ADVANCING RENEWABLE ENERGY: TRENDS IN SMART GRID INTEGRATION, DESIGN INNOVATION, AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

DEWI PUSPITA SARI[1], IMAM SYOFII[1], ANEKA FIRDAUS[2], EDI SETIYO[1,*], MARWANI[2], RUDI HERMAWAN[1], WADIRIN[1], DENDY ADANTA[2]

[1]*Study Program of Mechanical Engineering Education, Universitas Sriwijaya, South Sumatera 30662, Indonesia*
[2]*Department of Mechanical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, Universitas Sriwijaya, South Sumatera 30662, Indonesia*

**Corresponding author: edisetiyo@unsri.ac.id*

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ABSTRACT: This study examines current trends in renewable energy technologies, emphasizing their integration with smart grids, innovative designs, and environmental impact studies. It highlights how wind turbines, hydropower, solar thermal power, and tidal turbine technology are adapting to enhance efficiency and reliability. Integration with smart grids allows for improved energy management and real-time data utilization in wind and hydropower systems. Innovations in turbine designs aim to optimize performance while minimizing ecological impact, addressing ecological concerns such as wildlife disruption. Environmental studies across these technologies focus on understanding their effects on ecosystems and developing best practices for sustainable energy production. By exploring these trends, the study underscores the importance of continuous research in ensuring renewable energy sources effectively contribute to a sustainable future while mitigating climate change and bolstering energy security.

KEYWORDS: Renewable Energy Integration; Smart Grids; Innovative Turbine Designs; Environmental Impact Assessment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Current research across renewable energy technologies is defined by three key trends:

1. **Integration with Smart Grids**: Enhancements in energy storage and grid integration to manage variable renewable sources.
2. **Innovative Designs**: Continuous innovation in turbine designs, materials, and systems aimed at improving efficiency and reducing costs.
3. **Environmental Impact Studies**: A growing focus on the ecological consequences of energy developments and the promotion of sustainable practices.

These trends are particularly relevant for wind turbines, hydropower, solar thermal power, and ocean energy with tidal turbine technology.

2. WIND TURBINES

- **Integration with Smart Grids**: The integration of wind turbines with smart grid technology optimizes energy distribution and enhances grid stability. Smart grids enable real-time monitoring and management of electricity flows, facilitating reliable integration of variable renewable sources like wind energy. Research is concentrated on developing advanced communication technologies and algorithms that allow wind farms to provide valuable data to grid operators, thereby improving demand-response capabilities and operational efficiency [1].
- **Innovative Designs**: Current innovations in turbine design aim to enhance the efficiency and reliability of wind energy systems through advancements in aerodynamics, material science, and control systems. New turbine blade designs are being optimized to maximize energy capture while minimizing fatigue and the risk of failure. Research also explores lightweight and durable materials to extend the lifespan and performance of wind turbines [2], [3].
- **Environmental Impact Studies**: Assessing the environmental impacts of wind turbines is essential for understanding their ecological footprint, particularly regarding local wildlife such as birds and bats. Studies focus on habitat disruption and the viability of mitigation strategies to minimize negative impacts, ensuring wind energy remains a sustainable choice for clean electricity generation [4].

3. HYDROPOWER

- **Integration with Smart Grids**: The integration of hydropower with smart grid technology enhances the operation of hydroelectric plants, allowing for improved water resource management and energy distribution. By utilizing real-time data analytics, operators can optimize energy production based on demand forecasts and environmental conditions. Research is investigating how hydropower can support grid stability by providing backup power during peak demand periods [5].
- **Innovative Designs**: Advances in hydropower technology focus on enhancing turbine efficiency and reducing costs through design optimization and novel technologies. This includes developing small modular hydropower systems to address diverse energy needs and upgrading existing facilities to more efficient turbine models. Enhanced turbine designs are being tested to improve performance in low-flow conditions and increase resilience against climate variability [6].
- **Environmental Impact Studies**: Hydropower projects raise considerable environmental concerns related to ecosystem disruption and sedimentation. Research investigates the long-term effects of dams and reservoirs on fish populations, aquatic habitats, and sediment transport patterns. The objective is to develop best practices that balance ecological integrity with energy output through effective resource management [7].

4. SOLAR THERMAL POWER

- **Integration with Smart Grids**: Integrating solar thermal power with smart grids allows for more efficient management of solar-generated electricity. This technology facilitates optimized energy dispatch, where solar energy is stored and distributed according to real-time demand. Research is focused on enhancing energy storage systems associated with solar thermal facilities, ensuring a consistent power supply even during periods without sunlight [8].

- **Innovative Designs**: Innovations in solar thermal technology are driving advancements in collector designs and thermodynamic systems. Research emphasizes improving the effectiveness of new solar collector technologies to operate efficiently under various environmental conditions, as well as developing superior heat transfer fluids and storage methods. These advancements aim to reduce the cost per kilowatt-hour of solar thermal energy produced [9].
- **Environmental Impact Studies**: Environmental impact studies for solar thermal systems evaluate land use, water consumption, and effects on local ecosystems. Research focuses on understanding the interactions between large-scale solar thermal installations and local wildlife and plant species. The findings urge the implementation of site assessments and management practices to mitigate potential harm to biodiversity and promote sustainable development [10].

5. OCEAN ENERGY AND TIDAL TURBINE TECHNOLOGY

- **Integration with Smart Grids**: Research in tidal turbine technology is emphasizing innovative designs that improve efficiency while minimizing environmental impact. Current projects are developing both horizontal-axis and vertical-axis tidal turbines to effectively harness the kinetic energy of marine currents. These designs aim to enhance energy extraction while minimizing mechanical stress and maintenance requirements. Utilizing advanced materials and configurations can significantly improve the durability and performance of tidal turbines [11]. Additionally, hybrid systems that combine multiple energy conversion technologies—such as integrating tidal, wind, and wave energy—are being explored to optimize energy production [12].
- **Environmental Impact Studies**: As tidal energy projects proliferate, understanding their ecological impacts is increasingly critical. Environmental impact assessments focus on how turbine installations affect local marine ecosystems, particularly the behavior and migration patterns of fish and marine mammals. Research evaluates potential collision risks and alterations to habitat structures due to turbine operations [13]. Furthermore, studies investigate how installation and operation may change sediment transport patterns, water quality, and nutrient cycling within tidal zones. The goal is to establish sustainable practices that balance energy production with the health of marine ecosystems [14].

6. SUMMARY

Research across these renewable energy technologies reflects a concerted effort to integrate with smart grids, innovate in design and materials, and investigate environmental impacts. Each technology presents unique challenges and opportunities, making ongoing research essential to ensure these renewable sources contribute effectively to a sustainable energy future. Addressing operational efficiencies and ecological considerations will be critical as these emerging energy solutions play a key role in mitigating climate change and enhancing energy security.

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