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# Table of contents

Volume 602

**2019**

◀ Previous issue    Next issue ▶

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[View all abstracts](#)

---

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## Preface

---

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011001

Welcome Message

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---

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011002

Peer review statement

+ View abstract  PDF

---

## Papers

---

### Sustainable Innovation in Electrical Engineering

---

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012001

Design and Implementation of Microstrip Patch Ultra-wide Band Antenna for Detection of UHF Partial Discharge

Z Nawawi, M A B Sidik, M I Jambak, N Ahmad, M H Ahmad, C L G P Kumar, E P Walidi and Aulia

+ View abstract  PDF

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012002

### Overcurrent relay coordination with grid-connected and islanding capability on distribution network with distributed generation

Adrianti, S Wahyuni and M Nasir

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF**OPEN ACCESS**

012003

### Design of poka-yoke system based on fuzzy neural network for rotary-machinery monitoring

M Muharam and M Latif

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF**OPEN ACCESS**

012004

### Performance of impedance measurement algorithm applied in line with a compensation circuit

N Rohadi

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF**OPEN ACCESS**

012005

### Parametric sensitivity analysis of SEL-421 distance relay algorithms used in compensated line

N Rohadi

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF**OPEN ACCESS**

012006

### The real-time condition monitoring system of gapless arrester based on ZigBee protocol and third harmonic leakage current as indicator parameters

Novizon, S A Ulfiah, Z A Malek, Syafii, N Riska, Aulia and Darwison

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF**OPEN ACCESS**

012007

### Condition based monitoring of gapless surge arrester using electrical and thermal parameters

Novizon, Z A Malek, Syafii, M H Ahmad, Aulia and S A Ulfiah







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012008

### Power loss estimation of polymeric housing surge arrester using leakage current and temperature approach

Novizon, Z A Malek, M H Ahmad, E P Walidi, Aulia, H D Laksono and N Riska

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

- 
- OPEN ACCESS** 012009
- Harmonic analysis in electrical system at Andalas University Hospital
- N Afni, R Nazir, E P Waldi and A Pawawoi
- [+](#) View abstract  PDF
- 
- OPEN ACCESS** 012010
- The tensile properties of alumina and silica bionanocomposite material for high voltage insulation
- Aulia, E P Waldi, M H Setiawan, A Winarto, Darwison, Novizon, Y Nugraha, Abdurrahman, M A Hafizi and Z Nawawi
- [+](#) View abstract  PDF
- 
- OPEN ACCESS** 012011
- Multichannel audio steganography based on MPEG surround using direct sequence spread spectrum
- M Tomas, Baharuddin and I Elfitri
- [+](#) View abstract  PDF
- 
- OPEN ACCESS** 012012
- Voltage profile evaluation based on power flow analysis using Newton Raphson method: Central and South Sumatera Subsystem
- M A Haq, Syafii, H D Laksono and G Hidayat
- [+](#) View abstract  PDF
- 
- OPEN ACCESS** 012013
- Performance analysis of error control coding and diversity in image transmission on wireless channels
- Baharuddin, M Muharam, H Andre and R Angraini
- [+](#) View abstract  PDF
- 
- OPEN ACCESS** 012014
- Performance evaluation of image transmission using diversity selection combining technique
- Baharuddin and R Angraini
- [+](#) View abstract  PDF
- 
- OPEN ACCESS** 012015
- Development of HFCT for partial discharge sensors
- E P Waldi, AY Frenzi, R Fernandez, Darmawan, Darwison, H D Laksono, Aulia, Novizon, A Hazmi, H Abrial, S Arief, Z Nawawi, M H Ahmad and N Hozumi

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

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012016

**Study on static electrification of the PFAE-mineral oil mixture**

A Rajab, H Gumilang, M Tsuchie, M Kozako, M Hikita and T Suzuki

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

---

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012017

**PWM speed control of dc permanent magnet motor using a PIC18F4550 microcontroller**

M W Fatma and M I Hamid

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

---

**OPEN ACCESS**

012018

**Partial discharge characteristics of nanosilica biopolymer under AC voltage**

Aulia, E P Walidi, Darwison, M Anggaravidya, Novizon, M H Setiawan, Y Nugraha, Abdurrahman, M A Hafizi and I Jambak

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

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012019

**Analysis of the unbalanced harmonic propagation in a three-phase power system using a parallel program**

S Yunus, U G S Dinata, R Nazir and Aulia

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

---

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012020

**Morphological characteristics of preliminary breakdown pulses of hybrid intra cloud-negative cloud-to-ground lightning at low latitude**

P Emeraldi, M I Hamid and A Hazmi

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---

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012021

**Increasing the quality and power capacity of HERIC PV-Inverter through multilevel topology implementation**

M I Hamid and D Ardiansyah

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

---

**OPEN ACCESS**

012022

**Dipole planar bowtie printed antenna for ism application**

H Andre, R Fernandez and Baharuddin

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

**OPEN ACCESS**

012023

## Improving the quality and quantity of cinnamon drying process using art cave in Lambung Bukit West Sumatra

A U Baiqi, P P Utami, D Anugrah, A A Fauzan, W S Ningsih and M I Rusydi

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF**OPEN ACCESS**

012024

## Design of fuzzy logic controller for temperature control of small-scale food storage

M Latif, M Muharam, Darmawan, Darwison and R R Costa

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF**OPEN ACCESS**

012025

## Shape object selection using the chi-square method

R Kurnia, F Kurnia and Fitrilina

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF**OPEN ACCESS**

012026

## Characteristics of acoustic signals from lightning using a microphone array observation system

A Hazmi, P Emeraldi and M I Hamid

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF**OPEN ACCESS**

012027

## A wireless monitoring system for comparison photovoltaic and photovoltaic thermal characteristics

Krismadinata, R Lapisa and Asnil

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF**OPEN ACCESS**

012028

## Robot mobile control based on three EMG signals using an artificial neural network

M I Rusydi, I Aryeni, Joefrinaldo, Z Romadhon and A Rusydi

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF**OPEN ACCESS**

012029

## Recognition of horizontal gaze motion based on electrooculography using tsugeno fuzzy logic

Muhammad Ilhamdi Rusydi, Mardiah Bahri, Rizky Syahreza Ryaldi, Fauzan Akbar, Kojiro Matsuhita and Minoru Sasaki

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

---

**OPEN ACCESS** 012030

### Towards hand gesture-based control of virtual keyboards for effective communication

Muhammad Ilhamdi Rusydi, Oktrison, Willy Azhar, Samuel W Oluwarotimi and Febdian Rusydi

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

---

**OPEN ACCESS** 012031

### Development of rogowski coil sensor for partial discharge detection

E P Waldi, A Y Frenzi, R Fernandez, Darmawan, Darwison, H D Laksono, Aulia, A Hazmi, A Andre, H Abrial, S Arief, Z Nawawi, M H Ahmad and N Hozumi

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

---

**OPEN ACCESS** 012032

### Static VAR compensator for improving voltage profiles and transmission losses: Case study in Batam

S Yunus, Y I Rahmi, R Nazir, Aulia and U G S Dinata

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

---

**OPEN ACCESS** 012033

### Modification of arms patch of double layer printed antenna for partial discharge detection

U Khayam and Y M Hamdani

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

---

**OPEN ACCESS** 012034

### Partial discharge signal denoising by using hard threshold and soft threshold methods and wavelet transformation

A Zaeni, T Kasnalestari and U Khayam

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

---

**OPEN ACCESS** 012035

### Preliminary results on the development of monoester type insulating oil from coconut oil

A Rajab, F E Putra, J S Ramadhani, M S I Silitonga, R Kurniawan, K Qibran, M Latif and M I Hamid

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

---

## Industrial and Manufacturing Systems








---

**OPEN ACCESS** 012036

### Formulation of optimization model of raw material composition to achieve clinker quality standards (Case study PT Semen Padang Plant IV)

S Rijal, A S Indrapriyatna and A H B Adi

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

- 
- OPEN ACCESS** 012037  
A system for improving suppliers evaluation: the case of procurement in educational institution (Case study: Andalas University)  
M Farid, R A Hadiguna and I Kamil  
[+](#) View abstract  PDF
- 
- OPEN ACCESS** 012038  
An evaluation on Dr. M. Djamil Hospital Padang parking lot capacity  
Alfadhlani, W S F Yasrin and F Afrinaldi  
[+](#) View abstract  PDF
- 
- OPEN ACCESS** 012039  
Analysis of the application of quality management systems in the rubber industry based on ISO 9001:2015  
N Fajrah, N T Putri and E Amrina  
[+](#) View abstract  PDF
- 
- OPEN ACCESS** 012040  
Setup time efficiencies of quick die change system in metal stamping process  
R K Arief and Q Nurlaila  
[+](#) View abstract  PDF
- 
- OPEN ACCESS** 012041  
A framework to improve equipment effectiveness of manufacturing process - a case study of pressing station of crude palm oil production, Indonesia  
A Susilawati, A Tasri and D Arief  
[+](#) View abstract  PDF
- 
- OPEN ACCESS** 012042  
Identification criteria and indicators of palm oil industrial solid waste processing technology  
A Ishak and A Y B Ali  
[+](#) View abstract  PDF
- 
- OPEN ACCESS** 012043  
Design of ergonomic grated coconut squeezer  
D C Dewi, Novrianti, C Handayani, O Wulandari and I Nurhayati  
[+](#) View abstract  PDF
- 
- OPEN ACCESS** 012044

## The effect of alum addition on shrinkage temperature, chemical properties, and morphology in the manufacture of vegetable-tanned leather

E Kasmudjiastuti, B Pidhatika, G Griyanitasari and I F Pahlawan

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012045

## Assessing safety performance of tire retreading production employees

P Fithri, E Wirdianto and A Yoselina

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012046

## Chili sauce production planning model considering raw material availability: An application of Mixed Integer Linear Programming Method

Jonrinaldi, A H B Adi and R Novira

[+](#) View abstract  PDF

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012047

## Designing of welding jig for productivity improvement and cost-savings in thresher's cover assembly: A Case Study on CV Citra Dragon Assembly Plant

I H Mulyadi, N T Putri and F Muhammad

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012048

## Technical characteristics' determination of crumb rubber product by using quality function deployment (QFD) phase I

R Ginting and Widodo

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012049

## Optimization of significant factors of cement compressive strength at PT Semen Padang

P Fithri, D Meilani, N T Putri and F H Chotimah

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012050

## Waste assessment using a lean approach in receiving process of container terminal: a case of Teluk Bayur Port

E Amrina, I Kamil and D Rahmad

[+](#) View abstract  PDF

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012051



## The evaluation of bullwhip effect on distribution system of a supply chain using centralized demand information method

I Kholidasari, JR A Bidiawati and M E Sari

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---

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---

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012052

### The use of protein binder from shaving waste for leather finishing: Judging from the physical, chemical, and morphological properties of lizard skin leather

S Sutyasmi, I F Pahlawan and G Griyanitasari

[+](#) View abstract  PDF

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012053

### Food packaging development of bioplastic from basic waste of cassava peel (*manihot uttilisima*) and shrimp shell

Dasumiati, N Saridewi and M Malik

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012054

### Effect of tannery wastewater exposure on chromium detected in the gill of *oreochromis niloticus*

T Edwin, T Ihsan and H T Tamsin

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---

**OPEN ACCESS**

012055

### Minimization of household hazardous solid waste (HHSW) with 4R concepts (reduce, reuse, recycle and recovery) in Padang City, Indonesia

Y Ruslinda, S Raharjo, Y Dewilda, Hidayatullah and R Aziz

[+](#) View abstract  PDF

---

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012056

### Greenhouse knockdown in Merauke

M Alahudin, R D Latuheru and N L S Suryaningsih

[+](#) View abstract  PDF

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012057

### Distribution of organic contamination based on depth stratification in Maninjau Lake, Indonesia

P S Komala, A Nur and I Nazhifa

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

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**OPEN ACCESS**

012058

Effect of pipe diameter changes on the properties of fluid in closed channels using Osborne Reynold Apparatus

A Nur, R Afrianita and R D T F Ramli

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012059

Study of recycling potential of solid waste of tourist area in Pariaman City

R Aziz and Mira

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---

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012060

The effect of additional vegetables and fruits waste on the quality of compost of cassava chip industry solid waste on takakura composter

Yommi Dewilda, Rizki Aziz and Restu Ayu Handayani

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

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012061

Effects of different pre-treatment methods on anaerobic mixed microflora for hydrogen production and COD reduction from domestic effluent

B Primasari, M Z A Tamin and M A H Mustafa

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---

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012062

Spatial distribution of coliform bacteria in Batang Arau River, Padang, West Sumatera, Indonesia

D. Helard, S Indah and M Wilandari

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## Mechanical and Thermal Systems

---

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012063

Analysis of cracks in the welded zone of stainless steel pipe used in high-pressure decomposer equipment

Husaini, M Najib and I Hasanuddin

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012064

## The determination of workspace and the performance evaluation of PRoM-120 with 3 and 4 kinematic constants

Adriyan and Sufiyanto

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012065

## Thermal characteristics and phase transformation of iron ores containing varied crystalline water with coal mixtures

M M F Sinuhaji, S Harjanto and A Hapid

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012066

## The influence of some solution candidate on the performance of boundary element inverse analysis in detecting rebar corrosion

S Fonna, Gunawarman, S Huzni and A K Ariffin

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---

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012067

## Sound absorption characteristics of the natural fibrous material from coconut coir, oil palm fruit bunches, and pineapple leaf

M Rusli, M Irsyad, H Dahlan, Gusriwandi and M Bur

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---

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012068

## Effect of garlic oil as lubricant additive into coconut and palm oils on the physical and tribological properties

D Gasni, D Chandra, A A Putra and R Fajri

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012069

## Natural frequencies of twisted cantilever beam

J Malta, Jefri, M Bur and E Satria

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---

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012070

## Corrosion Resistance of $\beta$ type titanium (TNTZ) in 3%NaCl solution

J Affi, Gunawarman, Y Yetri, H Fajri, D Juliadmi, N F Nuswantoro, Nurbaiti, S Fonna, D H Tjong and M Manjas

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012071

## Hydroxyapatite Coatings on Titanium Alloy TNTZ using Electrophoretic Deposition

Gunawarman, N F Nuswantoro, D Juliadmi, H Fajri, A Budiman, D H Tjong and M Manjas

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---

**OPEN ACCESS**

012072

## Synthesis and characterization of calcium precursor for hydroxyapatite synthesis from blood clam shell (*Anadara antiquata*) using planetary ball mill process

Gunawarman, J Affi, Y Yetri, Ilhamdi, D Juliadmi, N F Nuswantoro, H Fajri, A Ahli, R Gundini and Hadi Nur

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

---

**OPEN ACCESS**

012073

## Production of pig iron nugget from low-grade iron ore and pyrolyzed oil-palm-empty-fruit-bunch composites

A Setiawan, R P Suratha, S Harjanto and E Kusriani

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---

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012074

## Experimental evaluation of tuned liquid column damper and tuned mass damper in a space structure model

L Son, M Bur and A D Andria

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---

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012075

## Atmospheric corrosion map of structural steel in industrial area: a preliminary investigation

S Huzni, Affandi, I Tanjung and S Fonna

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

---

**OPEN ACCESS**

012076

## Corrosion potential of reinforced steel in reinforced concrete in Kabupaten Bireun: Analysis of groundwater content used as a concrete mixture

R D I Kurnia, Suhaimi, S Huzni and S Fonna

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF

---

**OPEN ACCESS**

012077

## Design of solid desiccant air conditioning system

D A Saputra, N A Saputra, L Susanti, P Fithri and D I Putra

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---

**OPEN ACCESS**

012078

## Numerical analysis of U-shaped hysteresis steel damper with energy absorber for seismic areas

E Satria, L Son, M Bur, M D Akbar and S Haris

[+](#) [View abstract](#)  [PDF](#)

---

**OPEN ACCESS**

012079

## Optimization of matrix compositions of Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, SiO<sub>2</sub>, Caolin, and CaO on the mechanical properties of a geopolymer composite with short carbon fiber

J Akmal, M Badaruddin, M K Ismoyo and S D Yuwono

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---

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012080

## Characterization on particle size distribution of reduced lateritic nickel ore using biomass carbon reduction

F Abidin, S Harjanto, A Kawigraha and N V Permatasari

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---

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012081

## The effect of solar water heater performance by variation of the plate shaped

D Harun, M I Maulana and Akhyar

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012082

## The experimental performance of the semi-cylindrical type of solar concentrator collector on the addition of heat storage material

D Harun, Zulfadhli and Akhyar

[+](#) [View abstract](#)  [PDF](#)

---

**OPEN ACCESS**

012083

## Analysis cutting forces and surface roughness of fibre reinforced polymer for end mill processes

F Ridwan, R Havendri, O Susanti, Gusriwandi and Yulhizhar

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---

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012084

## Surface characterization of the ceramic coating process on aluminum matrix composite reinforced particulate

H Sukma, D Rahmalina, B Sulaksono and E A Pane

[+](#) [View abstract](#)  [PDF](#)

---

**OPEN ACCESS**

012085

## The potential of rising husk fiber/native sago starch reinforced biocomposite to automotive component

Nusyirwan, H Abral, M Hakim and R Vadia

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---

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012086

## The effect of particle compositions on the activation energy of the pa6/bagasse composite

S Thalib, S Huzni, S Fonna, C H Azhari and S Zakaria

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---

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012087

## Hardness and impact energy absorbed produced by Q&T steel and DQ&T teel

Yurianto, Pratikto, S Rudy, S Wahyono, Y Eflita, S Agus and U Yusuf

[+](#) [View abstract](#)  [PDF](#)

---

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012088

## Mechanical properties of mild steel by adding *Theobroma Cacao* Peels Extract (TCPE) inhibitor

Y Yetri, Gunawarman, R Hidayati and A Zamri

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012089

## The needs to investigate the effect of road surface vibrations to the fatigue life of a coil spring

M Ali, Husaini, T E Putra and N Ali

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---

**OPEN ACCESS**

012090

## Corrosion behavior of Ti6Al4V ELI coated by bioceramic HA in artificial saliva at fluctuating temperatures

R Muharni, Gunawarman and Y Yetri

[+](#) [View abstract](#)  [PDF](#)

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**OPEN ACCESS**

012091

## In vitro of Mg-1.6 Gd alloys after hot extruded for biomaterial application

O Susanti, E W Bachtiar, S Harjanto and Gunawarman

[+](#) [View abstract](#)  [PDF](#)

---

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012092

## Effect of coating time and protective current on thickness of paint layer of Steel ST-37 by continuous painting

Z Mansjur, Arrijani and M F Suharto

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---

**OPEN ACCESS**

012093

### Effect of Pouring Temperatures on Porosity and Mechanical Properties of Gravity Die Casting Magnesium Alloy

I P Nanda, M H Jahare, M H Idris, S B Kumar, M H Hassim and A Arafat

[+](#) [View abstract](#)  [PDF](#)

---

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012094

### Mechanical and degradation properties of zinc adopted magnesium alloys for biomedical application

I P Nanda, M H Hassim, M H Idris, M H Jahare, S S Abdulmalik and A Arafat

[+](#) [View abstract](#)  [PDF](#)

---

## Sustainable Civil Engineering Solutions

---

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012095

### The Effects of the distance between ground-sill and double cylinder-piers against the scour patterns

M Mera and M Thaahaa

[+](#) [View abstract](#)  [PDF](#)

---

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012096

### Analytical Network Process (ANP) for priority setting of strategic roads handling at Tebo Regency

Yosritzal, J Permana, B Istijono, B Hidayat, T Ophiyandri and H Gunawan

[+](#) [View abstract](#)  [PDF](#)

---

**OPEN ACCESS**

012097

### Simulation of the effect of floodway on Batang Kandis River flood control

Junaidi, S Marona and Dalrino

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012098

### Identification and analysis of application of Construction Management System (CMS) in the implementation of construction management

B Hidayat, A Suraji and R Frankly

[+](#) [View abstract](#)  [PDF](#)

**OPEN ACCESS**

012099

### Intersection performance evaluation and designing intersection at concourse between arterial road and ramp of Medan-Kualanamu-Tebing Tinggi Highway


Amrizal and A H S Harahap

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012100

### Sensitivity analysis of stormpav composite pavement

E E Putri, F J H Rewani, M A Mannan, W H W Ibrahim, M R Kabit, L S Tirau, R A Chan and R Buking

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012101

### Infrastructure maintenance system for community development projects to improve the quality of infrastructure services in West Sumatra Province

G Vitri and H Herman

[+](#) View abstract  PDF**OPEN ACCESS**

012102

### The Study Of Riverbed Change And Bed-load Transport In The Middle Segment Of The Batang Kuranji River

Junaidi, E D E Putra, A Junaidi, Sunaryo and Nurhamidah

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012103

### Determining the priority of new road development according to the West Sumatera provincial government perception

R D Susanti, Purnawan and Yossyafra

[+](#) View abstract  PDF**OPEN ACCESS**

012104

### Shear behavior of fly ash reinforced concrete beam without shear reinforcement

A E Nasution, R Kurniawan and R Thamrin

[+](#) View abstract  PDF**OPEN ACCESS**

012105

### Determining the priority criteria and ranking of provincial bridge maintenance in West Sumatra using a combination of the Fuzzy Analytical Hierarchy Process and VIKOR-Modification methods

Yossyafra, N Angelia, Yosritzal, Meyadtri and D I Mazni

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012106

**Marshall immersion test of warm mix asphalt polymer using Bayat natural zeolite**

A T Handayani, S N Peni and H Pandita

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF**OPEN ACCESS**

012107

**Analysis of water balance on Lake Maninjau, West Sumatera**

Sunaryo, Y D Nola, B Istijono and Junaidi

[+ View abstract](#)  PDF**OPEN ACCESS**

012108

**Seismic retrofitting analysis using concrete jacketing and shear wall on dental hospital building of Andalas University**

Fauzan, F A Ismail and Z A Jauhari

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# Design of solid desiccant air conditioning system

*by* Dendi Adi Saputra

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To cite this article: D A Saputra *et al* 2019 *IOP Conf. Ser.: Mater. Sci. Eng.* **602** 012077

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## Design of solid desiccant air conditioning system

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**Abstract.** Currently, solid desiccant air conditioning system (SDACS) is an alternative to utilize solar energy to resolve environmental and energy issues resulting from the use of conventional vapor compression of air conditioning systems. SDACS can maintain the thermal comfort of a room with optimization of solar thermal energy and minimal use of electrical power. Present work in this paper is to design a solid desiccant air conditioning system of a closed room with 18 m<sup>3</sup> of total volume. The desiccant wheel is used to dehumidify air in the room, and evaporative cooling will be decreasing the temperature of the air. The result shows the lower temperature can be reached 24<sup>o</sup>C.

### 1. Introduction

Indoor work trend increases at this time. The elevations of information technology utilization make people can do their work without leaving their room/house. It causes an increased requirement for indoor thermal comfort standards for workers/employees who perform activities. Thermal comfort standards are met by using the air conditioning machine (AC) which is one of the widely used solutions.

Currently, the use of air conditioning machine still uses vapor compression refrigeration system which requires significant electrical energy consumption. Energy requirements for air conditioning machines are predicted increase due to the rising standard of comfort and global warming issues. Isaac et al. [1] have predicted energy requirements for cooling systems in the world building, which will increase energy requirement about 4000 TWh in 2050 and will continue to 10,000 TWh in 2100. Thus, the renewable energy utilization to fulfill the energy requirement for cooling/air conditioning system needs to be done.

From several alternatives of renewable energy that can be harnessed, solar energy is the best alternative renewable energy that can be used. Solar energy can be used as a source of energy for air conditioning systems in two ways: through the process of converting solar energy into electrical energy and process for direct utilization of the solar energy. In the first process, the use of photovoltaic cells in solar energy utilization will convert solar energy into electrical energy, and then electricity will be used to operate the conventional vapor compression system in air conditioning system. With this system, simple construction and high efficiency are the main advantages. However, high investment



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costs for equipment and energy storage media (battery) and limited cooling during the day cause lack of technology implementation.

In the cooling system driven by solar heat, the solar heat is collected through a solar collector which is used to produce mechanical energy to compress the refrigerant vapor in a conventional vapor compression system or as a heat source for the generator to the cooling system of the sorption (absorption). The utilization of solar energy through thermal processes provide greater economic returns than the use of solar energy through solar cells (photovoltaic). It is because of the ability to provide the maximum cooling effect when the maximum input of solar radiation occurs at the same time. When the moment of the small size of solar radiation so the cooling load will be low, and thus no requirement for a large thermal storage tank to overcome the influence of the season. [1]

**2. Literature Review**

*2.1. Solid desiccant air conditioning systems*

The solid desiccant cooling system operates based on the open sorption cycle with adsorption working principles by absorbing water vapor contained in the air, and then the dry air is lowered to room temperature by using a sensible heat exchanger and cooling coil. The air conditioning system required a desiccant wheel to carry out an absorption process which consists of small hexagonal channels to form honeycomb formation. The desiccant wheel is continuously spinning very slowly through two separate airflows [5]. The first stream is air flow process which dehumidifiers by desiccant and the second flow are air flow regeneration or reactivation. Air temperature reactivation of silica gel rang from 50 - 160 °C. In the visualization, the principle of the solid desiccant cooling system is shown in Figure 1.

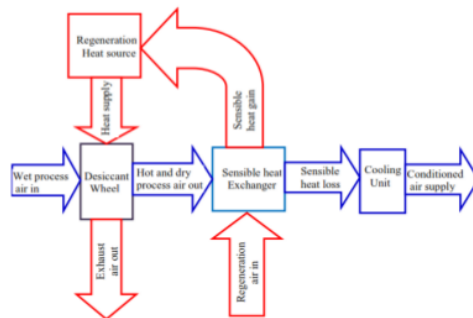


Figure 1. Working principle of solid desiccant cooling system [2]

*2.2. The Cycle of Desikan*

All desiccant function is in the same way by movement of water vapor. It caused by the difference between the surface pressure of water vapor and the around water pressure. When the vapor pressure at the surface is lower than air, the desiccant will bind moisture. When the surface pressure of water vapor is higher than the surrounding air, the desiccant will release water vapor.

After desiccant is dried (reactivated) with the heat, the vapor pressure becomes high, so the ability to absorb water vapor becomes small. When the desiccant is cooling down, it will reduce surface pressure so that it can absorb more water vapor. The full cycle is shown in Figure 2.



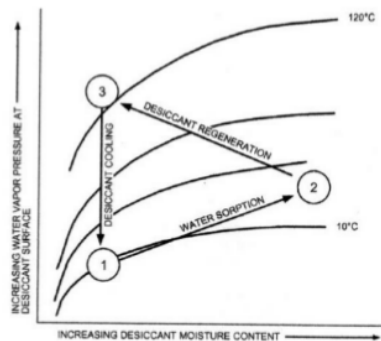


Figure 2. Desiccant regeneration cycle [6]

### 2.3. Heat Exchanger

The heat exchanger is a device for transfer energy due to temperature changes that can function as a heater or cooler. The heat exchanger is designed to perform heat transfer functions between fluid can take place efficiently. Heat transfer occurs due to direct or indirect contact.

### 4.4. Evaporative Cooler

Evaporative cooling process occurs when water vapor is added to the air which has a relative humidity below 100%. The relative humidity is a quantity that depends on the temperature of the dry and wet ball from the air. If the relative humidity is going low, so the potential for evaporative cooling will be greater. Evaporative cooling process can be seen in Figure 3.

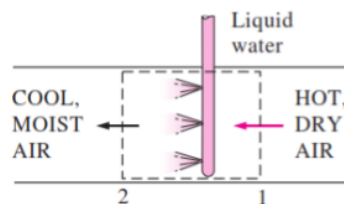


Figure 3. Evaporative cooler [7]

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As described in the introduction, this study aims to (1) design solar power solid desiccant air conditioning system based on the criteria of thermal comfort in indoor, (2) determining empirically operational conditions optimum for the system designed and (3) technical evaluation prototype based on the requirements of thermal comfort. For the second purposes a test will be carried out, and the information from test result is used to determine the optimal operating conditions.

This study begins by determining the design concept of solar power solid desiccant air conditioning systems, design specifications, the components characteristics, layout, analysis (using heat transfer concept and thermodynamics), component determination obtain the results of the design of air conditioning system. After getting design results, the design of the system is carried out.

### 3.1. Design

#### 3.1.1 The Design Concept

The design concept of an air conditioning system is to utilize solar heat as an energy source to perform the function of decreasing temperature in a room — the air conditioning system that will be designed using a solid desiccant as a moisture absorber. Also, some equipment to aid air circulation and cooling processes will be integrated into this prototype.

#### 3.1.2 Design Specifications

As a limitation (constraints) in the design of solar power solid desiccant air conditioning systems, the following design specifications are determined as follows:

##### A. Dimensions workspace

- Long : 3 m
- Wide: 2 m
- High : 3 m

##### B. Air conditioning systems

- Environmental temperature (max) : 38<sup>0</sup>C
- Temperatures to be achieved: 16<sup>0</sup>C - 25<sup>0</sup>C
- The capacity of workers in the workspace: 2 (max)
- Using a solid desiccant wheel
- The desiccant material used is silica gel which main material is SiO<sub>2</sub> solid wheel and transparent.

### 3.2. Determinations of Components

At this stage, the component characteristics are determined by the design specifications that have been set. It aims to identify the main components and auxiliary air conditioning system in the room.

#### 3.2.1. Layout

In the process of determining the components of the air conditioning system, it is divided into two types of components, namely standard components and specialized components. For the type of standard components will be determined by using an existing catalog, such as the evaporator component, condenser, expansion valve, and pump. For determination, the specific component is done using the basic calculation in advance as a way to know the dimensions of the components that are designed, such as the cooling load of the room, generator tubes, absorber, and solar collectors. After the air conditioning system component set, it will determine the ideal component location. The layout plan for the prototype component can be seen in Figure 5.

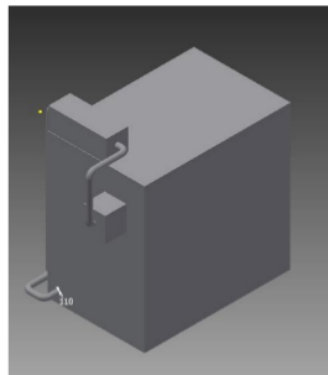


Figure 4. The layout design of air conditioning engine components

### 3.2.2. Determination of Dimension or Cooling System Component Selection

In the process of determining the component dimensions. The system is done with basic calculations in advance as a way to know the dimensions of the components that are designed, then the result of the calculation are adjusted to the catalog or easily found in the market as a way to obtain additional data regarding the dimensions of cooling system components.

### 3.2.3. Detailed Design

After the design process is done, then the results of the design are expressed in technical drawings. The result of the cooling system design will be drawn using Autodesk Inventor 2013 Student Version. Technical drawings will serve to simplify the process of making the cooling system.

### 3.3. Manufacture Cooling System

After the design and drawing design completed, the manufacture of the cooling system will be made. The preparation is carried out by several stages:

1. The first stage  
Creating a test room that resembles a box room area of 6 m<sup>2</sup>. It is used to test the circumstances or air temperature in the room.
2. The second stage  
Manufacture of desiccant wheel, heater, pump selection, and fan selection suitable for the solar power solid desiccant cooling system. The entire manufacturing process was carried out in the manufacturing workshop and the related laboratories in the Department of Mechanical Engineering and Industrial Engineering, Andalas University.
3. The third stage  
The assembly process of cooling system components. After all, components have been selected and made. The assembly process is carried out, both the installation of desiccant wheels, fans, pumps, solar collectors, and heater.

### 3.4. Experiment

Implementation of experiments was conducted with the following stages [11]:

1. Formulation of the problem  
Technical and economic evaluation of design results requires empirical validation. As well as to obtain optimum operating conditions, the empirical approach is treated considering the limitations of mathematical models on real prototypes.
2. Goal setting  
For purpose determination, identify the characteristics of the output must be done. In this study, the output is the yield of oil separation. Whereas, the purpose of the experiment was to evaluate the effect of desiccant wheel rotation on the performance of the air conditioning system made. It is based on the hypothesis of the relationship between rotation and performance of the prototype.

### 3.5. Testing and Data Collection

The tests to be performed are:

- Testing the lowest temperature that can be achieved by the system.
- Testing the chamber room temperature changing and components cooling engine.
- Humidity measurement of the test room during the test

## 4. Result and Discussion

### 4.1. Performance of the Test Chamber Cooling System

Experiments carried out useful for testing the performance of the cooling system with the first step of measuring the temperature of the dry ball ( $T_{db}$ ) and relative humidity ( $\phi$ ) At the input and output desiccant wheel as well as direct evaporative cooling. At the desiccant wheel input, the measured temperature is the environmental temperature while the output temperature is in the system that is the

air temperature after passing the desiccant wheel, then for evaporative cooling temperature measured inside the system is the air temperature before it entering the evaporative cooler while the output temperature is measured in the test room. Results of temperature testing and relative humidity are used to find the value of a humidity specific air, which uses a psychrometric diagram.

**Table 1.** The thermodynamic properties of air before and after passing desiccant

Time	Before Entering Desiccant			After Entering Desiccant			m	MRC
	Tdb1	RH1	W1	Tdb2	RH2	W2		
0	28	69	16	35	54	19	0.447	-1.341
15	29	70	18	34	54	18	0.447	0
30	31	74	21.5	33	57	17.5	0.447	1.788
45	30	73	20.5	33	35	11.3	0.447	4.1124
60	31	74	21.4	32	35	11	0.447	4.6488

The psychrometric diagram is used to find the value of specific humidity, which is this specific humidity is useful for searching for desiccant dryer performance value by calculating the moisture removal rate (MRC), which can be determined by the following equation:

$$\dot{m} = \rho \cdot v \cdot A \tag{1}$$

$$\dot{m} = 1,2 \frac{kg}{m^3} \cdot 0,08 m^2 \cdot 4,66 \frac{m}{s}$$

$$\dot{m} = 0,447 \frac{kg}{s}$$

$$MRC = \dot{m} (\omega_{inlet} - \omega_{outlet}) \tag{2}$$

$$MRC = 0,447 \frac{kg}{s} (16 - 19)$$

$$MRC = -1,341$$

**Table 2.** The thermodynamic properties of air before and after passing through an evaporative cooler

Time	Before Entering The Cooler			After Entering The Cooler			m	QC
	Tdb3	RH3	W3	Tdb4	RH4	W4		
0	32	54	16	26	85	19	0.447	2.6954
15	31	54	15.2	26	84	17	0.447	2.2462
30	32	57	16.1	26	84	17	0.447	2.6954
45	33	35	11.3	25	82	16.5	0.447	3.5939
60	31	35	9.2	24	76	16	0.447	3.1446

From the temperature difference of dry ball before entering and after entering the cooling, the cooling capacity can be found using the equation:

$$Q_c = \dot{m} \cdot cp \cdot (T_{db3} - T_{db4}) \quad (3)$$

$$Q_c = 0,447 \frac{kg}{s} \cdot 1,005 \frac{kJ}{kg \cdot ^\circ C} \cdot (32 - 26) ^\circ C$$

$$Q_c = 2,6954 kW$$

#### 4.2. Wheels Desiccant System Performance

In the design desiccant cooling system, the air from the environment enters the desiccant wheel in stage 1 to 2. In stage 1-2, there is a reduction in the water content of the incoming air or dehumidifying process. At stage 2-3, the dehumidifying process is still being processed through a heat rotary wheel. The output in this process, The air humidity decreases and followed by the decrease in temperature. In the 3-4 stage, dry air will be cooled by evaporative cooling. The lowest temperature that can be achieved by the system is 24°C.

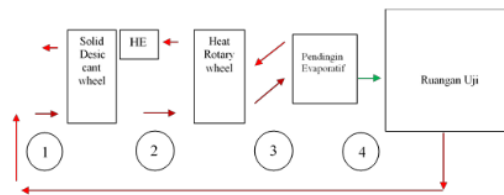


Figure 5. The cycle process of solid desiccant

#### 5. Conclusions And Recommendations

Based on research that has been done obtained some conclusions as follows:

1. The desiccant cooling system has been made with a volume of 18 m<sup>3</sup>.
2. The solid desiccant system has been able to work, have been able to reduce the input air humidity by reducing the rate of water/moisture removal rate (MRC): -1.341.
3. The designed cooling capacity is 2.6954 kW, rounded up to 2.7 kW.

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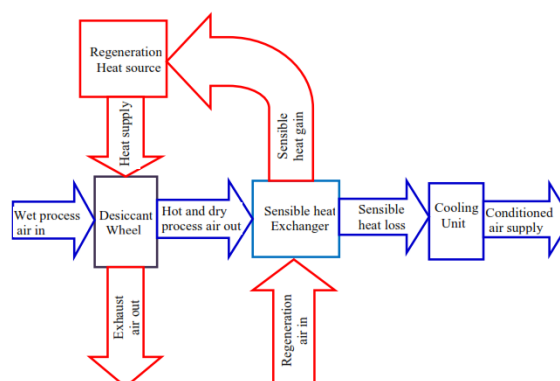


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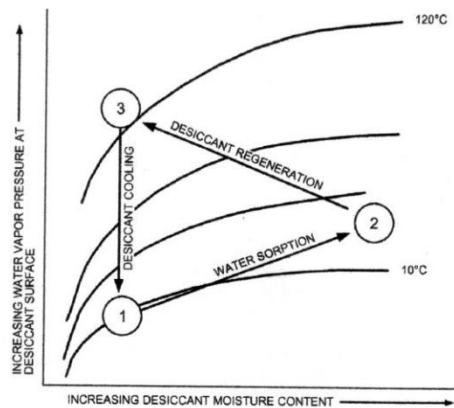


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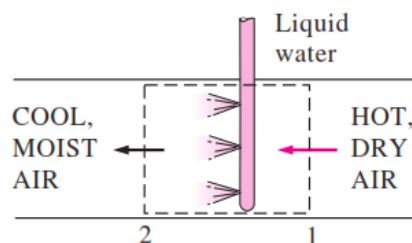


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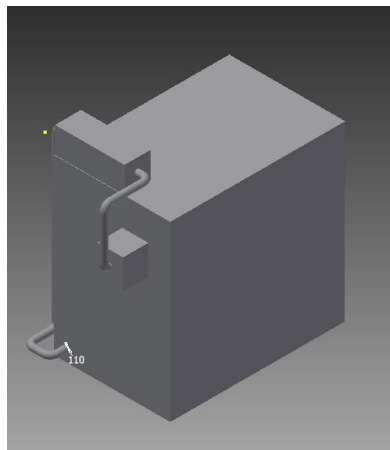


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### 3.2.3. Detailed Design

After the design process is done, then the results of the design are expressed in technical drawings. The result of the cooling system design will be drawn using Autodesk Inventor 2013 Student Version. Technical drawings will serve to simplify the process of making the cooling system.

### 3.3. Manufacture Cooling System

After the design and drawing design completed, the manufacture of the cooling system will be made. The preparation is carried out by several stages:

1. The first stage  
Creating a test room that resembles a box room area of 6 m<sup>2</sup>. It is used to test the circumstances or air temperature in the room.
2. The second stage  
Manufacture of desiccant wheel, heater, pump selection, and fan selection suitable for the solar power solid desiccant cooling system. The entire manufacturing process was carried out in the manufacturing workshop and the related laboratories in the Department of Mechanical Engineering and Industrial Engineering, Andalas University.
3. The third stage  
The assembly process of cooling system components. After all, components have been selected and made. The assembly process is carried out, both the installation of desiccant wheels, fans, pumps, solar collectors, and heater.

### 3.4. Experiment

Implementation of experiments was conducted with the following stages [11]:

1. Formulation of the problem  
Technical and economic evaluation of design results requires empirical validation. As well as to obtain optimum operating conditions, the empirical approach is treated considering the limitations of mathematical models on real prototypes.
2. Goal setting  
For purpose determination, identify the characteristics of the output must be done. In this study, the output is the yield of oil separation. Whereas, the purpose of the experiment was to evaluate the effect of desiccant wheel rotation on the performance of the air conditioning system made. It is based on the hypothesis of the relationship between rotation and performance of the prototype.

### 3.5. Testing and Data Collection

The tests to be performed are:

- Testing the lowest temperature that can be achieved by the system.
- Testing the chamber room temperature changing and components cooling engine.
- Humidity measurement of the test room during the test

## 4. Result and Discussion

### 4.1. Performance of the Test Chamber Cooling System

Experiments carried out useful for testing the performance of the cooling system with the first step of measuring the temperature of the dry ball ( $T_{db}$ ) and relative humidity ( $\phi$ ) At the input and output desiccant wheel as well as direct evaporative cooling. At the desiccant wheel input, the measured temperature is the environmental temperature while the output temperature is in the system that is the

air temperature after passing the desiccant wheel, then for evaporative cooling temperature measured inside the system is the air temperature before it entering the evaporative cooler while the output temperature is measured in the test room. Results of temperature testing and relative humidity are used to find the value of a humidity specific air, which uses a psychrometric diagram.

**Table 1.** The thermodynamic properties of air before and after passing desiccant

Time	Before Entering Desiccant			After Entering Desiccant			<i>m</i>	MRC
	Tdb1	RH1	W1	Tdb2	RH2	W2		
0	28	69	16	35	54	19	0.447	-1.341
15	29	70	18	34	54	18	0.447	0
30	31	74	21.5	33	57	17.5	0.447	1.788
45	30	73	20.5	33	35	11.3	0.447	4.1124
60	31	74	21.4	32	35	11	0.447	4.6488

The psychrometric diagram is used to find the value of specific humidity, which is this specific humidity is useful for searching for desiccant dryer performance value by calculating the moisture removal rate (MRC), which can be determined by the following equation:

$$\dot{m} = \rho \cdot v \cdot A \tag{1}$$

$$\dot{m} = 1,2 \frac{kg}{m^3} \cdot 0,08 m^2 \cdot 4,66 \frac{m}{s}$$

$$\dot{m} = 0,447 \frac{kg}{s}$$

$$MRC = \dot{m} (\omega_{inlet} - \omega_{outlet}) \tag{2}$$

$$MRC = 0,447 \frac{kg}{s} (16 - 19)$$

$$MRC = -1,341$$

**Table 2.** The thermodynamic properties of air before and after passing through an evaporative cooler

Time	Before Entering The Cooler			After Entering The Cooler			<i>m</i>	QC
	Tdb3	RH3	W3	Tdb4	RH4	W4		
0	32	54	16	26	85	19	0.447	2.6954
15	31	54	15.2	26	84	17	0.447	2.2462
30	32	57	16.1	26	84	17	0.447	2.6954
45	33	35	11.3	25	82	16.5	0.447	3.5939
60	31	35	9.2	24	76	16	0.447	3.1446

From the temperature difference of dry ball before entering and after entering the cooling, the cooling capacity can be found using the equation:

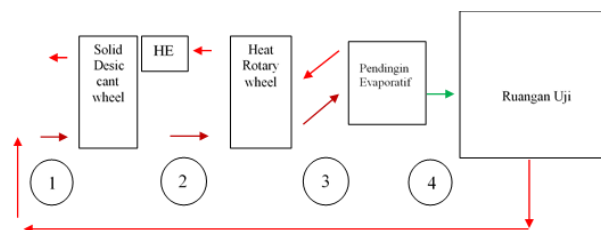
$$Q_c = \dot{m} \cdot c_p \cdot (T_{db3} - T_{db4}) \quad (3)$$

$$Q_c = 0,447 \frac{kg}{s} \cdot 1,005 \frac{kJ}{kg \cdot ^\circ C} \cdot (32 - 26) ^\circ C$$

$$Q_c = 2,6954 kW$$

#### 4.2. Wheels Desiccant System Performance

In the design desiccant cooling system, the air from the environment enters the desiccant wheel in stage 1 to 2. In stage 1-2, there is a reduction in the water content of the incoming air or dehumidifying process. At stage 2-3, the dehumidifying process is still being processed through a heat rotary wheel. The output in this process, The air humidity decreases and followed by the decrease in temperature. In the 3-4 stage, dry air will be cooled by evaporative cooling. The lowest temperature that can be achieved by the system is 24°C.



**Figure 5.** The cycle process of solid desiccant

### 5. Conclusions And Recommendations

Based on research that has been done obtained some conclusions as follows:

1. The desiccant cooling system has been made with a volume of 18 m<sup>3</sup>.
2. The solid desiccant system has been able to work, have been able to reduce the input air humidity by reducing the rate of water/moisture removal rate (MRC): -1.341.
3. The designed cooling capacity is 2.6954 kW, rounded up to 2.7 kW.

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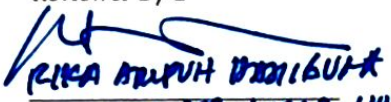
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