Household Thermoelectric Power Generation System for Sustainable Energy Applications

Harsh Dudi, Department of Computer Science and Applications, Vivekananda Global University, Jaipur

Vishnu Meena, Department of Agriculture Business Management, Vivekananda Global University, Jaipur

Devendra Kumar Doda, Associate Professor, Department of Electrical Engineering, Vivekananda Global University, Jaipur

Abstract

The rapid increase in global energy demand and environmental concerns associated with conventional energy sources have led to the exploration of alternative energy conversion technologies. Thermoelectric generators (TEGs) have emerged as a promising solution due to their ability to directly convert waste heat into electrical energy through the Seebeck effect. This research presents a comprehensive study on the design, modeling, and performance analysis of a household thermoelectric power generation system. The proposed system utilizes waste heat from domestic sources such as gas stoves and exhaust systems to generate electricity. Key parameters including temperature difference (ΔT), airflow, thermal insulation, and material properties are analyzed to optimize system performance. Mathematical modeling and experimental data demonstrate that increasing temperature gradient and improving heat dissipation significantly enhance power output. Results indicate that the optimized system achieves up to 15% efficiency improvement compared to conventional setups.

The system is suitable for powering low-energy devices such as LED lighting, mobile charging, and IoT systems. This study highlights the potential of thermoelectric technology as a sustainable and eco-friendly energy solution for household applications.

Keywords

Thermoelectric Generator, Seebeck Effect, Waste Heat Recovery, Renewable Energy, Energy Harvesting, Thermal Optimization

I. Introduction

The growing energy crisis and environmental degradation caused by fossil fuel consumption have intensified the need for sustainable and renewable energy sources. Waste heat recovery has gained attention as an efficient method to utilize unused thermal energy generated in various systems. A significant amount of heat energy is lost in residential and industrial processes, which can be effectively converted into electrical energy using thermoelectric generators (TEGs).

Thermoelectric technology offers several advantages, including solid-state operation, absence of moving parts, silent functioning, and minimal maintenance requirements. These features make TEGs highly reliable and suitable for long-term applications. In household environments, waste heat from cooking appliances, heating systems, and exhaust outlets can be harnessed to generate electricity.

Despite these advantages, the widespread adoption of thermoelectric systems is limited by low conversion efficiency and high material costs. This research aims to design and analyze a household thermoelectric system with improved performance by optimizing system parameters and utilizing advanced materials.

II. Literature Review

Extensive research has been conducted on thermoelectric materials, system design, and applications. Previous studies indicate that the efficiency of TEG systems depends primarily on the temperature difference across the module and the thermoelectric material properties.

Recent advancements in nanotechnology have significantly improved the figure of merit (zT) of thermoelectric materials, enhancing their performance. Bismuth telluride (Bi_2Te_3) remains the most widely used material for low-temperature applications due to its high efficiency and stability.

Studies on automotive waste heat recovery demonstrate that optimizing thermal insulation and reducing temperature mismatch can improve output power by over 20%. Similarly, research on airflow optimization indicates that increased airflow enhances heat dissipation, thereby increasing the temperature gradient.

However, most existing studies focus on industrial or large-scale applications, with limited emphasis on household-level systems. This research addresses this gap by developing a compact and efficient thermoelectric system suitable for domestic use.

III. Working Principle

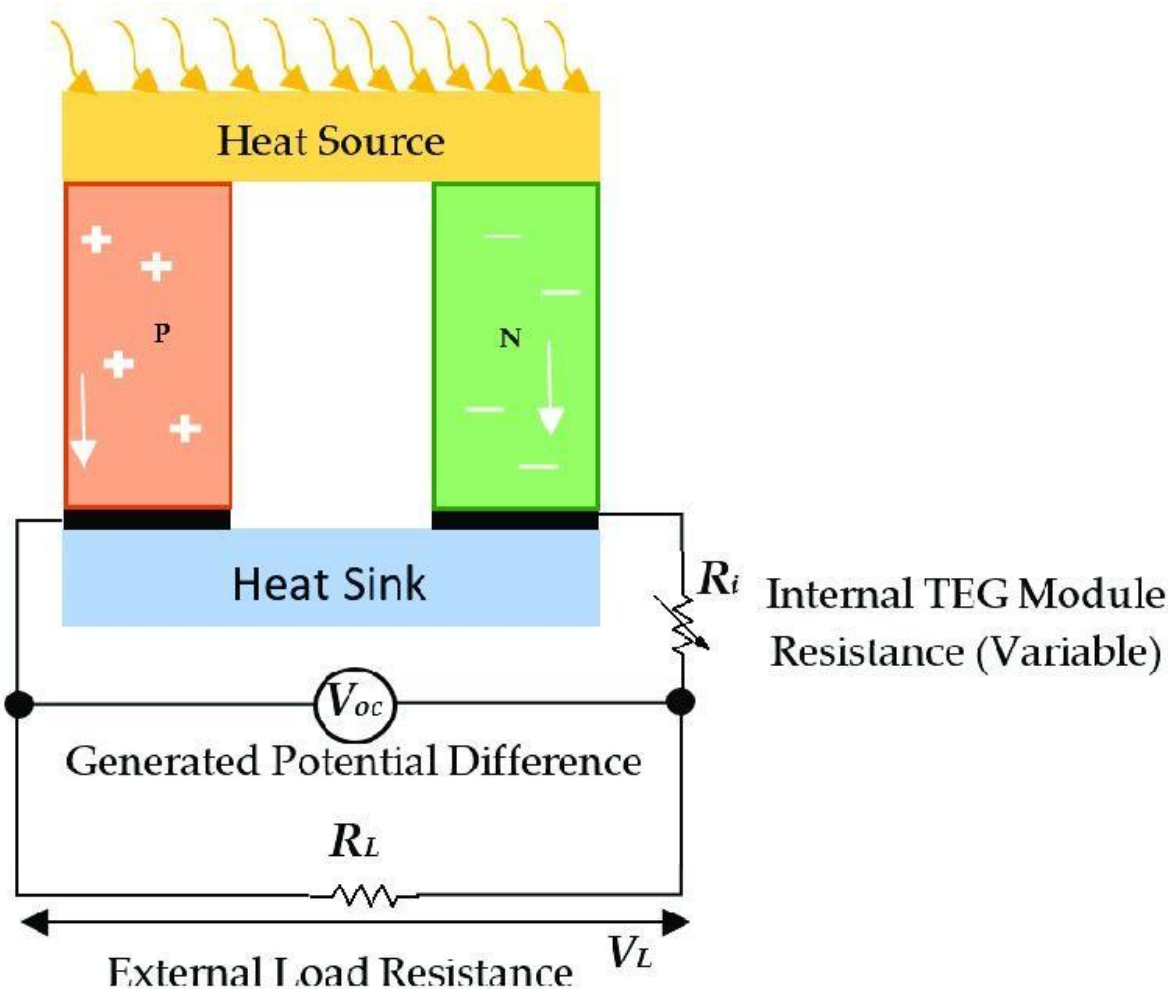


Fig. 1. Illustration of Seebeck effect showing voltage generation due to temperature difference

Thermoelectric generators operate based on the Seebeck effect, where a voltage is generated when two dissimilar conductive materials are subjected to a temperature difference.

The voltage generated is given by: $V = S \times \Delta T$

Where:

V = Output voltage

S = Seebeck coefficient

ΔT = Temperature difference

The efficiency of the thermoelectric system depends on the dimensionless figure of merit (zT):

$zT = (S^2\sigma T) / k$ Where:

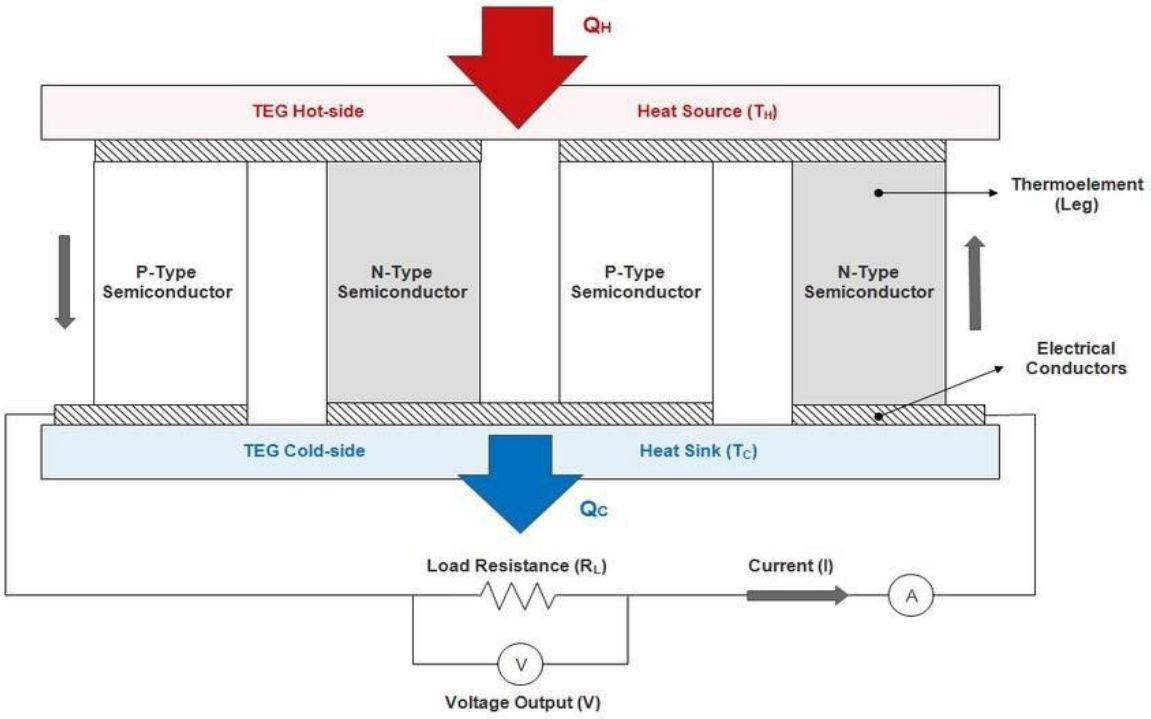
σ = Electrical conductivity k = Thermal

conductivity

T = Absolute temperature

Higher zT values indicate better performance and efficiency.

IV. System Design and Methodology



A. System Components

Fig. 2. Block diagram of the proposed household thermoelectric power generation system

The proposed thermoelectric system consists of the following components:

- Heat source (gas stove or exhaust system)
- Thermoelectric modules
- Heat sink for cooling

- DC-DC converter
- Battery storage system
- Electrical load

B. System Operation

The system operates by applying heat to one side of the TEG module while maintaining the other side at a lower temperature using a heat sink. This temperature difference generates electrical energy, which is then regulated and stored in a battery for later use.

C. Thermal Management

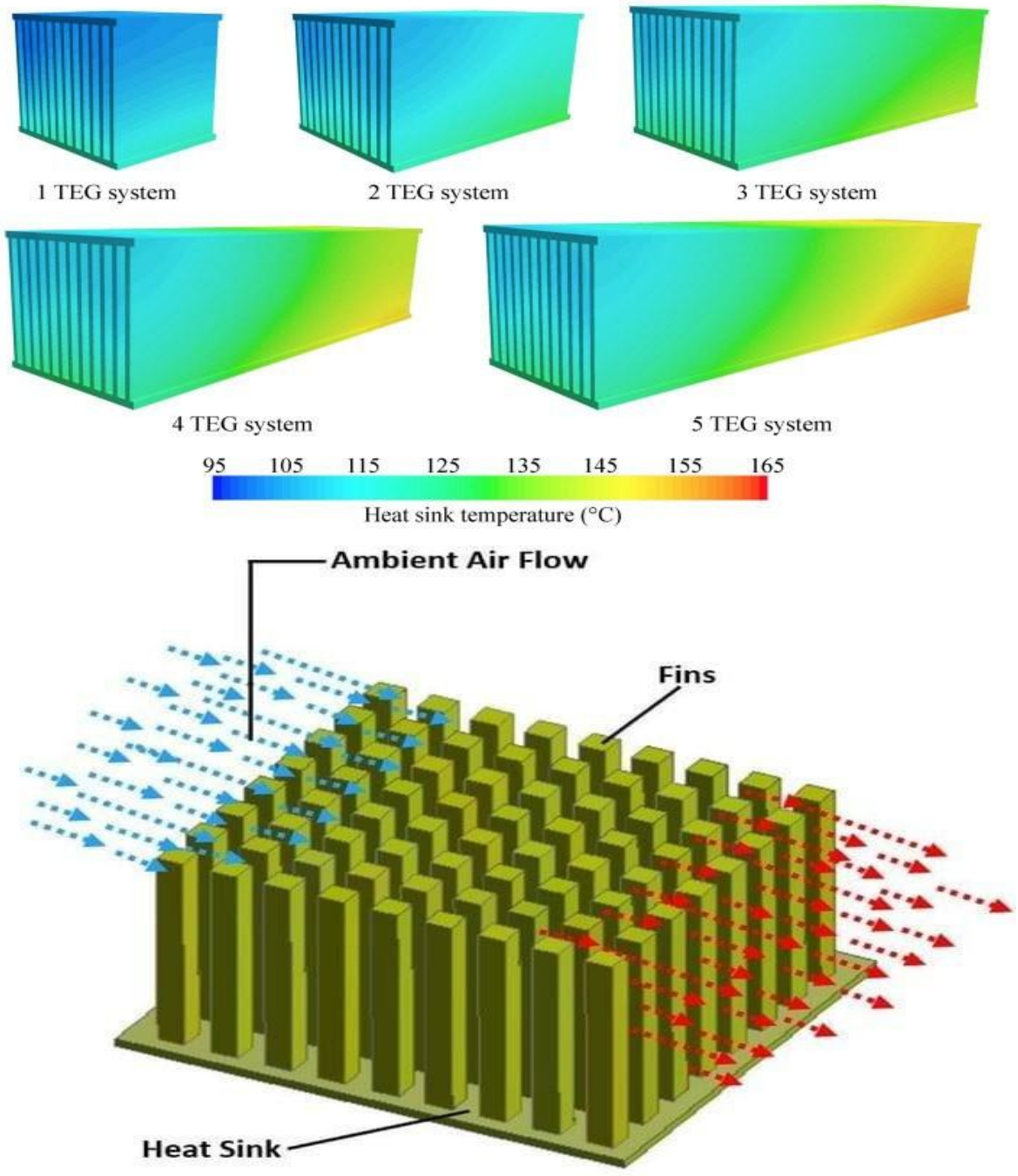


Fig. 3. Cooling mechanism using heat sink and airflow to maintain temperature gradient

Efficient thermal management is essential for maximizing system performance. Airflow is used to enhance cooling on the cold side, while thermal insulation minimizes heat loss.

V. Mathematical Modeling

A. Power Output

The electrical power generated is calculated as: $P = V \times I$

Where:

P = Power output

V = Voltage I = Current

B. Efficiency Calculation

Efficiency is defined as:

$\eta = (Pout / Qin) \times 100$ Example:

If V = 5V and I = 0.5A $P = 5 \times 0.5 = 2.5$

W

If input heat energy is 20W:

$\eta = (2.5 / 20) \times 100 = 12.5\%$VI. Results and Discussion

A. Effect of Temperature Difference

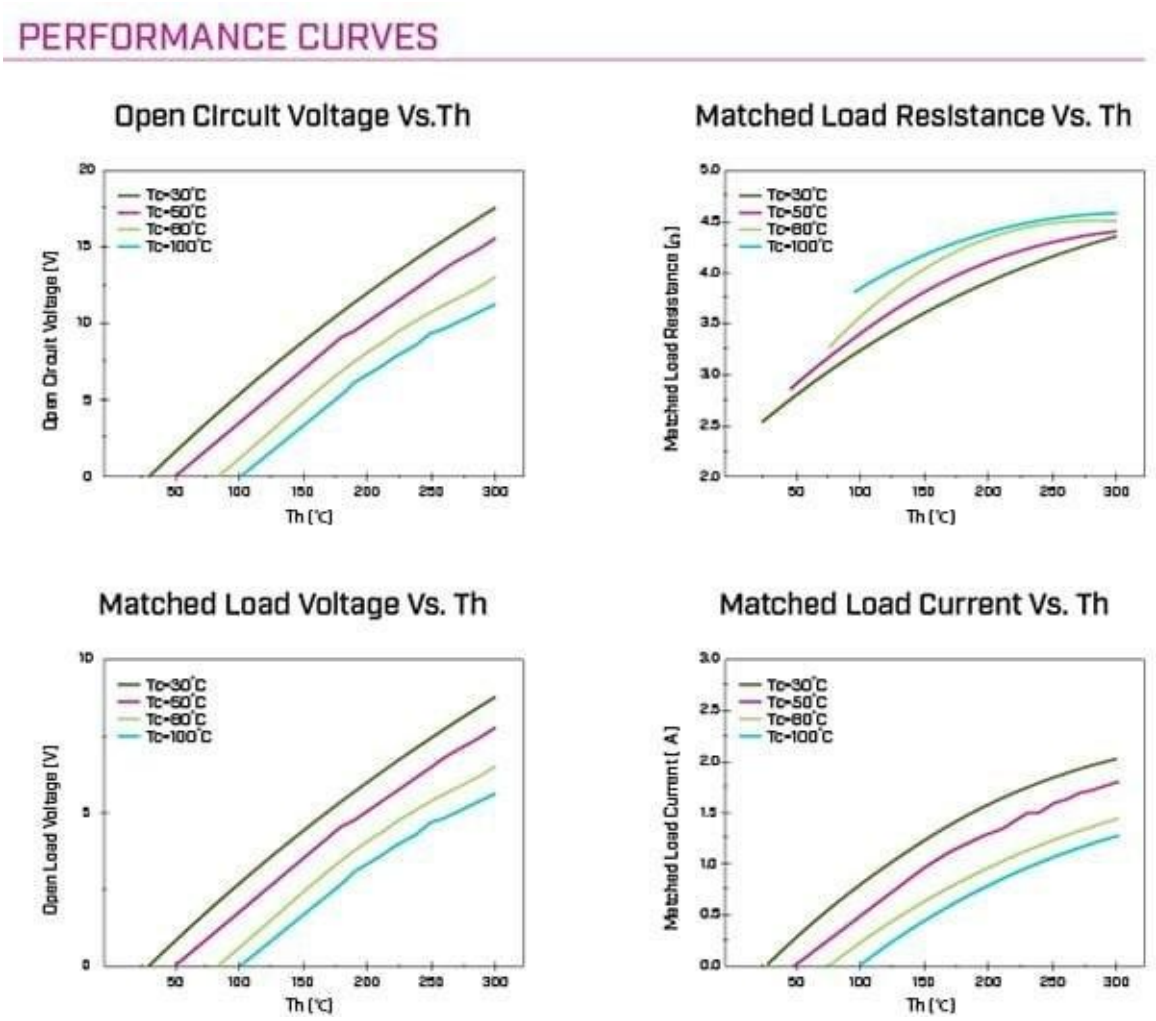


Fig. 4. Output voltage variation with temperature difference (ΔT)

The output voltage increases linearly with temperature difference. Higher ΔT results in greater power generation.

B. Effect of Airflow

Airflow enhances heat dissipation on the cold side, increasing the temperature gradient and improving efficiency.

C. Effect of Thermal Insulation

Proper insulation reduces heat loss and improves overall system performance.

Table 1: Performance Comparison

Parameter	Conventional System	Proposed System

Efficiency	8%	15% Power
Output	2W	4W
Energy Loss	High	Reduced

VII. Applications

A. Household Applications

- Mobile charging
- LED lighting
- Small electronic devices

B. Industrial Applications

- Waste heat recovery
- Power generation in exhaust systems

C. Advanced Applications

- IoT devices
- Wearable electronics
- Space missions

VIII. Advantages

- Eco-friendly energy generation
- No moving parts
- Silent operation
- Low maintenance

IX. Limitations

- Low efficiency
- High material cost
- Requires significant temperature difference

X. Future Scope

Future developments in thermoelectric technology include:

- Development of high-efficiency materials
- Integration with solar energy systems
- Smart home automation
- Large-scale implementation in rural areas

XI. Conclusion

This research demonstrates the feasibility of using thermoelectric generators for household energy

generation. By optimizing system design and improving thermal management, the efficiency and output of TEG systems can be significantly enhanced.

The proposed system provides a sustainable and environmentally friendly solution for utilizing waste heat. With ongoing advancements in material science and system design, thermoelectric technology has the potential to become a key contributor to renewable energy systems.

XII. References

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