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## **Collapse Mechanism of Wide-area Suspended Ceiling in School Gymnasium**

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### **Abstract**

In the 2011 off the Pacific coast of Tohoku Earthquake, many suspended ceilings and other suspended equipment fell down due to the lack of their resistance to earthquakes. To mitigate severe damage to ceiling system caused by earthquakes, new seismic design code for suspended ceiling system was issued by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transportation and Tourism. However, the mechanism why and how suspended ceiling system falls down during earthquakes has not yet been clarified. In order to clarify the collapse mechanism of wide-area ceiling system and development of its countermeasure, new research project was launched and first series of full-scale shake-table experiments of wide-area ceiling system in school gymnasium was conducted. Based on experimental results, collapse mechanism of nonseismic ceiling was clarified and it was found that failure mechanism of the seismically designed ceiling depends on the ratio of strength of ceiling braces and its metal joints.

**Keywords:** suspended ceiling, collapse mechanism, seismic design, school gymnasium, steel structure, full-scale shake table experiment, E-Defense

### **1. Introduction**

In the 2011 off the Pacific coast of Tohoku Earthquake, a lot of suspended ceilings in large-space structures such as gymnasium suffered damage and collapsed due to lack of their seismic performance [1]. In 2016 Kumamoto Earthquake, several gymnasium also suffered damage as shown in Photo 1. Because the school gymnasiums are generally expected to be used as evacuation shelters after strong earthquake, their seismic performance including nonstructural components and serviceability after earthquake is important. Thus, new seismic standards for wide-area suspended ceiling have been in effect from April 2014 in Japan. In the new standards, screw fastening to the connection of metal parts, a lot of bracings and clearance between ceilings and walls are required. However, collapse mechanism of ceiling is not yet clarified enough and effective seismic countermeasures are needed.

To identify the collapse mechanism of non-seismic ceiling and evaluate seismic performance of seismically designed ceiling, two series of full-scale shake table experiment is conducted. The specimen is designed as the steel school gymnasium with suspended ceiling. Structural members are designed based on the current Japanese code. In the gymnasium specimen, two different types of ceiling are installed; one is the non-seismic ceiling designed as the typical ceiling without any seismic countermeasures, the other is the seismically designed ceiling based on new seismic standards for ceiling. This paper represents experimental results and collapse mechanism of suspended ceilings.



Photo 1 Collapse of Suspended Ceiling in Gymnasium during Kumamoto Earthquake

## 2. Experimental Setup

Photo 2, Figure 1 and Table 1 show gymnasium specimen used for full-scale shake table experiment. The gymnasium specimen is designed as a steel gymnasium in elementary or junior high schools based on current Japanese code. Its size is 18.6 m x 30 m, which is larger than E-Defense shaking table, its height is 9.09 m and it has 10:3 sloped roof.

It is designed based on allowable stress design with base shear coefficient  $C_0$  of 0.2. Its main column and roof girder is H400x200x8x13, its beam is H248x124x5x8, its column in end panel is H250x125x6x9 and H300x150x6.5x9, and its base girder is tapered H900x300x16x28. Diameter of vertical braces are 20 mm in end panel and 27 mm in the others, and that of lateral braces are 16 mm. Yield strength and tensile strength of column, girder, braces is the range of 291 to 330 N/mm<sup>2</sup> and 443 to 482 N/mm<sup>2</sup>, respectively.



Photo 2 Full-scale Gymnasium Specimen

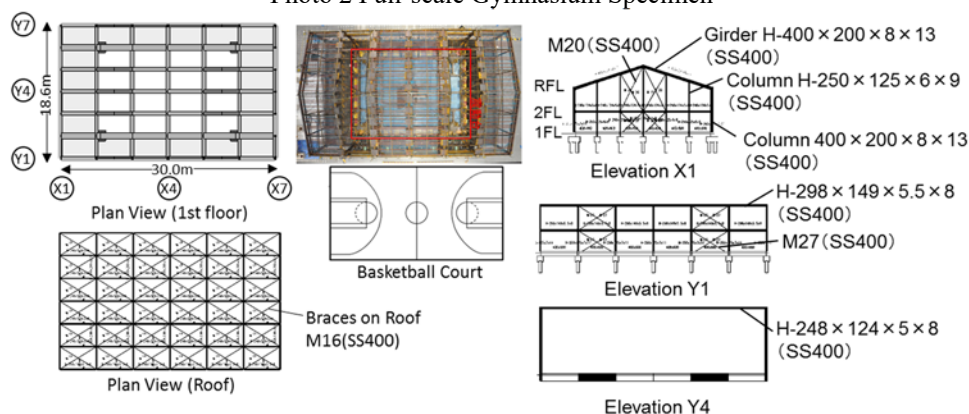


Fig. 1 Experimental Specimen

Table 1 Specification of Gymnasium Specimen

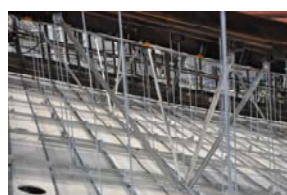
Item		Specification
Structure		One Story Steel Gymnasium
Weight	Superstructure	71t (without weight on roof)
	Weight on Roof	30t
	Total Weight	230t
Height		9.090m
Plan Size		30.0m×18.6m (6 x 6)
Design		Allowable stress design (Base-shear $C_0 = 0.2$ )
Members	Column	H400×200×8×13 (SS400) H250×125×6×9 (SS400) H300×150×6.5×9 (SS400)
	Girder	H400×200×8×13 (SS400)
	Beam	H248×124×5×8 (SS400)
	Vertical Braces	M20, M27 (SNR400B) Pipe-type Turnbuckle
	Lateral Braces	M16 (SNR400B) Pipe-type Turnbuckle

Photo 3 and Table 2 show suspended ceiling installed inside gymnasium specimen. Two series of shake table experiment were conducted; 1) the gymnasium specimen with nonseismic ceiling and 2) that with seismically designed ceilings with seismic coefficient of 1.1G and 2.2G. Nonseismic ceiling is designed as typical ceiling without any seismic countermeasures. Nonseismic ceiling is hanged by bolts with a diameter of 10 mm, length of 1500 mm and distance of 1147 x 1000 mm. Light-weight steel members for nonseismic ceiling is 19 type channel members defined in JIS (Japan Industrial Standard) with a section of 25×19×0.5 for narrow ceiling joists, 50×19×0.5 for wide ceiling joists and 38×12×1.2 for ceiling joists receivers. JIS confirmed easy-construction ceiling clips and hangers are used as connections. Ceiling panels are consists of gypsum boards with thickness of 9.5 mm and rock wool acoustic boards with thickness of 9 mm. Unit weight of ceiling is 13.1 kg/m<sup>2</sup>. There is no clearance between ceiling and wall/column.

Seismically designed ceilings with seismic coefficient of 1.1G (designated as 1.1G seismic ceiling) is designed as ceiling assembled using JIS confirmed, widely used lightweight steel members based on new Japanese seismic design code for ceiling. On the other hand, seismically designed ceilings with seismic coefficient of 2.2G (designated as 2.2G seismic ceiling) is designed as ceiling assembled using lightweight steel members with large enough sections based on new Japanese seismic design code for ceiling. Seismically designed ceilings with seismic coefficient of 1.1G and 2.2G are hanged by bolts with a diameter of 10 mm, length of 1500 mm and distance of 840 x 1000 mm. Light-weight steel members for 1.1G seismic ceiling is 19 type channel members defined in JIS (Japan Industrial Standard) with a section of 25×19×0.5 for narrow ceiling joists, 50×19×0.5 for wide ceiling joists and 38×12×1.2 for ceiling joists receivers. There are 27 pairs of ceiling braces with section of [-40x20x1.6 for 1.1G seismic ceiling. On the other hand, light-weight steel members for 2.2G seismic ceiling is channel members with a section of 50x25x0.8 for ceiling joists and [-40×20×1.6 for ceiling joists receivers. There are 30 pairs of ceiling braces with section of C-50x25x10x1.6 for 2.2G seismic ceiling. Unit weights of 1.1G and 2.2G seismic ceilings are 13.8kg/m<sup>2</sup> and 16.0kg/m<sup>2</sup>, respectively.



(a) Nonseismic ceiling



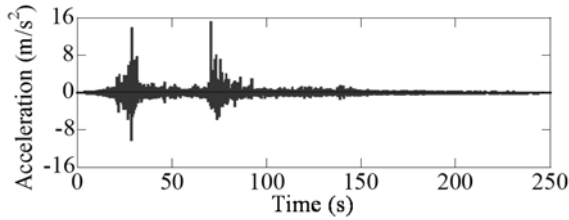
(b) 1.1G Seismic ceiling  
Photo 3 Suspended Ceiling



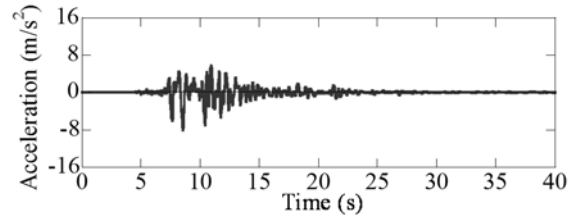
(c) 2.2G Seismic ceiling

Table 2 Specification of Suspended Ceiling

	Specification		
	Nonseismic Ceiling	1.1G Seismic Ceiling	2.2G Seismic Ceiling
Experimental Date	Jan. 27-28, 2014	Feb. 27-28, 2014	
Seismic Coefficient	N/A	1.1	2.2
Hanging Bolts	Φ10 mm Bolts		
Length of Bolts	1500mm		
Distance of Bolts	1147×1000mm	860×1000mm	860×1000mm
Ceiling Joist Receiver	JIS 19 type (38x12x1.2)@1000mm	JIS 19 type (38x12x1.2)@1000mm	[-40×20×1.6 @1000mm
Hanger	JIS Confirmed Hanger (for slope ceiling)	Aseismic Clip with screw	Aseismic Clip with screw
Narrow Ceiling Joist	JIS 19 type (25x19x0.5)@364mm	JIS 19 type (25x19x0.5)@303mm	JIS 25 type shape section with thicker steel (t=0.8mm) (50x25x0.8)@303mm
Wide Ceiling Joist	JIS 19 type (50x19x0.5)@1820mm	JIS 19 type (50x19x0.5)@910mm	
Clip	JIS 19 type Easy Construction Clip	Aseismic Clip with Screw	Aseismic Clip with Screw
Brace	N/A	27 pairs of braces with section of [-40x20x1.6	30 pairs of braces with section of C-50x25x10x1.6
Clearance	0 mm	More than 60 mm	
Ceiling Panel	Gypsum boards (t=9.5mm) + Rock wool acoustic boards (t=9mm)		
Ceiling Unit Weight	13.1kg/m²	13.8kg/m²	16.0kg/m²

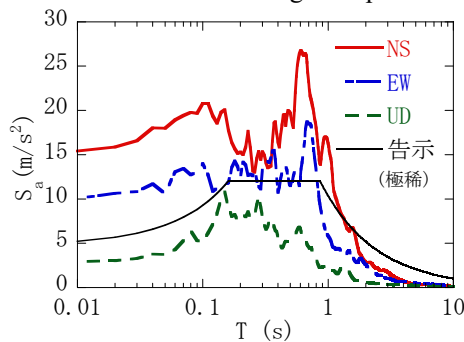


(a) K-NET Sendai Record

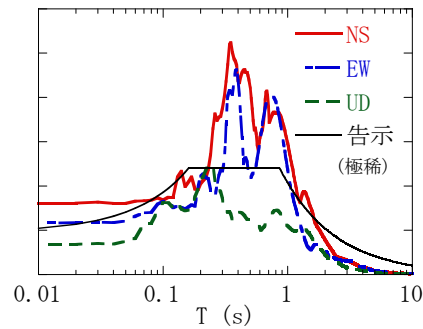


(b) JMA Kobe Record

Fig. 2 Imposed Motion (Span Direction)



(a) K-NET Sendai Record



(b) JMA Kobe Record

Fig. 3 Response Spectrum

Figs. 2 and 3 show imposed motions for full-scale shake table experiment. K-NET Sendai record is the record observed at K-NET Sendai station during the 2011 off the Pacific coast of Tohoku Earthquake, while JMA Kobe record is the record observed at JMA Kobe observatory during 1995 Kobe earthquake.



For nonseismic ceiling, 5%, 25% and twice of 50% of K-NET Sendai record are imposed. On the other hand, for 1.1G and 2.2G seismic ceiling, 5%, 25%, 50%, 80% and 100% of K-NET Sendai record are imposed first, then 100% and 150% of JMA Kobe record are imposed.

### 3. Experimental Results

#### 3.1. Structural response

Photo 4 shows damage of braces after all excitations. All vertical and lateral braces are buckled due to expansion resulting from yielding braces. There is no specific damage to structural members except for braces, such as columns, girders and beams.



Fig. 4 shows story drift at roof top during K-NET Sendai 100% excitation and Table 3 shows peak story drift at roof top. Story drift at roof top is calculated as displacement measured at center of roof top divided by roof height of 9.09 m. During K-NET Sendai 50% excitation, peak story drift is 0.65% in span direction, which is larger than that of 0.41% in ridge direction. On the other hand, peak story drift is increased to 1.81% in span direction, which is smaller than that of 2.09% in ridge direction. The reason why roof drift in ridge direction is larger than that in span direction in larger excitation levels is yielding of vertical braces and decrement of story stiffness in ridge direction.

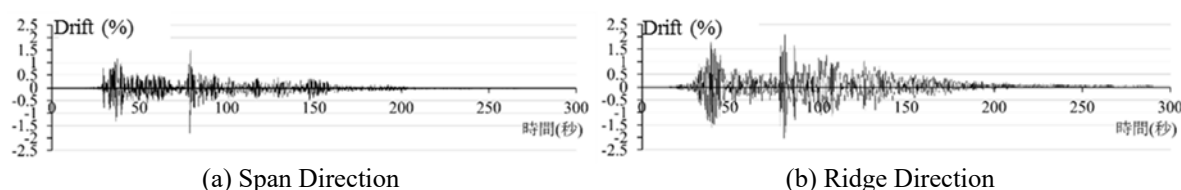


Fig. 4 Story Drift at Roof Top (K-NET Sendai 100% Excitation)

Table 3 Peak Story Drift at Roof Top

Ceiling	Excitation	Drift angle (%)	
		Span	Ridge
Nonseismic Ceiling	K-NET Sendai 25%	0.27	0.17
	K-NET Sendai 50%(1)	0.68	0.42
	K-NET Sendai 50%(2)	0.65	0.52
Seismic Ceiling	K-NET Sendai 25%	0.28	0.18
	K-NET Sendai 50%	0.65	0.41
	K-NET Sendai 80%	1.14	1.03
	K-NET Sendai 100%	1.81	2.09
	JMA Kobe 100%	1.45	3.20
	JMA Kobe 150%	2.05	4.47

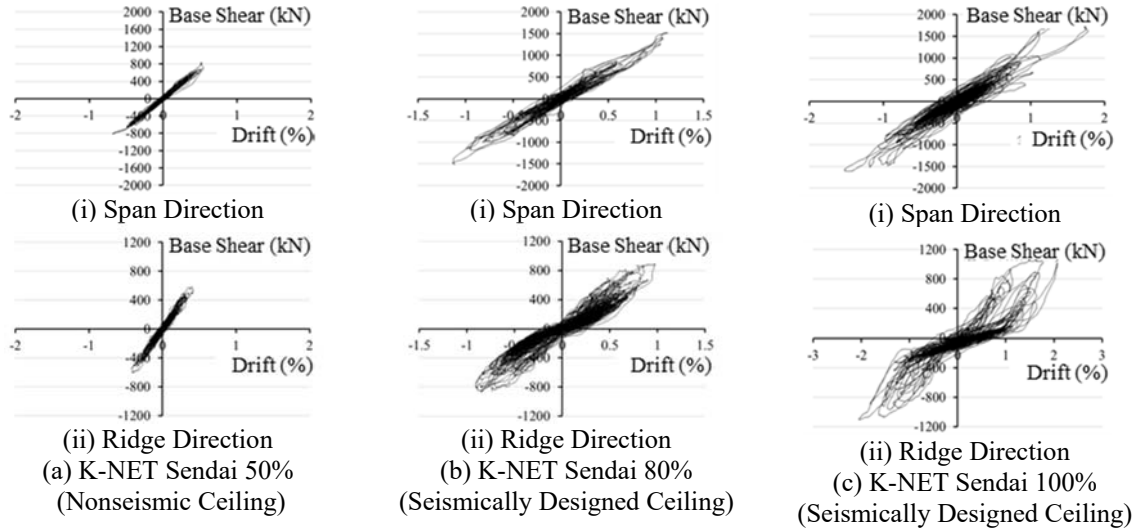


Fig. 5 Base Shear vs. Story Drift Hysteresis during K-NET Sendai Excitations

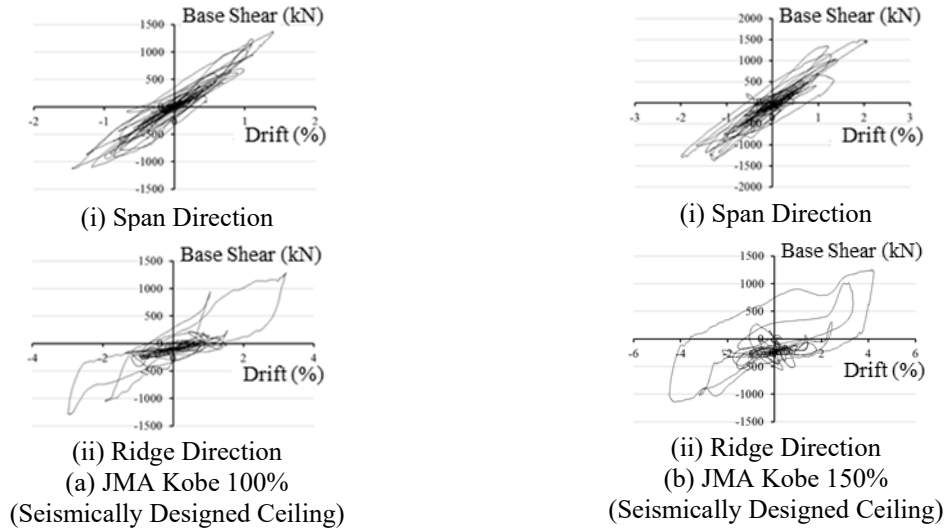


Fig. 6 Base Shear vs. Story Drift Hysteresis during JMA Kobe Excitations

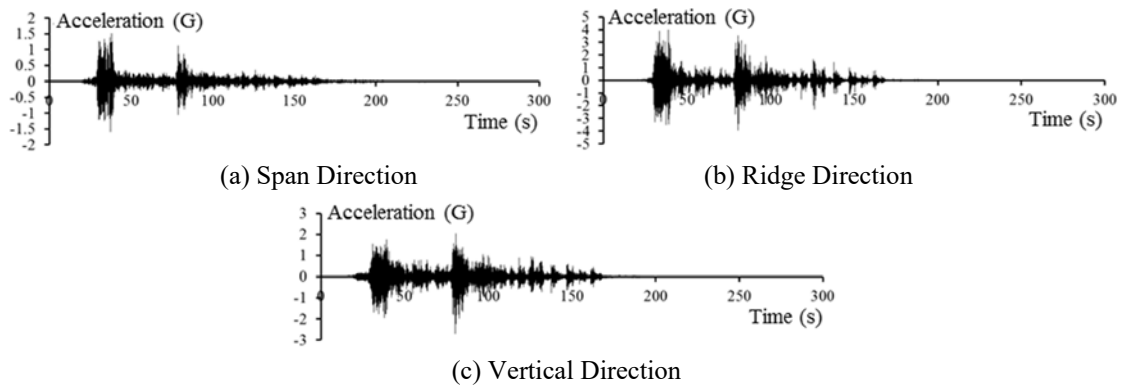


Fig. 7 Roof Acceleration (X4Y5) (Nonseismic Ceiling, 1st K-NET Sendai 50% Excitation)

Figs. 5 and 6 show base shear vs. story drift hysteresis. Base shear is calculated from summation of shear force of column and horizontal component of axial force of braces evaluated from measured strain. As shown in Fig 5(a), the gymnasium specimen remained elastic until K-NET Sendai 50% excitation.

From K-NET Sendai 80%, Columns and vertical braces started to yield. As shown in Fig. 5, especially large measured displacement during JMA Kobe 100% and 150% excitations, bilinear hysteresis with slip response can be identified in shape of hysteresis loop.

Fig. 7 shows roof acceleration at X4Y5 during 1st K-NET Sendai 50% excitation in gymnasium specimen with nonseismic ceiling and Tables 5 and 6 show average of peak values of accelerations measured by 35 accelerometers. In Tables 4 and 5, table acceleration and ceiling acceleration described later are also show for comparison. As shown in Tables 4 and 5, roof acceleration in ridge direction kept constant values of 4.2-4.4G during K-NET Sendai 80% and later excitations because base shear reached its yield value due to yielding of braces.

**Table 4 Average of Peak Acceleration in Gymnasium Specimen with Nonseismic Ceiling**

	Table Accel. (G)			Roof Accel. (G)			Ceiling Accel. (G)		
	Span	Ridge	Vertical	Span	Ridge	Vertical	Span	Ridge	Vertical
K-NET Sendai 25%	0.35	0.20	0.09	1.38	1.97	1.42	1.36	0.88	1.12
K-NET Sendai 50% (1)	0.77	0.44	0.21	2.72	3.35	2.49	6.21	2.76	4.04
K-NET Sendai 50% (2)	0.77	0.46	0.21	2.79	3.48	2.73	7.99	4.15	5.51

**Table 5 Average of Peak Acceleration in Gymnasium Specimen with 1.1G and 2.2G Seismic Ceilings**

	Table Accel. (G)			Roof Accel. (G)			1.1G seismic ceiling Ceiling Accel. (G)			2.2G seismic ceiling Ceiling Accel. (G)		
	Span	Ridge	Vertical	Span	Ridge	Vertical	Span	Ridge	Vertical	Span	Ridge	Vertical
K-NET Sendai 25%	0.40	0.18	0.08	1.25	1.39	1.03	0.86	0.65	1.10	0.88	0.76	1.32
K-NET Sendai 50%	0.77	0.40	0.20	2.37	2.99	2.27	2.03	1.50	2.56	2.07	1.61	2.59
K-NET Sendai 80%	1.18	0.71	0.30	3.98	4.19	3.42	3.34	2.04	4.39	3.32	2.06	4.43
K-NET Sendai 100%	1.36	0.73	0.36	4.23	4.23	3.23	3.71	2.62	4.78	4.14	2.33	5.26
JMA Kobe 100%	0.93	0.78	0.44	3.70	4.23	3.04	8.09	4.48	9.21	5.34	3.40	7.81
JMA Kobe 150%	1.62	1.23	0.73	3.98	4.44	3.18	7.57	4.81	9.18	7.60	4.62	10.59

### 3.2. Collapse mechanism of nonseismic ceiling

Photo 5 shows damage of nonseismic ceiling. During 1st K-NET Sendai 50% excitation, hanging bolts near the top of roof first detached from ceiling joist receivers, then ceiling clips were broken and ceiling panels with ceiling joists warped. During 2nd K-NET Sendai 50% excitation, warped ceiling panels vibrated severely and ceiling panels with ceiling joists fell down. Based on the damage survey after shake table experiments, it was clarified that there is trace of gypsum boards due to uplifting of ceiling panels at the rooftop and less damage of ceiling panels at the edge.

Fig. 8 shows peak values of ceiling accelerations measured from 20 to 35 sec (a-c) and 70 to 80 sec (d-f). As shown in Figs. 8(a) and (d), acceleration in positive span direction was larger in south part of ceiling (upper part in figures) was larger than that in north part of ceiling (lower part in figure). On the other hand, as shown in Figs. 8(b) and (e), acceleration in negative span direction was larger in north part of ceiling was larger than that in south part of ceiling. Maximum acceleration in positive and negative span direction was  $90.6\text{m/s}^2$  at X3Y3 shown in Fig8(b). This large accelerations observed in a half part of ceiling resulted from collisions between walls and ceilings. Based on the maximum acceleration of  $90.6\text{m/s}^2$ , impact force in unit width, which is evaluated from multiplying of unit weight of  $13.1\text{kg/m}^2$  and length of ceiling of  $9.71\text{m}$ , was  $11.5\text{kN/m}$ . Based on the past research on strength of ceiling panels evaluated from in-plain pushover experiment of ceiling panels, it was  $16.1\text{kN/m}$  [2], which is 1.4 times larger than impact force observed in shake table experiment. Thus, the edge of ceiling did not suffer severe damage.





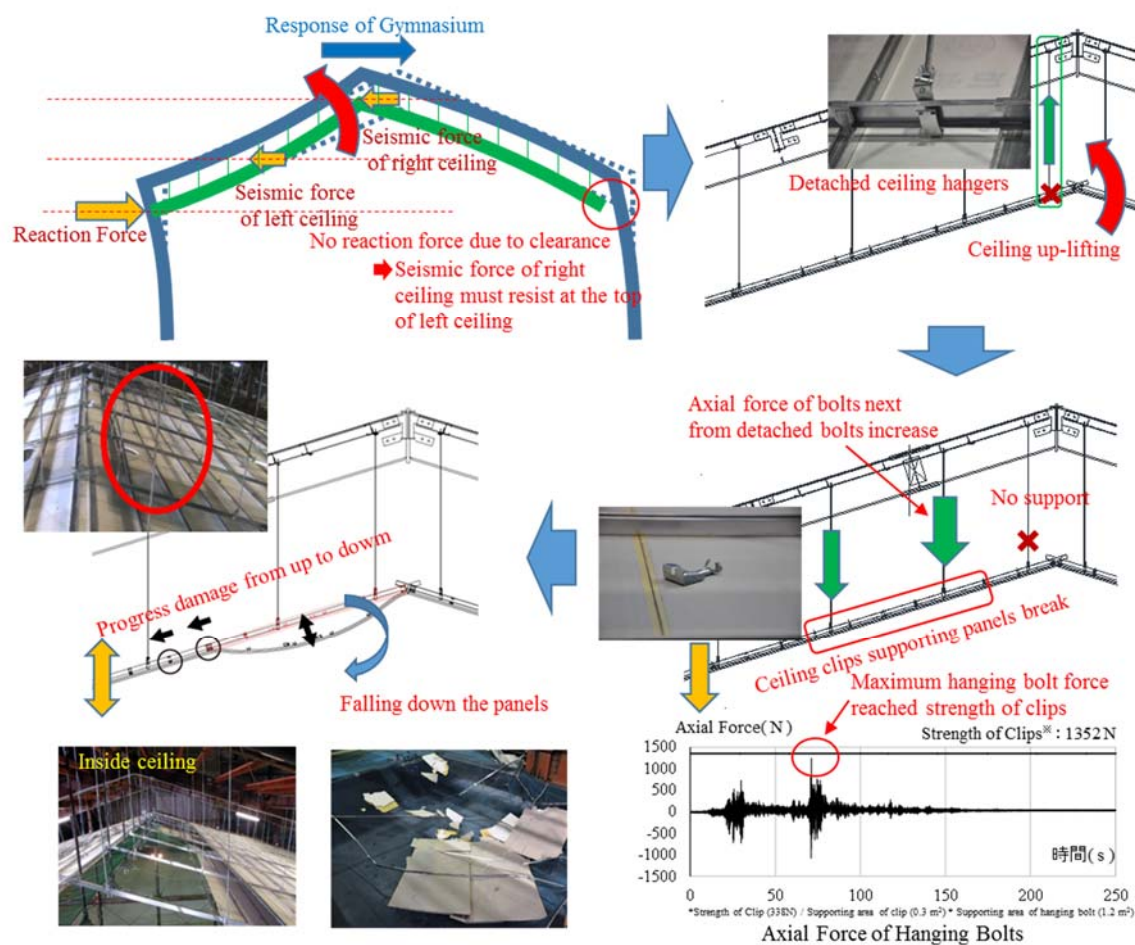


Fig. 9 Collapse Mechanism of Nonseismic Ceiling



(a) 1.1G seismic ceiling



(b) 2.2G seismic ceiling

Photo 6 Damage of 1.1G and 2.2G seismic ceilings after JMA Kobe 150% excitation

with 1.1G seismic ceiling. Failure mechanism of ceiling depends on relations between strength of brace connections and buckling strength of braces.

#### **4. Conclusions**

To clarify the collapse mechanism of ceilings, full-scale shake table experiment on school gymnasium with suspended ceiling was conducted. Based on the experimental results, the following conclusions are deduced;

1. Collapse mechanism of sloped nonseismic ceiling without any seismic countermeasures is clarified. When the ground acceleration acts to building, inertia force acts to ceiling. Because axes of inertia force of left and right ceiling and reaction force is different, moment acts to ceiling and up-lifting of ceiling at rooftop occurs due to its moment. Then ceiling hangers close to rooftop detached due to compression resulting from up-lifting of ceiling. Vertical force acted to hanging bolts next from detached bolts increases. Thus, ceiling clips underneath those hanging bolts break and ceiling panels with ceiling joists warp. Warped ceiling panels vibrate easily and larger vertical vibration result in damage progress from up to down and falling down the panels.
2. Failure mechanism of seismically designed ceiling with braces and clearance at edge of ceiling depends on relation between strength of brace connections and buckling strength of braces. If ceiling has stronger strength of brace connections than buckling strength of braces, ceiling pounds to walls and falls down due to increment of displacement resulting from buckling of ceiling braces. On the other hand, if ceiling has stronger buckling strength of braces than strength of brace connections, ceiling panels fall down due to deformation of ceiling joists resulting from damage of brace connections.

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