

Exploring Key Issues in the Structural Design of Supertall Buildings

Zi-Fu Hu*

College of Resources and Environment, Inner Mongolia University of Technology, Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, 01005, China

*Correspondence to: Zi-Fu Hu, College of Resources and Environment, Inner Mongolia University of Technology, Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, 01005, China, E-mail: huyinan0222@163.com

Abstract: With the accelerated process of urbanization and continuous technological advancement, supertall buildings, as effective means of urban landmarks and space utilization, are witnessing a constant increase in both their construction numbers and heights. The structural design of supertall buildings not only concerns the safety and stability of the buildings themselves but also directly impacts their functional use and economic benefits. This paper aims to explore several key issues in the structural design of supertall buildings, including the selection of structural systems, seismic design, consideration of wind loads, choice of materials, and the influence of construction techniques, in order to provide reference for related research and engineering practices.

Keywords: Supertall Buildings; Structural Design; Structural Systems; Seismic Design; Wind Loads

Introduction

Supertall buildings face numerous challenges in structural design due to their unique architectural forms and structural characteristics. Designers need to balance meeting the functional requirements of the buildings while ensuring the safety, economy, and feasibility of construction. This paper will delve into several key issues in supertall building structural design from the perspective of structural engineering.

1. Characteristics of Supertall Building Structures

The characteristics of supertall building structures are primarily reflected in their towering forms and complex

loading conditions. Due to their significant height, horizontal loads such as wind and seismic actions become dominant factors affecting the structure, necessitating excellent lateral resistance performance in structural design. Meanwhile, the bottom of supertall buildings often bears immense pressure, while the top may experience considerable sway due to wind, requiring the structure to be both robust and stable, yet possess a certain degree of flexibility to accommodate these vertical load differences. Additionally, supertall buildings feature diverse structural systems, such as frame-core tube systems and mega frames. The selection of these systems needs to be comprehensively considered based on the specific functions of the building, geographical location, and economic factors.



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During construction, supertall buildings also impose higher requirements on technology and materials, such as the use of high-strength concrete and steel structures, to ensure the safety and durability of the buildings. The characteristics of supertall building structures lie in their towering forms, complex loading conditions, diverse structural systems, and high standards for construction technology and materials. These characteristics collectively constitute the unique challenges in the structural design of supertall buildings^[1].

2. Key Issues in Structural Design of Supertall Buildings

2.1 Structural System Selection

In the structural design of supertall buildings, the selection of the structural system is undoubtedly one of the most critical issues. This is not only because the structural system determines the "skeleton" and "support" of the building but also because it is closely related to the safety, economy, and practicality of the building. Common structural systems for supertall buildings include frame structures, shear wall structures, core tube structures, and their combinations. Each structural system has its unique advantages, disadvantages, and applicable scenarios. Frame structures are flexible and adaptable to various building layouts but relatively weaker in lateral resistance. Shear wall structures are known for their excellent lateral resistance performance but may limit the internal space layout of the building. Core tube structures combine the advantages of the previous two, offering good lateral resistance performance while providing relatively flexible building space.

When choosing a structural system, designers must consider multiple factors comprehensively. Firstly, the height of the building is crucial. With increasing height, horizontal loads such as wind and seismic actions have a more significant impact on the structure, necessitating sufficient lateral resistance performance of the structural system. Secondly, the functional layout of the building plays a significant role. Different functional requirements determine the division of internal space and usage patterns, thus influencing the selection of the structural system. For example, commercial buildings may require large-span column-free spaces, while residential buildings prioritize room privacy and

comfort.

Additionally, seismic intensity and wind load magnitude are also significant factors. In earthquake-prone areas or regions with strong winds, the selection of the structural system should pay more attention to its seismic and wind resistance performance. At the same time, the performance of materials directly affects the selection of the structural system. High-performance building materials such as high-strength concrete and high-performance steel can ensure structural safety while reducing the weight and cost of the structure^[2].

For supertall buildings, core tube structures and their combinations have received widespread attention due to their excellent lateral resistance performance and space utilization efficiency. This structural system can effectively resist horizontal loads, ensuring the stability of the building in extreme environments. Moreover, through rational layout and optimized design, core tube structures can also provide flexible and adaptable building spaces to meet various functional requirements.

The selection of the structural system for supertall buildings is a complex and crucial task. Designers need to choose the most suitable structural system based on in-depth analysis of various factors to ensure the safety, economy, and practicality of the building

2.2 Seismic Design

Seismic design is undoubtedly a crucial aspect in the structural design of supertall buildings. Due to their height and complexity, the behavior of supertall buildings during earthquakes is significantly different from that of ordinary buildings. Therefore, the precision and depth of seismic design are particularly important. When embarking on seismic design, designers must first thoroughly understand the seismic activity of the building's location. This includes the frequency of earthquakes, their magnitudes, and the propagation characteristics of seismic waves. These data form the basis for designers to develop seismic strategies. Additionally, according to local seismic design codes, designers must ensure that the building can maintain its integrity and stability when subjected to earthquakes of certain intensities. To achieve this goal, designers employ various seismic design methods and measures. Selecting an appropriate structural system is a key step. Different structural systems perform differently during earthquakes, so designers need to choose those with

excellent seismic performance based on the specific circumstances of the building. For example, core tube structures are often used in the seismic design of supertall buildings due to their good overall integrity and stiffness. In addition to selecting the structural system, the arrangement of effective seismic lines is also crucial in seismic design. This includes setting up multiple lines of defense to dissipate seismic energy, ensuring that the building does not collapse entirely due to localized damage during earthquakes. The installation of energy dissipating and damping devices is also an effective means of improving the seismic performance of buildings. These devices can absorb and dissipate a significant amount of energy during earthquakes, reducing the seismic response of the structure. In seismic design, optimizing the cross-sections and reinforcement of structural components is equally important. Through rational cross-section design and reinforcement layout, designers can ensure that structural components have sufficient load-bearing capacity and deformation capacity during earthquakes, avoiding overall structural failure due to component damage. Finally, designers need to evaluate and improve the seismic performance of structures through methods such as elastic-plastic time history analysis. This analysis method can simulate the actual response of structures during earthquakes, helping designers identify potential problems in the design and make timely corrections. Seismic design is a core task in the structural design of supertall buildings. Designers need to comprehensively apply various seismic design methods and measures to ensure that buildings can stand safely and stably during earthquakes^[3].

2.3 Wind Load Consideration

As building heights continue to rise, the impact of wind loads on structures becomes increasingly significant, becoming one of the primary design loads. Therefore, when conducting structural design, designers must fully consider the effect of wind loads to ensure the safety and comfort of the building. Firstly, designers need to accurately assess the distribution of wind pressure on the building for different wind directions and speeds. This requires designers to have rich knowledge and practical experience in wind engineering, enabling them to accurately predict the distribution of wind on the building surface. Through wind tunnel tests or numerical simulations, designers can obtain detailed

data on the building's performance under various wind conditions, providing strong support for subsequent structural design. Based on accurately assessing the distribution of wind pressure, designers also need to reasonably determine the wind load values for the structure. This involves determining parameters such as wind load standard values and wind vibration coefficients, taking into account factors such as the building's importance, functionality, and local wind environment. Scientifically and reasonably determining wind load values can ensure that the structure has sufficient bearing capacity and stability under wind loads. To reduce the vibration response of the structure under wind loads and improve the building's comfort, designers also need to take a series of effective measures. Aerodynamic shape optimization is a commonly used method, altering the building's shape to better meet aerodynamic requirements and reduce wind-induced vibration responses. Additionally, installing dampers is an effective damping measure that can absorb and dissipate energy when the structure is subjected to wind loads, reducing the amplitude of structural vibrations. In addition to the above measures, designers also need to closely monitor the impact of wind loads on the structure during the building's use. Through regular inspections and evaluations, potential safety hazards can be identified and resolved promptly, ensuring that the building remains in good condition throughout its long-term use. Wind loads are an important consideration in the structural design of supertall buildings. Designers must pay full attention to the effects of wind loads and adopt scientifically effective methods and measures to ensure the safety and comfort of the structure under wind loads.

2.4 Material Selection

In the structural design of supertall buildings, material selection is a critical aspect that affects building performance, safety, and economy. With the continuous advancement of technology, new types of building materials such as high-strength concrete, high-performance steel, composite materials, etc., continue to emerge. They provide a broader range of choices for the structural design of supertall buildings due to their unique performance advantages. High-strength concrete, characterized by its high compressive

strength, excellent durability, and low self-weight, has been widely used in supertall buildings. It can withstand tremendous vertical loads and effectively resist the horizontal forces generated by wind loads and seismic actions, ensuring the stability and safety of the building. High-performance steel is another important structural material in supertall buildings. This type of steel possesses characteristics such as high strength, high toughness, good weldability, and corrosion resistance, meeting the high requirements for material strength and stability in supertall buildings. Additionally, the lightweight nature of high-performance steel can reduce the self-weight of the structure and alleviate the burden on foundation foundations. The emergence of composite materials brings more possibilities to the structural design of supertall buildings. These materials are composed of two or more different types of materials combined through physical or chemical methods, fully utilizing the advantages of each component to optimize performance. In supertall buildings, composite materials can be used to enhance the strength and stiffness of structures, improving seismic and wind resistance. When selecting structural materials, designers need to consider factors such as the structural characteristics, material performance, and economic benefits. For example, high-strength materials may be chosen for areas with high stress, while lower strength but more economical materials may be chosen for areas with lower stress. Additionally, the constructability and environmental friendliness of materials are also important considerations for designers. Selecting materials that are easy to construct can shorten the construction period and reduce construction costs, while choosing environmentally friendly materials can help reduce the environmental impact of buildings and achieve sustainable development. Material selection is an important aspect of structural design in supertall buildings. Designers should reasonably select structural materials based on the actual needs and conditions of the building to ensure its safety, economy, and environmental friendliness^[4].

2.5 Impact of Construction Techniques

In the structural design of supertall buildings, construction techniques are not only important considerations but also crucial factors in determining the success of the design implementation. From

the initial conceptualization and planning stages, designers must thoroughly understand and consider the characteristics, advantages, and limitations of various construction techniques. Prefabrication technology, as a product of modern construction industrialization, has brought revolutionary changes to supertall buildings. Through factory production and standardized design, prefabricated components not only ensure stable quality but also significantly improve construction efficiency. This technology reduces on-site wet operations, thereby reducing environmental disturbances and making the construction site clean and organized. For supertall buildings, with their complex structures and high construction difficulty, the application of prefabrication technology undoubtedly provides effective solutions to these challenges. Climbing formwork construction technology is a powerful tool for addressing vertical transportation issues in supertall building construction. As building heights increase, traditional construction methods struggle to meet the demands of vertical transportation. Climbing formwork construction technology utilizes its climbing ability to easily transport personnel and materials to specified heights, greatly improving construction efficiency. However, structural safety issues during construction cannot be ignored. During the construction process of supertall buildings, as the structure has not yet fully formed, its stability is relatively poor. Designers need to pay special attention to the setting of temporary supports to ensure they can withstand various loads during construction, ensuring the stability and safety of the structure. Additionally, the construction sequence of structural components is also crucial. A rational construction sequence not only ensures the smooth formation of the structure but also avoids unnecessary stress and deformation. In addition to the above techniques, many other construction technologies also play important roles in the structural design of supertall buildings. Each technology has its unique advantages and suitable scenarios, and designers need to select and combine them according to specific circumstances. The impact of construction techniques on the structural design of supertall buildings is profound and extensive. When conducting structural design, designers must fully consider the feasibility and economy of construction techniques, ensuring that the design can be smoothly implemented and achieve the desired results. At the same time, close cooperation and

communication with construction units are necessary to ensure safety and quality during the construction process.

Conclusion

The structural design of super high-rise buildings is a complex and challenging task, which requires designers to use comprehensive multidisciplinary knowledge and technical means. With the progress of science and technology and the development of new materials, the structural design of super high-rise buildings will face more new opportunities and challenges. In the future, designers need to actively explore innovative design methods and concepts on the basis of continuous summarization of experience, so as to promote the continuous development of super high-rise building structural design.

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