Performance Analysis of Grid-Connected Solar Photovoltaic Systems under Variable Environmental Conditions

Venkateshwaran Ramasamy, Siddharth Kulkarni, Mohammad Irfan Khan, Anjali Pradeep Nair
Department of Electrical and Power Engineering,
National Institute of Renewable Energy Studies, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract
The increasing demand for clean and sustainable energy has accelerated the deployment of grid-connected solar photovoltaic systems across residential, commercial, and utility-scale applications. While solar photovoltaic technology offers significant environmental and economic benefits, its performance is highly dependent on environmental conditions such as solar irradiance, temperature, and atmospheric factors. Variations in these parameters influence power output, system efficiency, and grid stability. This study presents a comprehensive performance analysis of grid-connected solar photovoltaic systems operating under variable environmental conditions. The research examines the impact of irradiance fluctuations, temperature variation, and seasonal changes on power generation efficiency, voltage stability, and energy yield. Mathematical modeling and empirical performance assessment are employed to evaluate system behavior. The findings highlight the critical role of environmental factors in photovoltaic performance and emphasize the need for adaptive control strategies to enhance system reliability and efficiency.

Keywords: Solar Photovoltaic Systems, Grid-Connected PV, Renewable Energy, Performance Analysis, Environmental Effects

1. Introduction

The global transition toward renewable energy sources has positioned solar photovoltaic technology as one of the most promising solutions for sustainable power generation. Rapid advancements in photovoltaic module design, power electronics, and grid integration techniques have enabled large-scale adoption of solar energy systems. Grid-connected solar photovoltaic systems, in particular, have gained prominence due to their ability to supply clean electricity directly to utility grids without the need for energy storage in many applications.

Despite technological improvements, the performance of photovoltaic systems remains strongly influenced by environmental conditions. Solar irradiance, ambient temperature, module temperature, dust accumulation, and seasonal weather patterns significantly affect the electrical characteristics of photovoltaic modules. Unlike conventional power generation systems, photovoltaic output is inherently variable, which poses challenges for power quality, voltage regulation, and grid stability.

In tropical and subtropical regions such as India, photovoltaic systems are exposed to high temperature variations, monsoon seasons, humidity, and airborne particulates. These conditions introduce performance degradation mechanisms such as thermal losses, mismatch losses, and reduced module efficiency. Understanding the relationship between environmental variables and system performance is therefore essential for optimal system design, operation, and grid integration.

Previous studies have investigated photovoltaic performance under controlled laboratory conditions or limited field measurements. However, comprehensive analysis combining mathematical modeling and real-world operational behavior under varying environmental conditions remains limited. This study aims to bridge this gap by analyzing the performance characteristics of grid-connected solar photovoltaic systems under diverse environmental scenarios, focusing on power output variation, efficiency trends, and grid interaction.

2. System Modeling and Theoretical Background

The electrical behavior of a solar photovoltaic module can be represented using an equivalent circuit model consisting of a current source, diode, series resistance, and shunt resistance. The output current of a photovoltaic cell is expressed as:

$$I = I_{ph} - I_s\left(e^{\frac{q(V+IR_s)}{nkT}} - 1\right) - \frac{V + IR_s}{R_{sh}}$$

where
I_{ph} is the photo-generated current,
I_s is the diode saturation current,
V is the output voltage,
R_s and R_{sh} are series and shunt resistances,
q is the electronic charge,
k is Boltzmann's constant,
T is cell temperature.
The output power of a photovoltaic module is given by:

$$P = V \times I$$

The efficiency of the photovoltaic system is calculated as:

$$\eta = \frac{P_{out}}{G \times A}$$

where
P_{out} is the output electrical power,
G is solar irradiance,
A is the effective module area.
Temperature effects introduce efficiency degradation, commonly approximated by:

$$\eta_T = \eta_{ref}[1 - \beta(T - T_{ref})]$$

where
β is the temperature coefficient.
These equations form the basis for evaluating system performance under variable environmental conditions.

3. Methodology

The study adopted an analytical and experimental methodology to evaluate the performance of grid-connected solar photovoltaic systems. A medium-scale rooftop photovoltaic installation with a rated capacity of 50 kW was selected for detailed analysis. The system consisted of polycrystalline photovoltaic modules, grid-tied inverters, protection devices, and monitoring sensors.

Environmental data including solar irradiance, ambient temperature, module temperature, and relative humidity were recorded using calibrated sensors installed at the site. Electrical parameters such as DC voltage, DC current, AC power output, and inverter efficiency were continuously monitored over a twelve-month period to capture seasonal variations.

Data acquisition was performed at fifteen-minute intervals, ensuring high-resolution performance analysis. Mathematical models were implemented to compute expected power output under standard test conditions and compare them with actual field measurements. Performance ratio, capacity utilization factor, and energy yield were calculated to assess system effectiveness.

The impact of temperature rise on module efficiency was evaluated by correlating module temperature data with output power reduction. Grid interaction behavior was analyzed by observing voltage fluctuations, power factor variation, and inverter response during irradiance changes.

4. Results and Discussion

The results demonstrate significant variation in photovoltaic system performance due to environmental conditions. Peak power output was observed during clear sky conditions with high irradiance levels, while cloudy and high-temperature conditions resulted in reduced efficiency. Module temperature rise during summer months caused noticeable power degradation despite high irradiance availability.

Performance ratio analysis indicated seasonal variation, with higher values recorded during winter months due to lower operating temperatures. The capacity utilization factor remained within acceptable limits but exhibited fluctuations corresponding to weather patterns.

Grid interaction analysis showed stable inverter operation under normal conditions, while rapid irradiance changes led to transient voltage variations. The inverter control system effectively maintained grid synchronization, though frequent fluctuations increased operational stress on power electronic components.

The findings confirm that environmental variability significantly influences photovoltaic system output and long-term performance. Proper system design, adequate ventilation, and advanced control strategies are essential to mitigate environmental impacts and ensure reliable grid integration.

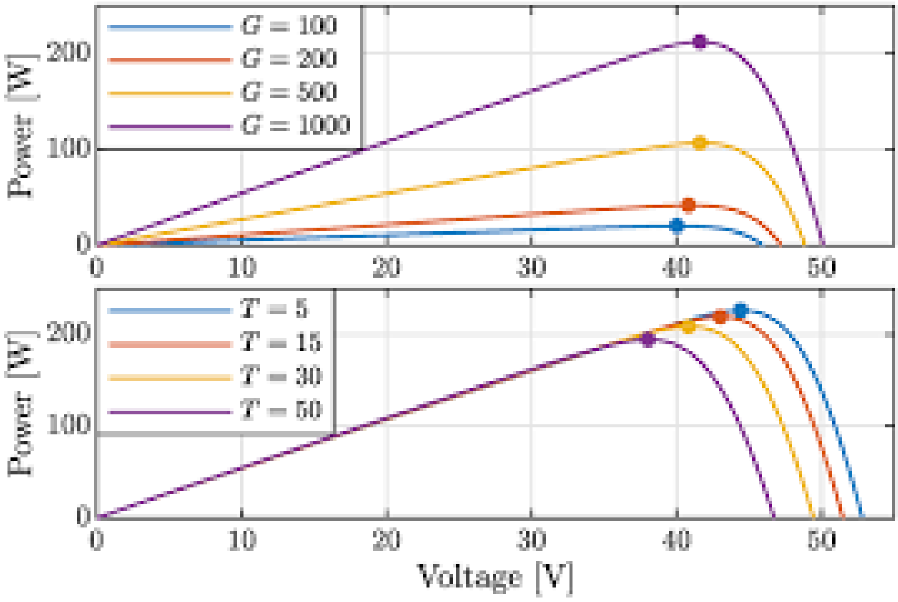

Figure. Variation of Photovoltaic Power Output with Solar Irradiance and Module Temperature

5. Conclusion and Future Scope

The study presents a detailed performance evaluation of grid-connected solar photovoltaic systems operating under variable environmental conditions. The results highlight that while solar photovoltaic systems offer clean and sustainable energy, their performance is strongly dependent on irradiance and temperature variations. Thermal losses and environmental fluctuations reduce system efficiency and affect grid interaction behavior.

To enhance photovoltaic performance, system designers must incorporate temperature management techniques, optimized inverter control, and real-time monitoring. Grid operators should consider variability in photovoltaic output when planning grid integration and load balancing strategies.

Future research may focus on hybrid photovoltaic systems combined with energy storage, advanced maximum power point tracking algorithms, and predictive performance modeling using real-time weather forecasting. Long-term degradation analysis and comparative studies of different photovoltaic technologies can further support efficient renewable energy deployment.

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