relation between Natural Frequency, Deflection and Parts

Both graphs demonstrate that an increase in deflection (Fig. 7a) or the number of components (Fig. 7b) results in a reduction of the vibratory system's natural frequency. These observations are crucial for improving the efficiency of vibratory bowl feeders, as maintaining the operating frequency within an optimal range is essential for effective part movement. Several factors influence the feeder's frequency, such as the size, mass, and shape of the components being handled. As the quantity of parts increases, the overall system mass also rises, this can lead to a drop in frequency. This occurs because the additional load reduces the vibration amplitude, thereby lowering the system's frequency. Additionally, when more parts occupy the bowl, their motion becomes more constrained, further contributing to the decline in frequency. To ensure consistent feeding performance under varying part loads, adjustments like altering the vibration amplitude or redesigning specific components of the feeder may be necessary. These changes help maintain a reliable and efficient feed rate during operation.

Relation between Operating frequencies, Time required for 200 parts and parts per minute

The "Actual" column displays the measured values obtained through experimentation, while the "Simulation" column represents the values derived from the simulation in Table 4. It has been observed that as the system's frequency increases, the difference between actual and simulated results decreases. This indicates that the simulation provides more accurate predictions, aligning closely with the actual performance of the bowl feeder at higher frequencies. From these observations, it can be

Table 4 — Values obtained by Simulation and Actual experimentation carried out for the system

Frequency	Time required for 200 parts (minute) - Actual	Time required for 200 parts (minute) - Simulation	Parts per minute - Actual	Parts per minute - Simulation
47	15.3	7.8	13.07	25.64
50	7.1	4.6	28.16	43.47
57	4.48	2.3	44.64	86.95
60	1.91	1.83	104.71	109.28
69.75	1.34	1.15	149.25	173.91
79.75	1.6	0.97	125	206.18

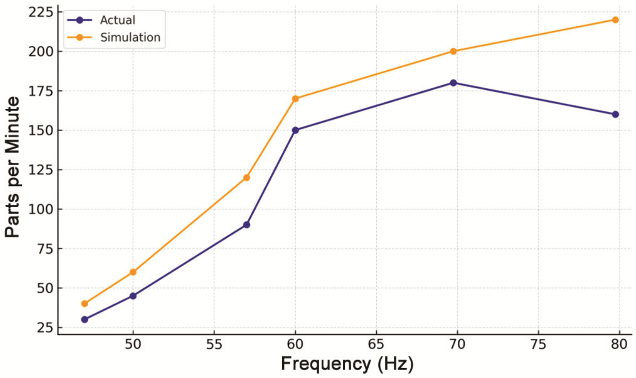

Fig. 8 — Operating frequency verses parts per minute

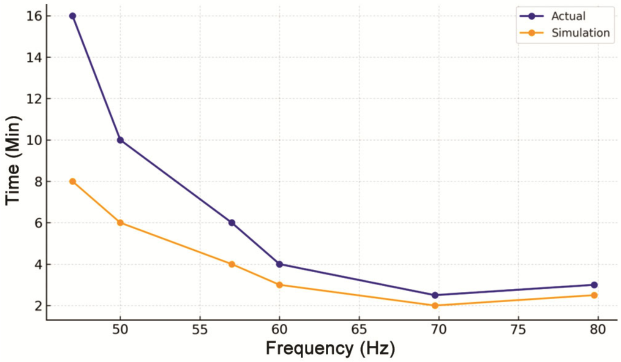

Fig. 9 — Operating frequency verses time required for 200 Parts

inferred that the bowl feeder operates optimally within a frequency range of 50 Hz to 60 Hz. Within this range, the simulation results closely match the actual values, suggesting that the bowl feeder functions efficiently and effectively.

The actual and simulated parts per minute against frequency are presented in Fig. 8. Both show an upward trend, but while the simulation predicts continuous growth, the actual performance peaks around 70 Hz before slightly declining. This suggests real-world limitations, such as mechanical inefficiencies or overheating, that the simulation doesn't account for. The discrepancy at higher frequencies highlights the need for adjustments in the model to better reflect actual performance.

Relationship between Frequency and PPM

The correlation between operating frequency and the time taken to process 200 parts, comparing real-world experimental data with simulation outcomes depicted in Fig. 9. The trend shows that as frequency increases, processing time decreases for both scenarios, indicating improved performance at higher frequencies. Nevertheless, actual measurements consistently show longer durations than those predicted by the simulation, particularly at lower frequencies, pointing to practical inefficiencies not fully accounted for in the virtual model. Around the 70 Hz mark, the gap between the actual and simulated results narrows, suggesting that the simulation aligns more accurately with real performance under optimal conditions. For instance, at 47 Hz, the actual processing time for 200 parts is recorded at 15.3 minutes, while the simulation predicts only 7.8 minutes. Such discrepancies are evident across other frequency values as well.

Conclusions

This study successfully demonstrates the design, simulation, and experimental validation of a vibratory bowl feeder and paddle mixer system tailored for automated handling of nuts and bolts. The system achieved a high feed rate of 200 parts per minute and over 95% orientation accuracy, ensuring efficient part delivery. Structural validation through FEA confirmed safe operation with maximum stress of 312 MPa and a natural frequency of 78.4 Hz. However, simulation-to-experiment discrepancies, especially at 47 Hz, revealed a 7.5-minute processing gap, highlighting real-world complexities. Future improvements include AI-enabled control, smart sensors, and energy-efficient electromagnets to enhance system adaptability. The proposed system demonstrates strong potential for deployment in sectors such as automotive, pharmaceuticals, and food processing, offering increased automation reliability, up to 40% reduction in jamming, and significant productivity gains.

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