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## Estimation of fracture toughness ( $K_{IC}$ ) using Charpy impact test for Al6061T6 and Al7075T6 alloys subjected to corrosion

S. Sunil Kumar<sup>a,b,\*</sup>, Neelakantha V. Londe<sup>b</sup>, K. Dilip Kumar<sup>c</sup>, Mohammed Ibrahim Kittur<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Mechanical Engineering, A J Institute of Engineering and Technology, Mangalore, Karnataka, India

<sup>b</sup>Department of Mechanical Engineering, Mangalore Institute of Technology and Engineering, Moodabidri, Karnataka, India

<sup>c</sup>Department of Mechanical Engineering, Shree Devi Institute of Technology, Mangalore, Karnataka, India

<sup>d</sup>Department of Mechanical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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### ABSTRACT

Fracture Toughness ( $K_{IC}$ ) is an important material property in fracture mechanics. There are numerous literatures that suggest the use of relationship between the fracture toughness ( $K_{IC}$ ) and impact strength (CVN). In this investigation, the relationship between  $K_{IC}$  and CVN was used to determine the fracture toughness of high strength, low density Al6061T6 and Al7075T6 aluminum alloys. Accelerated corrosion was performed on these alloys using salt spray in a closed chamber for 250 h and 500 h. Pitting corrosion followed with exfoliation corrosion was noticed after prolonged exposure time which were responsible for the deterioration of mechanical properties. The experimentation results in degradation of yield strength, tensile strength, and impact strength with increase in exposure time. The yield and the impact test results were considered to estimate fracture toughness using the relations proposed by Rolfe and Barsom, Weld Research Council (WRC) and Robert and Newton. The  $K_{IC}$  results were validated analytically using Compact Tension (CT) and Single Edge Notched Bend (SENB) specimens. The results show that,  $K_{IC}$  decreases with increase in exposure time for all the combinations considered. Further, it was relatively observed that Al7075T6 is more susceptible to corrosion than Al6061T6.

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### 1. Introduction

Aluminum alloys are potential replacement for conventional high strength metallic materials from decades. Their peculiar metallurgical properties of precipitation and dispersion permit their use in wide range of applications specially in components of aircraft and space shuttles to storage vessels [1]. 7075 T6 and 6061 T6 are precipitation hardened aluminum alloys with high strength and ductility that promotes their use in automobiles, aviation and marine applications. Al6061 is predominantly used in transportation and sports applications [2]. The composition of these alloys compel them to be used in corrosive environment. Though these alloys are corrosion resistant, the continuous and concentrated exposure would affect the surface leading to pitting and exfoliation corrosion of passive layers. It is reported in the lit-

erature that 7075 is more prone to pitting, intergranular attacks, and hydrogen embrittlement [3–7]. The extended exposure to corrosive atmosphere will cause degradation in mechanical and fracture properties [8]. Accelerated corrosion by salt spray on aluminum alloys accelerates the exfoliation of passive layers and thus deteriorates their mechanical strength, fatigue life, and fracture toughness particularly under impact loads and vibration shocks [9–17]. The use of CT and SENB specimens is recommended to determine the fracture toughness which involves the evaluation of constraint issues [18–22]. The complexity of testing conditions has promoted the researchers to find alternative methods to estimate fracture toughness by using alternate specimen geometry and mathematical equations. The use of Circumferentially Cracked Round Bar (CCRB) specimen which is circumferentially ‘V’ grooved and pre-cracked under controlled reversible bending load, followed by tensile loading is suggested as an alternative to conventional CT and SENB specimens to determine the fracture toughness and fatigue crack growth rate [23]. The literatures [24–30] influence the use of standard correlation equations of

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [sunilgkoch@gmail.com](mailto:sunilgkoch@gmail.com), [sunilkumar@ajiet.edu.in](mailto:sunilkumar@ajiet.edu.in), [sunilsansitha@gmail.com](mailto:sunilsansitha@gmail.com) (S. Sunil Kumar).

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fracture toughness  $K_{IC}$  with Charpy impact strength CVN. Teran et al. [26] highlights the  $K_{IC}$  – CVN relations by Rolfe-Barsom [28], Welding Research Council (WRC) – 1981 [29] and Robert-Newton [30], which require the data of Charpy impact strength and material's yield strength in tension to estimate fracture toughness  $K_{IC}$ . The stress concentration factor  $K_t$  at the root of 'V' notch responses for stress raisers which are comparatively greater than that for other geometrical discontinuities. These stress raisers influence the crack to initiate and propagate at faster rate [31]. Therefore, impact toughness obtained from 'V' notched impact specimens can be undeniably correlated to obtain fracture toughness of the material. The research has motivated to investigate the effect of accelerated salt spray on fracture toughness of Al6061T6 and Al7075T6 aluminum alloys by using the  $K_{IC}$  – CVN relations. The results are validated analytically by CT and SENB specimen geometry by considering the yield stress as the critical stress at crack tip to estimate linear elastic plane strain fracture toughness as per the standards suggested by A H Priest [32] and ASTM E399 [33].

## 2. Experimental program

### 2.1. Materials and methods

Aluminum alloys Al6061T6 and Al7075T6 aluminum alloys purchased from Hindalco Industries Limited' (Aditya Birla Group) were considered to investigate the effect of salt spray corrosion on impact strength and fracture toughness. Table 1 shows the chemical composition of the alloys.

The tensile and impact test specimens were machined following ASTM E8 [34] and ASTM E 23 [35] as shown in the Fig. 1(a) and (b) respectively.

### 2.2. Salt spray corrosion

The test specimens were exposed to accelerated salt spray as per ASTM B117 [36]. The chemical composition of salt water contained 5% NaCl (sodium chloride) with pH ranging from 6.5 to 7.2. Five parts by mass of sodium chloride was dissolved in 80 parts of distilled water. The specimens were immersed continuously at temperature of 35 °C. The rate of salt spray in the chamber was maintained between 1.0 and 2.0 ml/hr. The exposure time was maintained as 250 h and 500 h.

## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1. Optical microscopy

It was observed from the regular inspection that, inhomogeneous white and grey patches were formed at the end of 250 h of corrosion (Fig. 2(a, c)). The prolonged exposure resulted in pitting which visibly became larger and began to coalesce and propagate below the surface resulting exfoliation of the superficial layers [17]. Clearly visible pits and exfoliation was noticed in both the alloys as shown in the Fig. 2(b, d).

**Table 1**  
Chemical composition of Al6061T6 and Al7075T6.

	Zn	Mg	Cu	Fe	Si	Mn	Cr	Ti	Al
Al7075T6	5.4	2.5	1.6	0.4	0.35	0.1	0.23	0.021	remaining
Al6061T6	0.09	1	0.3	0.45	0.6	0.11	0.24	0.041	remaining

### 3.2. Tensile and impact test

The effect of salt spray corrosion on tensile properties was investigated on both alloys at 250 and 500 h of exposure with reference to the as-received sample. Fig. 3(a) and (b) represents the stress–strain curves for the respective alloys of 6061 and 7075. It was observed that yield strength and tensile strength decreases with exposure time in both the alloys. For Al6061, at 500 h of exposure a 29% decrease in yield strength and 19% decrease in tensile strength was observed. For Al7075, at 500 h of exposure a 28% decrease in yield strength and 33% decrease in tensile strength was observed. There was significant decrease in elongation at yield and elongation at break with increase in exposure time. The Charpy impact test was conducted to examine the influence of salt spray. The impact strength CVN show decreasing trend with increase in exposure hours. The data of yield strength  $\sigma_{ys}$  and the impact strength CVN were used to estimate the fracture toughness  $K_{IC}$ . The variations of  $\sigma_{ys}$  and CVN with corrosion duration are shown in Fig. 4(a) and (b) respectively (Table 2. Table 3).

## 4. Estimation of fracture toughness by $K_{IC}$ - CVN relations

The linear elastic plane strain fracture toughness is estimated using the relationship between  $K_{IC}$  and CVN. According to Rolfe-Barsom [28],  $K_{IC}$  can be estimated using CVN as:

$$\left(\frac{K_{IC}}{\sigma_{ys}}\right)^2 = 0.64 \left(\frac{CVN}{\sigma_{ys}} - 0.01\right) \quad (1)$$

According to Welding Research Council (WRC) – 1981, [29],

$$\left(\frac{K_{IC}}{\sigma_{ys}}\right)^2 = 0.54 \left(\frac{CVN}{\sigma_{ys}} - 0.02\right) \quad (2)$$

According to Roberts R and Newton C, at WRC in 1984 [30],

$$K_{IC} = 0.804\sigma_{ys} \left(\frac{CVN}{\sigma_{ys}} - 0.0098\right) \quad (3)$$

where  $K_{IC}$  represents fracture toughness in  $Pa\sqrt{m}$ , CVN is impact strength in  $J/m^2$ , and  $\sigma_{ys}$  is yield stress (tension) in  $N/m^2$

To analyse the variation of fracture toughness using the relationship between  $K_{IC}$  and CVN proposed by Rolfe –Barsom, WRC, and Robert-Newton The variation of fracture toughness with exposure time is plotted as shown in Fig. 5. The magnitude of  $K_{IC}$  for Al7075 decreases significantly after 250 h of exposure in all the three cases. The overall decrease of  $K_{IC}$  at the end of 500 h of exposure for Al6061 is 31.65%, 30.21% and 30.47% and for A7075 the  $K_{IC}$  decreases by 28.4%, 30.66%, and 28.4%.

### 4.1. Analytical validation of fracture toughness using CT and SENB specimens

The fracture toughness values obtained from Rolfe-Barsom (Eqn. (1)) and Robert-Newton (Eqn. (3)) were identical when compared with the values of WRC (Eqn. (2)). Analytical computation was done using the CT and SENB (Fig. 6.) in accordance with the standards of ASTM E 399 to estimate linear elastic plane strain fracture toughness  $K_{IC}$  [33].

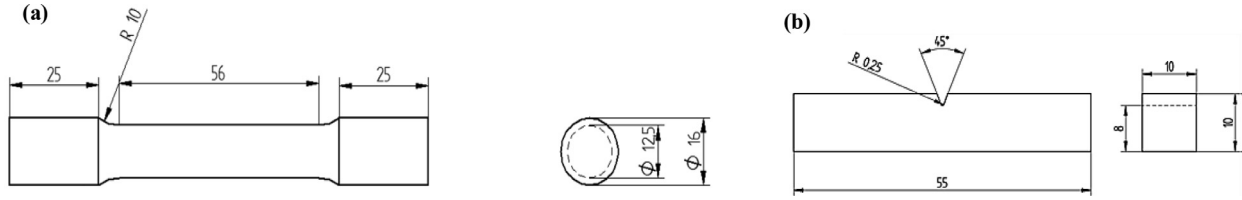


Fig. 1. (a) Dimensions of Tensile test specimen (mm) following ASTM E8; (b) Dimensions of Impact test specimen (mm) following ASTM E23.

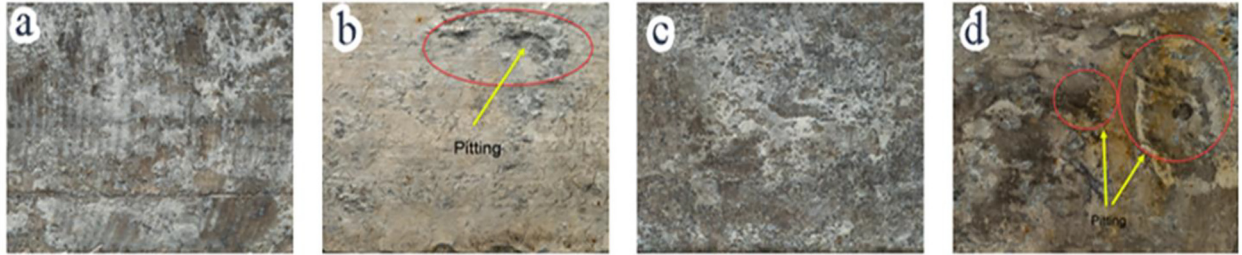


Fig. 2. Optical images of surfaces of Al6061 and Al7075 respectively (a, c): 250 h' exposure; (b, d): 500 h' exposure.

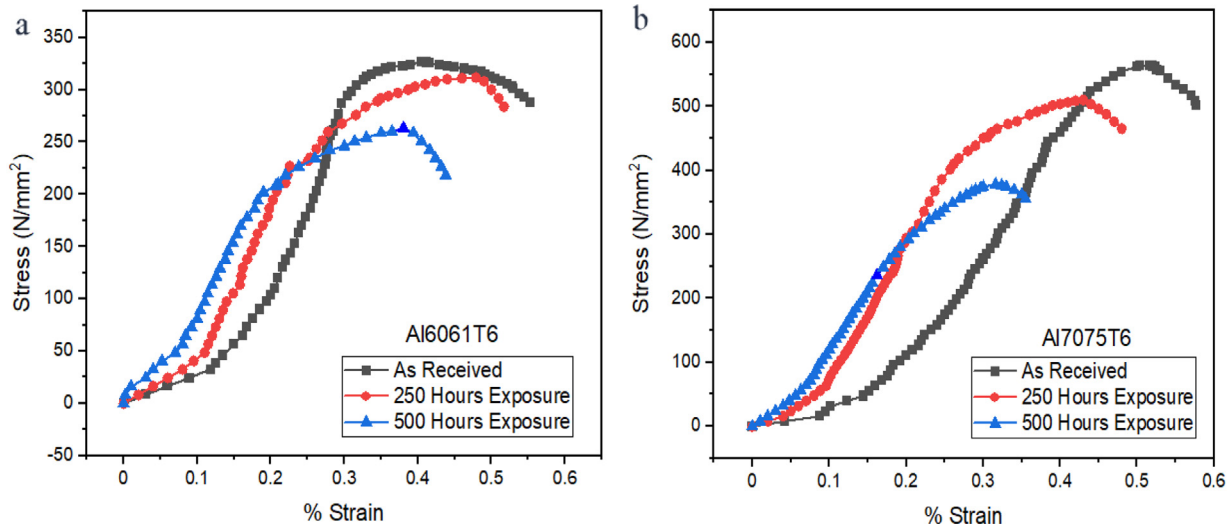


Fig. 3. Stress - Strain Curves for (a) Al6061T6; (b) Al7075T6.

The yield stress obtained by the tensile test was considered as the critical stress at the crack tip and the critical load 'P' was calculated based on Priest equations [32] for CT and SENB specimens as shown in Eqn. (4) and Eqn. (5).

$$\sigma_{ys} = \frac{2P(2W + a)}{B(W - a)^2} \quad (4)$$

$$\sigma_{ys} = \frac{3PS}{2B(W - a)^2} \quad (5)$$

For, CT and SENB specimens  $K_{IC}$  is estimated using the following equations:

$$K_{IC} = \frac{P}{B\sqrt{W}} f\left(\frac{a}{W}\right) \quad (6)$$

$$wheref\left(\frac{a}{W}\right) = \frac{(2 + \frac{a}{W}) [0.886 + 4.64 \frac{a}{W} - 13.32 (\frac{a}{W})^2 + 14.72 (\frac{a}{W})^3 - 5.6 (\frac{a}{W})^4]}{(1 - \frac{a}{W})^{\frac{3}{2}}} \quad (7)$$

For  $\frac{a}{W}$  as 0.5,  $f(\frac{a}{W}) = 9.6590$

$$K_{IC} = \frac{PS}{BW^{\frac{3}{2}}} f\left(\frac{a}{W}\right) \quad (8)$$

$$wheref\left(\frac{a}{W}\right) = 3\sqrt{\frac{a}{W}} \times \frac{(1.99 - \frac{a}{W})(1 - \frac{a}{W}) [2.15 - 3.93 \frac{a}{W} + 2.7 (\frac{a}{W})^2]}{2(1 + 2\frac{a}{W})(1 - \frac{a}{W})^{\frac{3}{2}}} \quad (9)$$

For  $\frac{a}{W}$  as 0.5,  $f(\frac{a}{W}) = 2.6522$

The fracture toughness for Al6061T6 and Al7075T6 alloys estimated using Eqn.6. and Eqn. 7. is tabulated as shown in Table 4.

The  $K_{IC}$  shows a decreasing trend in both the alloys for CT and SENB specimens and the variations are shown in Fig. 7.

It is observed from the Fig. 7 that, the magnitude of  $K_{IC}$  for Al7075 decreases significantly after 250 h of exposure in both the

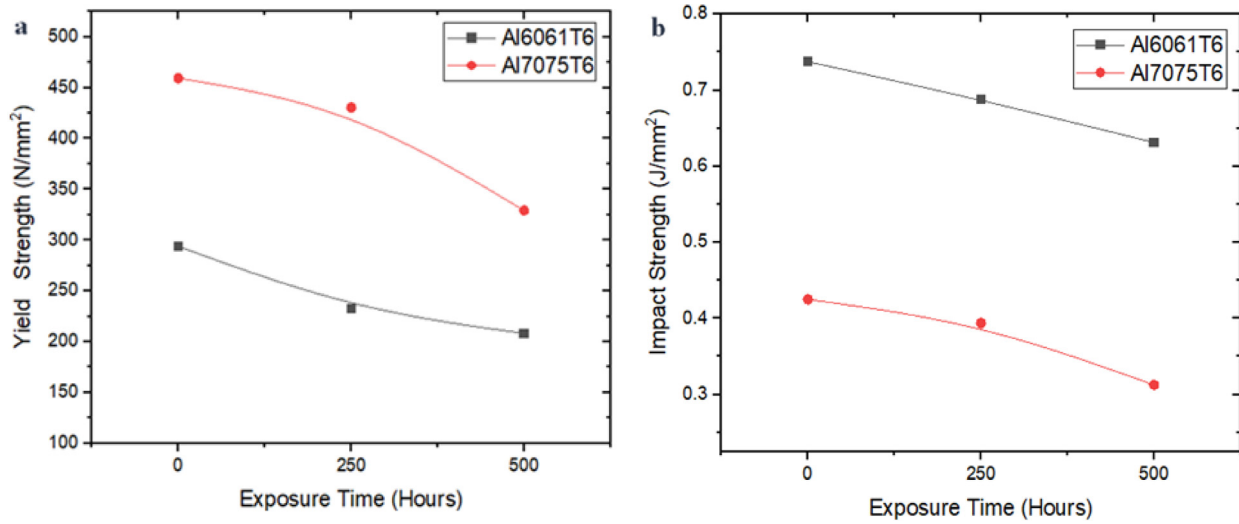


Fig. 4. Variation of (a) Yield Strength; (b) Impact Strength with Exposure Hours.

Table 2  
Fracture Toughness  $K_{IC}$  for Al6061T6 from  $K_{IC}$  - CVN relations.

Exposure Hours	Yield Strength $\sigma_{ys} (\times 10^6 \frac{N}{m^2})$	Impact Energy (J)	Impact Strength CVN ( $\frac{J}{m^2}$ )	Fracture Toughness $K_{IC} (MPa\sqrt{m})$		
				Rolfe-Barsom (Eqn. 1.)	WRC (Eqn. 2.)	Robert-Newton (Eqn. 3.)
0	293.84	59	737,500	20.35	28.56	20.17
250	232.10	55	687,500	15.58	22.35	15.43
500	208.24	50.5	631,250	13.91	19.93	13.78

Table 3  
Fracture Toughness  $K_{IC}$  for Al7075T6 from  $K_{IC}$  - CVN relations.

Exposure Hours	Yield Strength $\sigma_{ys} (\times 10^6 \frac{N}{m^2})$	Impact Energy (J)	Impact Strength CVN ( $\frac{J}{m^2}$ )	Fracture Toughness $K_{IC} (MPa\sqrt{m})$		
				Rolfe-Barsom (Eqn. 1.)	WRC (Eqn.2.)	Robert-Newton (Eqn.3.)
0	459.3	34	425,000	35.00	46.61	34.78
250	430.35	31.5	393,750	32.81	43.68	32.61
500	329.26	25	312,500	25.06	32.61	24.90

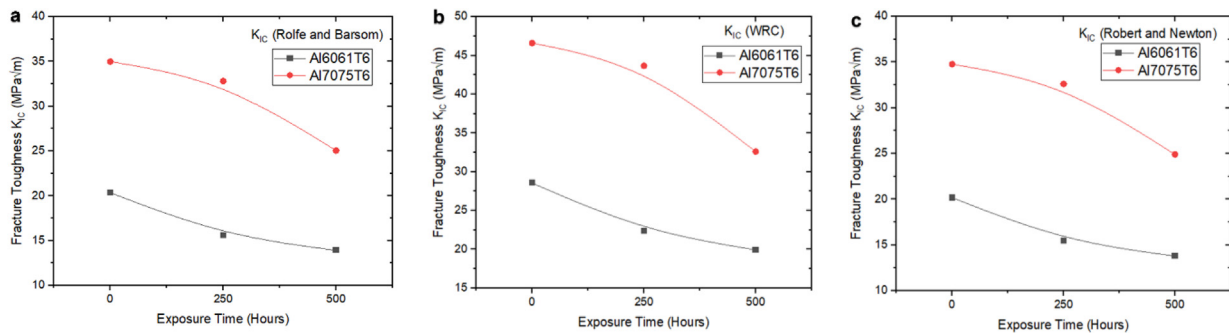
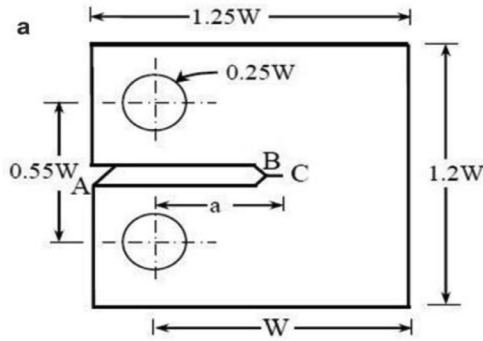


Fig. 5. Variation of  $K_{IC}$  with exposure hours (a) Rolfe -Barsom; (b) WRC; (c) Robert-Newton.

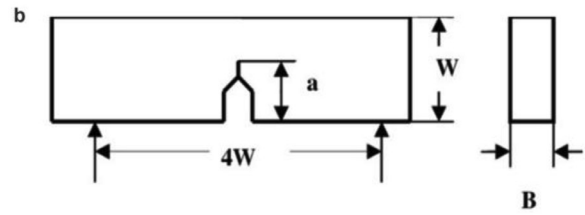
cases. The overall decrease in  $K_{IC}$  at the end of 500 h of exposure for Al6061T6 is 29.13%, and 29.11% and for A7075T6, the fracture toughness decreases by 28.31%, and 28.29% for CT and SENB specimens respectively. The analytically obtained  $K_{IC}$  values are compared with the values obtained from  $K_{IC}$  - CVN relations as shown in Fig. 8.

From Fig. 8 it is observed that, the  $K_{IC}$  of both the alloys decreases with increase in exposure duration for all the cases. Collectively it can be stated that, there is significant decrease in frac-

ture toughness which results in pre-mature failure. It is also evident from the comparison (Fig. 8) that the stress raisers at the root of 'V' notch of impact specimen are critically equivalent to the stress at the crack tip in CT and SENB specimens [26]. The fracture toughness  $K_{IC}$  of  $K_{IC}$  - CVN relationship obtained from Rolfe-Barsom (Eqn.1.) and Robert-Newton (Eqn.3.) are nearly equal to the values obtained using CT and SENB specimens. However, the  $K_{IC}$  results obtained from WRC (Eqn.2.) are not in agreement with the other cases considered.



Thickness B = 12.7 mm  
Width W = 25.4 mm  
Crack Length a = 12.7 mm



Thickness B = 12.7 mm  
Width W = 25.4 mm  
Crack Length a = 12.7 mm  
Span length S = 4W = 101.6 mm

Fig. 6. Standard dimensions of (a) CT specimen and (b) SENB specimen following ASTM E 399 [33].

Table 4  
Fracture Toughness for Al6061T6  $K_{Ic}$  in accordance with CT and SENB standards.

Exposure Hours	Al6061T6				Al7075T6			
	CT		SENB		CT		SENB	
	Load P from Eqn.4(N)	Fracture Toughness $K_{Ic} MPa\sqrt{m}$	Load P from Eqn.5(N)	Fracture Toughness $K_{Ic} MPa\sqrt{m}$	Load P from Eqn.4(N)	Fracture Toughness $K_{Ic} MPa\sqrt{m}$	Load P from Eqn.5(N)	Fracture Toughness $K_{Ic} MPa\sqrt{m}$
0	4739	22.62	3949	20.78	7408.	35.35	6173	32.48
250	3744	17.86	3119	16.41	6941	33.12	5784	30.43
500	3359	16.03	2799	14.73	5311	25.34	4426	23.29

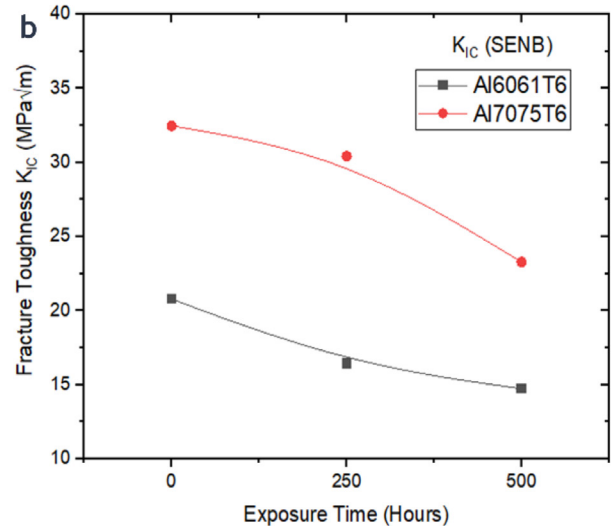
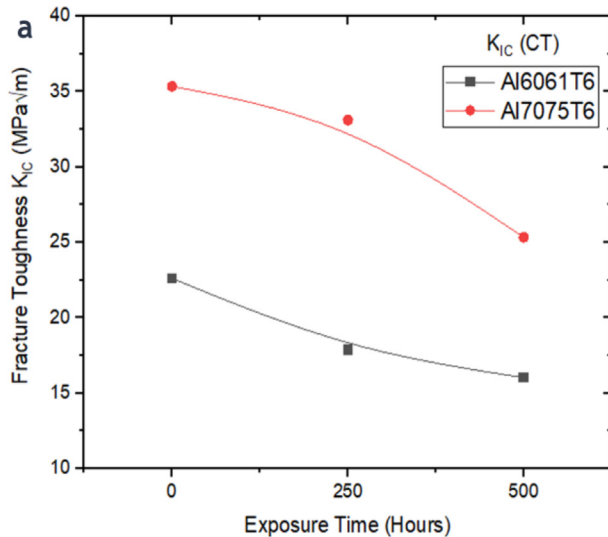


Fig. 7. Variation of  $K_{Ic}$  for Al6061T6 and Al7075 by the standards of (a) CT and (b) SENB.

5. Conclusions

In this investigation, Al6061T6 and Al7075T6 aluminum alloys were exposed to accelerated salt spray for the durations of 250 and 500 h and following conclusions were drawn,

- The tensile and yield strength of the alloys decreases with increase in exposure duration. The salt spray has significant effect on mechanical behaviour occurring due to exfoliation of passive layers and formation of pits.

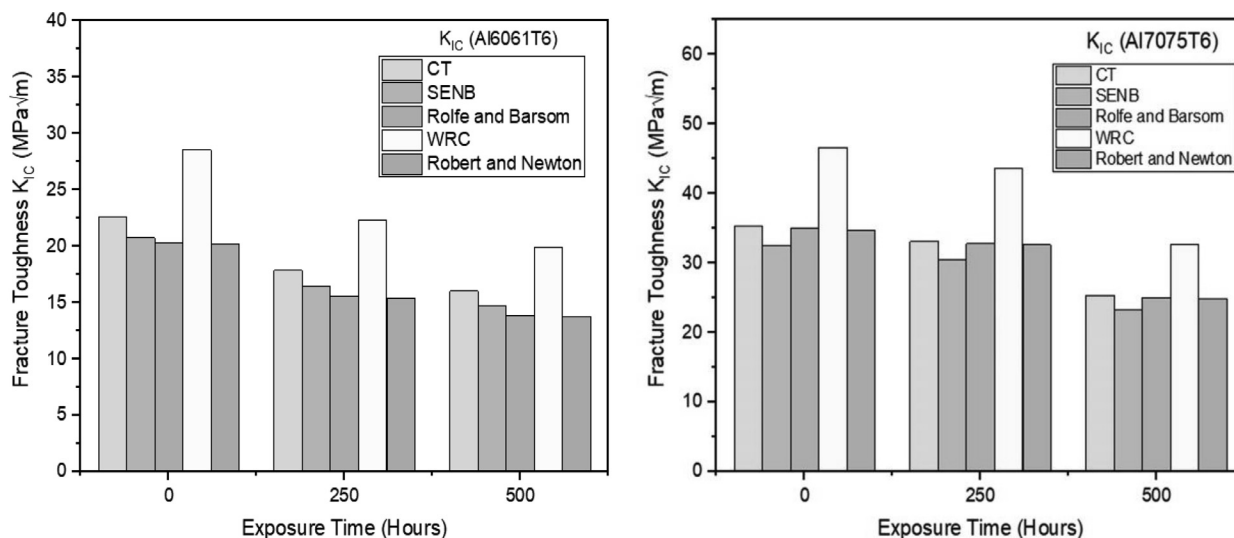


Fig. 8. Comparison of  $K_{IC}$  of  $K_{IC}$  - CVN correlations with CT and SENB standards for (a) Al6061T6; (b) Al7075T6 alloys.

- There is a considerable decrease in impact strength of the alloys and there is consequent reduction in fracture toughness in accordance with the  $K_{IC}$  - CVN relations.
- The analytical results obtained from CT and SENB specimens are in agreement with the  $K_{IC}$  - CVN equations proposed by Rolfe - Barsom, WRC and Robert-Newton and can be used to estimate linear elastic plane strain fracture toughness  $K_{IC}$ .

#### CRedit authorship contribution statement

**S. Sunil Kumar:** Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing - original draft. **Neelakantha V. Londe:** Conceptualization, Supervision. **K. Dilip Kumar:** Conceptualization, Supervision. **Mohammed Ibrahim Kittur:** Writing - review & editing.

#### Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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