



Risk-Based Inspection for Offshore Structures

Nur Faizah^{1*}, Andi Angga Saputra²

¹Hasanuddin University, Indonesia

²Universitas Bosowa, Indonesia

Abstract: Offshore structures operate in a demanding marine environment where waves, wind, currents, corrosion, fatigue, and repeated loading can gradually affect structural condition. Regular inspection is necessary to identify damage and maintain the safety and reliability of offshore facilities. However, inspecting every component with the same frequency may require considerable time, cost, and resources. Risk-Based Inspection (RBI) provides an approach for determining inspection priorities by considering the likelihood of failure and the consequences that may result from it. This article discusses the application of RBI in offshore structures and its role in supporting structural integrity and safety. A literature review method was used by examining studies related to offshore structural inspection, failure mechanisms, risk assessment, and maintenance planning. The reviewed studies indicate that RBI can help identify components with higher levels of risk and allocate inspection resources according to their condition and potential consequences. The approach can also support maintenance decisions and reduce the possibility of unexpected structural failure. Effective RBI implementation requires reliable inspection data, appropriate risk assessment, continuous monitoring, and regular reassessment of structural conditions.

Keywords: Risk-Based Inspection; Offshore Structures; Structural Integrity; Reliability; Safety

1. Introduction

Offshore structures such as fixed platforms, floating platforms, and other marine facilities are exposed to environmental loads throughout their operating life. Waves, wind, currents, corrosion, fatigue, and repeated loading can gradually reduce the condition of structural components. Damage may develop in critical areas such as joints, welds, connections, and submerged members, where direct observation can be more difficult than onshore structures. Maintaining structural integrity is therefore necessary to ensure that offshore facilities can continue operating safely under changing marine conditions [1].

Inspection is commonly used to detect damage and determine whether structural components remain suitable for operation. In conventional inspection programs, inspection intervals may be established based on fixed schedules or general requirements. However, not every component has the same probability of failure or the same consequences if failure occurs. Components that are more exposed to corrosion, fatigue, or high structural loading may require greater attention than components with lower levels of risk. This condition creates a need for an inspection strategy that can distinguish between different levels of risk [2].

Risk-Based Inspection provides a systematic way to establish inspection priorities by considering the likelihood of failure together with its potential consequences. Information from previous inspections, structural design, operating conditions, and known damage mechanisms can be used to determine which areas require closer monitoring. Applying RBI can help inspection resources be directed toward components where failure could have significant effects on structural safety, personnel, production, or the marine environment. This article discusses the principles of RBI for offshore structures, factors affecting inspection priorities, and its contribution to maintaining structural integrity and reducing operational risk [3].

2. Materials and Methods

This study applied a qualitative literature review to examine how Risk-Based Inspection is used to manage the integrity and safety of offshore structures. Scientific articles, technical reports, and engineering publications

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: icbloommagnet@gmail.com (N. Faizah).

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concerning offshore inspection, structural failure, risk assessment, and maintenance strategies were used as the main sources. The review focused on offshore structural components that may experience deterioration during operation, particularly those exposed to corrosion, fatigue, environmental loading, and mechanical damage [4].

Previous research involving offshore platforms and real inspection practices was examined to identify common damage mechanisms and factors that influence structural condition. Information concerning inspection history, environmental exposure, structural loading, material condition, and previous failures was considered in understanding how the level of risk can change during the service life of a structure. Studies discussing different inspection techniques were also reviewed, particularly methods used to identify cracks, corrosion, deformation, and other forms of structural deterioration [5].

The assessment was organized around two main elements of risk: probability of failure and consequence of failure. Probability was considered based on factors such as structural condition, damage mechanisms, loading conditions, corrosion rate, fatigue behavior, and inspection history. Consequences were examined in relation to possible effects on personnel safety, structural performance, offshore operations, economic losses, and the marine environment. These factors were then used to understand how inspection priorities can differ between structural components [6].

Inspection methods were also compared based on their ability to detect different types of damage and their suitability for offshore applications. Visual inspection, ultrasonic testing, magnetic particle testing, and other non-destructive inspection techniques were considered according to the type and location of defects they can identify. Practical factors such as accessibility, inspection cost, required equipment, and offshore working conditions were included in the analysis [7].

The information obtained from the reviewed studies was finally synthesized to examine how RBI can support inspection scheduling and maintenance decisions. Greater attention was given to approaches that allow inspection frequency and scope to be adjusted according to changing risk levels rather than relying only on fixed inspection intervals. The results of this comparison were used to discuss how risk-based inspection can contribute to safer and more reliable offshore structural operations [8].

3. Results

The reviewed studies indicate that the condition of offshore structures can change over time due to corrosion, fatigue, environmental loading, and repeated operational stresses. Damage is not distributed equally across all structural components, meaning that some areas may require more frequent inspection than others. Welded joints, connections, submerged members, and components exposed to aggressive marine conditions were commonly identified as areas requiring particular attention [9].

The application of Risk-Based Inspection allows structural components to be categorized according to their level of risk. Components with a higher likelihood of failure and greater potential consequences receive higher inspection priority, while components with lower risk can be monitored using less intensive inspection programs. This approach allows available inspection resources to be concentrated on areas where structural problems could have the greatest impact on safety and operations [10].

The results also show that inspection data play an important role in updating risk assessments. Information from previous inspections can reveal changes in corrosion, crack development, deformation, or other deterioration mechanisms. When new information becomes available, inspection intervals and priorities can be adjusted accordingly. Therefore, RBI is not a one-time assessment but a process that can develop along with the condition of the offshore structure [11].

Overall, risk-based inspection can support more targeted inspection planning and help identify potential structural problems before they develop into serious failures. Its effectiveness depends on the quality of inspection data, understanding of damage mechanisms, appropriate risk assessment, and regular review of structural conditions [12].

4. Discussion

The findings suggest that RBI provides a more condition-oriented approach to offshore inspection compared with relying only on predetermined inspection schedules. Offshore structures are exposed to different environmental and operational conditions, so the deterioration rate of one component may differ significantly from another. By considering both the likelihood and consequences of failure, inspection planning can be adjusted to reflect the actual risks faced by the structure. This is particularly useful for offshore facilities where inspection activities may involve specialized equipment, limited access, vessel support, and significant

operational costs [13].

The reliability of RBI, however, depends strongly on the information used to determine risk. Incomplete inspection records, inaccurate assumptions about deterioration, or failure to recognize changing operating conditions can affect inspection priorities. For this reason, RBI should be supported by continuous data collection, appropriate non-destructive testing, structural monitoring, and periodic reassessment. Combining inspection results with maintenance planning can help operators respond to deterioration before it becomes a major safety problem, while also supporting longer-term structural integrity and more reliable offshore operations [14].

5. Conclusion

Risk-Based Inspection provides a structured approach for managing the integrity of offshore structures by directing inspection attention toward areas with greater potential risk. The approach recognizes that structural components do not have identical failure probabilities or consequences, particularly because offshore facilities are continuously exposed to environmental loads, corrosion, fatigue, and operational stresses. By evaluating the condition of structural components together with the possible consequences of failure, inspection activities can be planned according to the actual needs of the facility rather than applying the same level of inspection to every component.

The effectiveness of RBI depends on the availability of accurate and updated information about structural condition. Inspection history, damage mechanisms, environmental exposure, loading conditions, and previous failures all contribute to a better understanding of structural risk. Regular inspection and reassessment are therefore important because the risk profile of an offshore structure can change during its operating life. When deterioration is identified early, appropriate maintenance or further inspection can be planned before the condition develops into a more serious failure.

In addition to supporting structural safety, RBI can improve the way inspection resources are managed. Offshore inspection often requires specialized personnel, equipment, time, and operational support, making it important to determine which areas require the greatest attention. The use of risk information can help establish inspection priorities while maintaining the reliability and integrity of critical components. Future development of RBI can be supported by improved monitoring technologies, digital inspection records, and data-based assessment methods, allowing changes in structural condition to be identified more effectively and supporting safer and more reliable offshore operations.

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