# Arc Welding for Additive Manufacturing of SS 308

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***Abstract—The Additive manufacturing (AM) technique has disrupted and streamlined the production industry by introducing unique and complex geometrical shapes while allowing less consumption of material. The objective of the present study is to additively manufacture a stainless steel 304 (SS304) grade, an arc welding process that marries the benefits of AM with the high tensile strength and tough mechanical properties of SS304.grade. This study investigated the microstructural, mechanical and tensile properties of fabricated block of stainless steel 304(SS304) prepared by arc welding for Additive Manufacturing (AM). The process parameter optimization methodology is centred on conducting a thorough investigation of current, voltage, travel speed, and heat input parameters as they pertain to the weld process, with the goal being to improve part quality and performance. Optical microscopic microstructure observation of the dendritic formations and potential defects such as porosity and cracks. Mechanical testing, including tensile and hardness tests, are also conducted to determine the strength and ductility of the welded specimens.***

## I. INTRODUCTION

304 stainless steel: A type of alloy that does not contain elements sensitive to magnetization and is stable in metal materials with good plasticity, toughness, and corrosion resistance.

The Wire Arc Additive Manufacturing (MIG-WAAM) technology utilises the arc as a heat source and wire as raw material. It is characterized by high deposition efficiency, low raw material cost and the ability to manufacture large size components. [1]

WAAM and LDED are two well-known processes in the additive manufacturing domain. MIG-WAAM is another variant of WAAM where an arc is used as the heat source and wire as material; here deposition efficiency is high and cost of material low. This method is well suited for making large parts; however, its disadvantage is the ability to achieve high levels of fabricating accuracy because the molten pool is large.

On the other hand, LDED uses a laser as the source of heat and can use either wire or powder feed stocks. It also allows finer detail, smoother finishes, and the ability to produce more intricate forms and contours. However, it proves pricey especially for large components since its operational costs are slightly higher hence less efficient in manufacturing compared to the former.

This research only embraces the additive manufacturing technologies, namely WAAM and LDED, and their integration in manufacturing 304 stainless steel. It starts with MIG-WAAM to build the large block structure and then LDED to build structures of desired types on this block's surface.
Imperfect areas in the WAAM block are corrected through LDED, thus forming a whole structure at the end. These microstructures and properties are studied from these different fabrication processes with special emphasis on the change in microstructure at the bonding interface and effects on the mechanical characteristics.

Some of the major subtopics incorporated in the study involve optical microscopy, scanning electron microscopy (SEM) coupled with energy dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (EDS), and X-ray diffraction

(XRD) look at grain structure, phase distribution as well as potential defects. These are done through tensile tests, hardness test and impact tests and the results thus obtained are then compared to that of conventionally forged stainless steel 304. Also, surface finish and dimensions are inspected and therefore, residual stress distribution is evaluated to determine the quality and strength of the Hybrid- sheet manufactured elements.

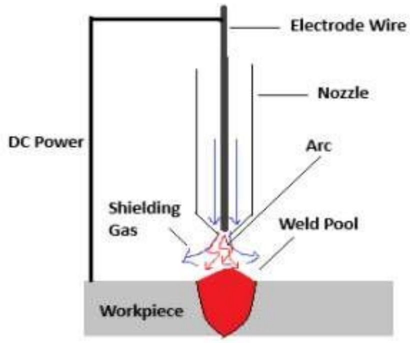


FIGURE 1. Schematic diagram of Arc Welding
TABLE 1. Composition of Stainless Steel 308

| Element | Content |
|---|---|
| Iron (Fe) | 68-71 % |
| Chromium (Cr) | 18-20% |
| Nickel (Ni) | 8-10.5% |
| Manganese (Mn) | <=2% |
| Silicon (Si) | <=0.045% |
| Carbon(C) | <=0.08% |
| Phosphorous(P) | <=0.045% |
| Sulphur(S) | <=0.030 |

TABLE 2. Mechanical and Physical properties of Stainless Steel 308

| Property | Metric |
|---|---|
| Density | 8.0 gm/cc |
| Tensile Strength | 515 MPa (min) |
| Yeild Strength | 205Mpa(min) |
| Elongation | 40%(min) in 50mm |
| Hardness | 201Brinell max, 95 Rockwell Bmax |
| Melting Point | 1400°C - 1450°C |

This project focuses on additive manufacturing of Stainless Steel 304 grade using arc welding technique. The primary aim is to manufacture a block of dimensions 100 mm x 50 mm x 10 mm by a layer- by-layer deposition using arc welding, and further carrying out a macro and microstructure study of the manufactured sample. A throughout study of the properties (Physical and Mechanical) and characteristics of the manufactured piece can be used to determine the benefits of using WAAM in the production of various metal components in the automotive, aerospace, marine and many other industries in a cost effective and efficient way.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Study 1: Stainless Steel 304 Additive Manufacturing Gas Metal Arc Welding (GMAW)

*a) Authors: DebRoy et al. (2018)*

In this study, Gas Metal Arc Welding (GMAW) is employed to perform additive manufacturing of stainless steel 304 (SS304). The research was concentrated on the optimization of microstructural and mechanical properties combining process parameters like voltage, current and travel speed based on feed rate[%]. The results highlighted that accurate control of heat input was key to minimising defects, and hence enabling consistency in layer deployment.

Study 2: Microstructural analysis of wire arc-additive manufactured (WAAM) stainless steel 304 components
Authors: Zhang et al. (2019)
Zhang et al. elucidated the microstructural features of WAAM-made SS304 parts. The research emphasized the importance of thermal management, in terms of heat input and cooling, to limit residual stress creation thereby avoiding crack development. The austenitic microstructure and a little δ-ferrite can be attributed to the rapid cooling rates

Study 3: Comparison Study on Additive Manufacturing of Stainless Steel 304 between GTAW and GMAW
Authors: Singh et al. (2022)
Component Study: Arc Additive manufacturing of SS304 was conducted between Gas Tungsten Arc Welding (GTAW) and GMAW in this study. Singh et al. determined that GTAW provides superior heat input control, and surface finish; at the same time GMAW works much faster than GTAW.

Study 4: Surface Roughness and Dimensional Accuracy in Arc Additive Manufacturing of Stainless Steel 304
Authors: Patel et al. (2019)
In this study, Patel et al. considered the study on layer thickness, welding speed, and current inputs by using the arc welding process to investigate its influence on the surface finish and geometric accuracy of SS304 components. Findings: These parameters affect surface roughness and also dimensional accuracy.

Study 5: Comparative Mechanical Properties of 304 Stainless Steel Material Fabricated by Different Arc Welding Additive Manufacturing Techniques
Authors: Smith et al. 2022
Smith et al. compared the tensile strength and hardness values of SS304 components obtained from GMAW and GTAW and WAAM. The results were that higher tensile strength is obtained by WAAM, better surface finishes are obtained by GTAW, and higher deposition rates can be achieved by GMAW.

6. In the paper "Microstructure and Mechanical Properties of Wire and Arc Additive Manufactured Ti-6Al-4V", Fude Wang et al. have investigated the use of WAAM for the production of large-scale Ti-6Al-4V components. The study focuses on the

macrostructure, microstructure and mechanical properties of WAAM produced Ti-6Al-4V. WAAM deposited Ti-6Al-4V has an anisotropic macrostructure, characterised by large columnar β grains that grow epitaxially from the substrate and extent across the deposited layers. Due to the thermal gradient during the build process, the grains are aligned perpendicularly to the substrate. The microstructure varies between the top and bottom regions of the build. The top layers showed fine Widmanstätten α and α' martensite, while the lower layers had coarser lamellar structures of α Widmanstätten. The tensile strength is found to be 10% lower that of forged parts, and the ductility is comparable. The properties show anisotropy with higher strength and lower ductility in specimens that are tested horizontally compared to vertically. The paper concludes that controlling porosity and ensuring defect free deposition are essential to maximise the material's mechanical performance. With a proper control of process parameters and mitigation of gas porosity, WAAM can achieve a higher fatigue performance thus making it a valuable manufacturing technique for industries demanding durable and light-weight materials, aerospace for instance [21].

## IV. METHEDOLOGY

Objective: To fabricate complex structures of stainless steel 304 using the arc melting technique, specifically focusing on the Wire Arc Additive Manufacturing (WAAM) process.

FIGURE 2. SS 308 Electrodes

TABLE 3. SS 308 L Electrode Properties

| Property | Metric |
|---|---|
| Dimensions | 3.15 x 350 mm |
| Chromium (Cr) | 80 – 110 A |
| Tensile Strength | 515 N/M |
| Elongation | 40 % |

FIGURE 3. Welding Machine

TABLE 4. Welding Machine Specifications

| Property | Metric |
|---|---|
| Model | TAP-330 |
| Type | Air Cooled |
| Capacity | 300 A |
| Current Range | 40-300 A |
| Operating Voltage | 20-32 V |

In the preparation of the stainless steel 304 material, the first process ensures that all the contaminants on the wire are removed because they will compromise welding. That raises the parameter up to an acceptable stage on the substrate. In a particular application, it can be preheated in order to facilitate better bonding and to minimize thermal stresses during deposition. Then, the WAAM system is established, This system is to deposit metals and alloys on the required site. All the components will be examined for operations, the stainless steel 304 wire will be fed into the wire feeder.

As far as it is possible, optimize always the process parameters which are under your control. The current and voltage shall be adjusted to such levels that it accommodating the arc heat and keeps melting the electrode shed continuously. For instance in applying the stainless steel 304, it was established that the average current is about 100A – 300 A with the voltage standards 20 V – 30 V. The ''speed of the wire feed'' must also correspond to the expected deposition rate of about between 2-5 meters per minute.

The deposition process is started by applying a first layer on the substrate so that you get the proper fusion and bonding. Closely depending on the requirements to the developed part, the successive layers are deposited in a controlled, layer-by-layer manner. The control of these parameters is however paramount in the process in order to ensure the quality of deposition. Sublayer cooling also is allowed between layers as a safeguard against the likelihood of retained stress and distortion in the material.

The last operation to be carried out leads to improvement of the overall quality as well as mechanical properties of the fabricated part. Some of the stresses that may be produced during the build process can be released using heat treatment wherein the material is annealed. If the surface finish and dimensional control required by the specifications needs to be achieved, then machining is done. Non-destructive tests such as X-ray CT, ultrasonic or dye penetrant test is conducted on the final part so that similar kind of defects or porosities that might have been manufactured and accumulated on the fabricated part could be seen.

Characterizations of the deposited material microstructure involve the use of optical microscopy, scanning electron microscopy (SEM) and X-ray diffraction (XRD). It would be very useful in studying the grain structure, the phase distribution and, in general, studying the defects and the inclusions of the material. The component performance of the part is analyzed in terms of tensile, hardness, and impact tests. Subsequently, this performance is compared with a conventionally produced stainless steel 304 to understand the characteristics of this additively manufactured part.

Profilometers and coordinate measuring machines (CMM) are used to deduce the surface finish and the dimensional accuracy to conclude that even the part does meet the design requirements. Potential variations from the expected design are reviewed with regards to their root causes and then addressed in later stages. Other techniques used are X-ray diffraction or the hole-drilling technique to determine the distribution of the stresses within the component so as to guarantee the integrity.

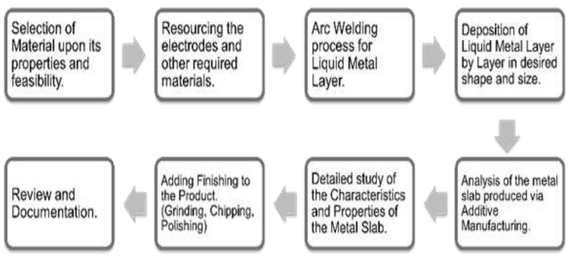


Figure 3:-Block Diagram

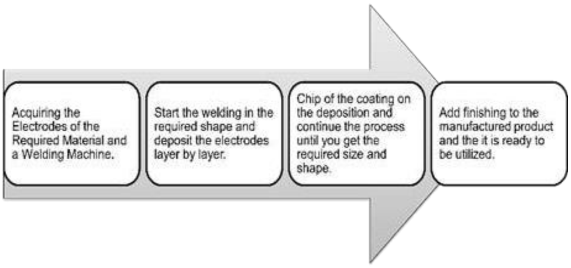


FIGURE 4. Flowchart

## V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Arc melting is a technique utilizing an electric arc to produce sufficient high temperatures to melt metals. Stainless steel 304 is the most common electrode material used in such processes because of its excellent electrical conductivity and corrosion resistance with good mechanical properties.

304 thin-walled component were obtained through wire arc additive manufacturing (WAAM) as one of the methods of additive manufacturing. Based on the limitations that the WAAM technology cannot produce large and complex components at one time, TIG welding was selected as a method for secondary processing to achieve effective connection.

The microstructure change and the mechanical properties of the welded joints in all directions were examined with optical and scanning electron microscope. A tensile machine and a microhardness tester were applied in the test.

The hardness of the weld is higher than that of the base metal, and the hardness of the HAZ is the lowest. At the same time, the distribution of microhardness of the weld with AC 50% was the most uniform. Average hardness of welds with AC accounting for 20% and 30% is the largest, which are 196.7 HV and 198.1 HV,.

| Weld Properties | Sample |
|---|---|
| Spatters | No Trace |
| Cracking | NoTrace |
| Slag Inclusion | No Trace |
| Under Cutting | No Trace |
| Porosity | No Trace |
| Unifomity Of weld bead | Un Uniform |

Table 4. Weld properties on welded sample

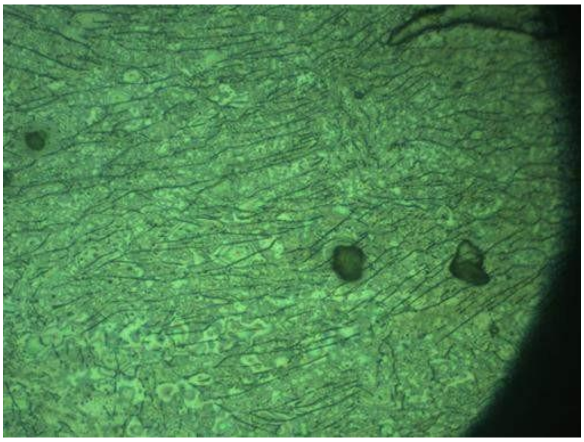

Figure 5. Microstructure at 400x

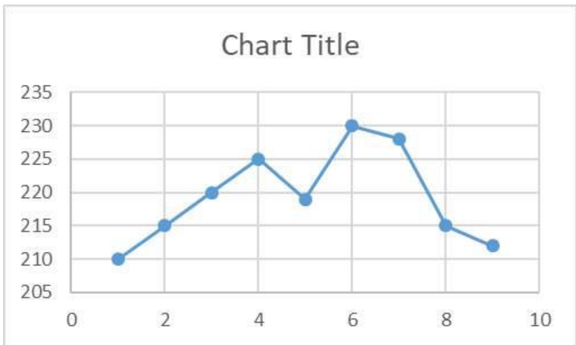


Figure 6. Result of hardness tests performed on workpiece

Figure 7. Top View

Figure 8. *Side View*

## V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## VI. CONCLUSION

In this study, we have done the additive manufacturing of Stainless Steel 304 by using the arc welding technique. We focused on the process parameters, microstructural features, mechanical properties, and probable applications of the produced components in this research work.

It is found to produce high-quality SS 304 parts with desirable mechanical properties. An optimization in this arc welding technique does realize a fine balance between the welding and solidification processes. All this can be achieved in process parameters such as current, voltage, and travel speed. The fabricated samples are found to possess comparable tensile strength, hardness, and corrosion resistance to that of the conventionally fabricated SS 304 thus establishing the possibility of this technique to be used industrially.

The fabricated parts are mainly austenitic in structure with good grain size, and this is one of the main reasons for excellent mechanical properties of material. Its ability to process flexibility also permits alteration in geometries of a component, so that's something of a big advantage in this regard, in production of more complex and tailored parts.

This study is very broad in scope, therefore covers all industries using SS 304, including aerospace, automotive, and biomedical fields. With the capability of this technique to produce complex geometries and superior mechanical properties, it opens up new avenues for design and innovation. Further, the arc welding technique provides economically and scalably sustainable alternative conventional manufacturing methods, which normally reduce production costs and material wastage in the process.

In the future, the research should focus more on the deeper impacts of the process parameters on the quality of the part and on the consistency of the parts produced. Long-term performance and reliability studies of components in real-world applications are also required. Of course, the capability of hybrid approaches that would entail arc welding and other AM techniques is interesting as well in further expansion of its capability and application of this technique.

In conclusion, arc welding additive manufacturing of Stainless Steel 304 is considered promising with efficiency, versatility, and good quality of the final product. This research contributes knowledge to general advancements in advanced manufacturing and leads the way in opportunities for innovations and enhancements in new application areas across numerous industrial sectors [13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18,19].

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