**Deskripsi Artikel**

- Judul Jurnal : Desalination and Water Treatment
- Volume Jurnal : Volume 322, April 2025
- Peringkat : Q2
- Judul Artikel : CFD simulation for optimizing the evaporation process in seawater desalination using exhaust heat from AC and vortex generators
- Penulis : Oktarina Heriyani, **Dan Mugisidi**, Rifky
- Status Penulis : Koresponding

ISSN 1944-3986

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# Desalination and Water Treatment

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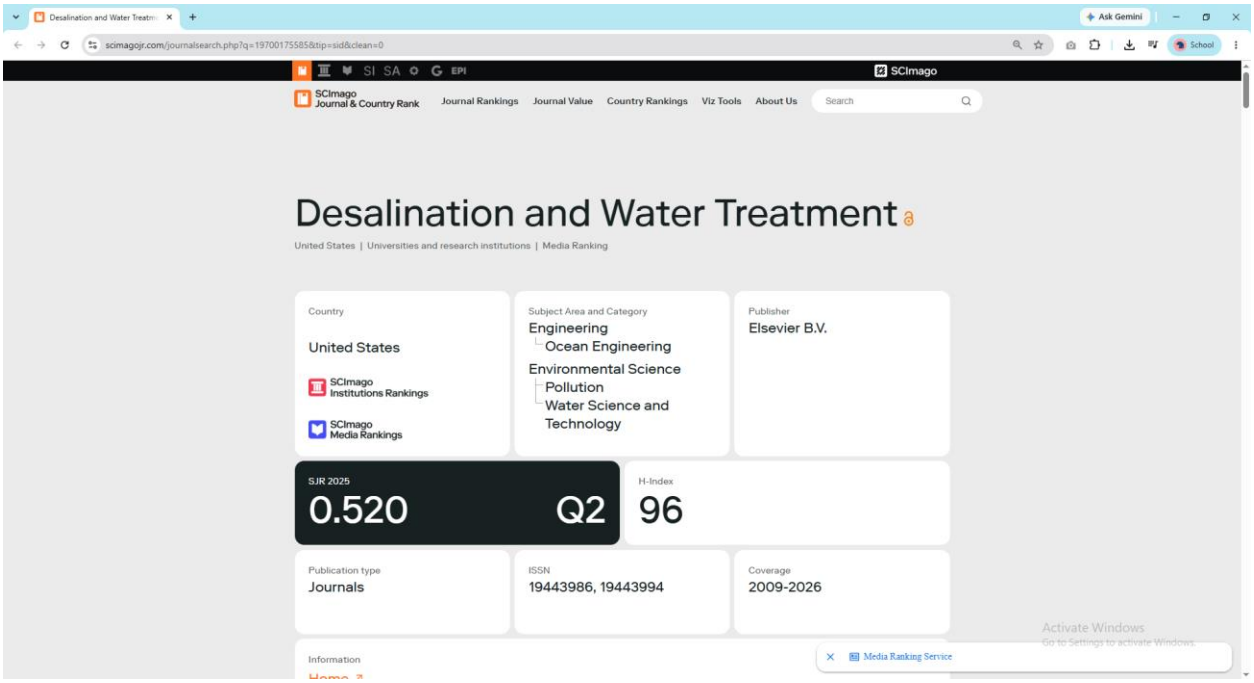


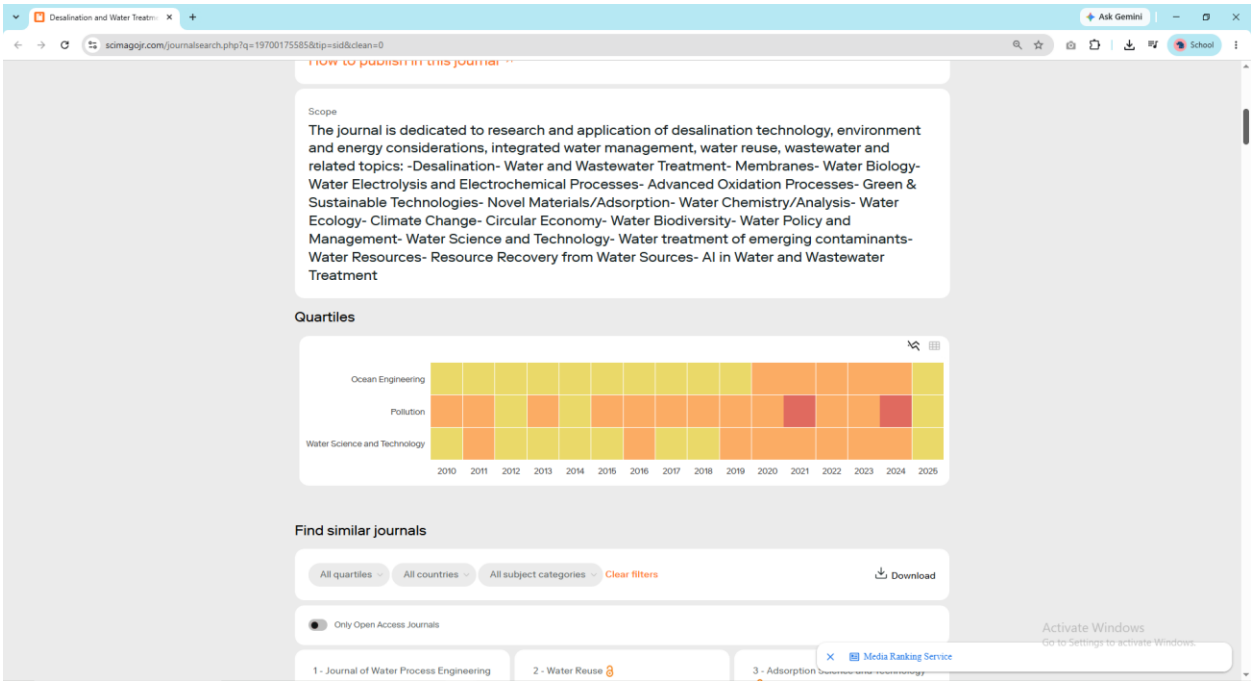

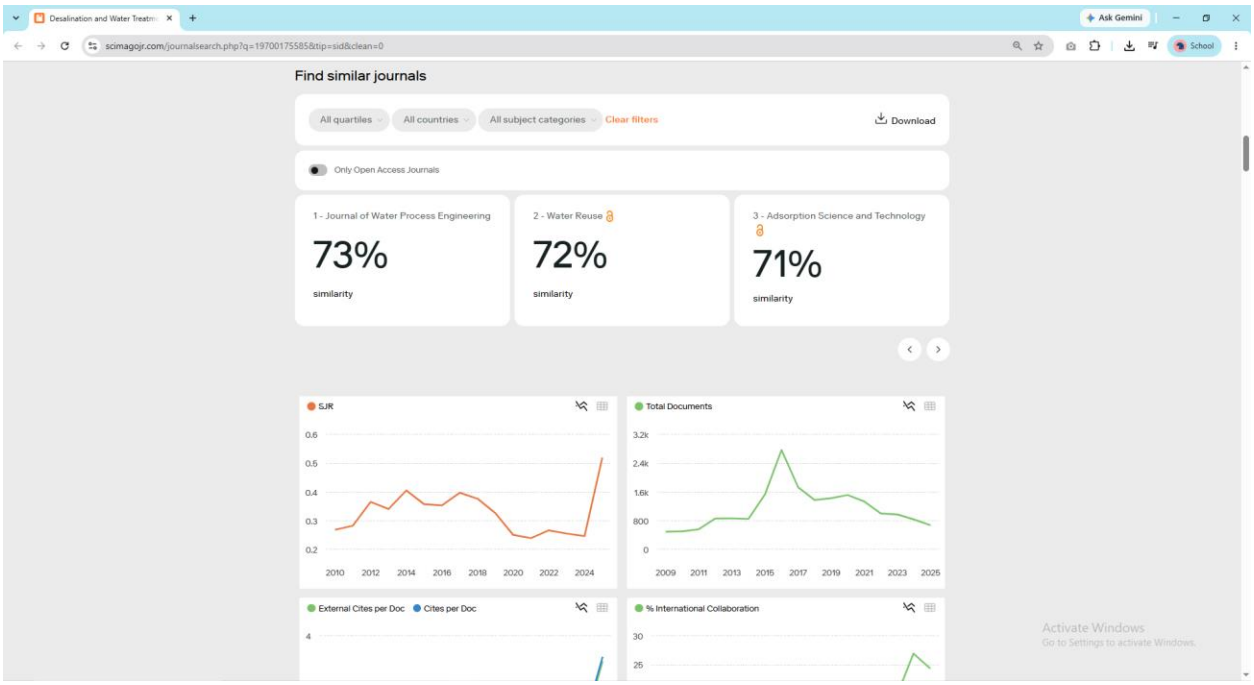
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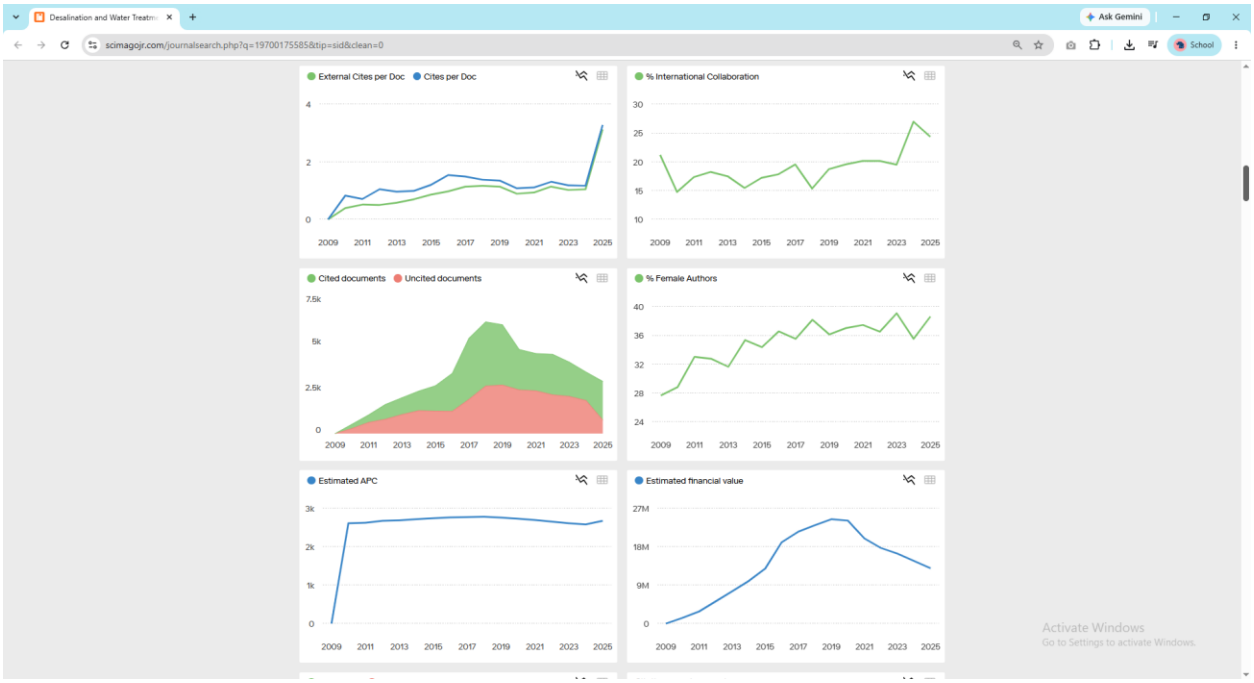
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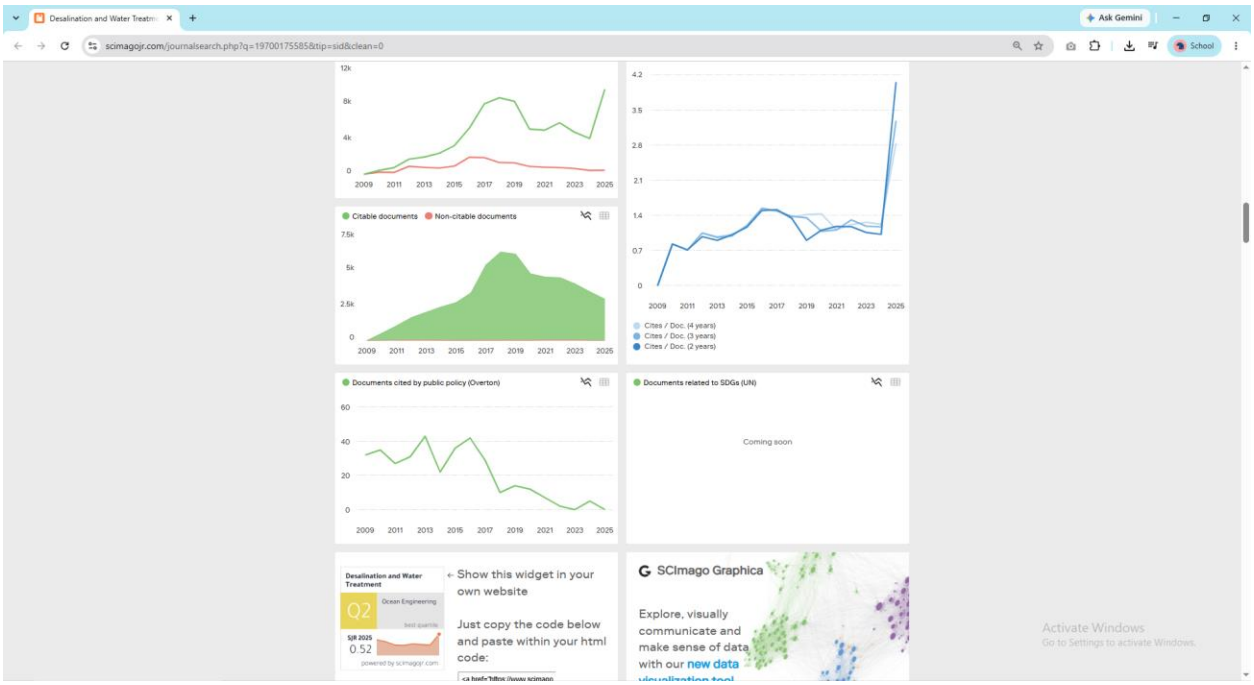
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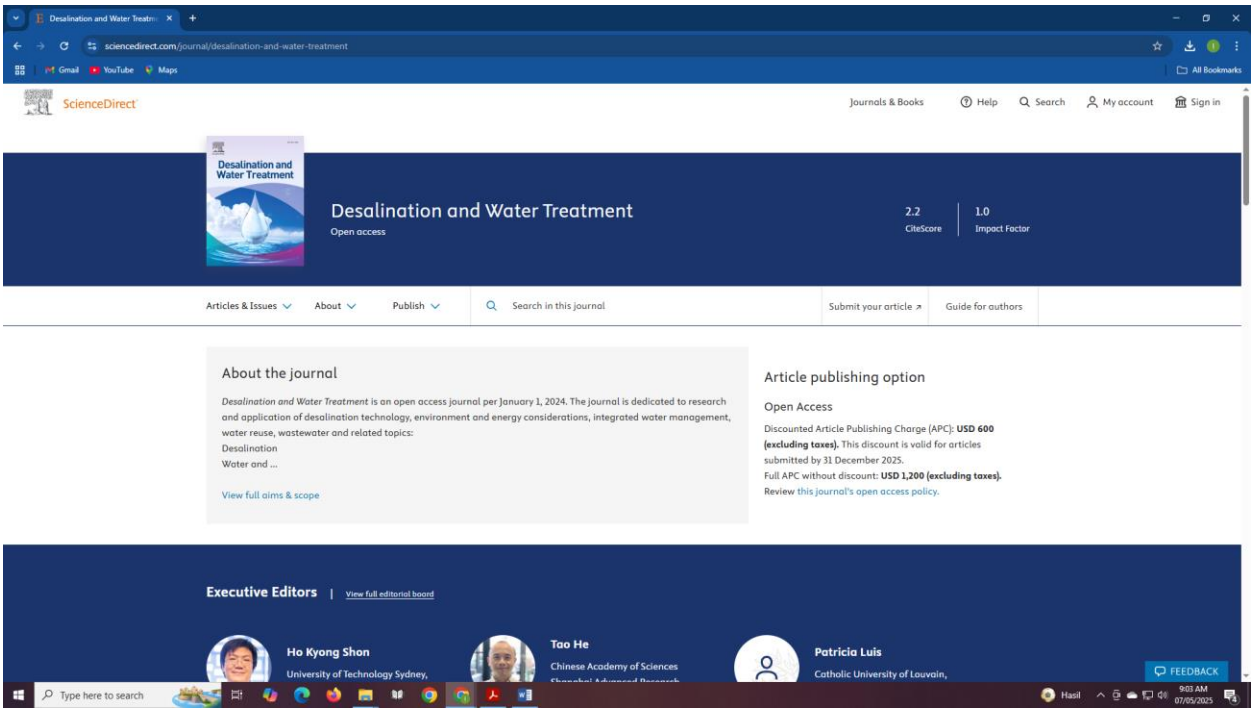


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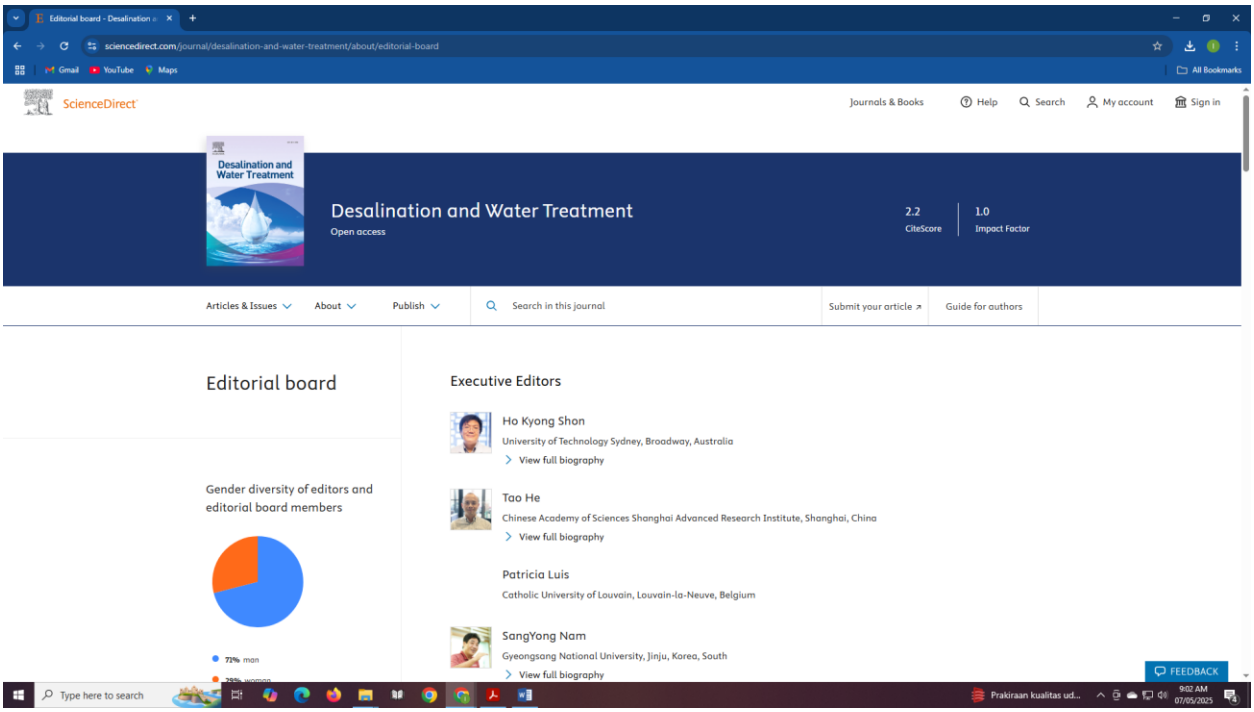

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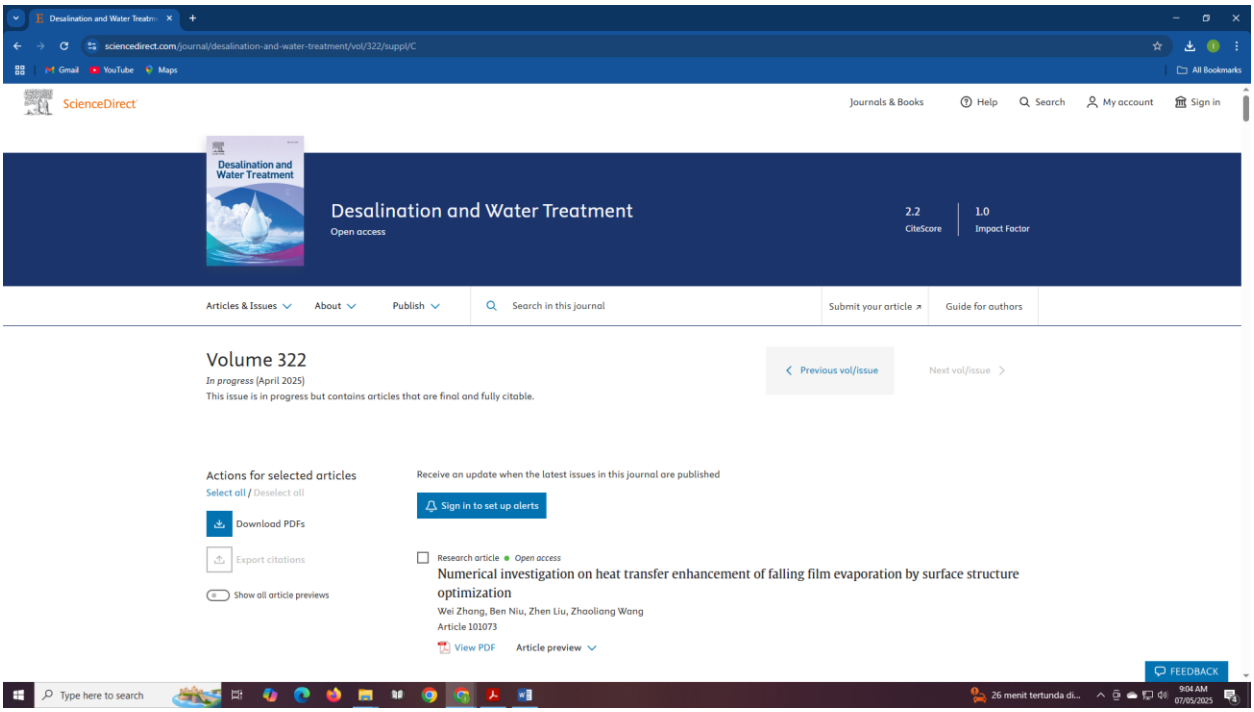


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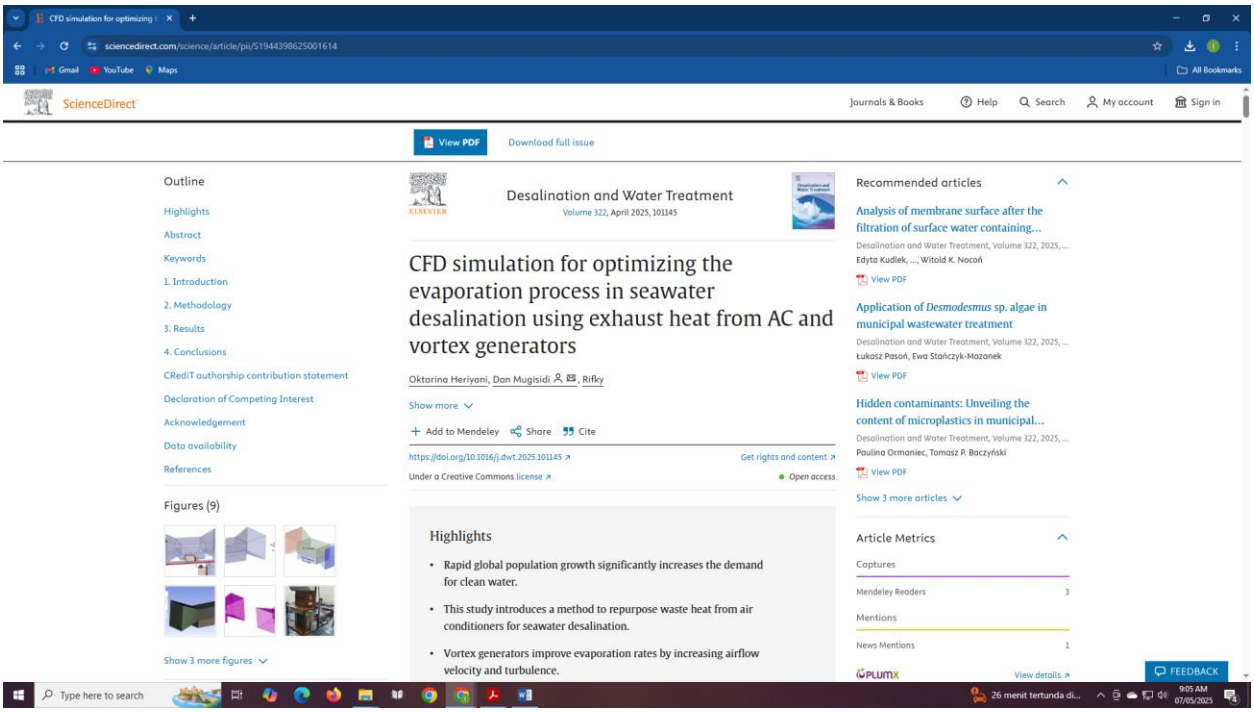

# BUKTI KORESPONDESNI
# ARTIKEL JURNAL INTERNASIONAL BEREPUTASI

Judul Artikel : CFD Simulation for Optimizing the Evaporation Process in Seawater Desalination Using Exhaust Heat from AC and Vortex Generators
Jurnal : Desalination and Water Treatment, Volume 322, April 2025
Penulis : Oktarina Heriyani , Dan Mugisidi , Rifky

| No. | Perihal | Tanggal |
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| | Bukti Submit Artikel | |
| | - Detailed Response to Reviewers (bukti review dan konfirmasi review)<br>- Cover Letter (pernyataan Keaslian Naskah)<br>- Declaration of Interest Statement (Pernyataan Penulis) | 27 September 2024 |
| | - Revised Manuscript with Changes Marked (Bukti Revisi, dan respon kepada reviewer)<br>- Revised Manuscript - Clean (Bukti konfirmasi revisi dari reviewer) | 1 Oktober 2024 |
| | - Detailed Response to Reviewers (Bukti Review Dan Konfirmasi Review, Revisi ke 2)<br>- Declaration of Interest Statement (pernyataan penulis)<br>- Revised Manuscript with Changes Marked (Bukti Revisi dan Respon Kepada Reviewer)<br>- Revised Manuscript - Clean(Bukti Konfirmasi revisi dari reviewer, Revisi ke 2) | 16 Desember 2024 |
| | View Letter (Bukti Artikel Accepted) | 25 Maret 2025 |
| | Completed Accepted (bukti konfirmasi artikel Published Online) | 25 Maret 2025 |

# Bukti Submit Artikel

Desalination and Water Treatment

# CFD Simulation for Optimizing the Evaporation Process in Seawater Desalination Using Exhaust Heat from AC and Vortex Generators

--Manuscript Draft--

| | |
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| **Manuscript Number:** | DWT-D-24-01884R2 |
| **Full Title:** | CFD Simulation for Optimizing the Evaporation Process in Seawater Desalination Using Exhaust Heat from AC and Vortex Generators |
| **Article Type:** | Full Length Article |
| **Section/Category:** | Desalination (Hokyong Shon) |
| **Keywords:** | CFD simulation; evaporation process; Seawater Desalination; vortex generators; waste heat utilization |
| **Corresponding Author:** | Dan Mugisidi<br>Faculty of Industrial and Informatics Technology, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof Dr. HAMKA<br>INDONESIA |
| **Corresponding Author Secondary Information:** | |
| **Corresponding Author's Institution:** | Faculty of Industrial and Informatics Technology, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof Dr. HAMKA |
| **Corresponding Author's Secondary Institution:** | |
| **First Author:** | Oktarina Heriyani |
| **First Author Secondary Information:** | |
| **Order of Authors:** | Oktarina Heriyani |
| | Dan Mugisidi |
| | Rifky Rifky |
| **Order of Authors Secondary Information:** | |
| **Manuscript Region of Origin:** | INDONESIA |
| **Abstract:** | Water is essential for human survival, yet freshwater resources are scarce and limited. In Indonesia's coastal regions, only 66.54% of the population has access to clean water, highlighting a significant challenge. This issue is further intensified by global warming, which has increased dependence on air conditioners, resulting in substantial waste heat emissions. While often overlooked, this waste heat contributes to local warming and presents an untapped energy resource. Repurposing this energy for innovative applications, such as seawater desalination, offers a promising solution to mitigate clean water shortages. This study proposes using waste heat from household ACs for seawater desalination through evaporation, enhanced by vortex generators. The research examines variations with and without vortex generators across different cross-sectional areas, affecting airflow velocity. Results indicate that using vortex generators significantly increases evaporation rates at all wind speeds. These devices enhance airflow velocity and turbulence, boosting heat transfer and accelerating evaporation. Through Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) simulations, the research aims to demonstrate how vortex generators can improve evaporation, offering a practical solution for cooling and desalination at a household scale. This novel approach could significantly benefit water-scarce regions, providing an efficient, cost-effective solution utilising existing household technology |
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# Detailed Response to Reviewers

(bukti review dan konfirmasi review)

Dear Editor,

I am pleased to submit the revised manuscript titled *"CFD Simulation for Optimizing the Evaporation Process in Seawater Desalination Using Exhaust Heat from AC and Vortex Generators"* by Oktarina Heriyani, Dan Mugisidi, and Rifky.

The revisions requested by the editor and reviewers have been carefully addressed and incorporated into the manuscript. We sincerely appreciate the reviewers' time and effort in providing valuable feedback to enhance the quality of our work. All modifications based on their suggestions have been highlighted in the revised version of the manuscript for your convenience.

Additionally, we have provided a detailed response to each comment, which is included below for your review.

**Reviewer 1:**

The authors have revised the manuscript based on the reviewers' comments, the paper is now good for publication.

Response:
Thank you for your constructive feedback and for acknowledging our revisions. We are grateful for your positive evaluation and recommendation for publication

**Reviewer 2:**

The manuscript presents a Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) study aimed at improving seawater desalination by utilizing waste heat from air conditioners (ACs). The study investigates how vortex generators (VGs) enhance evaporation by increasing airflow velocity and turbulence. While the study provides interesting results, some major concerns should be addressed before the consideration of publication in Desalination and Water Treatment.

**Comment 1**: The manuscript lacks a clear justification for the specific choice of vortex generator design parameters (e.g., height-to-channel height ratio, longitudinal pitch ratio, and angle of attack). Please provide a detailed engineering rationale for selecting these parameters.

Response:

We appreciate the reviewer's insightful comment regarding the justification for selecting vortex generator design parameters. In the revised manuscript, we have clarified the rationale behind these choices.

The vortex generator used in this study is a V-shaped design, as it effectively directs airflow and generates efficient vortices without excessive flow resistance [21]. The choice of parameters is based on prior experimental and numerical studies. A height-to-channel height ratio of 0.47 was selected as it provides a balance between vortex strength and flow obstruction, ensuring enhanced mixing without inducing excessive drag [22], as pressure drop can be reduced by up to 43.9% when the height ratio is less than 50% [23]. The longitudinal pitch ratio of 0.18 was chosen because it maximizes

vortex interaction, promoting turbulence intensity while preventing premature vortex dissipation [24]. The 30° angle of attack was selected as it has been shown to yield the best compromise between vortex strength, flow attachment, and overall thermal-hydraulic performance [25]. These design choices were validated through previous research and optimized for effective heat transfer and flow control.

We hope this addition addresses the reviewer's concern and strengthens the manuscript.

**A detailed explanation of the above has been added on pages 25-26**

**Comment 2**: The CFD results are only compared to a single experimental dataset with an $R^2$ value of 0.9804. However, there is no clear explanation of how to obtain the experimental data. The details of the experimental data should be provided.

Response:

Thank you for your insightful comment. We appreciate your suggestion to elaborate on how to provide the experimental data. In response, we have added a detailed explanation in the revised manuscript.

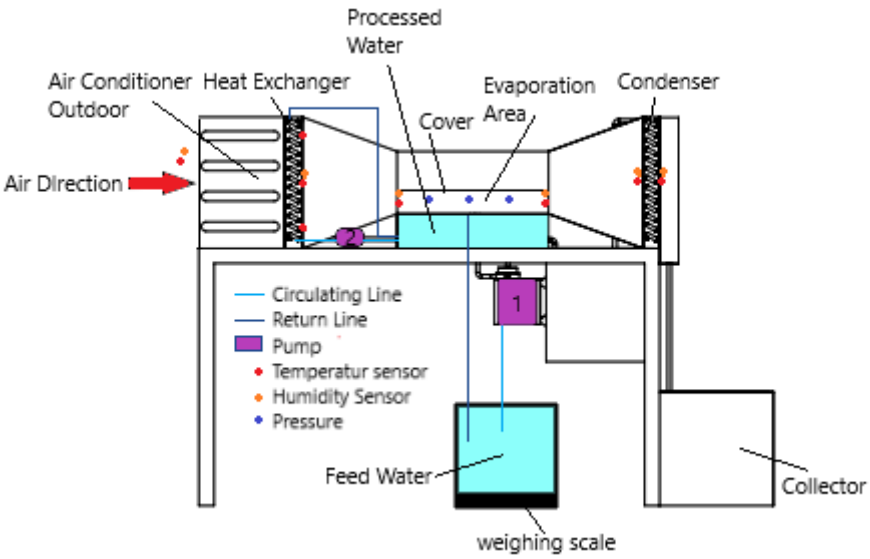


**Fig. 7.** Experimental Scheme

As shown in Fig. 7, feed water is pumped into the processed water tank using Pump 1 until it reaches capacity. If the tank reaches full capacity, excess water flows back to the feed tank through the return line. When the water level decreases, the pump automatically refills the tank.

Water from the processed water tank is then circulated using Pump 2 to the heat exchanger, where it is heated by the waste heat from the outdoor air conditioner (AC). The heated water returns to the processed tank, ensuring continuous thermal energy transfer.

In addition to heating the water, the airflow from the outdoor AC is directed through the evaporation area to accelerate the evaporation process. The processed water undergoes phase change into vapour and moves along the airflow direction. The air, now carrying water vapour, is directed into the condenser, where the temperature is maintained at approximately 20°C. The condensed water is subsequently collected in a storage tank.

The cover in the evaporation area is adjustable, allowing its height to be set between 2 cm and 14 cm above the water surface, which provides flexibility in optimizing the evaporation process.

Multiple sensors are deployed to monitor system performance. Temperature is measured at various points, including the outlet of the outdoor AC, the inlet and outlet of the evaporation area, the inlet and outlet of the condenser, and the ambient environment, using PT100 sensors (-50°C to 110°C, ±0.1°C accuracy). Humidity levels are recorded at corresponding points using a digital hygrometer (10%–99% range, 1% resolution, ±1% accuracy).

A weighing scale with a capacity of 20 kg (0–20 kg range, 0.5 g resolution) is used to measure the weight of water in the feed tank. The measurement begins once the processed water tank is fully filled. The reduction in water weight is used to quantify the evaporation occurring in the evaporation area. Air velocity is monitored using an anemometer GM-816 (0–30 m/s range, 0.1 m/s resolution). Additionally, the pressure in the evaporation area is measured using a Pressure Meter PCE-PDA 1L to ensure optimal operating conditions.

**A detailed explanation of the above has been added on pages 28-29**

**Comment 3**: The mesh validation section describes a grid independence test, but it does not provide details on convergence behaviour or numerical accuracy.

Response:

Thank you for your valuable feedback regarding the **mesh validation section**. We appreciate your suggestion to provide further details on **convergence behaviour and numerical accuracy** in our grid independence test. In response, we have made the following improvements in the revised manuscript:

**Table 1**
Grid independency test

| No | Mesh | Evaporation rate ($kg/s.m^3$) | %Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 160k | 1.12 | - |
| 2 | 250k | 1.73 | 54.46 |
| 3 | 400k | 2.27 | 31.21 |
| 4 | 600k | 2.56 | 12.78 |
| 5 | 900k | 2.72 | 6.25 |

To ensure the accuracy of the CFD simulation results, a convergence analysis was conducted by observing the trend of evaporation rate changes concerning mesh density.

Table 1 presents the evaporation rate values obtained for various mesh element counts along with their percentage differences. The results indicate that after exceeding 600k mesh elements, the variation in the evaporation rate becomes minimal, with a percentage difference below 10% [25]. This suggests that the numerical solution has achieved convergence. According to commonly applied CFD methodologies, a relative difference of less than 10% is an acceptable criterion for grid independence [26]. Additionally, the residual analysis shows that the residual values consistently decrease and remain within an acceptable convergence threshold of $10^{-4}$ [27]. This ensures that the solution remains stable and is not significantly affected by further mesh refinement.

The selection of 600k mesh elements was based on the percentage difference analysis, which remained below 10%, as well as the Richardson extrapolation method [28]. This technique is used to estimate numerical errors and ensure that further mesh refinement provides only marginal accuracy improvements compared to the significantly increased computational cost [29]. This methodology aligns with best practices in CFD grid validation, where excessive mesh refinement does not substantially improve results but significantly increases computational load [30]. Therefore, the selection of 600k mesh elements is considered optimal, achieving a balance between computational efficiency and simulation accuracy

**A detailed explanation of the above has been added on pages 27 - 28.**

**Comment 4**: The interfacial effects between air and water are simplified in the CFD model, neglecting critical phenomena like surface tension, evaporation-driven convective flows, and humidity diffusion.

Response:

The simulation model in this research simplifies the interface between air and water without fully capturing complex interfacial phenomena such as surface tension, evaporation-driven heat transfer at the molecular scale, and air-water interaction dynamics. Surface tension is excluded as its effect on large-scale evaporation is negligible, and grid independence testing shows that increasing the mesh from 160,000 to 900,000 elements improves evaporation by only 6.25%, making its modelling inefficient. Similarly, evaporation-driven convective flows are omitted since the system is dominated by forced convection from AC condenser airflow, with a reduction in channel cross-sectional area increasing evaporation rates due to turbulence rather than natural convection. Humidity diffusion is also neglected as vapour transport is primarily driven by advection, with experiments showing that vortex generators enhance evaporation rates by 57%, proving that turbulence has a greater impact than molecular diffusion. Despite its limitations, the model effectively demonstrates the impact of vortex generators on evaporation rates, aligning well with experimental data. These simplifications maintain computational efficiency, physical validity, and experimental consistency while accurately capturing the dominant evaporation mechanisms.

**A detailed explanation of the above has been added on page 26**

**Comment 5**: The methodology lacks clear explanations of key CFD settings, including turbulence model selection and boundary conditions.

Response:

In response, we have provided a more detailed description of the computational setup, including the selection of the turbulence model and boundary conditions, as follows:

The simulation was conducted using Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) software with the following configurations:

The **turbulence model** employed was the k-omega SST model. This model was chosen because the SST formulation effectively captures long, straight fluid flows, such as those found in flat regions, while the k-omega formulation enhances accuracy in regions with detailed flow structures and around suction areas. This selection ensures a balance between computational efficiency and predictive accuracy, particularly in capturing the complex interactions within the flow domain.

For the **wall boundary condition**, a no-slip condition was applied to model the reduction in fluid velocity near solid surfaces, generating a boundary layer effect. This condition was specifically assigned to the wall glass within the geometry to accurately represent the interaction between the fluid and solid surfaces.

At the **inlet**, a normal velocity condition was applied, where both velocity magnitude and liquid volume fraction (gas phase) were defined. To replicate realistic operating conditions, the inlet velocity was set to 1.8 m/s with an inlet temperature of 51°C.

For the **outlet**, a static pressure (outflow) condition was imposed at the outlet region to simulate the expected flow behaviour, ensuring numerical stability and consistency with experimental conditions.

**Humidity modelling** was activated to account for phase change effects, particularly the evaporation process, which is influenced by thermal conditions. The ambient temperature was set to 33°C to simulate the heat-induced vapour generation and assess the impact of humidity variations on evaporation rates.

Lastly, the **water level region** was defined to regulate the initial water volume, maintaining a water temperature of 48°C. This setting ensures that the thermal conditions of the fluid domain remain consistent throughout the simulation, providing reliable insights into the evaporation and condensation phenomena.

These improvements have been incorporated into the revised manuscript to provide a clearer and more comprehensive methodology. We hope this revision addresses the reviewer's concerns, and we appreciate the constructive feedback

**The above explanation has been added on pages 24-25**

**Comment 6:** Some figures lack proper legends, axis labels, and annotations, making interpretation difficult.

Response:

In response, we have revised the figures to ensure they include appropriate legends, axis labels, and annotations to improve readability and interpretation. These modifications have been implemented in the revised manuscript to enhance the comprehensibility of the presented data. We appreciate the reviewer’s suggestion and believe these changes will improve the overall clarity and effectiveness of our visual representations.

# Cover Letter (pernyataan Keaslian Naskah)

To,
The Editors-in-Chief of Desalination and Water Treatment Journal

We are submitting an original article with a title “CFD Simulation for Optimizing the Evaporation Process in Seawater Desalination Using Exhaust Heat from AC and Vortex Generators”

" This study proposes using waste heat from household ACs for seawater desalination through evaporation, enhanced by vortex generators. The research examines variations with and without vortex generators across different cross-sectional areas, affecting airflow velocity. Results indicate that using vortex generators significantly increases evaporation rates at all wind speeds. These devices enhance airflow velocity and turbulence, boosting heat transfer and accelerating evaporation. Through Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) simulations, the research aims to demonstrate how vortex generators can improve the evaporation process, offering a practical solution for cooling and desalination at a household scale. This novel approach could significantly benefit water-scarce regions, providing an efficient, cost-effective solution by utilizing existing household technology."

I, Dan Mugisidi (corresponding author) certify that:

* The manuscript is original work of all authors.
* All authors made a significant contribution to this study.
* This manuscript has not been submitted for publication and has not been published in any other journal.
* All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

I do hope that this study can be published in Desalination and Water Treatment. Thank you.

Sincerely yours

**Dan Mugisidi**
Departement of Mechanical Engineering, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA
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# Declaration of Interest Statement (Pernyataan Penulis)

**Declaration of interests**

☒The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

☐The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests:

Revised Manuscript with Changes Marked (Bukti Revisi, dan respon kepada reviewer)

Dear Editor,

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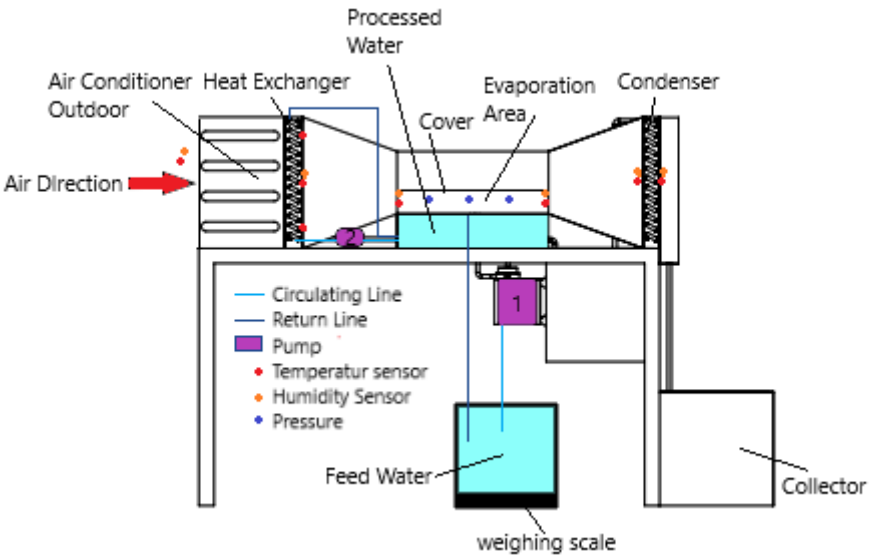


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| 4 | 600k | 2.56 | 12.78 |
| 5 | 900k | 2.72 | 6.25 |

To ensure the accuracy of the CFD simulation results, a convergence analysis was conducted by observing the trend of evaporation rate changes concerning mesh density.

Table 1 presents the evaporation rate values obtained for various mesh element counts along with their percentage differences. The results indicate that after exceeding 600k mesh elements, the variation in the evaporation rate becomes minimal, with a percentage difference below 10% [25]. This suggests that the numerical solution has achieved convergence. According to commonly applied CFD methodologies, a relative difference of less than 10% is an acceptable criterion for grid independence [26]. Additionally, the residual analysis shows that the residual values consistently decrease and remain within an acceptable convergence threshold of $10^{-4}$ [27]. This ensures that the solution remains stable and is not significantly affected by further mesh refinement.

The selection of 600k mesh elements was based on the percentage difference analysis, which remained below 10%, as well as the Richardson extrapolation method [28]. This technique is used to estimate numerical errors and ensure that further mesh refinement provides only marginal accuracy improvements compared to the significantly increased computational cost [29]. This methodology aligns with best practices in CFD grid validation, where excessive mesh refinement does not substantially improve results but significantly increases computational load [30]. Therefore, the selection of 600k mesh elements is considered optimal, achieving a balance between computational efficiency and simulation accuracy

**A detailed explanation of the above has been added on pages 27 - 28.**

**Comment 4**: The interfacial effects between air and water are simplified in the CFD model, neglecting critical phenomena like surface tension, evaporation-driven convective flows, and humidity diffusion.

Response:

The simulation model in this research simplifies the interface between air and water without fully capturing complex interfacial phenomena such as surface tension, evaporation-driven heat transfer at the molecular scale, and air-water interaction dynamics. Surface tension is excluded as its effect on large-scale evaporation is negligible, and grid independence testing shows that increasing the mesh from 160,000 to 900,000 elements improves evaporation by only 6.25%, making its modelling inefficient. Similarly, evaporation-driven convective flows are omitted since the system is dominated by forced convection from AC condenser airflow, with a reduction in channel cross-sectional area increasing evaporation rates due to turbulence rather than natural convection. Humidity diffusion is also neglected as vapour transport is primarily driven by advection, with experiments showing that vortex generators enhance evaporation rates by 57%, proving that turbulence has a greater impact than molecular diffusion. Despite its limitations, the model effectively demonstrates the impact of vortex generators on evaporation rates, aligning well with experimental data. These simplifications maintain computational efficiency, physical validity, and experimental consistency while accurately capturing the dominant evaporation mechanisms.

**A detailed explanation of the above has been added on page 26**

**Comment 5**: The methodology lacks clear explanations of key CFD settings, including turbulence model selection and boundary conditions.

Response:

In response, we have provided a more detailed description of the computational setup, including the selection of the turbulence model and boundary conditions, as follows:

The simulation was conducted using Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) software with the following configurations:

The **turbulence model** employed was the k-omega SST model. This model was chosen because the SST formulation effectively captures long, straight fluid flows, such as those found in flat regions, while the k-omega formulation enhances accuracy in regions with detailed flow structures and around suction areas. This selection ensures a balance between computational efficiency and predictive accuracy, particularly in capturing the complex interactions within the flow domain.

For the **wall boundary condition**, a no-slip condition was applied to model the reduction in fluid velocity near solid surfaces, generating a boundary layer effect. This condition was specifically assigned to the wall glass within the geometry to accurately represent the interaction between the fluid and solid surfaces.

At the **inlet**, a normal velocity condition was applied, where both velocity magnitude and liquid volume fraction (gas phase) were defined. To replicate realistic operating conditions, the inlet velocity was set to 1.8 m/s with an inlet temperature of 51°C.

For the **outlet**, a static pressure (outflow) condition was imposed at the outlet region to simulate the expected flow behaviour, ensuring numerical stability and consistency with experimental conditions.

**Humidity modelling** was activated to account for phase change effects, particularly the evaporation process, which is influenced by thermal conditions. The ambient temperature was set to 33°C to simulate the heat-induced vapour generation and assess the impact of humidity variations on evaporation rates.

Lastly, the **water level region** was defined to regulate the initial water volume, maintaining a water temperature of 48°C. This setting ensures that the thermal conditions of the fluid domain remain consistent throughout the simulation, providing reliable insights into the evaporation and condensation phenomena.

These improvements have been incorporated into the revised manuscript to provide a clearer and more comprehensive methodology. We hope this revision addresses the reviewer's concerns, and we appreciate the constructive feedback

**The above explanation has been added on pages 24-25**

**Comment 6:** Some figures lack proper legends, axis labels, and annotations, making interpretation difficult.

Response:

In response, we have revised the figures to ensure they include appropriate legends, axis labels, and annotations to improve readability and interpretation. These modifications have been implemented in the revised manuscript to enhance the comprehensibility of the presented data. We appreciate the reviewer’s suggestion and believe these changes will improve the overall clarity and effectiveness of our visual representations.

# CFD Simulation for Optimizing the Evaporation Process in Seawater Desalination Using Exhaust Heat from AC and Vortex Generators

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**ARTICLE INFO**

***Article history:***
Received 29 October XXXX
Received in revised form 1 December XXXX
Accepted 9 December XXXX
Available online 10 December XXXX

***Keywords:***

CFD simulation; evaporation process; seawater desalination; vortex generators; waste heat utilisation

**ABSTRACT**

Water is essential for human survival, yet freshwater resources are scarce and limited. In Indonesia's coastal regions, only 66.54% of the population has access to clean water, highlighting a significant challenge. This issue is further intensified by global warming, which has increased dependence on air conditioners, resulting in substantial waste heat emissions. While often overlooked, this waste heat contributes to local warming and presents an untapped energy resource. Repurposing this energy for innovative applications, such as seawater desalination, offers a promising solution to mitigate clean water shortages. This study proposes using waste heat from household ACs for seawater desalination through evaporation, enhanced by vortex generators. The research examines variations with and without vortex generators across different cross-sectional areas, affecting airflow velocity. Results indicate that using vortex generators significantly increases evaporation rates at all wind speeds. These devices enhance airflow velocity and turbulence, boosting heat transfer and accelerating evaporation. Through Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) simulations, the research aims to demonstrate how vortex generators can improve evaporation, offering a practical solution for cooling and desalination at a household scale. This novel approach could significantly benefit water-scarce regions, providing an efficient, cost-effective solution utilising existing household technology.

## Highlights

- Rapid global population growth significantly increases the demand for clean water.
- This study introduces a method to repurpose waste heat from air conditioners for seawater desalination.
- Vortex generators improve evaporation rates by increasing airflow velocity and turbulence.
- CFD simulations confirm the effectiveness of this approach for household-scale desalination systems.

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## 1. Introduction

Water is a vital substance needed by humans and other living organisms. With the growth of the global population, the water demand has increased rapidly. Estimates show that a 15% increase in the world population will reduce the availability of clean water by 40% [1], while the amount of freshwater constitutes only 2.8% [2] of the total water on the Earth's surface. Because water is so essential, water scarcity can trigger humanitarian, political, and even racial issues [3]. Water scarcity poses a significant global threat and increasingly impacts regions in Indonesia.

As an archipelagic country with the longest coastline in the world, Indonesia is home to many communities residing in coastal areas. However, they face serious problems related to water scarcity. Only about 66.54% of them have access to clean water, forcing the majority of coastal residents to use murky and saline water for daily needs such as washing and bathing, while for drinking water, they have to purchase it [4]. Water scarcity is just one of the various problems faced by coastal populations in Indonesia. Global warming is another current issue.

Global warming has transitioned from a potential threat to an urgent global crisis. The Earth's temperature has increased significantly in the past three decades [5]. This temperature rise has caused climate change and is linked to the increasing incidence of severe weather events [6]. In addition, the higher temperatures increase the demand for air conditioning (AC), especially in tropical regions like Indonesia. However, it should be noted that the AC units currently used in households and industries also emit hot air. This is due to the working principle of AC or heat pumps that take hot air from inside the room and expel it outside [7]. Therefore, this research will use heat pumps' waste hot air to evaporate seawater. The resulting vapour will then be condensed to produce clean water. Previous studies have shown that airflow is very adequate in the evaporation process [8]. The problem to be investigated is how to use the waste hot air from ACS to produce clean water through the desalination process, particularly for coastal communities in Indonesia.

Several studies have been conducted using heat pumps for desalination and cooling rooms. Heat pumps have been combined with multi-stage flash (MSF) and membrane distillation (MD) [9] for cooling and desalination processes. Srinivas used a staged system for desalination and cooling [10]. Junling combined heat pumps with vacuum to process wastewater [11], while several researchers only used heat pumps as desalination units [12], [13], [14]. However, heat pumps are used only at a large scale for air cooling and desalination. In contrast, Indonesia and many other places use heat pumps or ACs more commonly used for residential purposes.

Therefore, this research proposes a problem-solving approach to using household-scale AC units as air conditioners and desalination units by utilising the hot air released by the AC. The evaporation process will be integrated with a vortex generator to accelerate it. Thus, the second problem to be investigated in this research is integrating vortex generator technology to enhance the evaporation process in desalination units so that clean water can be produced efficiently without compromising AC performance.

The vortex generator is a component that disrupts the flow and increases flow velocity [15], leading to vorticity [16] that reduces flow pressure [17]. Vortex generators have been shown to enhance heat transfer, such as in cooling tower ducts and air channels [18]. Furthermore, since the evaporation pressure at the water surface is greater than the pressure in its surroundings [19] the reduction in flow pressure with the presence of a vortex generator will accelerate the evaporation process.

Based on the literature review, no household-scale desalination unit has evaporated using only flow integrated with a vortex generator, whether using a heat pump or not, thus representing a novelty in developing more efficient and affordable desalination technology in this research.

Additionally, computational fluid dynamics (CFD) simulations will be employed to obtain research results, allowing for a detailed analysis of the airflow dynamics and the impact of the vortex generator on the evaporation rate.

## 2. Methodology

This study utilises Ansys CFD software to conduct simulations. The basic governing equations of flow through the channel are summarised in terms of continuity, momentum and energy balance equation as follows:
The continuity equation,

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t}\iiint_{V} \rho dV + \iint_{A} \rho\vec{V}\cdot d\vec{A} = 0 \tag{1}$$

$$\frac{\partial \rho}{\partial t} + \rho\vec{\nabla}\cdot\vec{V} = 0 \tag{2}$$

The momentum equation in the x-axis direction

$$\frac{\partial(\rho u)}{\partial t} + \vec{\nabla}\cdot\left(\rho u\vec{V}\right) = -\frac{\partial p}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{xx}}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{yx}}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{zx}}{\partial z} + \rho f_x \tag{3}$$

The momentum equation in the y-axis direction

$$\frac{\partial(\rho v)}{\partial t} + \vec{\nabla}\cdot\left(\rho v\vec{V}\right) = -\frac{\partial p}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{xy}}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{yy}}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{zy}}{\partial z} + \rho f_y \tag{4}$$

The momentum equation in the z-axis direction

$$\frac{\partial(\rho w)}{\partial t} + \vec{\nabla}\cdot\left(\rho w\vec{V}\right) = -\frac{\partial p}{\partial z} + \frac{\partial \tau_{xz}}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{yz}}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{zz}}{\partial z} + \rho f_z \tag{5}$$

The energy equation written in terms of internal energy.

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t}\left[\rho\left(e + \frac{V^2}{2}\right)\right] + \vec{\nabla}\cdot\left[\rho\left(e + \frac{V^2}{2}\right)\vec{V}\right] = \rho\dot{q} - \frac{\partial(\rho p)}{\partial x} - \frac{\partial(vp)}{\partial y} - \frac{\partial(wp)}{\partial z} + \rho\vec{f}\cdot\vec{V} \tag{6}$$

The simulation was conducted using Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) software with the following configurations:

The turbulence model employed was the k-omega SST model. This model was chosen because the SST formulation effectively captures long, straight fluid flows, such as those found in flat regions, while the k-omega formulation enhances accuracy in regions with detailed flow structures and around suction areas. This selection ensures a balance between computational efficiency and predictive accuracy, particularly in capturing the complex interactions within the flow domain.

For the wall boundary condition, a no-slip condition was applied to model the reduction in fluid velocity near solid surfaces, generating a boundary layer effect. This condition was specifically assigned to the wall glass within the geometry to accurately represent the interaction between the fluid and solid surfaces.

At the inlet, a normal velocity condition was applied, where both velocity magnitude and liquid volume fraction (gas phase) were defined. To replicate realistic operating conditions, the inlet velocity was set to 1.8 m/s with an inlet temperature of 51°C.

For the outlet, a static pressure (outflow) condition was imposed at the outlet region to simulate the expected flow behaviour, ensuring numerical stability and consistency with experimental conditions.

Humidity modelling was activated to account for phase change effects, particularly the evaporation process, which is influenced by thermal conditions. The ambient temperature was set to 33°C to simulate the heat-induced vapour generation and assess the impact of humidity variations on evaporation rates.

Simulations focus on evaporation within a channel downstream of the air conditioner (AC) condenser, where airflow reaches temperatures up to 45°C. The airflow passes through the channel above the water surface, with varying cross-sectional areas of the channel set at 0.03, 0.024, 0.018, 0.012, and 0.006 m², as illustrated in Figure 1.

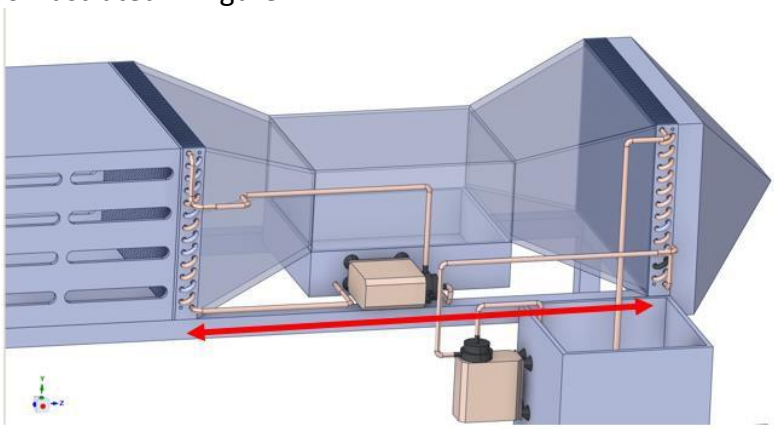


**Fig. 1.** Simulation model

Figure 1 indicates the section to be simulated by red arrows, highlighting where water evaporates into vapour. Other areas are not included in the simulation as they are not the primary focus of this research. This study concentrates explicitly on water evaporation.

As mentioned earlier, simulation variations are achieved by altering the cross-sectional area of the channel without a Vortex Generator (NVG) and with a Vortex Generator (VG), as shown in Figure 2.

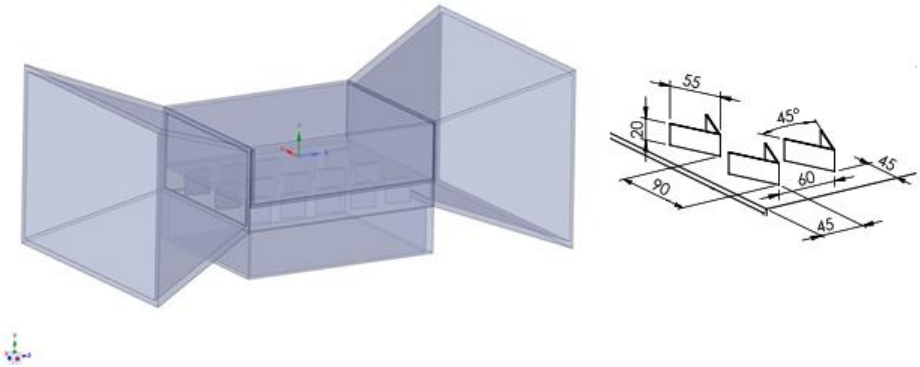



**Fig. 2.** Simulation variable

The vortex generator used in this study is a V-shaped design, as it effectively directs airflow and generates efficient vortices without excessive flow resistance [20]. The choice of parameters is based on prior experimental and numerical studies. A height-to-channel height ratio of 0.47 was selected as it provides a balance between vortex strength and flow obstruction, ensuring enhanced mixing without inducing excessive drag [21], as pressure drop can be reduced by up to 43.9% when the height ratio is less than 50% [22]. The longitudinal pitch ratio of 0.18 was chosen because it maximizes vortex interaction, promoting turbulence intensity while preventing premature vortex dissipation

[23]. The 30° angle of attack was selected as it has been shown to yield the best compromise between vortex strength, flow attachment, and overall thermal-hydraulic performance [24]. These design choices were validated through previous research and optimized for effective heat transfer and flow control.

The simulation model in this research simplifies the interface between air and water without fully capturing complex interfacial phenomena such as surface tension, evaporation-driven heat transfer at the molecular scale, and air-water interaction dynamics. Surface tension is excluded as its effect on large-scale evaporation is negligible, and grid independence testing shows that increasing the mesh from 160,000 to 900,000 elements improves evaporation by only 6.25%, making its modelling inefficient. Similarly, evaporation-driven convective flows are omitted since the system is dominated by forced convection from AC condenser airflow, with a reduction in channel cross-sectional area increasing evaporation rates due to turbulence rather than natural convection. Humidity diffusion is also neglected as vapour transport is primarily driven by advection, with experiments showing that vortex generators enhance evaporation rates by 57%, proving that turbulence has a greater impact than molecular diffusion. Despite its limitations, the model effectively demonstrates the impact of vortex generators on evaporation rates, aligning well with experimental data. These simplifications maintain computational efficiency, physical validity, and experimental consistency while accurately capturing the dominant evaporation mechanisms.

The modelling of the interaction between air and water during the evaporation process utilises a fluid domain, where warm air from the condenser flows over the water surface, influencing the evaporation rate, as illustrated in Figure 3.

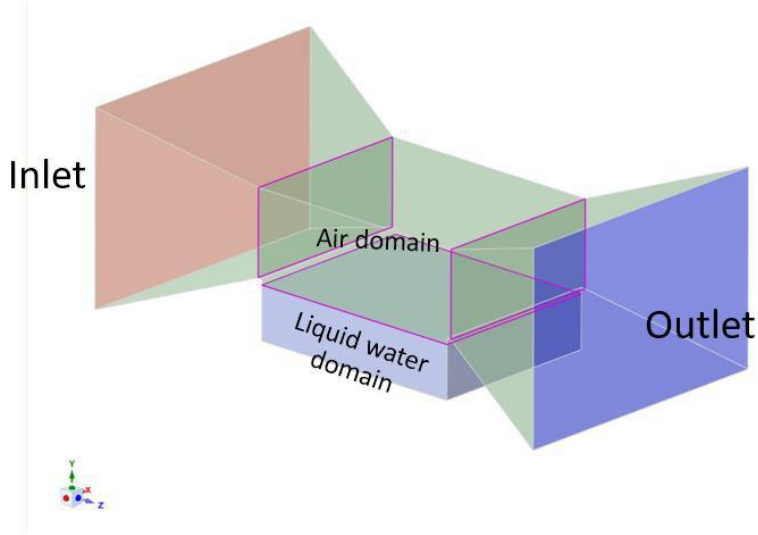



**Fig. 3.** Simulation domain

Figure 3 illustrates the fluid domain (flow area) simulated in the CFD process. The analysed fluid domain is situated between the input (AC condenser) and the output, featuring two types of fluids: the air domain and the water domain. The initial water volume is 0.01 $m^3$.

In solving the fluid flow equations using CFD simulations, the fluid domain is divided into small elements (grid), referred to as mesh, as shown in Figure 4.

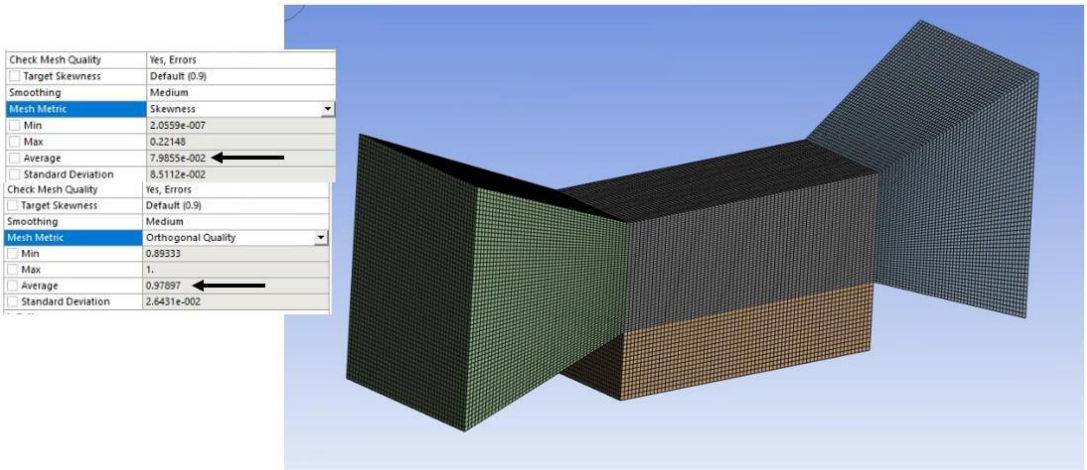



**Fig. 4.** Simulation mesh

Figure 4 above illustrates the mesh utilised in the CFD simulation. The chosen element type is hexahedral, known for its structured grid that enhances numerical stability and accuracy. This study considers the skewness and orthogonal quality values sufficient because they meet and exceed the standard thresholds used in CFD simulations. A skewness value below 0.25 is typically deemed acceptable, and an orthogonal quality value above 0.7 is considered good. The values of 0.08 and 0.98 ensure minimal numerical errors and optimal flow simulation, aligning with best practices in CFD modelling. A grid independence test was performed to ensure the reliability of the simulation results. This test determines whether the results are consistent across different mesh densities, confirming that the chosen mesh configuration does not significantly influence the findings.

**Table 1**
Grid independency test

| No | Mesh | Evaporation rate (kg/s.m$^3$) | %Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 160k | 1.12 | - |
| 2 | 250k | 1.73 | 54.46 |
| 3 | 400k | 2.27 | 31.21 |
| 4 | 600k | 2.56 | 12.78 |
| 5 | 900k | 2.72 | 6.25 |

Table 1 presents the outcomes of this grid independence test. A relative difference in results below 10% establishes the validity of the simulation model used in this study. The 10% threshold is commonly adopted in CFD studies as it represents a balance between computational cost and result accuracy, ensuring convergence of the numerical solution while maintaining efficiency [25]. This suggests that the numerical solution has achieved convergence. According to commonly applied CFD methodologies, a relative difference of less than 10% is an acceptable criterion for grid independence [26]. Additionally, the residual analysis shows that the residual values consistently decrease and remain within an acceptable convergence threshold of $10^{-4}$ [27]. This ensures that the solution remains stable and is not significantly affected by further mesh refinement.

The selection of 600k mesh elements was based on the percentage difference analysis, which remained below 10%, as well as the Richardson extrapolation method [28]. This technique is used to estimate numerical errors and ensure that further mesh refinement provides only marginal accuracy improvements compared to the significantly increased computational cost [29]. This methodology

aligns with best practices in CFD grid validation, where excessive mesh refinement does not substantially improve results but significantly increases computational load [30]. Therefore, the selection of 600k mesh elements is considered optimal, achieving a balance between computational efficiency and simulation accuracy. The generated mesh primarily consists of hexahedrons, offering high resolution and computational efficiency, as shown in Figure 5. For detailed regions, polyhedral meshes are utilized due to their superior capability to conform to objects with high curvature.

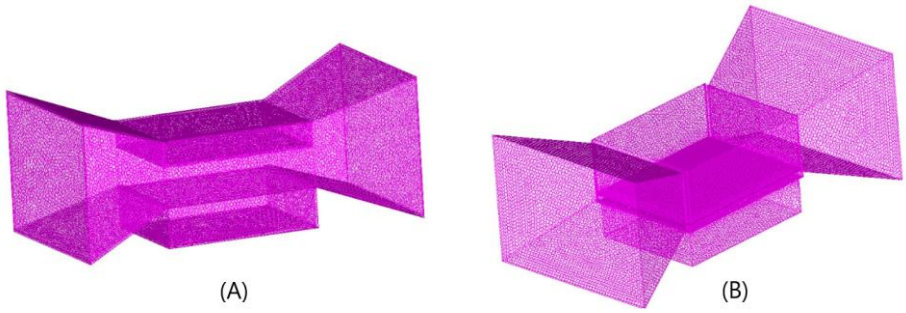



**Fig. 5.** Simulation mesh without VG (A) and using VG (B)

**Fig. 6.** Experimental rig

The verification of CFD results can be conducted using data from experimental research or previous studies [31] to ensure that the CFD model accurately represents physical phenomena. In this study, the simulation results were verified using evaporation data obtained from experiments without a vortex generator, using an experimental rig shown in Fig. 6 and an experimental scheme in Fig. 7.

As shown in Fig. 7, feed water is pumped into the processed water tank using Pump 1 until it reaches capacity. If the tank reaches full capacity, excess water flows back to the feed tank through the return line. When the water level decreases, the pump automatically refills the tank. Water from the processed water tank is then circulated using Pump 2 to the heat exchanger, where it is heated by the waste heat from the outdoor air conditioner (AC). The heated water returns to the processed tank, ensuring continuous thermal energy transfer. In addition to heating the water, the airflow from the outdoor AC is directed through the evaporation area to accelerate the evaporation process. The processed water undergoes phase change into vapour and moves along the airflow direction. The air, now carrying water vapour, is directed into the condenser, where the temperature is maintained at

approximately 20°C. The condensed water is subsequently collected in a storage tank. The cover in the evaporation area is adjustable, allowing its height to be set between 2 cm and 14 cm above the water surface, which provides flexibility in optimizing the evaporation process. Multiple sensors are deployed to monitor system performance. Temperature is measured at various points, including the outlet of the outdoor AC, the inlet and outlet of the evaporation area, the inlet and outlet of the condenser, and the ambient environment, using PT100 sensors (-50°C to 110°C, ±0.1°C accuracy). Humidity levels are recorded at corresponding points using a digital hygrometer (10%–99% range, 1% resolution, ±1% accuracy). A weighing scale with a capacity of 20 kg (0–20 kg range, 0.5 g resolution) is used to measure the weight of water in the feed tank. The measurement begins once the processed water tank is fully filled. The reduction in water weight is used to quantify the evaporation occurring in the evaporation area. Air velocity is monitored using an anemometer GM-816 (0–30 m/s range, 0.1 m/s resolution). Additionally, the pressure in the evaporation area is measured using a Pressure Meter PCE-PDA 1L to ensure optimal operating conditions.

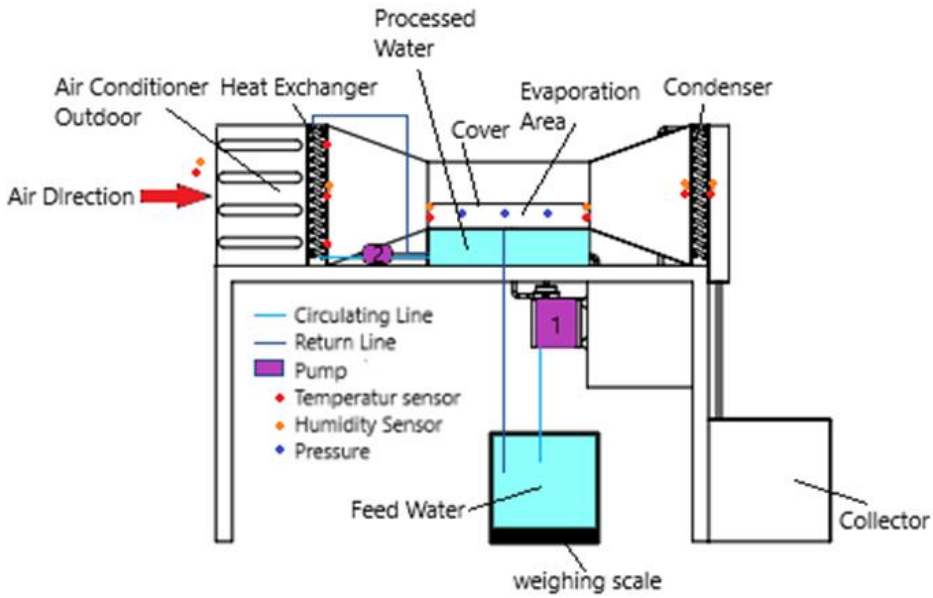



**Fig. 7.** Experimental scheme

## 3. Results

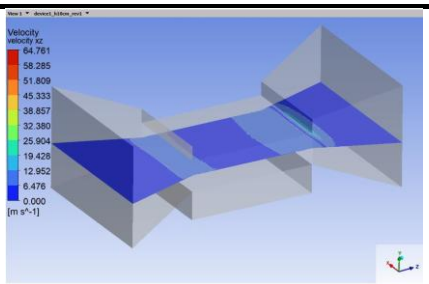
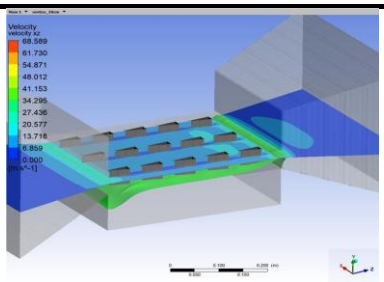
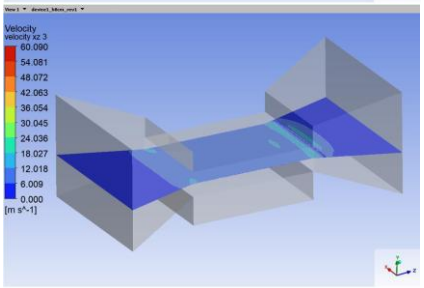
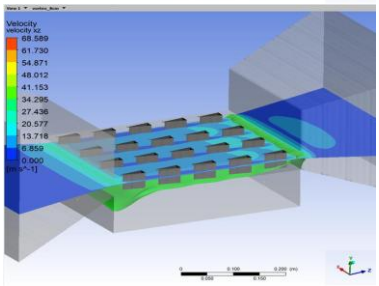
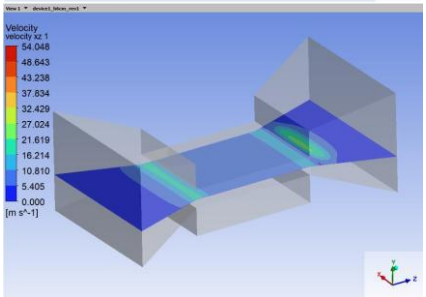
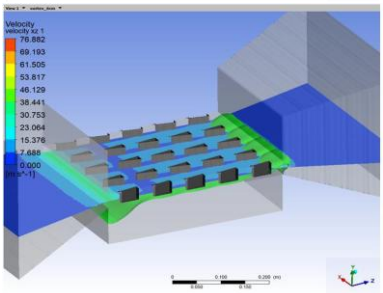
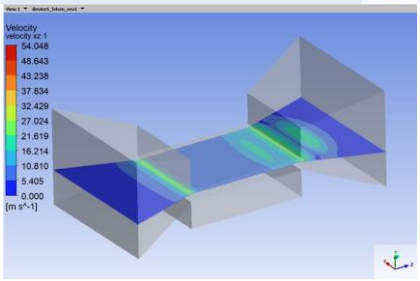
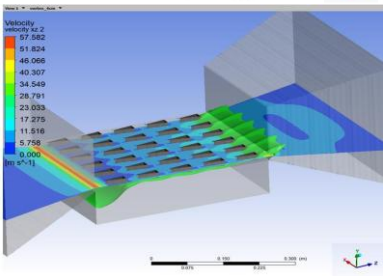
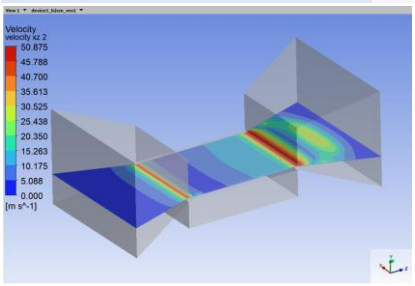
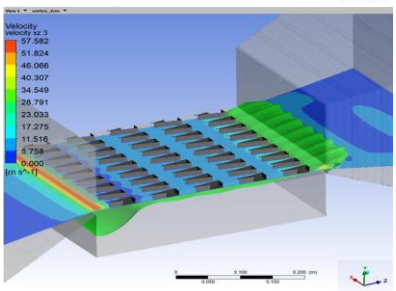
The simulation results presented in this article focus on the airflow velocity as influenced by the reduction in cross-sectional area and the corresponding evaporation rates. This analysis encompasses scenarios both without vortex generators (NVG) and with vortex generators (VG).

The investigation highlights how variations in the channel's cross-sectional area impact the airflow's velocity. As the area decreases, the airflow velocity tends to increase due to fluid dynamics principles, particularly the continuity equation, which states that the mass flow rate must remain constant from one flow cross-section to another.

The comparative results between the two configurations—one using vortex generators and the other without—will provide insights into the effectiveness of vortex generators in enhancing the evaporation process. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of optimising desalination techniques, particularly for applications in coastal areas where water scarcity is a pressing issue. By

demonstrating the impact of airflow velocity on evaporation rates, the findings will emphasise the importance of flow dynamics in improving desalination efficiency.

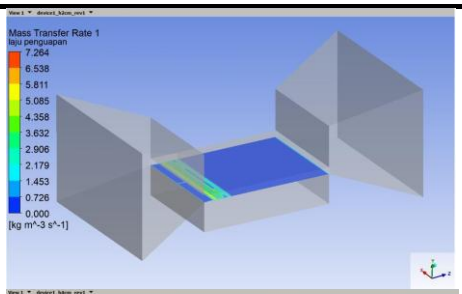
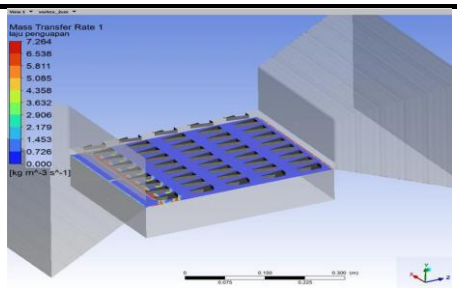
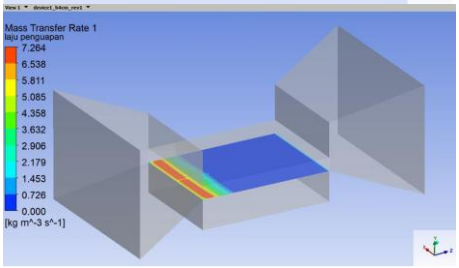
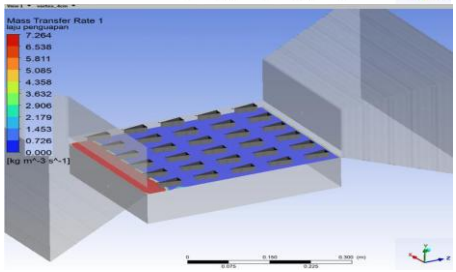
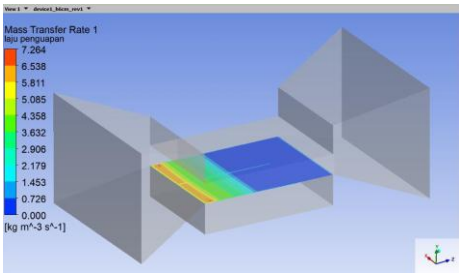
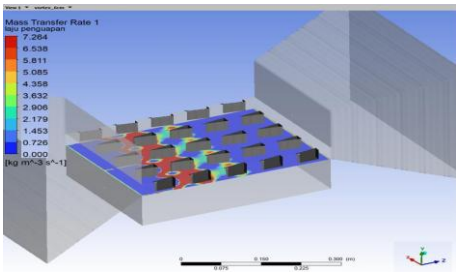
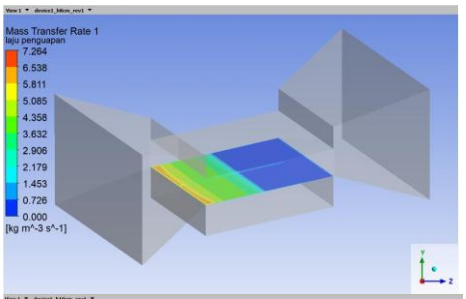
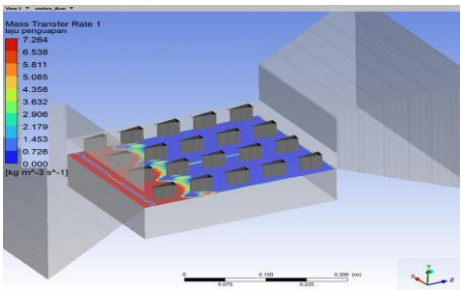
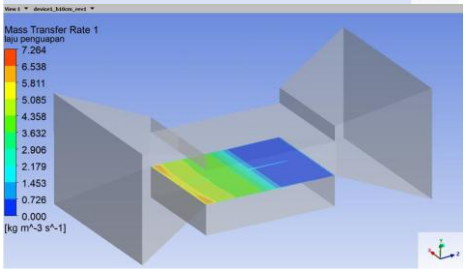
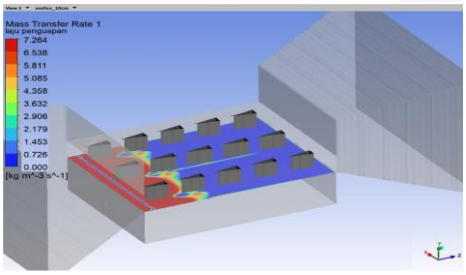
**Table 2**
Velocity contour

| cross-sectional area | NVG | VG |
|---|---|---|
| 0.03 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.024 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.018 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.012 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.006 $m^2$ |  |  |

The increase in airflow velocity caused by the vortex generator, as shown in Table 2, is closely related to the evaporation process. Table 2 illustrates that airflow velocity increases as the cross-sectional area of the channel decreases. When vortex generators are applied to the channel, the

airflow velocity increases significantly compared to the channel without vortex generators (NVG). This occurs because vortex generators create longitudinal vortices that disturb the boundary layer, reduce thickness, and enhance fluid mixing. As a result, higher airflow velocity leads to more efficient removal of water vapour from the surface, accelerating the evaporation process. Additionally, the increased airflow velocity, as reflected in the data from Table 2, also accelerates the transfer of thermal energy from the water surface to the surrounding air.

**Table 3**
Evaporation rate

| cross-sectional area | NVG | VG |
|---|---|---|
| 0.03 $m^2$ |   |   |
| 0.024 $m^2$ |   |   |
| 0.018 $m^2$ |   |   |
| 0.012 $m^2$ |   |   |
| 0.006 $m^2$ |   |   |

With better flow distribution and higher turbulence, the heat absorbed from the water surface can be transferred more efficiently to the air, ultimately speeding up evaporation. Longitudinal vortices can significantly improve flow distribution and momentum transfer in small channels, enhancing evaporation efficiency by optimising pressure distribution within the microchannel [32]. Moreover, these findings align with other research, showing that decreasing the cross-sectional area of the channel improves flow distribution and momentum transfer in microchannel systems, further enhancing evaporation efficiency [33]. Thus, the implementation of vortex generators not only optimises thermal and fluid performance in systems such as heat exchangers and cooling mechanisms and enhances evaporation rates, as demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3 compares the evaporation rates for the NVG and VG configurations. Channels equipped with vortex generators show significantly higher evaporation rates. The average increase in the evaporation rate, approximately 57%, is due to enhanced fluid mixing and continuous disruption of the thermal boundary layer, which improves heat transfer efficiency.

There are two key implications of this increase in evaporation rate. First, improved mass transfer facilitates the removal of saturated air near the water surface, allowing for higher evaporation efficiency. Second, disrupting the stagnant air layer near the liquid surface ensures a continuous supply of dry air, creating a higher concentration gradient for evaporation. These findings emphasise the importance of vortex generators in applications such as desalination, where optimising evaporation efficiency is crucial. Micro-vortices can accelerate evaporation by increasing turbulence and reducing boundary layer thickness [34] . The higher evaporation rates observed in vortex-induced systems are closely related to the reduction of the thermal boundary layer thickness, which speeds up the transport of water molecules from the liquid surface to the airflow [35].

This enhanced airflow leads to a more efficient evaporation process, as the constant replacement of saturated air with drier air increases the evaporation rate. The findings presented in Table 3 highlight the positive impact of vortex generators on evaporation efficiency, making them a valuable component in systems designed for desalination or other thermal applications. Additionally, the increased evaporation rates observed in the presence of vortex generators contribute to the effectiveness of water desalination techniques and offer potential improvements in various industrial processes where evaporation is a key mechanism.

To validate the CFD results, the evaporation rate obtained from the simulation was compared with experimental data. This comparison is presented in Table 2, which displays the deviation between CFD results and experimental data.

**Table**

**Table 4**
Result deviation

| Configuration | Evaporation Rate (CFD) (kg/s·m³) | Evaporation Rate (Experiment) (kg/s·m³) | Deviation (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| NVG | 2.56 | 2.42 | 5.79 |
| VG | 3.98 | 3.72 | 6.99 |

This comparison shows that the maximum deviation between the CFD results and the experiment is 6.99%, which is still within the acceptable error range for CFD studies, typically 5-10% [35]. These findings confirm that the numerical model used is capable of reliably representing the physical phenomena, thereby increasing confidence in the simulation results [36],[37].

Furthermore, the evaporation results from the simulation were verified against the experimental evaporation data, as presented in Figure 8.

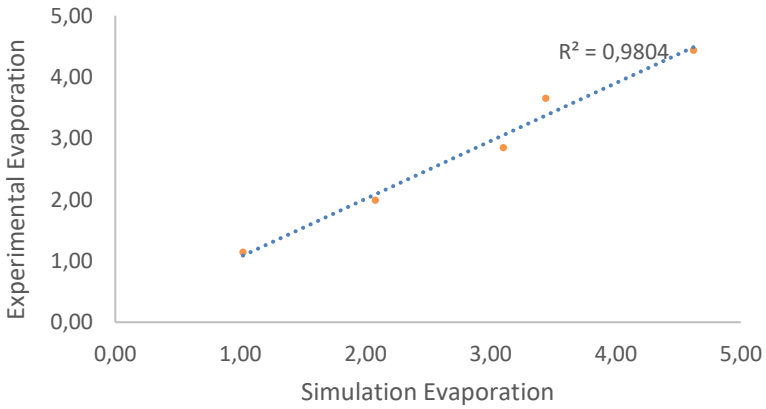



**Fig. 8.** Simulation-Based Model Verification Against Experimental Data

Figure 8 shows that the evaporation rates from the simulation closely match the experimental results, forming an almost linear relationship with a coefficient of determination ($R^2$) of 0.9804. This indicates that the simulation results align well with the experimental data [38], with a deviation of only 7.1%. The high agreement between the simulation and experimental data demonstrates that the CFD simulation approach is reliable for predicting VG's mass transfer enhancement effects. Low deviation in CFD simulations when modelling the effects of vortices on mass and heat transfer [39] . Subsequently, the simulation results for evaporation without a Vortex Generator (NVG) are compared to those with a Vortex Generator (VG), as shown in Figure 8.

The findings presented in Figure 8 further validate the analysis, demonstrating the impact of vortex generators on evaporation rates. The simulation results depicted in Figure 6 reveal that using vortex generators increases the evaporation rate by an average of 57% compared to systems without vortex generators. This enhancement is primarily due to the effect of vortex generators in increasing the flow velocity along the surface, which causes flow instability (turbulence) and the development of boundary layers and vortices [40]. These effects, in turn, amplify the temperature gradient between the surface and the surrounding air [41].

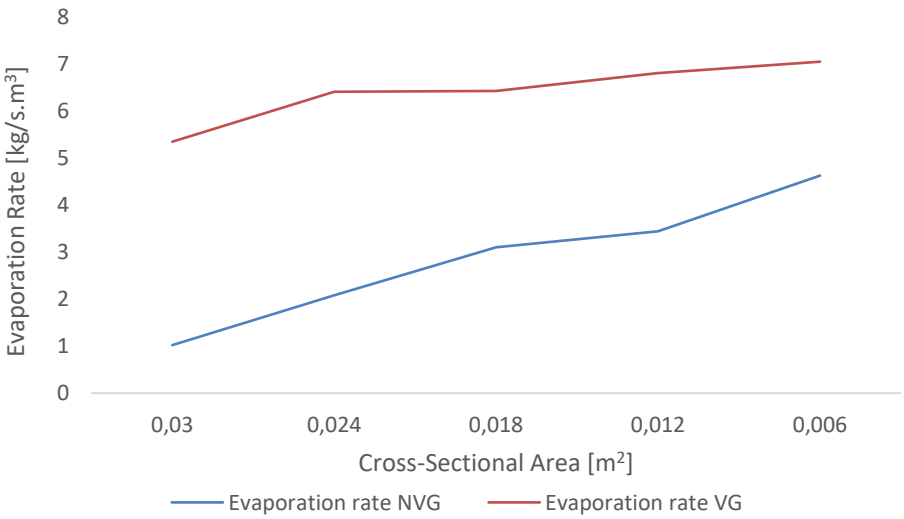



**Fig. 9.** Evaporation rate NVG and VG

The research findings indicate that applying vortex generators (VG) in evaporation systems, such as those used in desalination or industrial drying processes, provides significant advantages in terms of thermal efficiency. VG increases the evaporation rate, reducing operational time and energy consumption. The optimisation of VG design holds great potential for further improving thermal efficiency. The optimal VG geometry can maximise evaporation rates and heat transfer under various environmental conditions [42]. VG significantly enhances evaporation efficiency in desalination processes [43], thereby lowering operational costs.

Evaporation occurring within the channel can be described by the equation $J=K_m (Ps-Pa)$, where J represents the mass transfer rate due to evaporation and $k_m$ is the mass transfer coefficient. Ps and Pa are saturation vapour pressure at the surface and partial vapour pressure of the surrounding air, respectively. The vortex generators enhance the mass transfer rate by promoting turbulence and improving the mixing of the fluid, which in turn increases the effective mass transfer coefficient $k_m$. This leads to a more efficient transfer of vapour from the surface to the surrounding air, driven by the vapour pressure difference. The influence of the vortex generators results in higher evaporation rates compared to a system without such enhancements.

Implementing VG in evaporation-dependent systems, such as evaporative cooling or industrial drying, provides substantial benefits. VG accelerates the evaporation process and reduces the additional energy required to maintain the temperature gradient, thus improving operational efficiency. This increase in evaporation rates also enables the design of surfaces involved in heat and mass transfer to become more compact without compromising performance. As a result, material costs can be reduced, and overall system performance can be enhanced. Therefore, the impact of vortex generators on flow and evaporation offers an efficient and innovative approach to improving the performance of thermal and fluid systems.

## 4. Conclusions

This study confirms that vortex generators significantly improve evaporation rates in desalination systems by harnessing waste heat from air conditioners. The results indicate an average increase of 57% in evaporation rates when vortex generators are employed, attributed to the induced turbulence that improves fluid mixing and thermal energy transfer. This research highlights the effectiveness of vortex generators in optimising airflow dynamics, leading to more efficient heat transfer and evaporation processes.

From a scientific perspective, this work contributes to understanding fluid dynamics and heat transfer mechanisms in evaporative systems. It provides a novel approach for utilising existing household technologies, such as air conditioning units, to address pressing issues related to freshwater scarcity, particularly in coastal regions. Additionally, the findings pave the way for further exploration of innovative solutions in thermal management, potentially influencing the design and efficiency of future systems in domestic and industrial applications. The study encourages the adoption of vortex generators as a feasible method for improving thermal efficiency, thereby promoting sustainable practices in water desalination and environmental management.

**Acknowledgement**

This research was funded by a grant from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia 105/E5/PG.02.00.PL/2024, 812/LL3/AL.04/2024, 104/F.03.07/2024.

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# CFD Simulation for Optimizing the Evaporation Process in Seawater Desalination Using Exhaust Heat from AC and Vortex Generators

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**ARTICLE INFO**

***Article history:***
Received 29 October XXXX
Received in revised form 1 December XXXX
Accepted 9 December XXXX
Available online 10 December XXXX

***Keywords:***

CFD simulation; evaporation process; seawater desalination; vortex generators; waste heat utilisation

**ABSTRACT**

Water is essential for human survival, yet freshwater resources are scarce and limited. In Indonesia's coastal regions, only 66.54% of the population has access to clean water, highlighting a significant challenge. This issue is further intensified by global warming, which has increased dependence on air conditioners, resulting in substantial waste heat emissions. While often overlooked, this waste heat contributes to local warming and presents an untapped energy resource. Repurposing this energy for innovative applications, such as seawater desalination, offers a promising solution to mitigate clean water shortages. This study proposes using waste heat from household ACs for seawater desalination through evaporation, enhanced by vortex generators. The research examines variations with and without vortex generators across different cross-sectional areas, affecting airflow velocity. Results indicate that using vortex generators significantly increases evaporation rates at all wind speeds. These devices enhance airflow velocity and turbulence, boosting heat transfer and accelerating evaporation. Through Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) simulations, the research aims to demonstrate how vortex generators can improve evaporation, offering a practical solution for cooling and desalination at a household scale. This novel approach could significantly benefit water-scarce regions, providing an efficient, cost-effective solution utilising existing household technology.

## Highlights

- Rapid global population growth significantly increases the demand for clean water.
- This study introduces a method to repurpose waste heat from air conditioners for seawater desalination.
- Vortex generators improve evaporation rates by increasing airflow velocity and turbulence.
- CFD simulations confirm the effectiveness of this approach for household-scale desalination systems.

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## 1. Introduction

Water is a vital substance needed by humans and other living organisms. With the growth of the global population, the water demand has increased rapidly. Estimates show that a 15% increase in the world population will reduce the availability of clean water by 40% [1], while the amount of freshwater constitutes only 2.8% [2] of the total water on the Earth's surface. Because water is so essential, water scarcity can trigger humanitarian, political, and even racial issues [3]. Water scarcity poses a significant global threat and increasingly impacts regions in Indonesia.

As an archipelagic country with the longest coastline in the world, Indonesia is home to many communities residing in coastal areas. However, they face serious problems related to water scarcity. Only about 66.54% of them have access to clean water, forcing the majority of coastal residents to use murky and saline water for daily needs such as washing and bathing, while for drinking water, they have to purchase it [4]. Water scarcity is just one of the various problems faced by coastal populations in Indonesia. Global warming is another current issue.

Global warming has transitioned from a potential threat to an urgent global crisis. The Earth's temperature has increased significantly in the past three decades [5]. This temperature rise has caused climate change and is linked to the increasing incidence of severe weather events [6]. In addition, the higher temperatures increase the demand for air conditioning (AC), especially in tropical regions like Indonesia. However, it should be noted that the AC units currently used in households and industries also emit hot air. This is due to the working principle of AC or heat pumps that take hot air from inside the room and expel it outside [7]. Therefore, this research will use heat pumps' waste hot air to evaporate seawater. The resulting vapour will then be condensed to produce clean water. Previous studies have shown that airflow is very adequate in the evaporation process [8]. The problem to be investigated is how to use the waste hot air from ACS to produce clean water through the desalination process, particularly for coastal communities in Indonesia.

Several studies have been conducted using heat pumps for desalination and cooling rooms. Heat pumps have been combined with multi-stage flash (MSF) and membrane distillation (MD) [9] for cooling and desalination processes. Srinivas used a staged system for desalination and cooling [10]. Junling combined heat pumps with vacuum to process wastewater [11], while several researchers only used heat pumps as desalination units [12], [13], [14]. However, heat pumps are used only at a large scale for air cooling and desalination. In contrast, Indonesia and many other places use heat pumps or ACs more commonly used for residential purposes.

Therefore, this research proposes a problem-solving approach to using household-scale AC units as air conditioners and desalination units by utilising the hot air released by the AC. The evaporation process will be integrated with a vortex generator to accelerate it. Thus, the second problem to be investigated in this research is integrating vortex generator technology to enhance the evaporation process in desalination units so that clean water can be produced efficiently without compromising AC performance.

The vortex generator is a component that disrupts the flow and increases flow velocity [15], leading to vorticity [16] that reduces flow pressure [17]. Vortex generators have been shown to enhance heat transfer, such as in cooling tower ducts and air channels [18]. Furthermore, since the evaporation pressure at the water surface is greater than the pressure in its surroundings [19] the reduction in flow pressure with the presence of a vortex generator will accelerate the evaporation process.

Based on the literature review, no household-scale desalination unit has evaporated using only flow integrated with a vortex generator, whether using a heat pump or not, thus representing a novelty in developing more efficient and affordable desalination technology in this research.

Additionally, computational fluid dynamics (CFD) simulations will be employed to obtain research results, allowing for a detailed analysis of the airflow dynamics and the impact of the vortex generator on the evaporation rate.

## 2. Methodology

This study utilises Ansys CFD software to conduct simulations. The basic governing equations of flow through the channel are summarised in terms of continuity, momentum and energy balance equation as follows:
The continuity equation,

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t}\iiint_{V} \rho dV + \iint_{A} \rho\vec{V}\cdot d\vec{A} = 0 \tag{1}$$

$$\frac{\partial \rho}{\partial t} + \rho\vec{\nabla}\cdot\vec{V} = 0 \tag{2}$$

The momentum equation in the x-axis direction

$$\frac{\partial(\rho u)}{\partial t} + \vec{\nabla}\cdot\left(\rho u\vec{V}\right) = -\frac{\partial p}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{xx}}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{yx}}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{zx}}{\partial z} + \rho f_x \tag{3}$$

The momentum equation in the y-axis direction

$$\frac{\partial(\rho v)}{\partial t} + \vec{\nabla}\cdot\left(\rho v\vec{V}\right) = -\frac{\partial p}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{xy}}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{yy}}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{zy}}{\partial z} + \rho f_y \tag{4}$$

The momentum equation in the z-axis direction

$$\frac{\partial(\rho w)}{\partial t} + \vec{\nabla}\cdot\left(\rho w\vec{V}\right) = -\frac{\partial p}{\partial z} + \frac{\partial \tau_{xz}}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{yz}}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{zz}}{\partial z} + \rho f_z \tag{5}$$

The energy equation written in terms of internal energy.

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t}\left[\rho\left(e + \frac{V^2}{2}\right)\right] + \vec{\nabla}\cdot\left[\rho\left(e + \frac{V^2}{2}\right)\vec{V}\right] = \rho\dot{q} - \frac{\partial(\rho p)}{\partial x} - \frac{\partial(vp)}{\partial y} - \frac{\partial(wp)}{\partial z} + \rho\vec{f}\cdot\vec{V} \tag{6}$$

The simulation was conducted using Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) software with the following configurations:

The turbulence model employed was the k-omega SST model. This model was chosen because the SST formulation effectively captures long, straight fluid flows, such as those found in flat regions, while the k-omega formulation enhances accuracy in regions with detailed flow structures and around suction areas. This selection ensures a balance between computational efficiency and predictive accuracy, particularly in capturing the complex interactions within the flow domain.

For the wall boundary condition, a no-slip condition was applied to model the reduction in fluid velocity near solid surfaces, generating a boundary layer effect. This condition was specifically assigned to the wall glass within the geometry to accurately represent the interaction between the fluid and solid surfaces.

At the inlet, a normal velocity condition was applied, where both velocity magnitude and liquid volume fraction (gas phase) were defined. To replicate realistic operating conditions, the inlet velocity was set to 1.8 m/s with an inlet temperature of 51°C.

For the outlet, a static pressure (outflow) condition was imposed at the outlet region to simulate the expected flow behaviour, ensuring numerical stability and consistency with experimental conditions.

Humidity modelling was activated to account for phase change effects, particularly the evaporation process, which is influenced by thermal conditions. The ambient temperature was set to 33°C to simulate the heat-induced vapour generation and assess the impact of humidity variations on evaporation rates.

Simulations focus on evaporation within a channel downstream of the air conditioner (AC) condenser, where airflow reaches temperatures up to 45°C. The airflow passes through the channel above the water surface, with varying cross-sectional areas of the channel set at 0.03, 0.024, 0.018, 0.012, and 0.006 m², as illustrated in Figure 1.

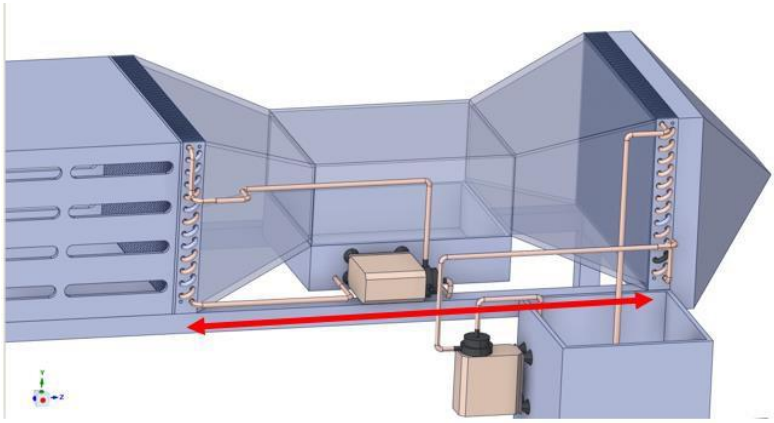


**Fig. 1.** Simulation model

Figure 1 indicates the section to be simulated by red arrows, highlighting where water evaporates into vapour. Other areas are not included in the simulation as they are not the primary focus of this research. This study concentrates explicitly on water evaporation.

As mentioned earlier, simulation variations are achieved by altering the cross-sectional area of the channel without a Vortex Generator (NVG) and with a Vortex Generator (VG), as shown in Figure 2.

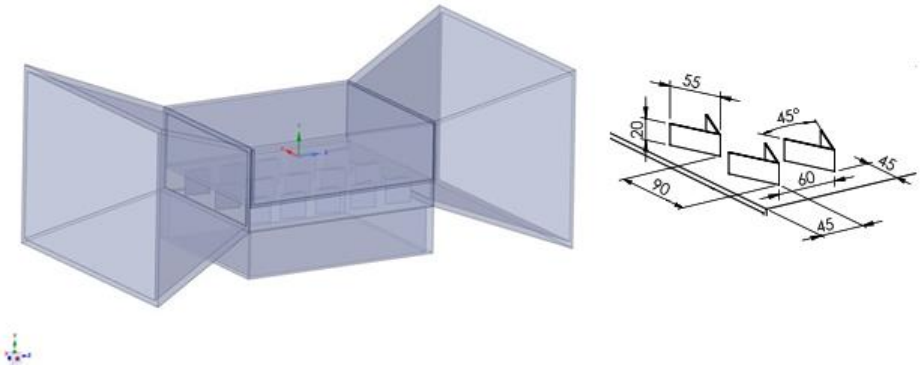



**Fig. 2.** Simulation variable

The vortex generator used in this study is a V-shaped design, as it effectively directs airflow and generates efficient vortices without excessive flow resistance [20]. The choice of parameters is based on prior experimental and numerical studies. A height-to-channel height ratio of 0.47 was selected as it provides a balance between vortex strength and flow obstruction, ensuring enhanced mixing without inducing excessive drag [21], as pressure drop can be reduced by up to 43.9% when the height ratio is less than 50% [22]. The longitudinal pitch ratio of 0.18 was chosen because it maximizes vortex interaction, promoting turbulence intensity while preventing premature vortex dissipation

[23]. The 30° angle of attack was selected as it has been shown to yield the best compromise between vortex strength, flow attachment, and overall thermal-hydraulic performance [24]. These design choices were validated through previous research and optimized for effective heat transfer and flow control.

The simulation model in this research simplifies the interface between air and water without fully capturing complex interfacial phenomena such as surface tension, evaporation-driven heat transfer at the molecular scale, and air-water interaction dynamics. Surface tension is excluded as its effect on large-scale evaporation is negligible, and grid independence testing shows that increasing the mesh from 160,000 to 900,000 elements improves evaporation by only 6.25%, making its modelling inefficient. Similarly, evaporation-driven convective flows are omitted since the system is dominated by forced convection from AC condenser airflow, with a reduction in channel cross-sectional area increasing evaporation rates due to turbulence rather than natural convection. Humidity diffusion is also neglected as vapour transport is primarily driven by advection, with experiments showing that vortex generators enhance evaporation rates by 57%, proving that turbulence has a greater impact than molecular diffusion. Despite its limitations, the model effectively demonstrates the impact of vortex generators on evaporation rates, aligning well with experimental data. These simplifications maintain computational efficiency, physical validity, and experimental consistency while accurately capturing the dominant evaporation mechanisms.

The modelling of the interaction between air and water during the evaporation process utilises a fluid domain, where warm air from the condenser flows over the water surface, influencing the evaporation rate, as illustrated in Figure 3.

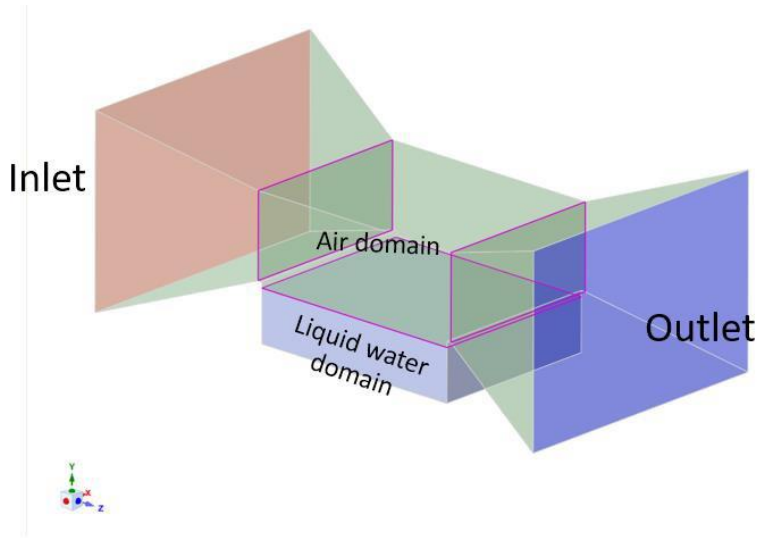



**Fig. 3.** Simulation domain

Figure 3 illustrates the fluid domain (flow area) simulated in the CFD process. The analysed fluid domain is situated between the input (AC condenser) and the output, featuring two types of fluids: the air domain and the water domain. The initial water volume is 0.01 m³.

In solving the fluid flow equations using CFD simulations, the fluid domain is divided into small elements (grid), referred to as mesh, as shown in Figure 4.

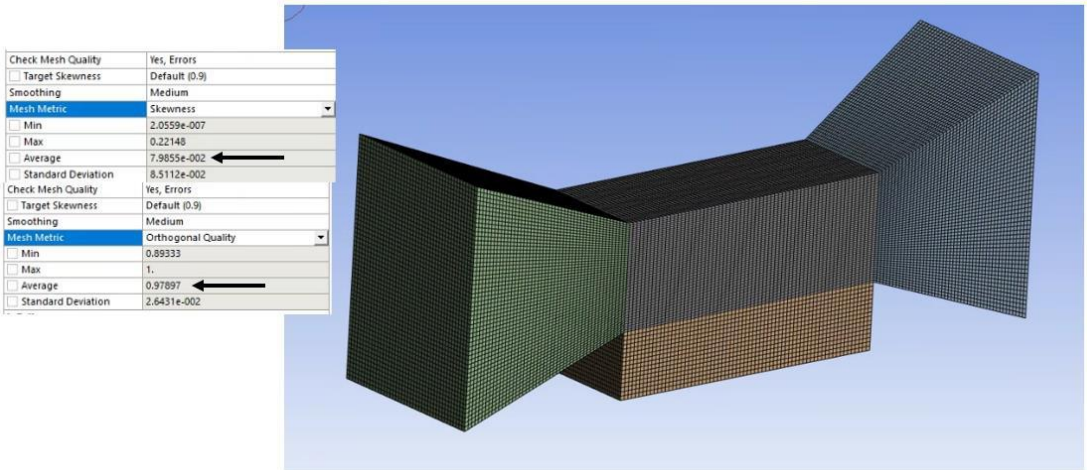



**Fig. 4.** Simulation mesh

Figure 4 above illustrates the mesh utilised in the CFD simulation. The chosen element type is hexahedral, known for its structured grid that enhances numerical stability and accuracy. This study considers the skewness and orthogonal quality values sufficient because they meet and exceed the standard thresholds used in CFD simulations. A skewness value below 0.25 is typically deemed acceptable, and an orthogonal quality value above 0.7 is considered good. The values of 0.08 and 0.98 ensure minimal numerical errors and optimal flow simulation, aligning with best practices in CFD modelling. A grid independence test was performed to ensure the reliability of the simulation results. This test determines whether the results are consistent across different mesh densities, confirming that the chosen mesh configuration does not significantly influence the findings.

**Table 1**
Grid independency test

| No | Mesh | Evaporation rate ($kg/s.m^3$) | %Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 160k | 1.12 | - |
| 2 | 250k | 1.73 | 54.46 |
| 3 | 400k | 2.27 | 31.21 |
| 4 | 600k | 2.56 | 12.78 |
| 5 | 900k | 2.72 | 6.25 |

Table 1 presents the outcomes of this grid independence test. A relative difference in results below 10% establishes the validity of the simulation model used in this study. The 10% threshold is commonly adopted in CFD studies as it represents a balance between computational cost and result accuracy, ensuring convergence of the numerical solution while maintaining efficiency [25]. This suggests that the numerical solution has achieved convergence. According to commonly applied CFD methodologies, a relative difference of less than 10% is an acceptable criterion for grid independence [26]. Additionally, the residual analysis shows that the residual values consistently decrease and remain within an acceptable convergence threshold of $10^{-4}$ [27]. This ensures that the solution remains stable and is not significantly affected by further mesh refinement.

The selection of 600k mesh elements was based on the percentage difference analysis, which remained below 10%, as well as the Richardson extrapolation method [28]. This technique is used to estimate numerical errors and ensure that further mesh refinement provides only marginal accuracy improvements compared to the significantly increased computational cost [29]. This methodology

aligns with best practices in CFD grid validation, where excessive mesh refinement does not substantially improve results but significantly increases computational load [30]. Therefore, the selection of 600k mesh elements is considered optimal, achieving a balance between computational efficiency and simulation accuracy. The generated mesh primarily consists of hexahedrons, offering high resolution and computational efficiency, as shown in Figure 5. For detailed regions, polyhedral meshes are utilized due to their superior capability to conform to objects with high curvature.

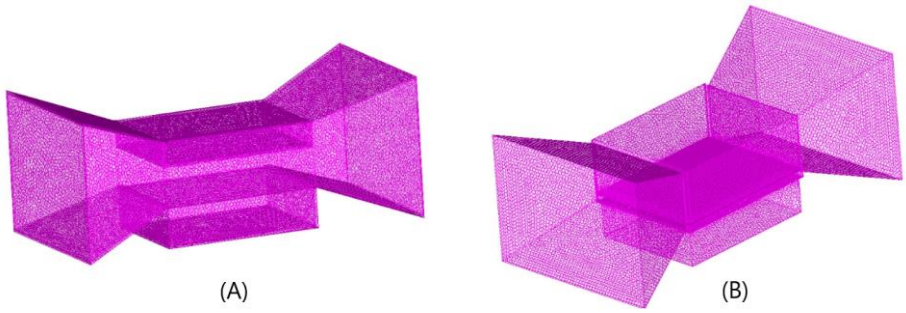



**Fig. 5.** Simulation mesh without VG (A) and using VG (B)

**Fig. 6.** Experimental rig

The verification of CFD results can be conducted using data from experimental research or previous studies [31] to ensure that the CFD model accurately represents physical phenomena. In this study, the simulation results were verified using evaporation data obtained from experiments without a vortex generator, using an experimental rig shown in Fig. 6 and an experimental scheme in Fig. 7.

As shown in Fig. 7, feed water is pumped into the processed water tank using Pump 1 until it reaches capacity. If the tank reaches full capacity, excess water flows back to the feed tank through the return line. When the water level decreases, the pump automatically refills the tank. Water from the processed water tank is then circulated using Pump 2 to the heat exchanger, where it is heated by the waste heat from the outdoor air conditioner (AC). The heated water returns to the processed tank, ensuring continuous thermal energy transfer. In addition to heating the water, the airflow from the outdoor AC is directed through the evaporation area to accelerate the evaporation process. The processed water undergoes phase change into vapour and moves along the airflow direction. The air, now carrying water vapour, is directed into the condenser, where the temperature is maintained at

approximately 20°C. The condensed water is subsequently collected in a storage tank. The cover in the evaporation area is adjustable, allowing its height to be set between 2 cm and 14 cm above the water surface, which provides flexibility in optimizing the evaporation process. Multiple sensors are deployed to monitor system performance. Temperature is measured at various points, including the outlet of the outdoor AC, the inlet and outlet of the evaporation area, the inlet and outlet of the condenser, and the ambient environment, using PT100 sensors (-50°C to 110°C, ±0.1°C accuracy). Humidity levels are recorded at corresponding points using a digital hygrometer (10%–99% range, 1% resolution, ±1% accuracy). A weighing scale with a capacity of 20 kg (0–20 kg range, 0.5 g resolution) is used to measure the weight of water in the feed tank. The measurement begins once the processed water tank is fully filled. The reduction in water weight is used to quantify the evaporation occurring in the evaporation area. Air velocity is monitored using an anemometer GM-816 (0–30 m/s range, 0.1 m/s resolution). Additionally, the pressure in the evaporation area is measured using a Pressure Meter PCE-PDA 1L to ensure optimal operating conditions.

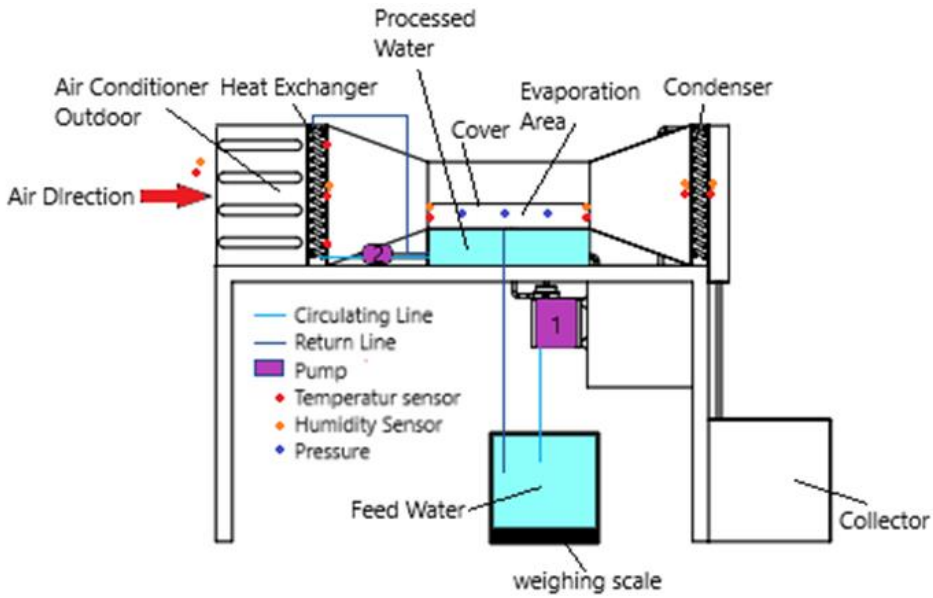



**Fig. 7.** Experimental scheme

## 3. Results

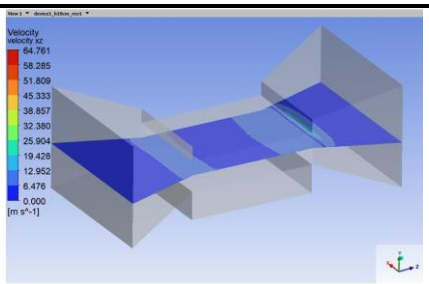
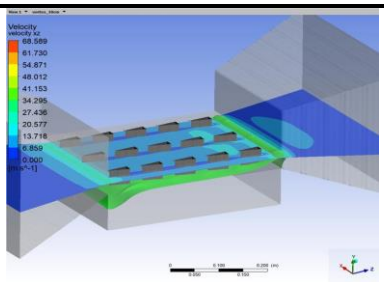
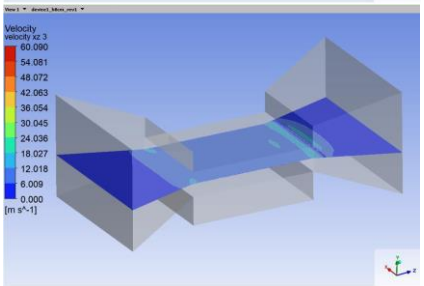
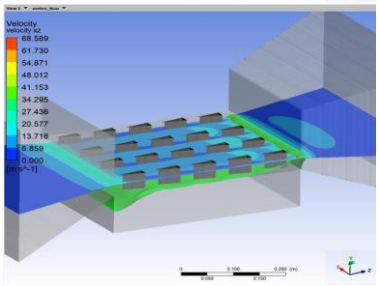
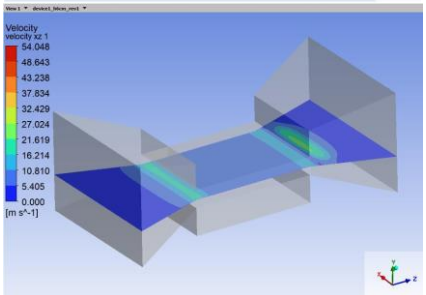
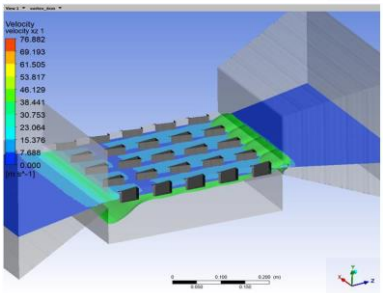
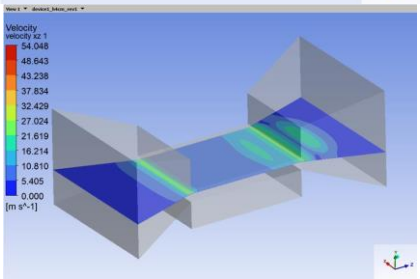
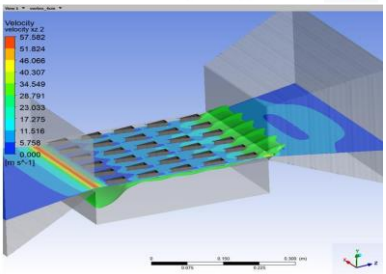
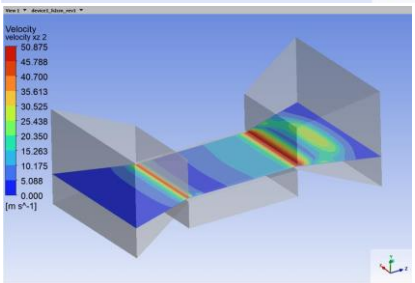
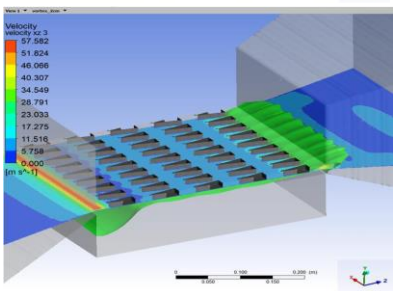
The simulation results presented in this article focus on the airflow velocity as influenced by the reduction in cross-sectional area and the corresponding evaporation rates. This analysis encompasses scenarios both without vortex generators (NVG) and with vortex generators (VG).

The investigation highlights how variations in the channel's cross-sectional area impact the airflow's velocity. As the area decreases, the airflow velocity tends to increase due to fluid dynamics principles, particularly the continuity equation, which states that the mass flow rate must remain constant from one flow cross-section to another.

The comparative results between the two configurations—one using vortex generators and the other without—will provide insights into the effectiveness of vortex generators in enhancing the evaporation process. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of optimising desalination techniques, particularly for applications in coastal areas where water scarcity is a pressing issue. By

demonstrating the impact of airflow velocity on evaporation rates, the findings will emphasise the importance of flow dynamics in improving desalination efficiency.

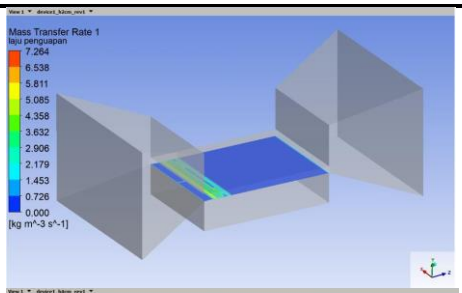
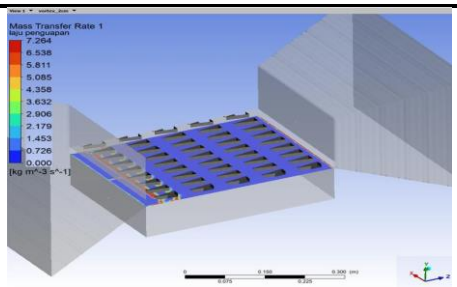
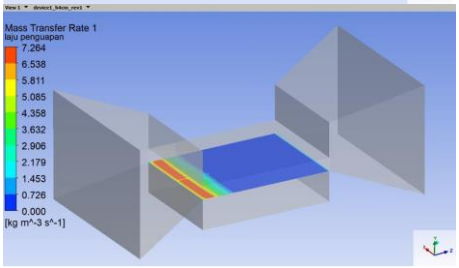
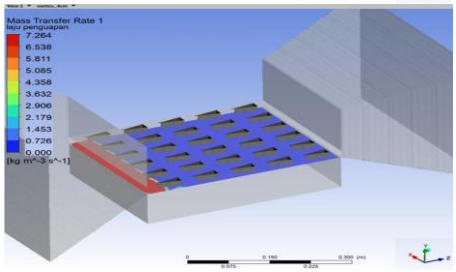
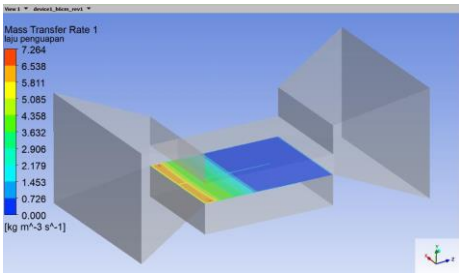
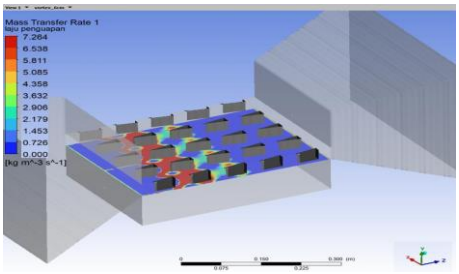
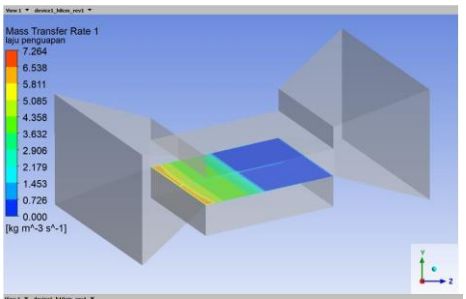
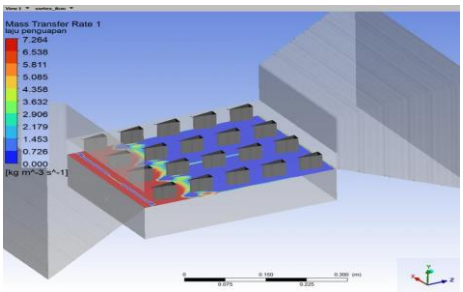
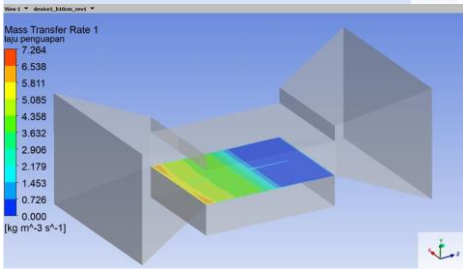
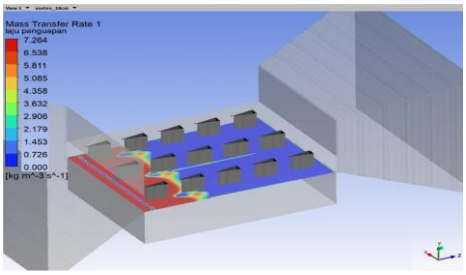
**Table 2**
Velocity contour

| cross-sectional area | NVG | VG |
|---|---|---|
| 0.03 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.024 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.018 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.012 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.006 $m^2$ |  |  |

The increase in airflow velocity caused by the vortex generator, as shown in Table 2, is closely related to the evaporation process. Table 2 illustrates that airflow velocity increases as the cross-sectional area of the channel decreases. When vortex generators are applied to the channel, the

airflow velocity increases significantly compared to the channel without vortex generators (NVG). This occurs because vortex generators create longitudinal vortices that disturb the boundary layer, reduce thickness, and enhance fluid mixing. As a result, higher airflow velocity leads to more efficient removal of water vapour from the surface, accelerating the evaporation process. Additionally, the increased airflow velocity, as reflected in the data from Table 2, also accelerates the transfer of thermal energy from the water surface to the surrounding air.

**Table 3**
Evaporation rate

| cross-sectional area | NVG | VG |
|---|---|---|
| 0.03 $m^2$ |   |   |
| 0.024 $m^2$ |   |   |
| 0.018 $m^2$ |   |   |
| 0.012 $m^2$ |   |   |
| 0.006 $m^2$ |   |   |

With better flow distribution and higher turbulence, the heat absorbed from the water surface can be transferred more efficiently to the air, ultimately speeding up evaporation. Longitudinal vortices can significantly improve flow distribution and momentum transfer in small channels, enhancing evaporation efficiency by optimising pressure distribution within the microchannel [32]. Moreover, these findings align with other research, showing that decreasing the cross-sectional area of the channel improves flow distribution and momentum transfer in microchannel systems, further enhancing evaporation efficiency [33]. Thus, the implementation of vortex generators not only optimises thermal and fluid performance in systems such as heat exchangers and cooling mechanisms and enhances evaporation rates, as demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3 compares the evaporation rates for the NVG and VG configurations. Channels equipped with vortex generators show significantly higher evaporation rates. The average increase in the evaporation rate, approximately 57%, is due to enhanced fluid mixing and continuous disruption of the thermal boundary layer, which improves heat transfer efficiency.

There are two key implications of this increase in evaporation rate. First, improved mass transfer facilitates the removal of saturated air near the water surface, allowing for higher evaporation efficiency. Second, disrupting the stagnant air layer near the liquid surface ensures a continuous supply of dry air, creating a higher concentration gradient for evaporation. These findings emphasise the importance of vortex generators in applications such as desalination, where optimising evaporation efficiency is crucial. Micro-vortices can accelerate evaporation by increasing turbulence and reducing boundary layer thickness [34] . The higher evaporation rates observed in vortex-induced systems are closely related to the reduction of the thermal boundary layer thickness, which speeds up the transport of water molecules from the liquid surface to the airflow [35].

This enhanced airflow leads to a more efficient evaporation process, as the constant replacement of saturated air with drier air increases the evaporation rate. The findings presented in Table 3 highlight the positive impact of vortex generators on evaporation efficiency, making them a valuable component in systems designed for desalination or other thermal applications. Additionally, the increased evaporation rates observed in the presence of vortex generators contribute to the effectiveness of water desalination techniques and offer potential improvements in various industrial processes where evaporation is a key mechanism.

To validate the CFD results, the evaporation rate obtained from the simulation was compared with experimental data. This comparison is presented in Table 2, which displays the deviation between CFD results and experimental data.

**Table**

**Table 4**
Result deviation

| Configuration | Evaporation Rate (CFD) (kg/s·m³) | Evaporation Rate (Experiment) (kg/s·m³) | Deviation (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| NVG | 2.56 | 2.42 | 5.79 |
| VG | 3.98 | 3.72 | 6.99 |

This comparison shows that the maximum deviation between the CFD results and the experiment is 6.99%, which is still within the acceptable error range for CFD studies, typically 5-10% [35]. These findings confirm that the numerical model used is capable of reliably representing the physical phenomena, thereby increasing confidence in the simulation results [36],[37].

Furthermore, the evaporation results from the simulation were verified against the experimental evaporation data, as presented in Figure 8.

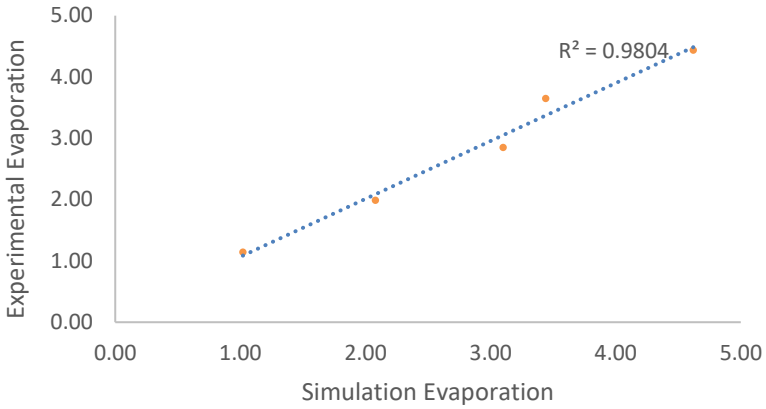



**Fig. 8.** Simulation-Based Model Verification Against Experimental Data

Figure 8 shows that the evaporation rates from the simulation closely match the experimental results, forming an almost linear relationship with a coefficient of determination ($R^2$) of 0.9804. This indicates that the simulation results align well with the experimental data [38], with a deviation of only 7.1%. The high agreement between the simulation and experimental data demonstrates that the CFD simulation approach is reliable for predicting VG's mass transfer enhancement effects. Low deviation in CFD simulations when modelling the effects of vortices on mass and heat transfer [39] . Subsequently, the simulation results for evaporation without a Vortex Generator (NVG) are compared to those with a Vortex Generator (VG), as shown in Figure 8.

The findings presented in Figure 8 further validate the analysis, demonstrating the impact of vortex generators on evaporation rates. The simulation results depicted in Figure 6 reveal that using vortex generators increases the evaporation rate by an average of 57% compared to systems without vortex generators. This enhancement is primarily due to the effect of vortex generators in increasing the flow velocity along the surface, which causes flow instability (turbulence) and the development of boundary layers and vortices [40]. These effects, in turn, amplify the temperature gradient between the surface and the surrounding air [41].

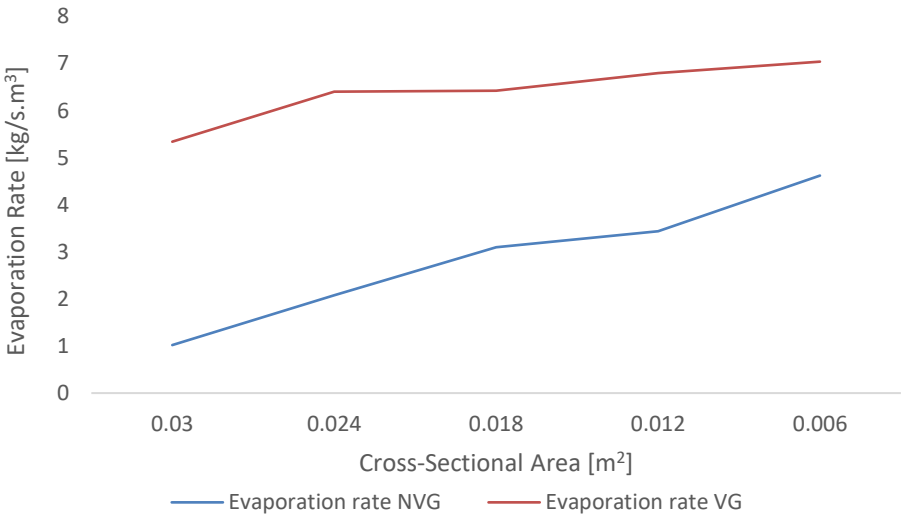



**Fig. 9.** Evaporation rate NVG and VG

The research findings indicate that applying vortex generators (VG) in evaporation systems, such as those used in desalination or industrial drying processes, provides significant advantages in terms of thermal efficiency. VG increases the evaporation rate, reducing operational time and energy consumption. The optimisation of VG design holds great potential for further improving thermal efficiency. The optimal VG geometry can maximise evaporation rates and heat transfer under various environmental conditions [42]. VG significantly enhances evaporation efficiency in desalination processes [43], thereby lowering operational costs.

Evaporation occurring within the channel can be described by the equation $J=K_m (Ps-Pa)$, where J represents the mass transfer rate due to evaporation and $k_m$ is the mass transfer coefficient. Ps and Pa are saturation vapour pressure at the surface and partial vapour pressure of the surrounding air, respectively. The vortex generators enhance the mass transfer rate by promoting turbulence and improving the mixing of the fluid, which in turn increases the effective mass transfer coefficient $k_m$. This leads to a more efficient transfer of vapour from the surface to the surrounding air, driven by the vapour pressure difference. The influence of the vortex generators results in higher evaporation rates compared to a system without such enhancements.

Implementing VG in evaporation-dependent systems, such as evaporative cooling or industrial drying, provides substantial benefits. VG accelerates the evaporation process and reduces the additional energy required to maintain the temperature gradient, thus improving operational efficiency. This increase in evaporation rates also enables the design of surfaces involved in heat and mass transfer to become more compact without compromising performance. As a result, material costs can be reduced, and overall system performance can be enhanced. Therefore, the impact of vortex generators on flow and evaporation offers an efficient and innovative approach to improving the performance of thermal and fluid systems.

## 4. Conclusions

This study confirms that vortex generators significantly improve evaporation rates in desalination systems by harnessing waste heat from air conditioners. The results indicate an average increase of 57% in evaporation rates when vortex generators are employed, attributed to the induced turbulence that improves fluid mixing and thermal energy transfer. This research highlights the effectiveness of vortex generators in optimising airflow dynamics, leading to more efficient heat transfer and evaporation processes.

From a scientific perspective, this work contributes to understanding fluid dynamics and heat transfer mechanisms in evaporative systems. It provides a novel approach for utilising existing household technologies, such as air conditioning units, to address pressing issues related to freshwater scarcity, particularly in coastal regions. Additionally, the findings pave the way for further exploration of innovative solutions in thermal management, potentially influencing the design and efficiency of future systems in domestic and industrial applications. The study encourages the adoption of vortex generators as a feasible method for improving thermal efficiency, thereby promoting sustainable practices in water desalination and environmental management.

**Acknowledgement**

This research was funded by a grant from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia 105/E5/PG.02.00.PL/2024, 812/LL3/AL.04/2024, 104/F.03.07/2024.

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Desalination and Water Treatment

# CFD Simulation for Optimizing the Evaporation Process in Seawater Desalination Using Exhaust Heat from AC and Vortex Generators

--Manuscript Draft--

| | |
|---|---|
| **Manuscript Number:** | DWT-D-24-01884R1 |
| **Full Title:** | CFD Simulation for Optimizing the Evaporation Process in Seawater Desalination Using Exhaust Heat from AC and Vortex Generators |
| **Article Type:** | Full Length Article |
| **Section/Category:** | Desalination (Hokyong Shon) |
| **Keywords:** | CFD simulation; evaporation process; Seawater Desalination; vortex generators; waste heat utilization |
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| **Order of Authors:** | Oktarina Heriyani |
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| | Rifky Rifky |
| **Order of Authors Secondary Information:** | |
| **Manuscript Region of Origin:** | INDONESIA |
| **Abstract:** | Water is essential for human survival, yet freshwater resources are scarce and limited. In Indonesia's coastal regions, only 66.54% of the population has access to clean water, highlighting a significant challenge. This issue is further intensified by global warming, which has increased dependence on air conditioners, resulting in substantial waste heat emissions. While often overlooked, this waste heat contributes to local warming and presents an untapped energy resource. Repurposing this energy for innovative applications, such as seawater desalination, offers a promising solution to mitigate clean water shortages. This study proposes using waste heat from household ACs for seawater desalination through evaporation, enhanced by vortex generators. The research examines variations with and without vortex generators across different cross-sectional areas, affecting airflow velocity. Results indicate that using vortex generators significantly increases evaporation rates at all wind speeds. These devices enhance airflow velocity and turbulence, boosting heat transfer and accelerating evaporation. Through Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) simulations, the research aims to demonstrate how vortex generators can improve evaporation, offering a practical solution for cooling and desalination at a household scale. This novel approach could significantly benefit water-scarce regions, providing an efficient, cost-effective solution utilising existing household technology |
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# Detailed Response to Reviewers (Bukti Review Dan Konfirmasi Review, Revisi ke 2)

Dear Editor,

I am pleased to submit the revised manuscript titled *"CFD Simulation for Optimizing the Evaporation Process in Seawater Desalination Using Exhaust Heat from AC and Vortex Generators"* by Oktarina Heriyani, Dan Mugisidi, and Rifky.

The revisions requested by the esteemed editor and reviewers have been carefully addressed and incorporated into the manuscript. We sincerely appreciate the reviewers' time and effort in providing valuable feedback to enhance the quality of our work. All modifications based on their suggestions have been highlighted in the revised version of the manuscript for your convenience.

Additionally, we have provided a detailed response to each comment, which is included below for your review.

**Reviewer 1:**

Waste heat was worthy of application. This paper introduces an approach to use waste heat from household ACs for seawater desalination. The authors conclude that These devices enhance airflow velocity and turbulence, boosting heat transfer and accelerating evaporation. Overall, the manuscript is worse organized with bad description of results and conclusion. This manuscript could be published after major revision.

**Comment 1**: The research background in abstract should be briefly described.

For example, "Water is essential for human survival, and with the global population growing,……., especially for Indonesia's coastal areas, where only 66.54% of residents have access to clean water"

Response:

We have revised the abstract to include a concise description of the research background, ensuring that it provides sufficient context while maintaining brevity. We hope this improves the clarity and relevance of the abstract. the revision is highlighted.

**Comment 2**: Results indicate that using vortex generators significantly increases evaporation rates at all wind speeds. How to measure evaporation rate? The authors should elaborate it.

Response:

Thank you for your insightful comment. We appreciate your suggestion to elaborate on how the evaporation rate is measured. In response, we have added a detailed explanation in the revised manuscript, specifying the methodology used to calculate evaporation rates in our CFD simulations. This includes the governing equations and any assumptions made during the process.

"The research findings indicate that applying vortex generators (VG) in evaporation systems, such as those used in desalination or industrial drying processes, provides significant advantages in terms of thermal efficiency. VG increases the evaporation rate, reducing operational time and energy consumption. The optimisation of VG design holds great potential for further improving thermal efficiency. The optimal VG geometry can maximise evaporation rates and heat transfer under various

environmental conditions [30]. VG significantly enhances evaporation efficiency in desalination processes, thereby lowering operational costs[31].

Evaporation occurring within the channel can be described by the equation $J=K_m (Ps-Pa)$, where J represents the mass transfer rate due to evaporation and $k_m$ is the mass transfer coefficient. Ps and Pa are saturation vapour pressure at the surface and partial vapour pressure of the surrounding air, respectively. The vortex generators enhance the mass transfer rate by promoting turbulence and improving the mixing of the fluid, which in turn increases the effective mass transfer coefficient $k_m$. This leads to a more efficient transfer of vapour from the surface to the surrounding air, driven by the vapour pressure difference. The influence of the vortex generators results in higher evaporation rates compared to a system without such enhancements."

**A detailed explanation of the above has been added on page 22,23 and 28-29**

**Comment 3**: Mesh validation should be described more clearly (Page 21).

Response:

Thank you for your valuable suggestion.

We will try to explain in detail that the skewness value of 0.08 and the orthogonal quality of 0.98 are sufficient to ensure high-quality mesh, resulting in accurate and stable simulation. The grid independence test shows that the 600k element mesh is the optimal choice based on the relative difference threshold criterion below 10%, ensuring the accuracy of the results while maintaining the efficiency of computational time.

In CFD simulation, skewness and orthogonal quality are two main metrics for evaluating mesh quality. A low skewness value indicates that the mesh elements have a shape close to ideal (nearly uniform rectangular or hexagonal elements), thus reducing the potential for numerical errors. In this study, the average skewness value of 0.08 indicates that the mesh is very uniform and has no significant deformation that can affect the stability or accuracy of the simulation. In addition, the average orthogonal quality value of 0.98 indicates that the mesh elements are nearly orthogonal, so that the fluid flow is calculated with high precision. These values are better than the standard threshold values generally accepted in CFD simulations (skewness < 0.25 and orthogonal quality > 0.70), making it sufficient to ensure stable and accurate results in this study.

The grid independence test aims to ensure that the simulation results are independent of the mesh density, so that the simulation is close to the actual physical solution. In this study, five mesh configurations were tested with element densities of 160k, 250k, 400k, 600k, and 900k. The relative differences between the evaporation rates were calculated for each increase in mesh density. It was found that:

The relative difference between the 400k and 600k meshes is 12.78%, which is still above the 10% threshold. The relative difference between the 600k and 900k meshes is 6.25%, which is below the 10% threshold. Based on these results, a mesh of 600k elements was chosen because it produced consistent results with no significant differences with the 900k mesh, while still considering computational time efficiency. This choice ensures that the simulation achieves a balance between accuracy and efficiency.

A threshold of 10% relative difference was used as the mesh convergence criterion because it is a common standard in CFD studies. This criterion ensures that changes in simulation results (such as evaporation rate) become insignificant as the mesh density is increased. By choosing a mesh where

the relative difference is less than 10%, we can ensure that the numerical solution has reached stability and the simulation results are no longer affected by the mesh density. This threshold is widely used in the literature for various CFD applications, including studies related to heat transfer and fluid flow, and is therefore acceptable for validation in this study.

**A detailed explanation of the above has been added on page 23.**

**Comment 4**: How to select the geometry of vortex generators (Page 19)? Do these geometry impact the quality of mesh?

Response:

Thank you for your valuable question. We appreciate the opportunity to clarify.

In the revised manuscript, we have elaborated on the selection criteria for the geometry of vortex generators, including factors such as the height-to-channel height ratio, longitudinal pitch ratio, and angle of attack. These parameters were chosen based on previous studies and optimized to achieve efficient vortex formation and enhanced evaporation rates.

**A detailed explanation of the above has been added on page 23**

Regarding the impact of geometry on the quality of the mesh, we have included a discussion on how the geometry affects meshing. Complex geometries like vortex generators can pose challenges in generating high-quality meshes, particularly in areas with sharp edges or high curvature. To address this, we used a combination of hexahedral and polyhedral meshes to ensure accuracy while maintaining computational efficiency. This explanation has been added to the manuscript for better clarity.

**A detailed explanation of the above has been added on page 24**

**Comment 5**: The simulation model did not consider the interface between air and water. Please elaborate it.

Response:

Thank you for your comment.

The simulation model in this study simplifies the air-water interface, without fully capturing complex interfacial phenomena such as surface tension, evaporative heat transfer at the molecular scale, and the dynamics of air-water interactions. However, this limitation does not detract from the overall findings but rather highlights areas for future improvements. The current simulation model effectively demonstrates the impact of the vortex generator on the evaporation rate, showing a strong agreement with the experimental data ($R^2$ = 0.9804). The observed 57% increase in evaporation rate due to the vortex generator provides strong evidence of its effectiveness.

**The above explanation has been added on page 23**

**Comment 6:** The 'Results and discussion' is heavy on results and light on discussion, therefore, this manuscript reads too much like a report.

Response:

Thank you for your feedback. I understand that the 'Results and Discussion' section may appear more focused on presenting the results rather than engaging in a deeper analysis. I have revised the section to ensure that the discussion of the results is more comprehensive and reflective, connecting the findings with existing literature and their broader implications.

We have revised the results and discussion as follows:

"The increase in airflow velocity caused by the vortex generator, as shown in Table 2, is closely related to the evaporation process. Table 2 illustrates that airflow velocity increases as the cross- sectional area of the channel decreases. When vortex generators are applied to the channel, the airflow velocity increases significantly compared to the channel without vortex generators (NVG). This occurs because vortex generators create longitudinal vortices that disturb the boundary layer, reduce thickness, and enhance fluid mixing. As a result, higher airflow velocity leads to more efficient removal of water vapour from the surface, accelerating the evaporation process. Additionally, the increased airflow velocity, as reflected in the data from Table 2, also accelerates the transfer of thermal energy from the water surface to the surrounding air. With better flow distribution and higher turbulence, the heat absorbed from the water surface can be transferred more efficiently to the air, ultimately speeding up evaporation. Longitudinal vortices can significantly improve flow distribution and momentum transfer in small channels, enhancing evaporation efficiency by optimising pressure distribution within the microchannel [26]. Moreover, these findings align with other research, showing that decreasing the cross-sectional area of the channel improves flow distribution and momentum transfer in microchannel systems, further enhancing evaporation efficiency [27]. Thus, the implementation of vortex generators not only optimises thermal and fluid performance in systems such as heat exchangers and cooling mechanisms and enhances evaporation rates, as demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3 compares the evaporation rates for the NVG and VG configurations. Channels equipped with vortex generators show significantly higher evaporation rates. The average increase in the evaporation rate, approximately 57%, is due to enhanced fluid mixing and continuous disruption of the thermal boundary layer, which improves heat transfer efficiency.

There are two key implications of this increase in evaporation rate. First, improved mass transfer facilitates the removal of saturated air near the water surface, allowing for higher evaporation efficiency. Second, disrupting the stagnant air layer near the liquid surface ensures a continuous supply of dry air, creating a higher concentration gradient for evaporation. These findings emphasise the importance of vortex generators in applications such as desalination, where optimising evaporation efficiency is crucial. Micro-vortices can accelerate evaporation by increasing turbulence and reducing boundary layer thickness [28]. The higher evaporation rates observed in vortex-induced systems are closely related to the reduction of the thermal boundary layer thickness, which speeds up the transport of water molecules from the liquid surface to the airflow [29].

**The above explanation has been added on page 29-30**

**Comment 7:** The verification of CFD model is necessary before further analyzing, and in this paper, the calculated evaporation proven to in accordance with experiments. What is the precision of the validation method?

Response:

Thank you for your valuable suggestion. The verification of the CFD model is indeed crucial for ensuring the reliability of the analysis. In this study, We have verified the CFD simulation using experimental data. The verification of CFD results can be conducted using data from experimental research or previous studies [25] to ensure that the CFD model accurately represents physical phenomena. In this study, the simulation results were verified using evaporation data obtained from experiments without using a vortex generator, using an experimental rig shown in Figure 6.

**The above explanation has been added on page 27**

**Additionally, the results of the verification are presented on page 31 as follows**

Figure 7 shows that the evaporation rates from the simulation closely match the experimental results, forming an almost linear relationship with a coefficient of determination ($R^2$) of 0.9804. This indicates that the simulation results align well with the experimental data [30], with a deviation of only 7.1%. The high agreement between the simulation and experimental data demonstrates that the CFD simulation approach is reliable for predicting VG's mass transfer enhancement effects. Low deviation in CFD simulations when modelling the effects of vortices on mass and heat transfer [31].

# Declaration of Interest Statement (pernyataan penulis)

**Declaration of interests**

☒The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

☐The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests:

# Revised Manuscript with Changes Marked (Bukti Revisi dan Respon Kepada Reviewer)

# CFD Simulation for Optimizing the Evaporation Process in Seawater Desalination Using Exhaust Heat from AC and Vortex Generators

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**ARTICLE INFO**

***Article history:***
Received 29 October XXXX
Received in revised form 1 December XXXX
Accepted 9 December XXXX
Available online 10 December XXXX

***Keywords:***

CFD simulation; evaporation process; seawater desalination; vortex generators; waste heat utilisation

**ABSTRACT**

Water is essential for human survival, yet freshwater resources are scarce and limited. In Indonesia's coastal regions, only 66.54% of the population has access to clean water, highlighting a significant challenge. This issue is further intensified by global warming, which has increased dependence on air conditioners, resulting in substantial waste heat emissions. While often overlooked, this waste heat contributes to local warming and presents an untapped energy resource. Repurposing this energy for innovative applications, such as seawater desalination, offers a promising solution to mitigate clean water shortages. This study proposes using waste heat from household ACs for seawater desalination through evaporation, enhanced by vortex generators. The research examines variations with and without vortex generators across different cross-sectional areas, affecting airflow velocity. Results indicate that using vortex generators significantly increases evaporation rates at all wind speeds. These devices enhance airflow velocity and turbulence, boosting heat transfer and accelerating evaporation. Through Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) simulations, the research aims to demonstrate how vortex generators can improve evaporation, offering a practical solution for cooling and desalination at a household scale. This novel approach could significantly benefit water-scarce regions, providing an efficient, cost-effective solution utilising existing household technology.

## Highlights

- Rapid global population growth significantly increases the demand for clean water.
- This study introduces a method to repurpose waste heat from air conditioners for seawater desalination.
- Vortex generators improve evaporation rates by increasing airflow velocity and turbulence.
- CFD simulations confirm the effectiveness of this approach for household-scale desalination systems.

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## 1. Introduction

Water is a vital substance needed by humans and other living organisms. With the growth of the global population, the water demand has increased rapidly. Estimates show that a 15% increase in the world population will reduce the availability of clean water by 40% [1], while the amount of freshwater constitutes only 2.8% [2] of the total water on the Earth's surface. Because water is so essential, water scarcity can trigger humanitarian, political, and even racial issues [3]. Water scarcity poses a significant global threat and increasingly impacts regions in Indonesia.

As an archipelagic country with the longest coastline in the world, Indonesia is home to many communities residing in coastal areas. However, they face serious problems related to water scarcity. Only about 66.54% of them have access to clean water, forcing the majority of coastal residents to use murky and saline water for daily needs such as washing and bathing, while for drinking water, they have to purchase it [4]. Water scarcity is just one of the various problems faced by coastal populations in Indonesia. Global warming is another current issue.

Global warming has transitioned from a potential threat to an urgent global crisis. The Earth's temperature has increased significantly in the past three decades [5]. This temperature rise has caused climate change and is linked to the increasing incidence of severe weather events [6]. In addition, the higher temperatures increase the demand for air conditioning (AC), especially in tropical regions like Indonesia. However, it should be noted that the AC units currently used in households and industries also emit hot air. This is due to the working principle of AC or heat pumps that take hot air from inside the room and expel it outside [7]. Therefore, this research will use heat pumps' waste hot air to evaporate seawater. The resulting vapour will then be condensed to produce clean water. Previous studies have shown that airflow is very adequate in the evaporation process [8]. The problem to be investigated is how to use the waste hot air from ACS to produce clean water through the desalination process, particularly for coastal communities in Indonesia.

Several studies have been conducted using heat pumps for desalination and cooling rooms. Heat pumps have been combined with multi-stage flash (MSF) and membrane distillation (MD) [9] for cooling and desalination processes. Srinivas used a staged system for desalination and cooling [10]. Junling combined heat pumps with vacuum to process wastewater [11], while several researchers only used heat pumps as desalination units [12], [13], [14]. However, heat pumps are used only at a large scale for air cooling and desalination. In contrast, Indonesia and many other places use heat pumps or ACs more commonly used for residential purposes.

Therefore, this research proposes a problem-solving approach to using household-scale AC units as air conditioners and desalination units by utilising the hot air released by the AC. The evaporation process will be integrated with a vortex generator to accelerate it. Thus, the second problem to be investigated in this research is integrating vortex generator technology to enhance the evaporation process in desalination units so that clean water can be produced efficiently without compromising AC performance.

The vortex generator is a component that disrupts the flow and increases flow velocity [15], leading to vorticity [16] that reduces flow pressure [17]. Vortex generators have been shown to enhance heat transfer, such as in cooling tower ducts and air channels [18]. Furthermore, since the evaporation pressure at the water surface is greater than the pressure in its surroundings [8], [19], [20] the reduction in flow pressure with the presence of a vortex generator will accelerate the evaporation process.

Based on the literature review, no household-scale desalination unit has evaporated using only flow integrated with a vortex generator, whether using a heat pump or not, thus representing a novelty in developing more efficient and affordable desalination technology in this research.

Additionally, computational fluid dynamics (CFD) simulations will be employed to obtain research results, allowing for a detailed analysis of the airflow dynamics and the impact of the vortex generator on the evaporation rate.

## 2. Methodology

This study utilises Ansys CFD software to conduct simulations. The basic governing equations of flow through the channel are summarised in terms of continuity, momentum and energy balance equation as follows:
The continuity equation,

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t}\iiint_V \rho dV + \iint_A \rho \vec{V} \cdot d\vec{A} = 0 \quad (1)$$

$$\frac{\partial \rho}{\partial t} + \rho \vec{\nabla} \cdot \vec{V} = 0 \quad (2)$$

The momentum equation in the x-axis direction

$$\frac{\partial(\rho u)}{\partial t} + \vec{\nabla} \cdot \left(\rho u \vec{V}\right) = -\frac{\partial p}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{xx}}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{yx}}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{zx}}{\partial z} + \rho f_x \quad (3)$$

The momentum equation in the y-axis direction

$$\frac{\partial(\rho v)}{\partial t} + \vec{\nabla} \cdot \left(\rho v \vec{V}\right) = -\frac{\partial p}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{xy}}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{yy}}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{zy}}{\partial z} + \rho f_y \quad (4)$$

The momentum equation in the z-axis direction

$$\frac{\partial(\rho w)}{\partial t} + \vec{\nabla} \cdot \left(\rho w \vec{V}\right) = -\frac{\partial p}{\partial z} + \frac{\partial \tau_{xz}}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{yz}}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{zz}}{\partial z} + \rho f_z \quad (5)$$

The energy equation written in terms of internal energy.

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t}\left[\rho\left(e + \frac{V^2}{2}\right)\right] + \vec{\nabla} \cdot \left[\rho\left(e + \frac{V^2}{2}\right)\vec{V}\right] = \rho \dot{q} - \frac{\partial(\rho p)}{\partial x} - \frac{\partial(vp)}{\partial y} - \frac{\partial(wp)}{\partial z} + \rho \vec{f} \cdot \vec{V} \quad (6)$$

Simulations focus on evaporation within a channel downstream of the air conditioner (AC) condenser, where airflow reaches temperatures up to 45°C. The airflow passes through the channel above the water surface, with varying cross-sectional areas of the channel set at 0.03, 0.024, 0.018, 0.012, and 0.006 m², as illustrated in Figure 1.

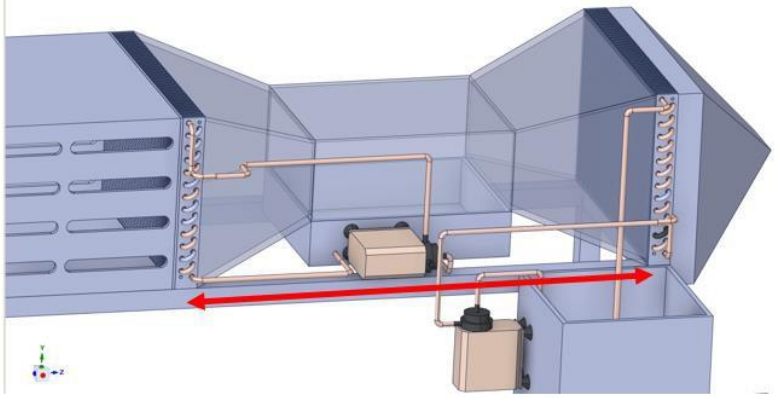


**Fig. 1.** Simulation model

Figure 1 indicates the section to be simulated by red arrows, highlighting where water evaporates into vapour. Other areas are not included in the simulation as they are not the primary focus of this research. This study concentrates explicitly on water evaporation.

As mentioned earlier, simulation variations are achieved by altering the cross-sectional area of the channel without a Vortex Generator (NVG) and with a Vortex Generator (VG), as shown in Figure 2.

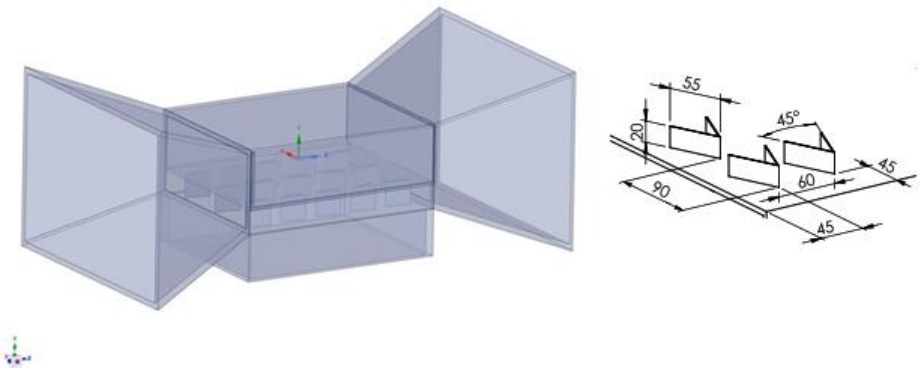



**Fig. 2.** Simulation variable

The vortex generator used in this study is a V-shaped design, as it directs the airflow more effectively and generates efficient vortices without creating excessive flow resistance [21], with the optimal geometry defined by a height-to-channel height ratio of 0.47 [22], a longitudinal pitch ratio of 0.18 that generates the largest vortices [23], and an angle of attack of 30°, which provides superior hydraulic and thermal performance [24]The model assumptions include an incompressible ideal gas, constant density and viscosity, and Newtonian, laminar, and two-dimensional flow. A no-slip condition is applied to all boundaries, and the inlet temperature is assumed constant.

The simulation model in this research simplifies the interface between air and water without fully capturing complex interfacial phenomena such as surface tension, evaporation-driven heat transfer at the molecular scale, and air-water interaction dynamics. However, this limitation does not detract from the overall findings but highlights areas for future refinement. The current simulated model effectively demonstrates the impact of vortex generators on evaporation rates, showing strong alignment with experimental data. The modelling of the interaction between air and water during the evaporation process utilises a fluid domain, where warm air from the condenser flows over the water surface, influencing the evaporation rate, as illustrated in Figure 3.

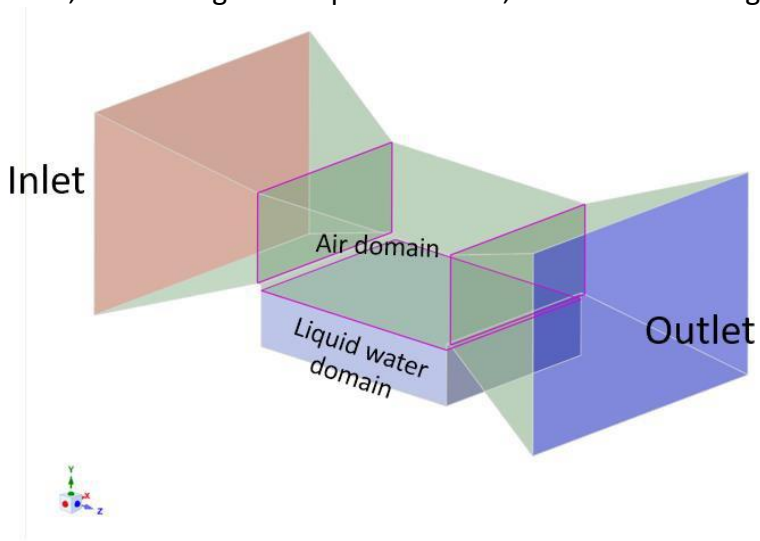



**Fig. 3.** Simulation domain

Figure 3 illustrates the fluid domain (flow area) simulated in the CFD process. The analysed fluid domain is situated between the input (AC condenser) and the output, featuring two types of fluids: the air domain and the water domain. The initial water volume is 0.01 $m^3$.

In solving the fluid flow equations using CFD simulations, the fluid domain is divided into small elements (grid), referred to as mesh, as shown in Figure 4.

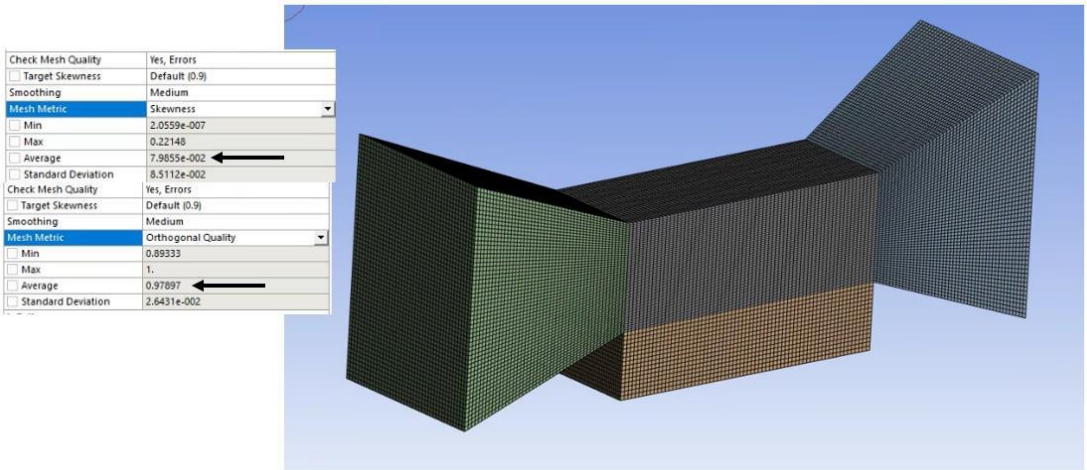



**Fig. 4.** Simulation mesh

Figure 4 above illustrates the mesh utilised in the CFD simulation. The chosen element type is hexahedral, known for its structured grid that enhances numerical stability and accuracy. This study considers the skewness and orthogonal quality values sufficient because they meet and exceed the standard thresholds used in CFD simulations. A skewness value below 0.25 is typically deemed acceptable, and an orthogonal quality value above 0.7 is considered good. The values of 0.08 and 0.98 ensure minimal numerical errors and optimal flow simulation, aligning with best practices in CFD modelling. A grid independence test was performed to ensure the reliability of the simulation results. This test determines whether the results are consistent across different mesh densities, confirming that the chosen mesh configuration does not significantly influence the findings.

Table 1 presents the outcomes of this grid independence test. A relative difference in results below 10% establishes the validity of the simulation model used in this study. The 10% threshold is commonly adopted in CFD studies as it represents a balance between computational cost and result accuracy, ensuring convergence of the numerical solution while maintaining efficiency. The generated mesh primarily consists of hexahedrons, offering high resolution and computational efficiency, as shown in Figure 5. For detailed regions, polyhedral meshes are utilized due to their superior capability to conform to objects with high curvature.

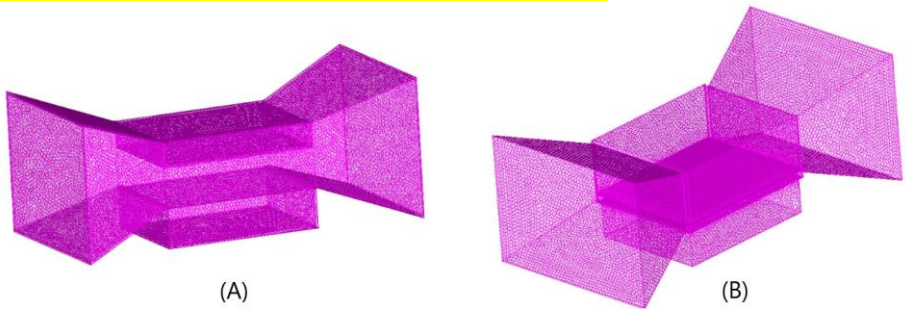



**Fig. 5.** Simulation mesh without VG (A) and using VG (B)

**Table 1**
Grid independency test

| No | Mesh | Evaporation rate (kg/s m^3) | %Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 160k | 1.12 | - |
| 2 | 250k | 1.73 | 54.46 |
| 3 | 400k | 2.27 | 31.21 |
| 4 | 600k | 2.56 | 12.78 |
| 5 | 900k | 2.72 | 6.25 |

Table 1 above shows the impact of mesh density on evaporation rates. Mesh number 1 and mesh number 2 exhibit a relative difference of 54.46%. This mesh dependency analysis aims to select a mesh with a relative difference of less than 10%. Mesh number 4 and mesh number 5 demonstrate a relative difference of 6.25%, while the relative difference between mesh number 4 and mesh number 3 is 12.78%. In this simulation, mesh number 4 was chosen due to its relative difference of 12.78%, whereas the difference in evaporation rate with mesh number 5 is only 0.16 kg/s m³. This selection ensures that the simulation results remain valid and accurate while optimising computational efficiency. The choice of mesh 600k balances accuracy and efficiency, as increasing the mesh density beyond this point provides diminishing returns in accuracy relative to the increased computational cost.

**Fig. 6.** Experimental rig

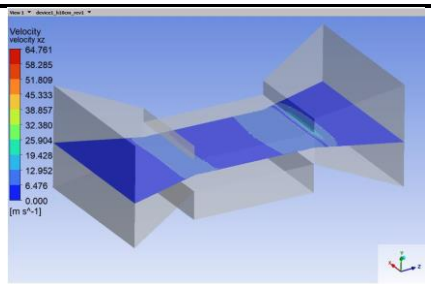
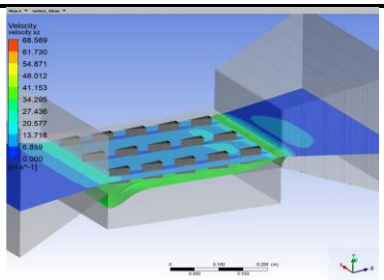
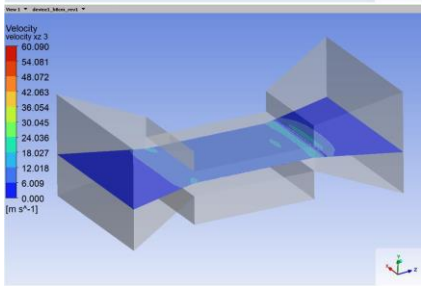
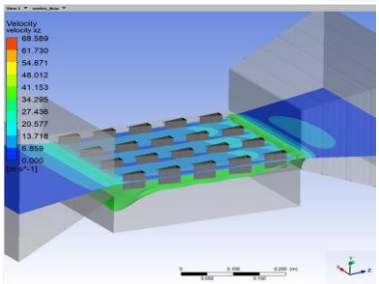
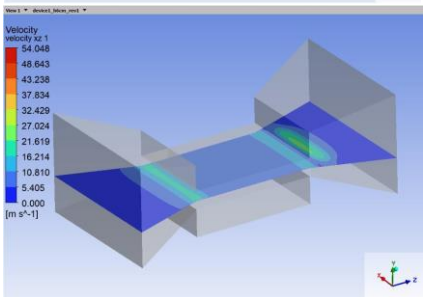
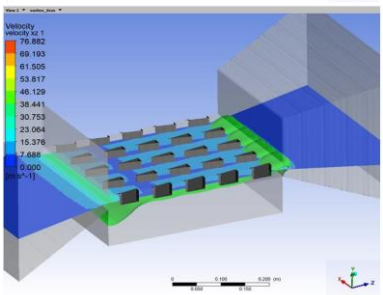
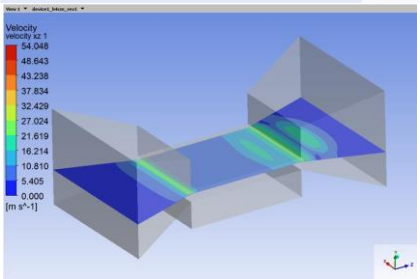
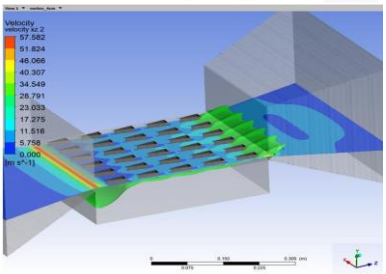
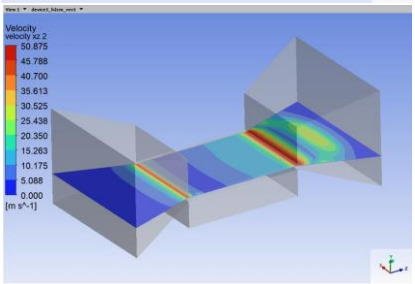
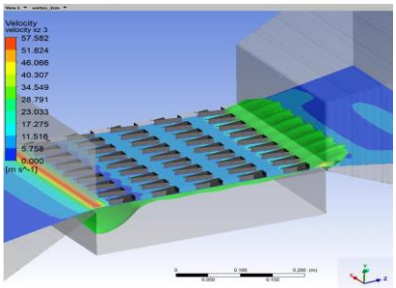
The verification of CFD results can be conducted using data from experimental research or previous studies [25] to ensure that the CFD model accurately represents physical phenomena. In this study, the simulation results were verified using evaporation data obtained from experiments without using a vortex generator, using an experimental rig shown in Figure 6.

## 3. Results

The simulation results presented in this article focus on the airflow velocity as influenced by the reduction in cross-sectional area and the corresponding evaporation rates. This analysis encompasses scenarios both without vortex generators (NVG) and with vortex generators (VG).

The investigation highlights how variations in the channel's cross-sectional area impact the airflow's velocity. As the area decreases, the airflow velocity tends to increase due to fluid dynamics principles, particularly the continuity equation, which states that the mass flow rate must remain constant from one flow cross-section to another.

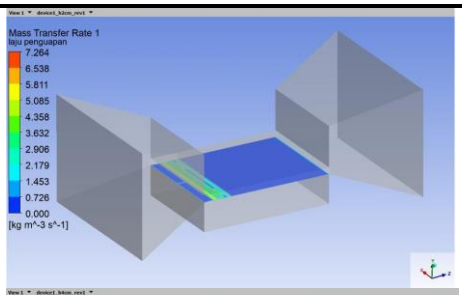
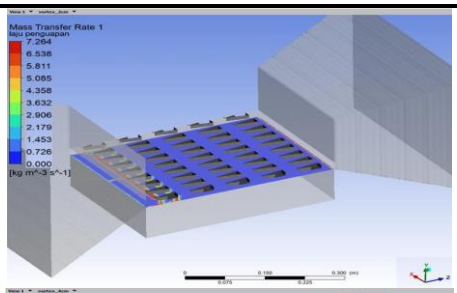
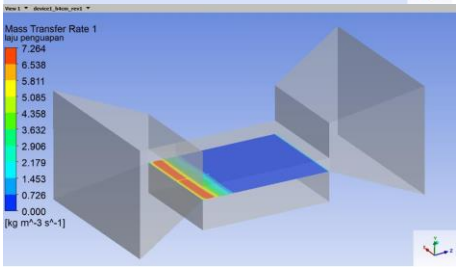
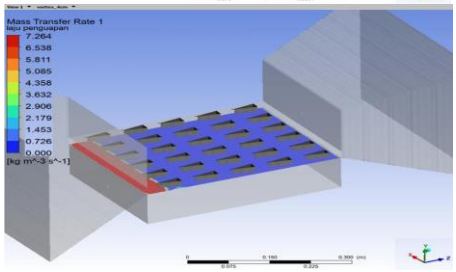
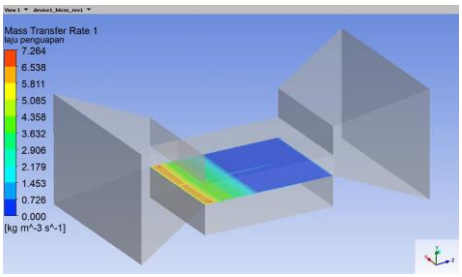
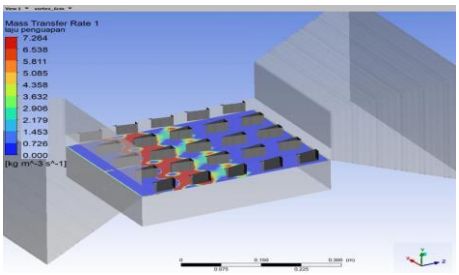
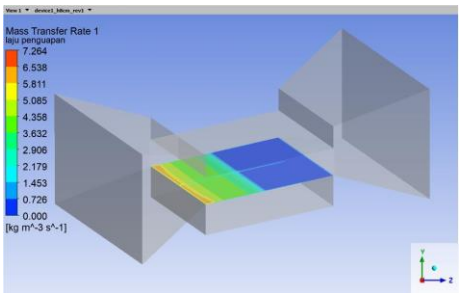
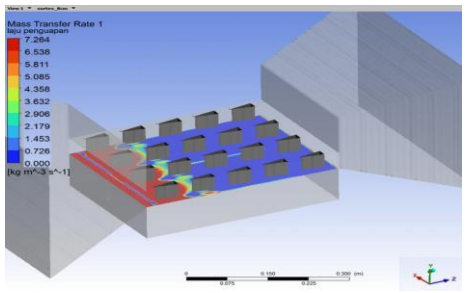
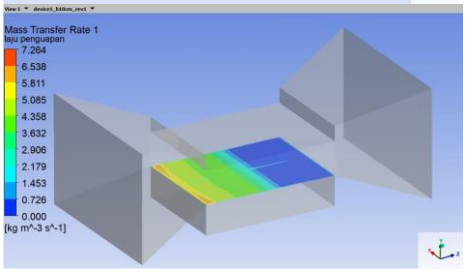
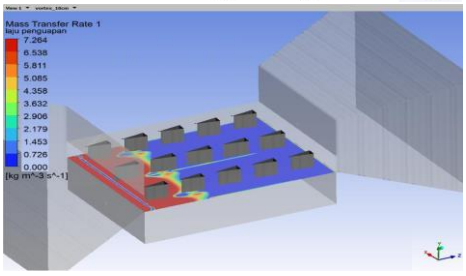
**Table 2**
Velocity contour

| cross-sectional area | NVG | VG |
|---|---|---|
| 0.03 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.024 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.018 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.012 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.006 $m^2$ |  |  |

The comparative results between the two configurations—one using vortex generators and the other without—will provide insights into the effectiveness of vortex generators in enhancing the evaporation process. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of optimising desalination techniques, particularly for applications in coastal areas where water scarcity is a pressing issue. By demonstrating the impact of airflow velocity on evaporation rates, the findings will emphasise the importance of flow dynamics in improving desalination efficiency.

The increase in airflow velocity caused by the vortex generator, as shown in Table 2, is closely related to the evaporation process. Table 2 illustrates that airflow velocity increases as the cross-

**Table 3**
Evaporation rate

| cross-sectional area | NVG | VG |
|---|---|---|
| 0.03 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.024 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.018 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.012 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.006 $m^2$ |  |  |

sectional area of the channel decreases. When vortex generators are applied to the channel, the airflow velocity increases significantly compared to the channel without vortex generators (NVG). This occurs because vortex generators create longitudinal vortices that disturb the boundary layer, reduce thickness, and enhance fluid mixing. As a result, higher airflow velocity leads to more efficient removal of water vapour from the surface, accelerating the evaporation process. Additionally, the

increased airflow velocity, as reflected in the data from Table 2, also accelerates the transfer of thermal energy from the water surface to the surrounding air. With better flow distribution and higher turbulence, the heat absorbed from the water surface can be transferred more efficiently to the air, ultimately speeding up evaporation. Longitudinal vortices can significantly improve flow distribution and momentum transfer in small channels, enhancing evaporation efficiency by optimising pressure distribution within the microchannel [26]. Moreover, these findings align with other research, showing that decreasing the cross-sectional area of the channel improves flow distribution and momentum transfer in microchannel systems, further enhancing evaporation efficiency [27]. Thus, the implementation of vortex generators not only optimises thermal and fluid performance in systems such as heat exchangers and cooling mechanisms and enhances evaporation rates, as demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3 compares the evaporation rates for the NVG and VG configurations. Channels equipped with vortex generators show significantly higher evaporation rates. The average increase in the evaporation rate, approximately 57%, is due to enhanced fluid mixing and continuous disruption of the thermal boundary layer, which improves heat transfer efficiency.

There are two key implications of this increase in evaporation rate. First, improved mass transfer facilitates the removal of saturated air near the water surface, allowing for higher evaporation efficiency. Second, disrupting the stagnant air layer near the liquid surface ensures a continuous supply of dry air, creating a higher concentration gradient for evaporation. These findings emphasise the importance of vortex generators in applications such as desalination, where optimising evaporation efficiency is crucial. Micro-vortices can accelerate evaporation by increasing turbulence and reducing boundary layer thickness [28]. The higher evaporation rates observed in vortex-induced systems are closely related to the reduction of the thermal boundary layer thickness, which speeds up the transport of water molecules from the liquid surface to the airflow [29].

As a result, this enhanced airflow leads to a more efficient evaporation process, as the constant replacement of saturated air with drier air increases the evaporation rate. The findings presented in Table 3 highlight the positive impact of vortex generators on evaporation efficiency, making them a valuable component in systems designed for desalination or other thermal applications. Additionally, the increased evaporation rates observed in the presence of vortex generators contribute to the effectiveness of water desalination techniques and offer potential improvements in various industrial processes where evaporation is a key mechanism. Subsequently, the evaporation results from the simulation will be verified against the experimental evaporation data, as presented in Figure 7.

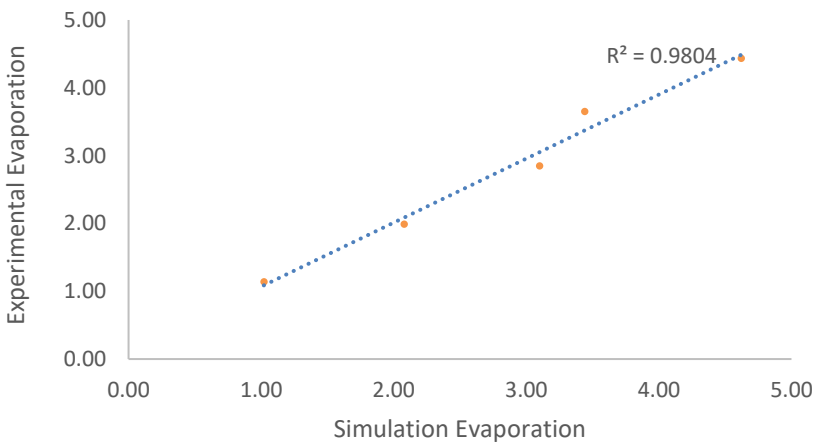



**Fig. 7.** Model verification

Figure 7 shows that the evaporation rates from the simulation closely match the experimental results, forming an almost linear relationship with a coefficient of determination ($R^2$) of 0.9804. This indicates that the simulation results align well with the experimental data [30], with a deviation of only 7.1%. The high agreement between the simulation and experimental data demonstrates that the CFD simulation approach is reliable for predicting VG's mass transfer enhancement effects. Low deviation in CFD simulations when modelling the effects of vortices on mass and heat transfer [31]. Subsequently, the simulation results for evaporation without a Vortex Generator (NVG) are compared to those with a Vortex Generator (VG), as shown in Figure 8.

The findings presented in Figure 8 further validate the analysis, demonstrating the impact of vortex generators on evaporation rates. The simulation results depicted in Figure 6 reveal that using vortex generators increases the evaporation rate by an average of 57% compared to systems without vortex generators. This enhancement is primarily due to the effect of vortex generators in increasing the flow velocity along the surface, which causes flow instability (turbulence) and the development of boundary layers and vortices [32]. These effects, in turn, amplify the temperature gradient between the surface and the surrounding air [33].

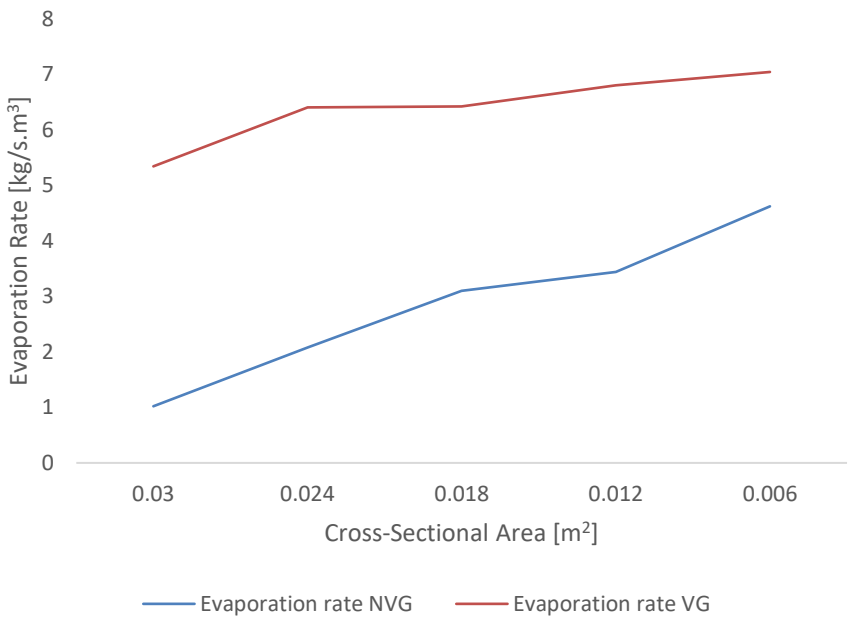



**Fig. 8.** Evaporation rate NVG and VG

The research findings indicate that applying vortex generators (VG) in evaporation systems, such as those used in desalination or industrial drying processes, provides significant advantages in terms of thermal efficiency. VG increases the evaporation rate, reducing operational time and energy consumption. The optimisation of VG design holds great potential for further improving thermal efficiency. The optimal VG geometry can maximise evaporation rates and heat transfer under various environmental conditions [30]. VG significantly enhances evaporation efficiency in desalination processes, thereby lowering operational costs[31].

Evaporation occurring within the channel can be described by the equation $J=K_m (Ps-Pa)$, where J represents the mass transfer rate due to evaporation and $k_m$ is the mass transfer coefficient. Ps and Pa are saturation vapour pressure at the surface and partial vapour pressure of the surrounding air, respectively. The vortex generators enhance the mass transfer rate by promoting turbulence and improving the mixing of the fluid, which in turn increases the effective mass transfer coefficient $k_m$.

This leads to a more efficient transfer of vapour from the surface to the surrounding air, driven by the vapour pressure difference. The influence of the vortex generators results in higher evaporation rates compared to a system without such enhancements.

Implementing VG in evaporation-dependent systems, such as evaporative cooling or industrial drying, provides substantial benefits. VG accelerates the evaporation process and reduces the additional energy required to maintain the temperature gradient, thus improving operational efficiency. This increase in evaporation rates also enables the design of surfaces involved in heat and mass transfer to become more compact without compromising performance. As a result, material costs can be reduced, and overall system performance can be enhanced. Therefore, the impact of vortex generators on flow and evaporation offers an efficient and innovative approach to improving the performance of thermal and fluid systems.

## 4. Conclusions

This study confirms that vortex generators significantly improve evaporation rates in desalination systems by harnessing waste heat from air conditioners. The results indicate an average increase of 57% in evaporation rates when vortex generators are employed, attributed to the induced turbulence that improves fluid mixing and thermal energy transfer. This research highlights the effectiveness of vortex generators in optimising airflow dynamics, leading to more efficient heat transfer and evaporation processes.

From a scientific perspective, this work contributes to understanding fluid dynamics and heat transfer mechanisms in evaporative systems. It provides a novel approach for utilising existing household technologies, such as air conditioning units, to address pressing issues related to freshwater scarcity, particularly in coastal regions. Additionally, the findings pave the way for further exploration of innovative solutions in thermal management, potentially influencing the design and efficiency of future systems in domestic and industrial applications. The study encourages the adoption of vortex generators as a feasible method for improving thermal efficiency, thereby promoting sustainable practices in water desalination and environmental management.

**Acknowledgement**

This research was funded by a grant from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia 105/E5/PG.02.00.PL/2024, 812/LL3/AL.04/2024, 104/F.03.07/2024.

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Revised Manuscript - Clean(Bukti Konfirmasi revisi dari reviewer, Revisi ke 2)

# CFD Simulation for Optimizing the Evaporation Process in Seawater Desalination Using Exhaust Heat from AC and Vortex Generators

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**ARTICLE INFO**

***Article history:***
Received 29 October XXXX
Received in revised form 1 December XXXX
Accepted 9 December XXXX
Available online 10 December XXXX

***Keywords:***

CFD simulation; evaporation process; seawater desalination; vortex generators; waste heat utilisation

**ABSTRACT**

Water is essential for human survival, yet freshwater resources are scarce and limited. In Indonesia's coastal regions, only 66.54% of the population has access to clean water, highlighting a significant challenge. This issue is further intensified by global warming, which has increased dependence on air conditioners, resulting in substantial waste heat emissions. While often overlooked, this waste heat contributes to local warming and presents an untapped energy resource. Repurposing this energy for innovative applications, such as seawater desalination, offers a promising solution to mitigate clean water shortages. This study proposes using waste heat from household ACs for seawater desalination through evaporation, enhanced by vortex generators. The research examines variations with and without vortex generators across different cross-sectional areas, affecting airflow velocity. Results indicate that using vortex generators significantly increases evaporation rates at all wind speeds. These devices enhance airflow velocity and turbulence, boosting heat transfer and accelerating evaporation. Through Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) simulations, the research aims to demonstrate how vortex generators can improve evaporation, offering a practical solution for cooling and desalination at a household scale. This novel approach could significantly benefit water-scarce regions, providing an efficient, cost-effective solution utilising existing household technology.

## Highlights

- Rapid global population growth significantly increases the demand for clean water.
- This study introduces a method to repurpose waste heat from air conditioners for seawater desalination.
- Vortex generators improve evaporation rates by increasing airflow velocity and turbulence.
- CFD simulations confirm the effectiveness of this approach for household-scale desalination systems.

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## 1. Introduction

Water is a vital substance needed by humans and other living organisms. With the growth of the global population, the water demand has increased rapidly. Estimates show that a 15% increase in the world population will reduce the availability of clean water by 40% [1], while the amount of freshwater constitutes only 2.8% [2] of the total water on the Earth's surface. Because water is so essential, water scarcity can trigger humanitarian, political, and even racial issues [3]. Water scarcity poses a significant global threat and increasingly impacts regions in Indonesia.

As an archipelagic country with the longest coastline in the world, Indonesia is home to many communities residing in coastal areas. However, they face serious problems related to water scarcity. Only about 66.54% of them have access to clean water, forcing the majority of coastal residents to use murky and saline water for daily needs such as washing and bathing, while for drinking water, they have to purchase it [4]. Water scarcity is just one of the various problems faced by coastal populations in Indonesia. Global warming is another current issue.

Global warming has transitioned from a potential threat to an urgent global crisis.. The Earth's temperature has increased significantly in the past three decades [5]. This temperature rise has caused climate change and is linked to the increasing incidence of severe weather events [6]. In addition, the higher temperatures increase the demand for air conditioning (AC), especially in tropical regions like Indonesia. However, it should be noted that the AC units currently used in households and industries also emit hot air. This is due to the working principle of AC or heat pumps that take hot air from inside the room and expel it outside [7]. Therefore, this research will use heat pumps' waste hot air to evaporate seawater. The resulting vapour will then be condensed to produce clean water. Previous studies have shown that airflow is very adequate in the evaporation process [8]. The problem to be investigated is how to use the waste hot air from ACS to produce clean water through the desalination process, particularly for coastal communities in Indonesia.

Several studies have been conducted using heat pumps for desalination and cooling rooms. Heat pumps have been combined with multi-stage flash (MSF) and membrane distillation (MD) [9] for cooling and desalination processes. Srinivas used a staged system for desalination and cooling [10]. Junling combined heat pumps with vacuum to process wastewater [11], while several researchers only used heat pumps as desalination units [12], [13], [14]. However, heat pumps are used only at a large scale for air cooling and desalination. In contrast, Indonesia and many other places use heat pumps or ACs more commonly used for residential purposes.

Therefore, this research proposes a problem-solving approach to using household-scale AC units as air conditioners and desalination units by utilising the hot air released by the AC. The evaporation process will be integrated with a vortex generator to accelerate it. Thus, the second problem to be investigated in this research is integrating vortex generator technology to enhance the evaporation process in desalination units so that clean water can be produced efficiently without compromising AC performance.

The vortex generator is a component that disrupts the flow and increases flow velocity [15], leading to vorticity [16] that reduces flow pressure [17]. Vortex generators have been shown to enhance heat transfer, such as in cooling tower ducts and air channels [18]. Furthermore, since the evaporation pressure at the water surface is greater than the pressure in its surroundings [8], [19], [20] the reduction in flow pressure with the presence of a vortex generator will accelerate the evaporation process.

Based on the literature review, no household-scale desalination unit has evaporated using only flow integrated with a vortex generator, whether using a heat pump or not, thus representing a novelty in developing more efficient and affordable desalination technology in this research.

Additionally, computational fluid dynamics (CFD) simulations will be employed to obtain research results, allowing for a detailed analysis of the airflow dynamics and the impact of the vortex generator on the evaporation rate.

## 2. Methodology

This study utilises Ansys CFD software to conduct simulations. The basic governing equations of flow through the channel are summarised in terms of continuity, momentum and energy balance equation as follows:
The continuity equation,

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t}\iiint_{V} \rho dV + \iint_{A} \rho\vec{V}\cdot d\vec{A} = 0 \tag{1}$$

$$\frac{\partial \rho}{\partial t} + \rho\vec{\nabla}\cdot\vec{V} = 0 \tag{2}$$

The momentum equation in the x-axis direction

$$\frac{\partial(\rho u)}{\partial t} + \vec{\nabla}\cdot\left(\rho u\vec{V}\right) = -\frac{\partial p}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{xx}}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{yx}}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{zx}}{\partial z} + \rho f_x \tag{3}$$

The momentum equation in the y-axis direction

$$\frac{\partial(\rho v)}{\partial t} + \vec{\nabla}\cdot\left(\rho v\vec{V}\right) = -\frac{\partial p}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{xy}}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{yy}}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{zy}}{\partial z} + \rho f_y \tag{4}$$

The momentum equation in the z-axis direction

$$\frac{\partial(\rho w)}{\partial t} + \vec{\nabla}\cdot\left(\rho w\vec{V}\right) = -\frac{\partial p}{\partial z} + \frac{\partial \tau_{xz}}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{yz}}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{zz}}{\partial z} + \rho f_z \tag{5}$$

The energy equation written in terms of internal energy.

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t}\left[\rho\left(e + \frac{V^2}{2}\right)\right] + \vec{\nabla}\cdot\left[\rho\left(e + \frac{V^2}{2}\right)\vec{V}\right] = \rho\dot{q} - \frac{\partial(\rho p)}{\partial x} - \frac{\partial(vp)}{\partial y} - \frac{\partial(wp)}{\partial z} + \rho\vec{f}\cdot\vec{V} \tag{6}$$

Simulations focus on evaporation within a channel downstream of the air conditioner (AC) condenser, where airflow reaches temperatures up to 45°C. The airflow passes through the channel above the water surface, with varying cross-sectional areas of the channel set at 0.03, 0.024, 0.018, 0.012, and 0.006 m², as illustrated in Figure 1

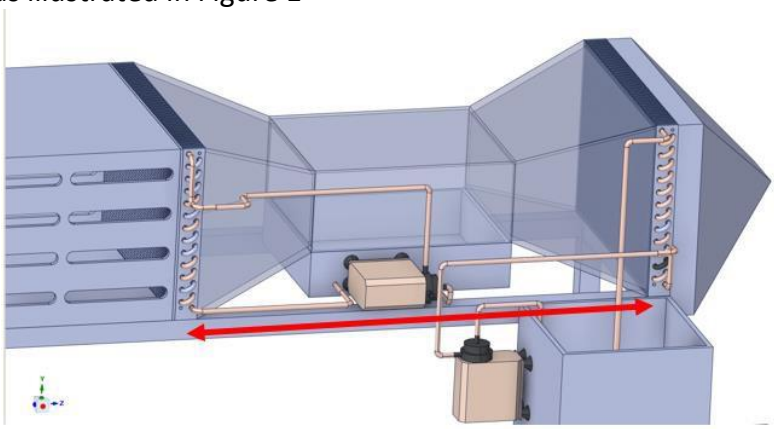


**Fig. 1.** Simulation model

Figure 1 indicates the section to be simulated by red arrows, highlighting where water evaporates into vapour. Other areas are not included in the simulation as they are not the primary focus of this research. This study concentrates explicitly on water evaporation.

As mentioned earlier, simulation variations are achieved by altering the cross-sectional area of the channel without a Vortex Generator (NVG) and with a Vortex Generator (VG), as shown in Figure 2.

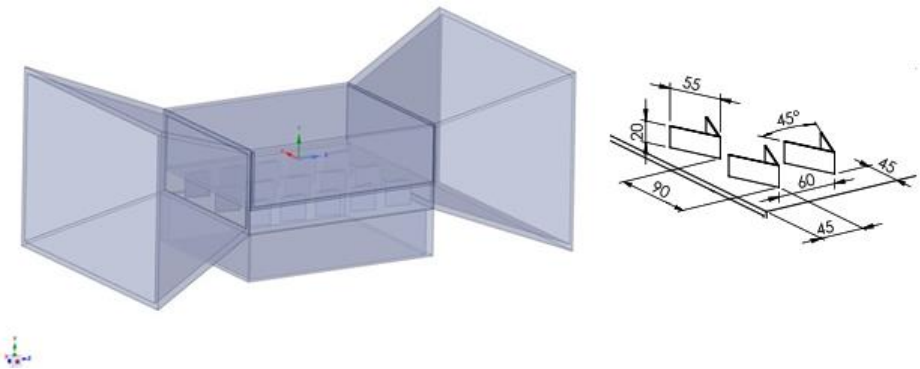



**Fig. 2.** Simulation variable

The vortex generator used in this study is a V-shaped design, as it directs the airflow more effectively and generates efficient vortices without creating excessive flow resistance [21], with the optimal geometry defined by a height-to-channel height ratio of 0.47 [22], a longitudinal pitch ratio of 0.18 that generates the largest vortices [23], and an angle of attack of 30°, which provides superior hydraulic and thermal performance [24]The model assumptions include an incompressible ideal gas, constant density and viscosity, and Newtonian, laminar, and two-dimensional flow. A no-slip condition is applied to all boundaries, and the inlet temperature is assumed constant.

The simulation model in this research simplifies the interface between air and water without fully capturing complex interfacial phenomena such as surface tension, evaporation-driven heat transfer at the molecular scale, and air-water interaction dynamics. However, this limitation does not detract from the overall findings but highlights areas for future refinement. The current simulated model effectively demonstrates the impact of vortex generators on evaporation rates, showing strong alignment with experimental data. The modelling of the interaction between air and water during the evaporation process utilises a fluid domain, where warm air from the condenser flows over the water surface, influencing the evaporation rate, as illustrated in Figure 3.

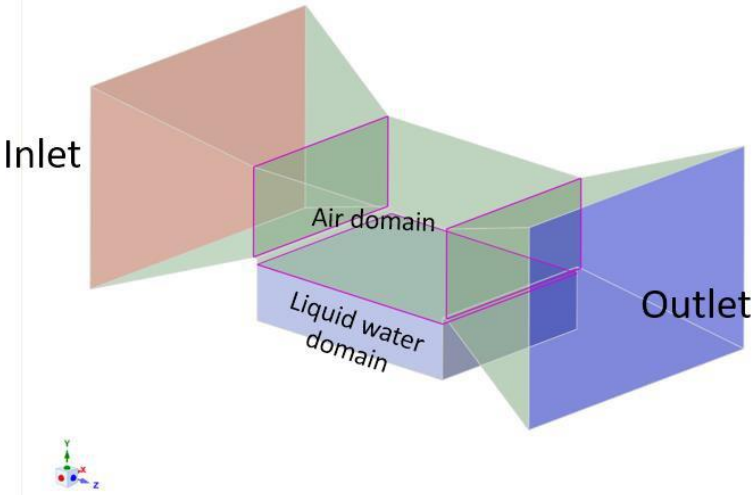



**Fig. 3.** Simulation domain

Figure 3 illustrates the fluid domain (flow area) simulated in the CFD process. The analysed fluid domain is situated between the input (AC condenser) and the output, featuring two types of fluids: the air domain and the water domain. The initial water volume is 0.01 $m^3$.

In solving the fluid flow equations using CFD simulations, the fluid domain is divided into small elements (grid), referred to as mesh, as shown in Figure 4.

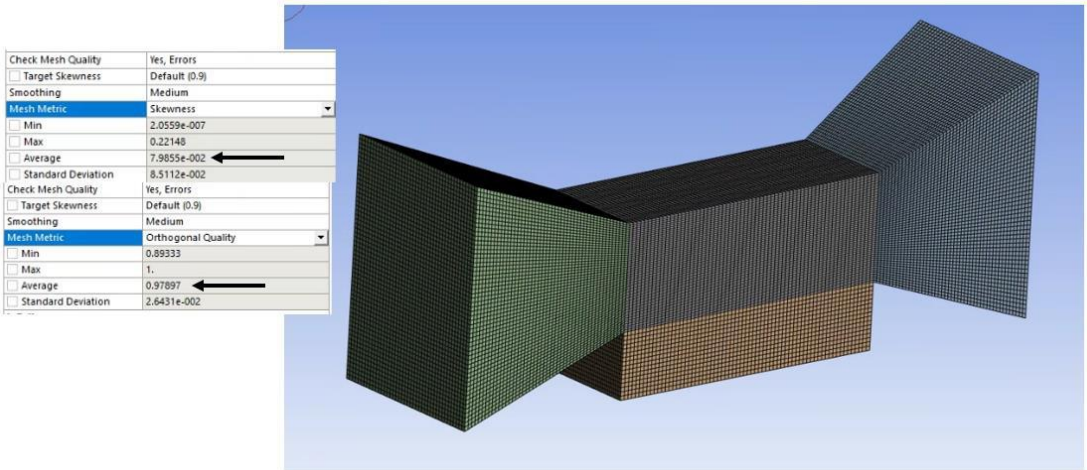



**Fig. 4.** Simulation mesh

Figure 4 above illustrates the mesh utilised in the CFD simulation. The chosen element type is hexahedral, known for its structured grid that enhances numerical stability and accuracy. This study considers the skewness and orthogonal quality values sufficient because they meet and exceed the standard thresholds used in CFD simulations. A skewness value below 0.25 is typically deemed acceptable, and an orthogonal quality value above 0.7 is considered good. The values of 0.08 and 0.98 ensure minimal numerical errors and optimal flow simulation, aligning with best practices in CFD modelling. A grid independence test was performed to ensure the reliability of the simulation results. This test determines whether the results are consistent across different mesh densities, confirming that the chosen mesh configuration does not significantly influence the findings.

Table 1 presents the outcomes of this grid independence test. A relative difference in results below 10% establishes the validity of the simulation model used in this study. The 10% threshold is commonly adopted in CFD studies as it represents a balance between computational cost and result accuracy, ensuring convergence of the numerical solution while maintaining efficiency. The generated mesh primarily consists of hexahedrons, offering high resolution and computational efficiency, as shown in Figure 5. For detailed regions, polyhedral meshes are utilized due to their superior capability to conform to objects with high curvature.

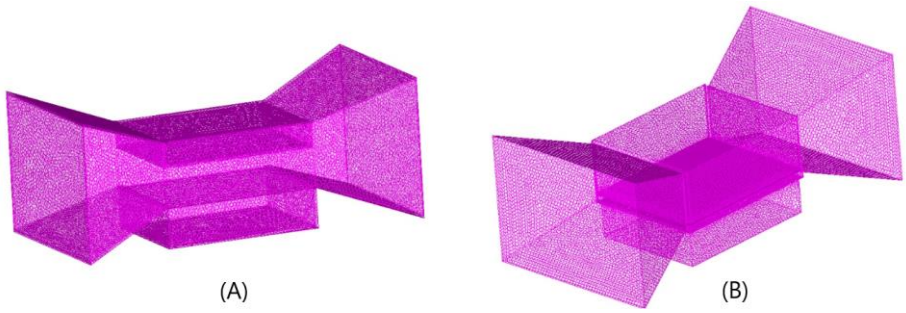



**Fig. 5.** Simulation mesh without VG (A) and using VG (B)

**Table 1**
Grid independency test

| No | Mesh | Evaporation rate (kg/s m^3) | %Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 160k | 1.12 | - |
| 2 | 250k | 1.73 | 54.46 |
| 3 | 400k | 2.27 | 31.21 |
| 4 | 600k | 2.56 | 12.78 |
| 5 | 900k | 2.72 | 6.25 |

Table 1 above shows the impact of mesh density on evaporation rates. Mesh number 1 and mesh number 2 exhibit a relative difference of 54.46%. This mesh dependency analysis aims to select a mesh with a relative difference of less than 10%. Mesh number 4 and mesh number 5 demonstrate a relative difference of 6.25%, while the relative difference between mesh number 4 and mesh number 3 is 12.78%. In this simulation, mesh number 4 was chosen due to its relative difference of 12.78%, whereas the difference in evaporation rate with mesh number 5 is only 0.16 kg/s m³. This selection ensures that the simulation results remain valid and accurate while optimising computational efficiency. The choice of mesh 600k balances accuracy and efficiency, as increasing the mesh density beyond this point provides diminishing returns in accuracy relative to the increased computational cost.

**Fig. 6.** Experimental rig

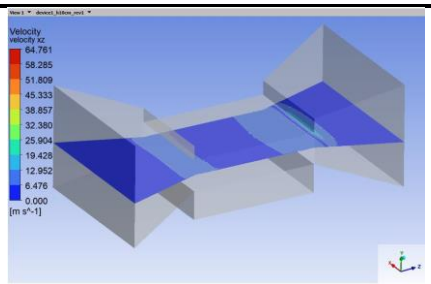
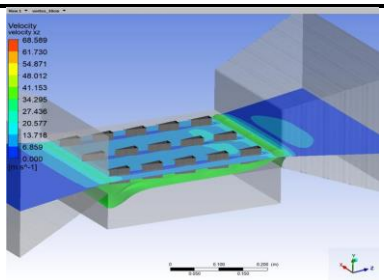
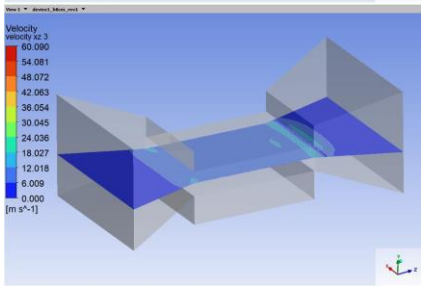
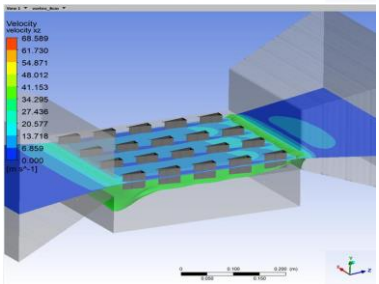
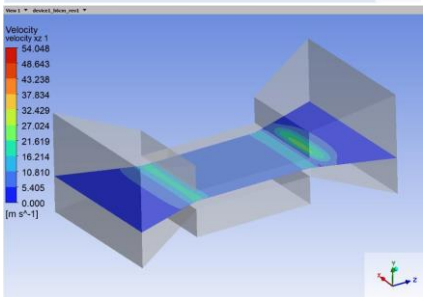
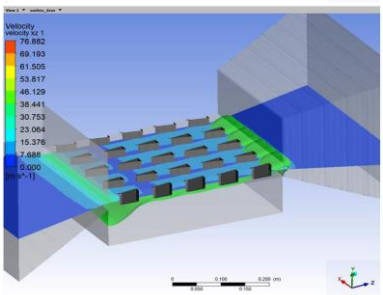
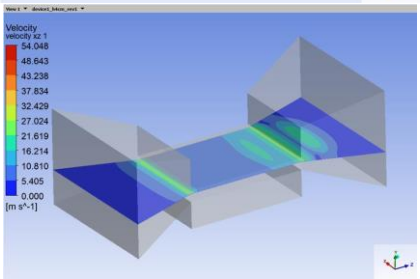
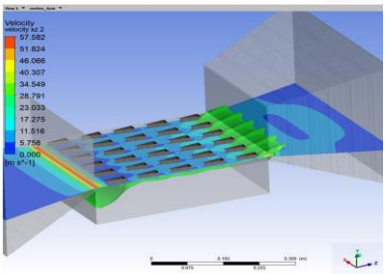
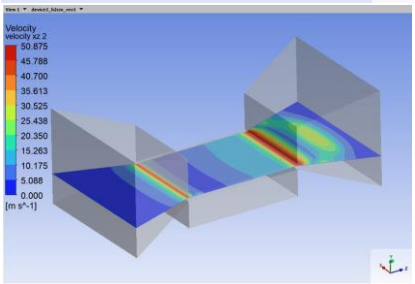
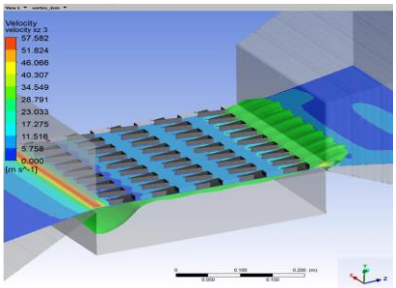
The verification of CFD results can be conducted using data from experimental research or previous studies [25] to ensure that the CFD model accurately represents physical phenomena. In this study, the simulation results were verified using evaporation data obtained from experiments without using a vortex generator, using an experimental rig shown in Figure 6.

## 3. Results

The simulation results presented in this article focus on the airflow velocity as influenced by the reduction in cross-sectional area and the corresponding evaporation rates. This analysis encompasses scenarios both without vortex generators (NVG) and with vortex generators (VG).

The investigation highlights how variations in the channel's cross-sectional area impact the airflow's velocity. As the area decreases, the airflow velocity tends to increase due to fluid dynamics principles, particularly the continuity equation, which states that the mass flow rate must remain constant from one flow cross-section to another.

**Table 2**
Velocity contour

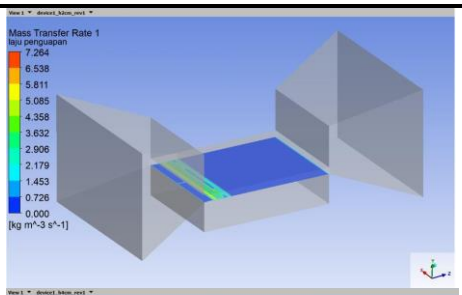
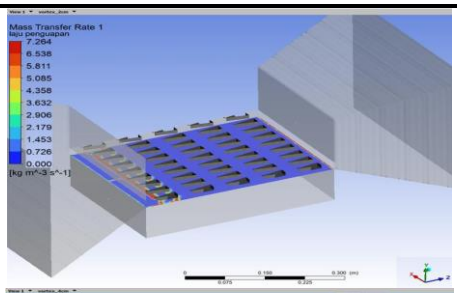
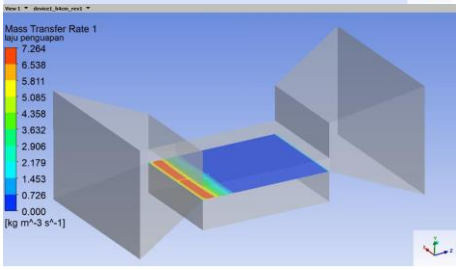
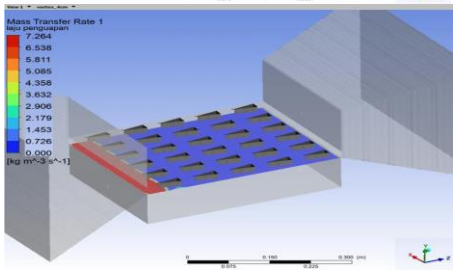
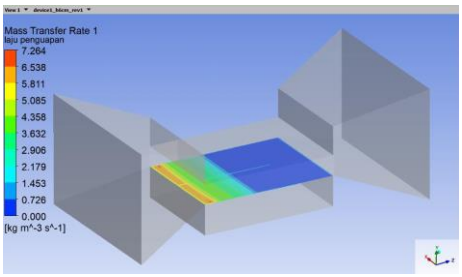
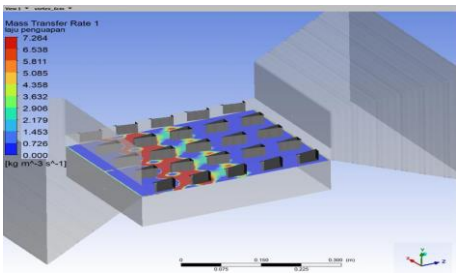
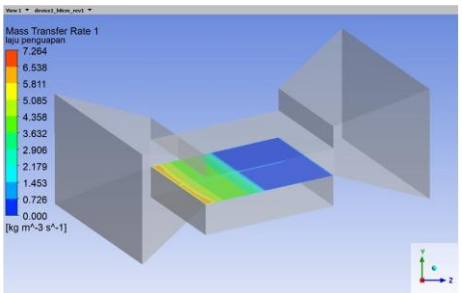
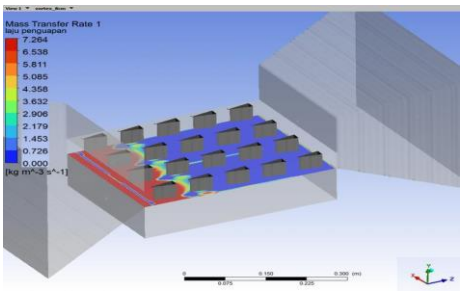
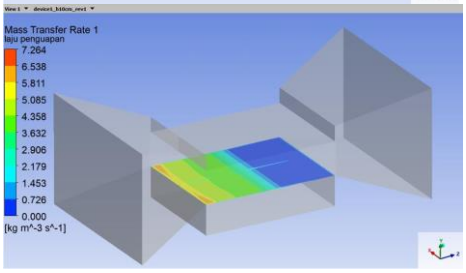
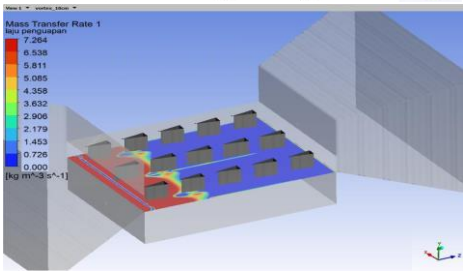
| cross-sectional area | NVG | VG |
|---|---|---|
| 0.03 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.024 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.018 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.012 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.006 $m^2$ |  |  |

The comparative results between the two configurations—one using vortex generators and the other without—will provide insights into the effectiveness of vortex generators in enhancing the evaporation process. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of optimising desalination techniques, particularly for applications in coastal areas where water scarcity is a pressing issue. By demonstrating the impact of airflow velocity on evaporation rates, the findings will emphasise the importance of flow dynamics in improving desalination efficiency.

The increase in airflow velocity caused by the vortex generator, as shown in Table 2, is closely related to the evaporation process. Table 2 illustrates that airflow velocity increases as the cross-

**Table 3**

Evaporation rate

| cross-sectional area | NVG | VG |
|---|---|---|
| 0.03 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.024 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.018 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.012 $m^2$ |  |  |
| 0.006 $m^2$ |  |  |

sectional area of the channel decreases. When vortex generators are applied to the channel, the airflow velocity increases significantly compared to the channel without vortex generators (NVG). This occurs because vortex generators create longitudinal vortices that disturb the boundary layer, reduce thickness, and enhance fluid mixing. As a result, higher airflow velocity leads to more efficient removal of water vapour from the surface, accelerating the evaporation process. Additionally, the

increased airflow velocity, as reflected in the data from Table 2, also accelerates the transfer of thermal energy from the water surface to the surrounding air. With better flow distribution and higher turbulence, the heat absorbed from the water surface can be transferred more efficiently to the air, ultimately speeding up evaporation. Longitudinal vortices can significantly improve flow distribution and momentum transfer in small channels, enhancing evaporation efficiency by optimising pressure distribution within the microchannel [26]. Moreover, these findings align with other research, showing that decreasing the cross-sectional area of the channel improves flow distribution and momentum transfer in microchannel systems, further enhancing evaporation efficiency [27]. Thus, the implementation of vortex generators not only optimises thermal and fluid performance in systems such as heat exchangers and cooling mechanisms and enhances evaporation rates, as demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3 compares the evaporation rates for the NVG and VG configurations. Channels equipped with vortex generators show significantly higher evaporation rates. The average increase in the evaporation rate, approximately 57%, is due to enhanced fluid mixing and continuous disruption of the thermal boundary layer, which improves heat transfer efficiency.

There are two key implications of this increase in evaporation rate. First, improved mass transfer facilitates the removal of saturated air near the water surface, allowing for higher evaporation efficiency. Second, disrupting the stagnant air layer near the liquid surface ensures a continuous supply of dry air, creating a higher concentration gradient for evaporation. These findings emphasise the importance of vortex generators in applications such as desalination, where optimising evaporation efficiency is crucial. Micro-vortices can accelerate evaporation by increasing turbulence and reducing boundary layer thickness [28]. The higher evaporation rates observed in vortex-induced systems are closely related to the reduction of the thermal boundary layer thickness, which speeds up the transport of water molecules from the liquid surface to the airflow [29].

As a result, this enhanced airflow leads to a more efficient evaporation process, as the constant replacement of saturated air with drier air increases the evaporation rate. The findings presented in Table 3 highlight the positive impact of vortex generators on evaporation efficiency, making them a valuable component in systems designed for desalination or other thermal applications. Additionally, the increased evaporation rates observed in the presence of vortex generators contribute to the effectiveness of water desalination techniques and offer potential improvements in various industrial processes where evaporation is a key mechanism. Subsequently, the evaporation results from the simulation will be verified against the experimental evaporation data, as presented in Figure 7.

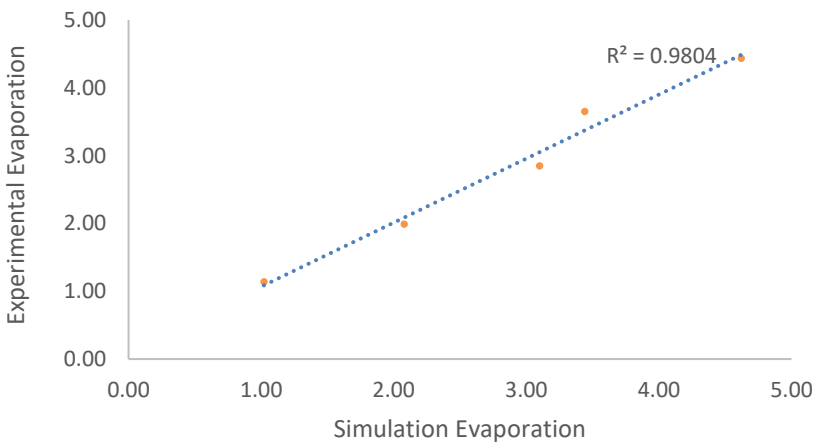



**Fig. 7.** Model verification

Figure 6 shows that the evaporation rates from the simulation closely match the experimental results, forming an almost linear relationship with a coefficient of determination ($R^2$) of 0.9804. This indicates that the simulation results align well with the experimental data [30], with a deviation of only 7.1%. The high agreement between the simulation and experimental data demonstrates that the CFD simulation approach is reliable for predicting VG's mass transfer enhancement effects. Low deviation in CFD simulations when modelling the effects of vortices on mass and heat transfer [31]. Subsequently, the simulation results for evaporation without a Vortex Generator (NVG) are compared to those with a Vortex Generator (VG), as shown in Figure 8.

The findings presented in Figure 8 further validate the analysis, demonstrating the impact of vortex generators on evaporation rates. The simulation results depicted in Figure 6 reveal that using vortex generators increases the evaporation rate by an average of 57% compared to systems without vortex generators. This enhancement is primarily due to the effect of vortex generators in increasing the flow velocity along the surface, which causes flow instability (turbulence) and the development of boundary layers and vortices [32]. These effects, in turn, amplify the temperature gradient between the surface and the surrounding air [33].

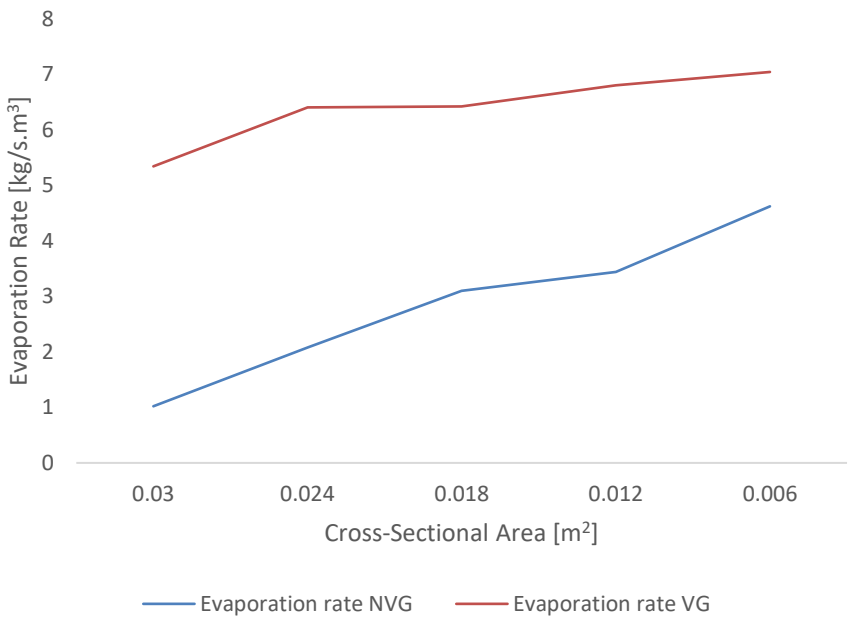



**Fig. 8.** Evaporation rate NVG and VG

The research findings indicate that applying vortex generators (VG) in evaporation systems, such as those used in desalination or industrial drying processes, provides significant advantages in terms of thermal efficiency. VG increases the evaporation rate, reducing operational time and energy consumption. The optimisation of VG design holds great potential for further improving thermal efficiency. The optimal VG geometry can maximise evaporation rates and heat transfer under various environmental conditions [30]. VG significantly enhances evaporation efficiency in desalination processes, thereby lowering operational costs[31].

Evaporation occurring within the channel can be described by the equation $J=K_m (Ps-Pa)$, where J represents the mass transfer rate due to evaporation and $k_m$ is the mass transfer coefficient. Ps and Pa are saturation vapour pressure at the surface and partial vapour pressure of the surrounding air, respectively. The vortex generators enhance the mass transfer rate by promoting turbulence and improving the mixing of the fluid, which in turn increases the effective mass transfer coefficient $k_m$.

This leads to a more efficient transfer of vapour from the surface to the surrounding air, driven by the vapour pressure difference. The influence of the vortex generators results in higher evaporation rates compared to a system without such enhancements.

Implementing VG in evaporation-dependent systems, such as evaporative cooling or industrial drying, provides substantial benefits. VG accelerates the evaporation process and reduces the additional energy required to maintain the temperature gradient, thus improving operational efficiency. This increase in evaporation rates also enables the design of surfaces involved in heat and mass transfer to become more compact without compromising performance. As a result, material costs can be reduced, and overall system performance can be enhanced. Therefore, the impact of vortex generators on flow and evaporation offers an efficient and innovative approach to improving the performance of thermal and fluid systems.

## 4. Conclusions

This study confirms that vortex generators significantly improve evaporation rates in desalination systems by harnessing waste heat from air conditioners. The results indicate an average increase of 57% in evaporation rates when vortex generators are employed, attributed to the induced turbulence that improves fluid mixing and thermal energy transfer. This research highlights the effectiveness of vortex generators in optimising airflow dynamics, leading to more efficient heat transfer and evaporation processes.

From a scientific perspective, this work contributes to understanding fluid dynamics and heat transfer mechanisms in evaporative systems. It provides a novel approach for utilising existing household technologies, such as air conditioning units, to address pressing issues related to freshwater scarcity, particularly in coastal regions. Additionally, the findings pave the way for further exploration of innovative solutions in thermal management, potentially influencing the design and efficiency of future systems in domestic and industrial applications. The study encourages the adoption of vortex generators as a feasible method for improving thermal efficiency, thereby promoting sustainable practices in water desalination and environmental management.

**Acknowledgement**

This research was funded by a grant from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia 105/E5/PG.02.00.PL/2024, 812/LL3/AL.04/2024, 104/F.03.07/2024.

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# CFD simulation for optimizing the evaporation process in seawater desalination using exhaust heat from AC and vortex generators

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Rapid global population growth significantly increases the demand for clean water.
- This study introduces a method to repurpose waste heat from air conditioners for seawater desalination.
- Vortex generators improve evaporation rates by increasing airflow velocity and turbulence.
- CFD simulations confirm the effectiveness of this approach for household-scale desalination systems.

## ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:*
CFD simulation
Evaporation process
Seawater desalination
Vortex generators
Waste heat utilisation

## ABSTRACT

Water is essential for human survival, yet freshwater resources are scarce and limited. In Indonesia's coastal regions, only 66.54 % of the population has access to clean water, highlighting a significant challenge. This issue is further intensified by global warming, which has increased dependence on air conditioners, resulting in substantial waste heat emissions. While often overlooked, this waste heat contributes to local warming and presents an untapped energy resource. Repurposing this energy for innovative applications, such as seawater desalination, offers a promising solution to mitigate clean water shortages. This study proposes using waste heat from household ACs for seawater desalination through evaporation, enhanced by vortex generators. The research examines variations with and without vortex generators across different cross-sectional areas, affecting airflow velocity. Results indicate that using vortex generators significantly increases evaporation rates at all wind speeds. These devices enhance airflow velocity and turbulence, boosting heat transfer and accelerating evaporation. Through Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) simulations, the research aims to demonstrate how vortex generators can improve evaporation, offering a practical solution for cooling and desalination at a household scale. This novel approach could significantly benefit water-scarce regions, providing an efficient, cost-effective solution utilising existing household technology.

## 1. Introduction

Water is a vital substance needed by humans and other living organisms. With the growth of the global population, the water demand has increased rapidly. Estimates show that a 15 % increase in the world population will reduce the availability of clean water by 40 % [1], while the amount of freshwater constitutes only 2.8 % [2] of the total water on the Earth's surface. Because water is so essential, water scarcity can trigger humanitarian, political, and even racial issues [3]. Water scarcity poses a significant global threat and increasingly impacts regions in Indonesia.

As an archipelagic country with the longest coastline in the world, Indonesia is home to many communities residing in coastal areas. However, they face serious problems related to water scarcity. Only about 66.54 % of them have access to clean water, forcing the majority of coastal residents to use murky and saline water for daily needs such as washing and bathing, while for drinking water, they have to purchase it [4]. Water scarcity is just one of the various problems faced by coastal populations in Indonesia. Global warming is another current issue.

Global warming has transitioned from a potential threat to an urgent global crisis. The Earth's temperature has increased significantly in the past three decades [5]. This temperature rise has caused climate change and is linked to the increasing incidence of severe weather events [6]. In addition, the higher temperatures increase the demand for air

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dwt.2025.101145
Received 27 September 2024; Received in revised form 17 March 2025; Accepted 25 March 2025
Available online 25 March 2025
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conditioning (AC), especially in tropical regions like Indonesia. However, it should be noted that the AC units currently used in households and industries also emit hot air. This is due to the working principle of AC or heat pumps that take hot air from inside the room and expel it outside [7]. Therefore, this research will use heat pumps' waste hot air to evaporate seawater. The resulting vapour will then be condensed to produce clean water. Previous studies have shown that airflow is very adequate in the evaporation process [8]. The problem to be investigated is how to use the waste hot air from ACS to produce clean water through the desalination process, particularly for coastal communities in Indonesia.

Several studies have been conducted using heat pumps for desalination and cooling rooms. Heat pumps have been combined with multi-stage flash (MSF) and membrane distillation (MD) [9] for cooling and desalination processes. Srinivas used a staged system for desalination and cooling [10]. Junling combined heat pumps with vacuum to process wastewater [11], while several researchers only used heat pumps as desalination units [12,13,14]. However, heat pumps are used only at a large scale for air cooling and desalination. In contrast, Indonesia and many other places use heat pumps or ACs more commonly used for residential purposes.

Therefore, this research proposes a problem-solving approach to using household-scale AC units as air conditioners and desalination units by utilising the hot air released by the AC. The evaporation process will be integrated with a vortex generator to accelerate it. Thus, the second problem to be investigated in this research is integrating vortex generator technology to enhance the evaporation process in desalination units so that clean water can be produced efficiently without compromising AC performance.

The vortex generator is a component that disrupts the flow and increases flow velocity [15], leading to vorticity [16] that reduces flow pressure [17]. Vortex generators have been shown to enhance heat transfer, such as in cooling tower ducts and air channels [18]. Furthermore, since the evaporation pressure at the water surface is greater than the pressure in its surroundings [19] the reduction in flow pressure with the presence of a vortex generator will accelerate the evaporation process.

Based on the literature review, no household-scale desalination unit has used evaporation solely through flow integrated with a vortex generator, whether using a heat pump or not. This represents a novelty in developing more efficient and affordable desalination technology in this research. Additionally, computational fluid dynamics (CFD) simulations will be employed to obtain research results, allowing for a detailed analysis of the airflow dynamics and the impact of the vortex generator on the evaporation rate.

## 2. Methodology

This study utilises Ansys CFD software to conduct simulations. The basic governing equations of flow through the channel are summarised in terms of continuity, momentum and energy balance equation as follows:

The continuity equation,

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t}\iiint_V \rho dV + \iint_A \rho \vec{V} \bullet d\vec{A} = 0 \tag{1}$$

$$\frac{\partial \rho}{\partial t} + \rho \vec{\nabla} \bullet \vec{V} = 0 \tag{2}$$

The momentum equation in the x-axis direction

$$\frac{\partial(\rho u)}{\partial t} + \vec{\nabla} \bullet \left(\rho u \vec{V}\right) = -\frac{\partial p}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{xx}}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{yx}}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{zx}}{\partial z} + \rho f_x \tag{3}$$

The momentum equation in the y-axis direction

$$\frac{\partial(\rho v)}{\partial t} + \vec{\nabla} \bullet \left(\rho v \vec{V}\right) = -\frac{\partial p}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{xy}}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{yy}}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{zy}}{\partial z} + \rho f_y \tag{4}$$

The momentum equation in the z-axis direction

$$\frac{\partial(\rho w)}{\partial t} + \vec{\nabla} \bullet \left(\rho w \vec{V}\right) = -\frac{\partial p}{\partial z} + \frac{\partial \tau_{xz}}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{yz}}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{zz}}{\partial z} + \rho f_z \tag{5}$$

The energy equation written in terms of internal energy.

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t}\left[\rho\left(e + \frac{V^2}{2}\right)\right] + \vec{\nabla} \bullet \left[\rho\left(e + \frac{V^2}{2}\right)\vec{V}\right] = \rho \dot{q} - \frac{\partial(\rho p)}{\partial x} - \frac{\partial(vp)}{\partial y} - \frac{\partial(wp)}{\partial z} + \rho \vec{f} \bullet \vec{V} \tag{6}$$

The simulation was conducted using Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) software with the following configurations:

The turbulence model employed was the k-omega SST model. This model was chosen because the SST formulation effectively captures long, straight fluid flows, such as those found in flat regions, while the k-omega formulation enhances accuracy in regions with detailed flow structures and around suction areas. This selection ensures a balance between computational efficiency and predictive accuracy, particularly in capturing the complex interactions within the flow domain.

For the wall boundary condition, a no-slip condition was applied to model the reduction in fluid velocity near solid surfaces, generating a boundary layer effect. This condition was specifically assigned to the wall glass within the geometry to accurately represent the interaction between the fluid and solid surfaces.

At the inlet, a normal velocity condition was applied, where both velocity magnitude and liquid volume fraction (gas phase) were defined. To replicate realistic operating conditions, the inlet velocity was set to 1.8 m/s with an inlet temperature of 51°C.

For the outlet, a static pressure (outflow) condition was imposed at the outlet region to simulate the expected flow behaviour, ensuring numerical stability and consistency with experimental conditions.

Humidity modelling was activated to account for phase change effects, particularly the evaporation process, which is influenced by thermal conditions. The ambient temperature was set to 33°C to simulate the heat-induced vapour generation and assess the impact of humidity variations on evaporation rates.

Simulations focus on evaporation within a channel downstream of the air conditioner (AC) condenser, where airflow reaches temperatures up to 45°C. The airflow passes through the channel above the water surface, with varying cross-sectional areas of the channel set at 0.03, 0.024, 0.018, 0.012, and 0.006 $m^2$, as illustrated in Fig. 1.

Fig. 1 indicates the section to be simulated by red arrows, highlighting where water evaporates into vapour. Other areas are not included in the simulation as they are not the primary focus of this research. This study concentrates explicitly on water evaporation.

As mentioned earlier, simulation variations are achieved by altering the cross-sectional area of the channel without a Vortex Generator

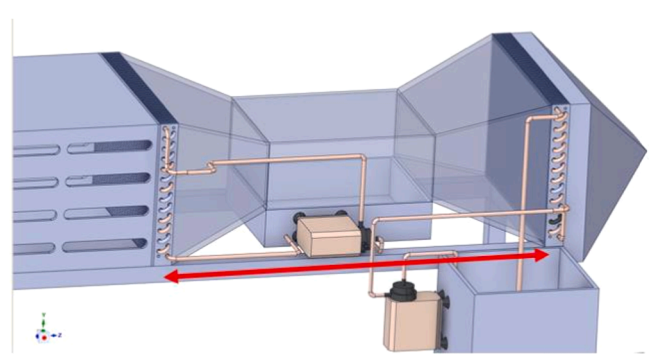


**Fig. 1.** Simulation model.

(NVG) and with a Vortex Generator (VG), as shown in Fig. 2.

The vortex generator used in this study is a V-shaped design, as it effectively directs airflow and generates efficient vortices without excessive flow resistance [20]. The choice of parameters is based on prior experimental and numerical studies. A height-to-channel height ratio of 0.47 was selected as it provides a balance between vortex strength and flow obstruction, ensuring enhanced mixing without inducing excessive drag [21], as pressure drop can be reduced by up to 43.9 % when the height ratio is less than 50 % [22]. The longitudinal pitch ratio of 0.18 was chosen because it maximizes vortex interaction, promoting turbulence intensity while preventing premature vortex dissipation [23]. The 30° angle of attack was selected as it has been shown to yield the best compromise between vortex strength, flow attachment, and overall thermal-hydraulic performance [24]. These design choices were validated through previous research and optimized for effective heat transfer and flow control.

The simulation model in this research simplifies the interface between air and water without fully capturing complex interfacial phenomena such as surface tension, evaporation-driven heat transfer at the molecular scale, and air-water interaction dynamics. Surface tension is excluded as its effect on large-scale evaporation is negligible, and grid independence testing shows that increasing the mesh from 160,000 to 900,000 elements improves evaporation by only 6.25 %, making its modelling inefficient. Similarly, evaporation-driven convective flows are omitted since the system is dominated by forced convection from AC condenser airflow, with a reduction in channel cross-sectional area increasing evaporation rates due to turbulence rather than natural convection. Humidity diffusion is also neglected as vapour transport is primarily driven by advection, with experiments showing that vortex generators enhance evaporation rates by 57 %, proving that turbulence has a greater impact than molecular diffusion. Despite its limitations, the model effectively demonstrates the impact of vortex generators on evaporation rates, aligning well with experimental data. These simplifications maintain computational efficiency, physical validity, and experimental consistency while accurately capturing the dominant evaporation mechanisms.

The modelling of the interaction between air and water during the evaporation process utilises a fluid domain, where warm air from the condenser flows over the water surface, influencing the evaporation rate, as illustrated in Fig. 3.

Fig. 3 illustrates the fluid domain (flow area) simulated in the CFD process. The analysed fluid domain is situated between the input (AC condenser) and the output, featuring two types of fluids: the air domain and the water domain. The initial water volume is 0.01 $m^3$ .

In solving the fluid flow equations using CFD simulations, the fluid domain is divided into small elements (grid), referred to as mesh, as shown in Fig. 4.

Fig. 4 above illustrates the mesh utilised in the CFD simulation. The chosen element type is hexahedral, known for its structured grid that

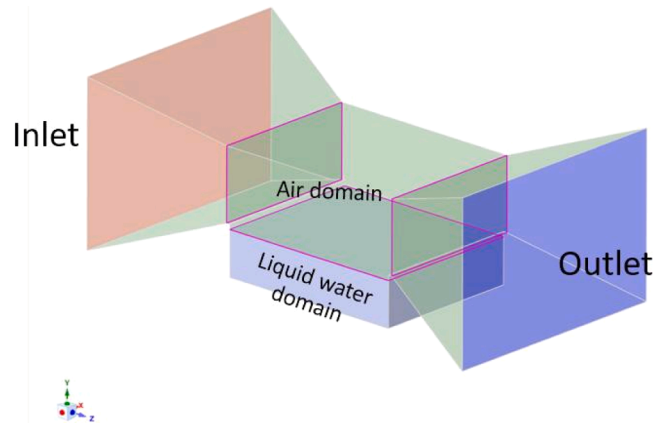



**Fig. 3.** Simulation domain.

enhances numerical stability and accuracy. This study considers the skewness and orthogonal quality values sufficient because they meet and exceed the standard thresholds used in CFD simulations. A skewness value below 0.25 is typically deemed acceptable, and an orthogonal quality value above 0.7 is considered good. The values of 0.08 and 0.98 ensure minimal numerical errors and optimal flow simulation, aligning with best practices in CFD modelling. A grid independence test was performed to ensure the reliability of the simulation results. This test determines whether the results are consistent across different mesh densities, confirming that the chosen mesh configuration does not significantly influence the findings.

Table 1 presents the outcomes of this grid independence test. A relative difference in results below 10 % establishes the validity of the simulation model used in this study. The 10 % threshold is commonly adopted in CFD studies as it represents a balance between computational cost and result accuracy, ensuring convergence of the numerical solution while maintaining efficiency [25]. This suggests that the numerical solution has achieved convergence. According to commonly applied CFD methodologies, a relative difference of less than 10 % is an acceptable criterion for grid independence [26]. Additionally, the residual analysis shows that the residual values consistently decrease and remain within an acceptable convergence threshold of $10^{-4}$ [27]. This ensures that the solution remains stable and is not significantly affected by further mesh refinement.

The selection of 600k mesh elements was based on the percentage difference analysis, which remained below 10 %, as well as the Richardson extrapolation method [28]. This technique is used to estimate numerical errors and ensure that further mesh refinement provides only marginal accuracy improvements compared to the significantly increased computational cost [29]. This methodology aligns with best practices in CFD grid validation, where excessive mesh refinement does

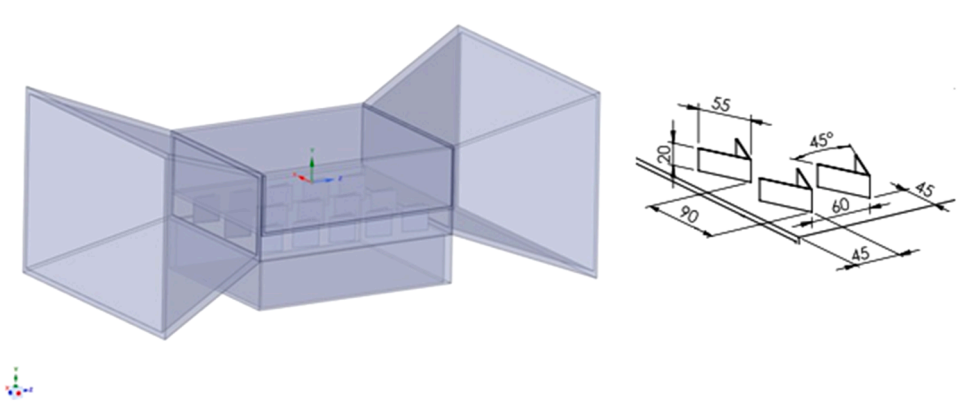



**Fig. 2.** Simulation variable.

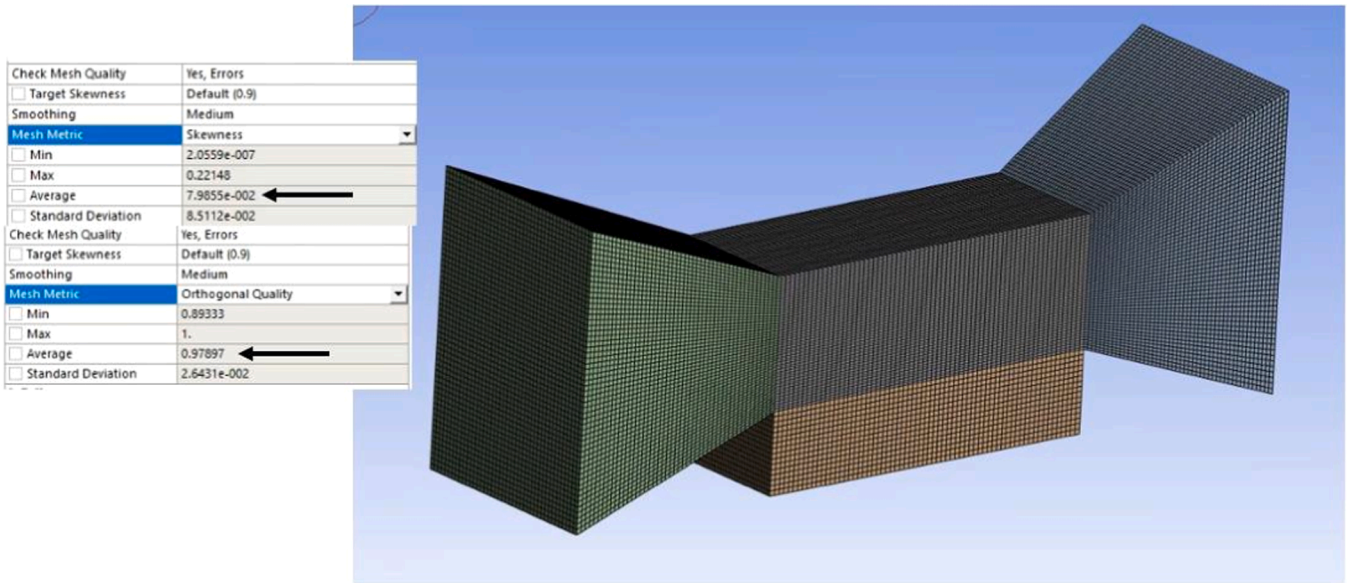



**Fig. 4.** Simulation mesh.

**Table 1**
Grid independency test.

| No | Mesh | Evaporation rate (kg/s.m$^3$) | %Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 160k | 1.12 | - |
| 2 | 250k | 1.73 | 54.46 |
| 3 | 400k | 2.27 | 31.21 |
| 4 | 600k | 2.56 | 12.78 |
| 5 | 900k | 2.72 | 6.25 |

not substantially improve results but significantly increases computational load [30]. Therefore, the selection of 600k mesh elements is considered optimal, achieving a balance between computational efficiency and simulation accuracy. The generated mesh primarily consists of hexahedrons, offering high resolution and computational efficiency, as shown in Fig. 5. For detailed regions, polyhedral meshes are utilized due to their superior capability to conform to objects with high curvature.

The verification of CFD results can be conducted using data from experimental research or previous studies [31] to ensure that the CFD model accurately represents physical phenomena. In this study, the simulation results were verified using evaporation data obtained from experiments without a vortex generator, using an experimental rig shown in Fig. 6 and an experimental scheme in Fig. 7.

As shown in Fig. 7, feed water is pumped into the processed water tank using Pump 1 until it reaches capacity. If the tank reaches full capacity, excess water flows back to the feed tank through the return line.

**Fig. 6.** Experimental rig.

When the water level decreases, the pump automatically refills the tank. Water from the processed water tank is then circulated using Pump 2 to the heat exchanger, where it is heated by the waste heat from the outdoor air conditioner (AC). The heated water returns to the processed

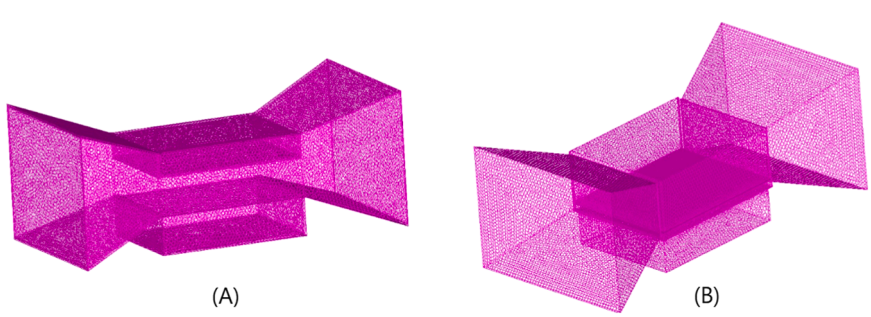



**Fig. 5.** Simulation mesh without VG (A) and using VG (B).

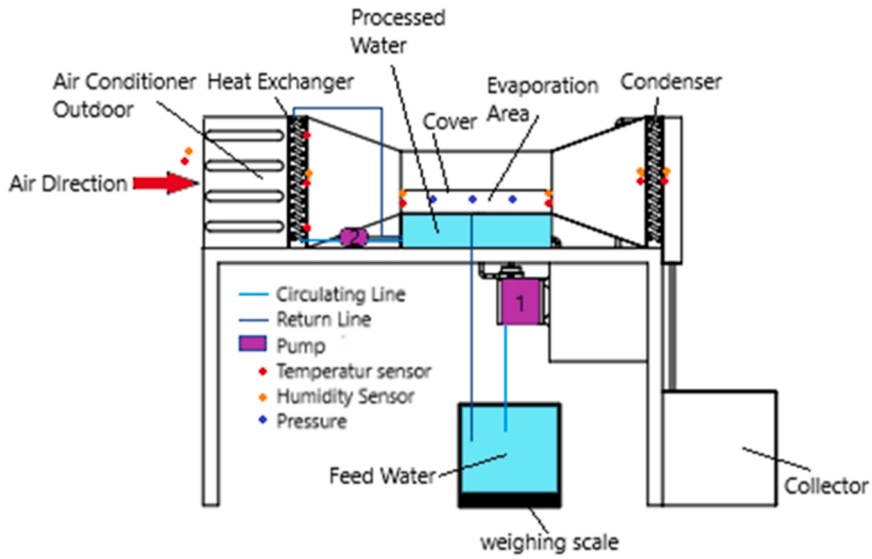



**Fig. 7.** Experimental scheme.

tank, ensuring continuous thermal energy transfer. In addition to heating the water, the airflow from the outdoor AC is directed through the evaporation area to accelerate the evaporation process. The processed water undergoes phase change into vapour and moves along the airflow direction. The air, now carrying water vapour, is directed into the condenser, where the temperature is maintained at approximately 20°C. The condensed water is subsequently collected in a storage tank. The cover in the evaporation area is adjustable, allowing its height to be set between 2 cm and 14 cm above the water surface, which provides flexibility in optimizing the evaporation process. Multiple sensors are deployed to monitor system performance. Temperature is measured at various points, including the outlet of the outdoor AC, the inlet and outlet of the evaporation area, the inlet and outlet of the condenser, and the ambient environment, using PT100 sensors (-50°C to 110°C, ± 0.1°C accuracy). Humidity levels are recorded at corresponding points using a digital hygrometer (10 %–99 % range, 1 % resolution, ± 1 % accuracy). A weighing scale with a capacity of 20 kg (0–20 kg range, 0.5 g resolution) is used to measure the weight of water in the feed tank. The measurement begins once the processed water tank is fully filled. The reduction in water weight is used to quantify the evaporation occurring in the evaporation area. Air velocity is monitored using an anemometer GM-816 (0–30 m/s range, 0.1 m/s resolution). Additionally, the pressure in the evaporation area is measured using a Pressure Meter PCE-PDA 1 L to ensure optimal operating conditions.

## 3. Results

The simulation results presented in this article focus on the airflow velocity as influenced by the reduction in cross-sectional area and the corresponding evaporation rates. This analysis encompasses scenarios both without vortex generators (NVG) and with vortex generators (VG).

The investigation highlights how variations in the channel's cross-sectional area impact the airflow's velocity. As the area decreases, the airflow velocity tends to increase due to fluid dynamics principles, particularly the continuity equation, which states that the mass flow rate must remain constant from one flow cross-section to another.

The comparative results between the two configurations—one using vortex generators and the other without—will provide insights into the effectiveness of vortex generators in enhancing the evaporation process. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of optimising desalination techniques, particularly for applications in coastal areas where water scarcity is a critical issue. By demonstrating the impact of airflow velocity on evaporation rates, the findings will highlight the importance of flow dynamics in improving desalination efficiency.

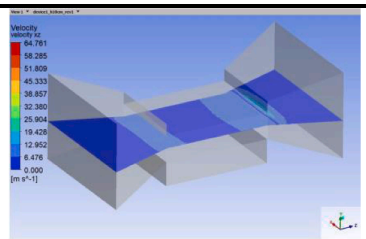
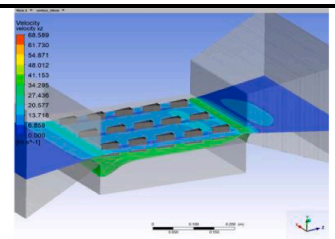
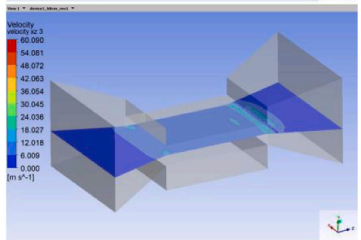
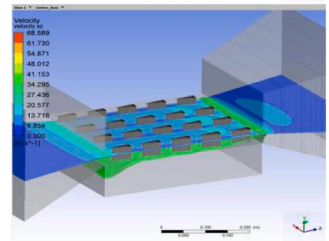
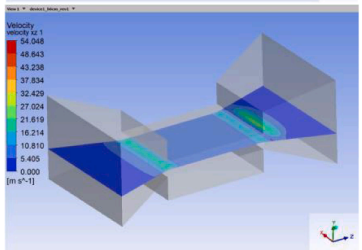
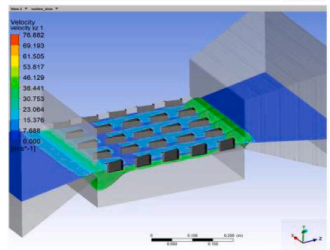
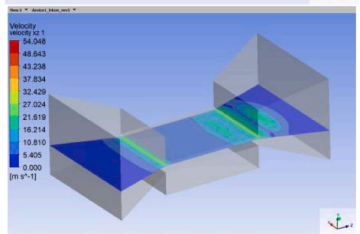
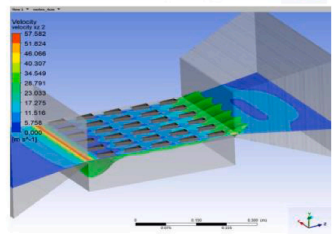
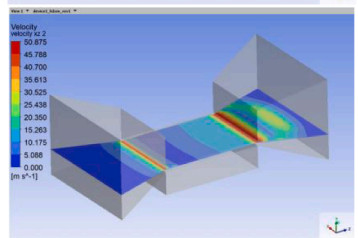
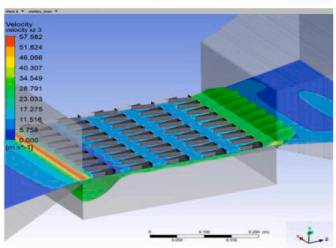
The increase in airflow velocity caused by the vortex generator, as shown in Table 2, is closely related to the evaporation process. Table 2 illustrates that airflow velocity increases as the cross-sectional area of the channel decreases. When vortex generators are applied to the channel, the airflow velocity increases significantly compared to the channel without vortex generators (NVG). This occurs because vortex generators create longitudinal vortices that disturb the boundary layer, reduce thickness, and enhance fluid mixing. As a result, higher airflow velocity leads to more efficient removal of water vapour from the surface, accelerating the evaporation process. Additionally, the increased airflow velocity, as reflected in the data from Table 2, also accelerates the transfer of thermal energy from the water surface to the surrounding air.

With better flow distribution and higher turbulence, the heat absorbed from the water surface can be transferred more efficiently to the air, ultimately speeding up evaporation. Longitudinal vortices can significantly improve flow distribution and momentum transfer in small channels, enhancing evaporation efficiency by optimising pressure distribution within the microchannel [32]. Moreover, these findings align with other research, showing that decreasing the cross-sectional area of the channel improves flow distribution and momentum transfer in microchannel systems, further enhancing evaporation efficiency [33]. Thus, the implementation of vortex generators not only optimises thermal and fluid performance in systems such as heat exchangers and cooling mechanisms and enhances evaporation rates, as demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3 compares the evaporation rates for the NVG and VG configurations. Channels equipped with vortex generators show significantly higher evaporation rates. The average increase in the evaporation rate, approximately 57 %, is due to enhanced fluid mixing and continuous disruption of the thermal boundary layer, which improves heat transfer efficiency.

There are two key implications of this increase in evaporation rate. First, improved mass transfer facilitates the removal of saturated air near the water surface, allowing for higher evaporation efficiency. Second, disrupting the stagnant air layer near the liquid surface ensures a continuous supply of dry air, creating a higher concentration gradient for evaporation. These findings emphasise the importance of vortex generators in applications such as desalination, where optimising evaporation efficiency is crucial. Micro-vortices can accelerate evaporation by increasing turbulence and reducing boundary layer thickness [34]. The higher evaporation rates observed in vortex-induced systems

**Table 2**
Velocity contour.

| cross-sectional area | NVG | VG |
|---|---|---|
| 0.03 m$^2$ |  |  |
| 0.024 m$^2$ |  |  |
| 0.018 m$^2$ |  |  |
| 0.012 m$^2$ |  |  |
| 0.006 m$^2$ |  |  |

are closely related to the reduction of the thermal boundary layer thickness, which speeds up the transport of water molecules from the liquid surface to the airflow [35].

This enhanced airflow leads to a more efficient evaporation process, as the constant replacement of saturated air with drier air increases the evaporation rate. The findings presented in Table 3 highlight the positive impact of vortex generators on evaporation efficiency, making them a valuable component in systems designed for desalination or other thermal applications. Additionally, the increased evaporation rates observed in the presence of vortex generators contribute to the effectiveness of water desalination techniques and offer potential improvements in various industrial processes where evaporation is a key mechanism.

To validate the CFD results, the evaporation rate obtained from the simulation was compared with experimental data. This comparison is presented in Table 4, which displays the deviation between CFD results and experimental data.

This comparison shows that the maximum deviation between the CFD results and the experiment is 6.99 %, which is still within the acceptable error range for CFD studies, typically 5–10 % [35]. These findings confirm that the numerical model used is capable of reliably representing the physical phenomena, thereby increasing confidence in the simulation results [36],[37].

Furthermore, the evaporation results from the simulation were verified against the experimental evaporation data, as presented in Fig. 8.

Fig. 8 shows that the evaporation rates from the simulation closely match the experimental results, forming an almost linear relationship with a coefficient of determination ($R^2$) of 0.9804. This indicates that the simulation results align well with the experimental data [38], with a

**Table 3**
Evaporation rate.

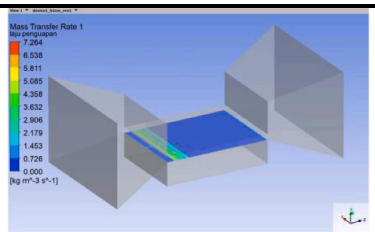
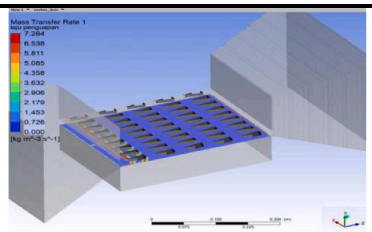
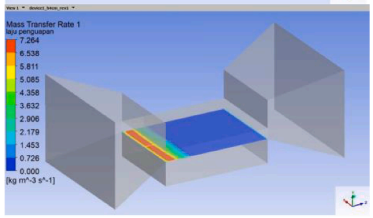
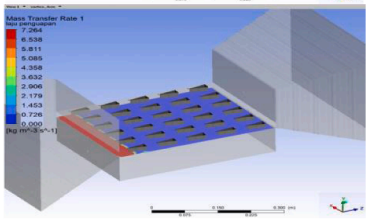
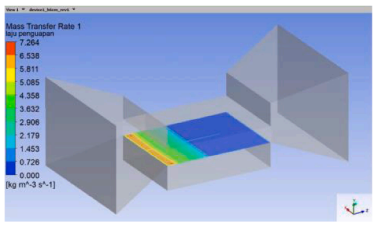
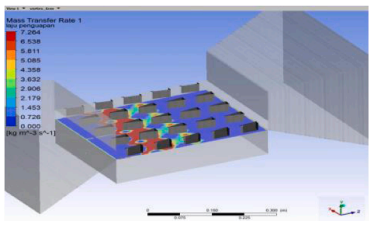
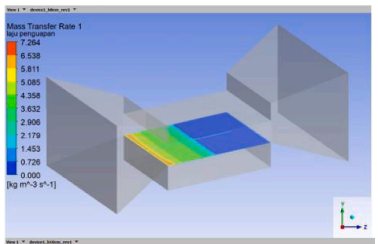
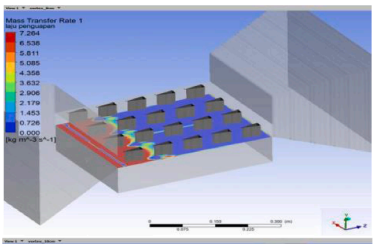
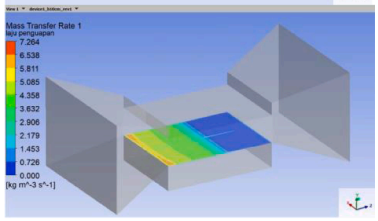
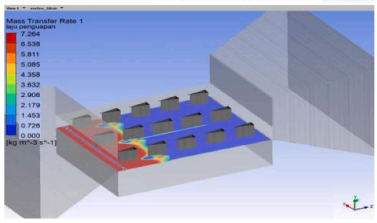
| cross-sectional area | NVG | VG |
|---|---|---|
| 0.03 m$^2$ |  |  |
| 0.024 m$^2$ |  |  |
| 0.018 m$^2$ |  |  |
| 0.012 m$^2$ |  |  |
| 0.006 m$^2$ |  |  |

**Table 4**
Result deviation.

| Configuration | Evaporation Rate (CFD) (kg/s·m$^3$) | Evaporation Rate (Experiment) (kg/s·m$^3$) | Deviation (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| NVG | 2.56 | 2.42 | 5.79 |
| VG | 3.98 | 3.72 | 6.99 |

deviation of only 7.1 %. The high agreement between the simulation and experimental data demonstrates that the CFD simulation approach is reliable for predicting VG's mass transfer enhancement effects. Low deviation in CFD simulations when modelling the effects of vortices on mass and heat transfer [39]. Subsequently, the simulation results for evaporation without a Vortex Generator (NVG) are compared to those with a Vortex Generator (VG), as shown in Fig. 9.

The findings presented in Fig. 9 further validate the analysis, demonstrating the impact of vortex generators on evaporation rates. The

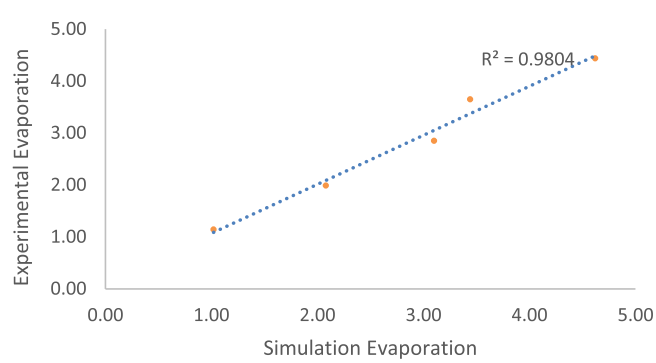



**Fig. 8.** Simulation-based model verification against experimental data.

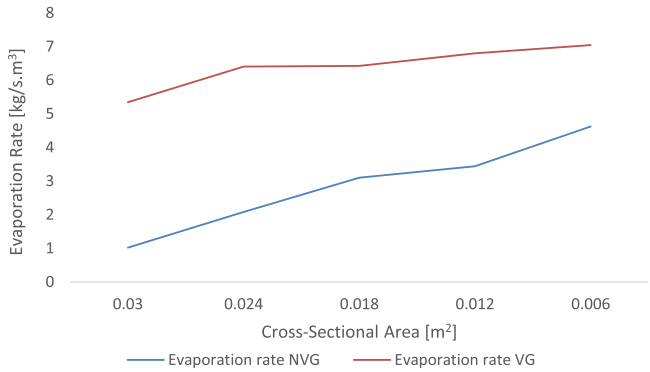



**Fig. 9.** Evaporation rate NVG and VG.

simulation results depicted in Fig. 9 reveal that using vortex generators increases the evaporation rate by an average of 57 % compared to systems without vortex generators. This enhancement is primarily due to the effect of vortex generators in increasing the flow velocity along the surface, which causes flow instability (turbulence) and the development of boundary layers and vortices [40]. These effects, in turn, amplify the temperature gradient between the surface and the surrounding air [41].

The research findings indicate that applying vortex generators (VG) in evaporation systems, such as those used in desalination or industrial drying processes, provides significant advantages in terms of thermal efficiency. VG increases the evaporation rate, reducing operational time and energy consumption. The optimisation of VG design holds great potential for further improving thermal efficiency. The optimal VG geometry can maximise evaporation rates and heat transfer under various environmental conditions [42]. VG significantly enhances evaporation efficiency in desalination processes [43], thereby lowering operational costs.

Evaporation occurring within the channel can be described by the equation $J=K_m (Ps-Pa)$, where J represents the mass transfer rate due to evaporation and $k_m$ is the mass transfer coefficient. Ps and Pa are saturation vapour pressure at the surface and partial vapour pressure of the surrounding air, respectively. The vortex generators enhance the mass transfer rate by promoting turbulence and improving the mixing of the fluid, which in turn increases the effective mass transfer coefficient $k_m$. This leads to a more efficient transfer of vapour from the surface to the surrounding air, driven by the vapour pressure difference. The influence of the vortex generators results in higher evaporation rates compared to a system without such enhancements.

Implementing VG in evaporation-dependent systems, such as evaporative cooling or industrial drying, provides substantial benefits. VG accelerates the evaporation process and reduces the additional energy required to maintain the temperature gradient, thus improving operational efficiency. This increase in evaporation rates also enables the design of surfaces involved in heat and mass transfer to become more compact without compromising performance. As a result, material costs can be reduced, and overall system performance can be enhanced. Therefore, the impact of vortex generators on flow and evaporation offers an efficient and innovative approach to improving the performance of thermal and fluid systems.

## 4. Conclusions

This study confirms that vortex generators significantly improve evaporation rates in desalination systems by harnessing waste heat from air conditioners. The results indicate an average increase of 57 % in evaporation rates when vortex generators are employed, attributed to the induced turbulence that improves fluid mixing and thermal energy transfer. This research highlights the effectiveness of vortex generators in optimising airflow dynamics, leading to more efficient heat transfer and evaporation processes.

From a scientific perspective, this work contributes to understanding fluid dynamics and heat transfer mechanisms in evaporative systems. It provides a novel approach for utilising existing household technologies, such as air conditioning units, to address pressing issues related to freshwater scarcity, particularly in coastal regions. Additionally, the findings pave the way for further exploration of innovative solutions in thermal management, potentially influencing the design and efficiency of future systems in domestic and industrial applications. The study encourages the adoption of vortex generators as a feasible method for improving thermal efficiency, thereby promoting sustainable practices in water desalination and environmental management.

## CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Oktarina Heriyani:** Writing – original draft. **Dan Mugisidi:** Supervision, Methodology, Conceptualization. **Rifky:** Writing – review & editing.

## Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

## Acknowledgement

This research was funded by a grant from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia, under the following assignment number: 105/E5/PG.02.00.PL/2024, 812/LL3/AL.04/2024, 104/F.03.07/2024.

## Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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## CFD simulation for optimizing the evaporation process in seawater desalination using exhaust heat from AC and vortex ...

LK BU OKTA
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# CFD simulation for optimizing the evaporation process in seawater desalination using exhaust heat from AC and vortex generators

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Rapid global population growth significantly increases the demand for clean water.
- This study introduces a method to repurpose waste heat from air conditioners for seawater desalination.
- Vortex generators improve evaporation rates by increasing airflow velocity and turbulence.
- CFD simulations confirm the effectiveness of this approach for household-scale desalination systems.

## ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:*
CFD simulation
Evaporation process
Seawater desalination
Vortex generators
Waste heat utilisation

## ABSTRACT

Water is essential for human survival, yet freshwater resources are scarce and limited. In Indonesia's coastal regions, only 66.54 % of the population has access to clean water, highlighting a significant challenge. This issue is further intensified by global warming, which has increased dependence on air conditioners, resulting in substantial waste heat emissions. While often overlooked, this waste heat contributes to local warming and presents an untapped energy resource. Repurposing this energy for innovative applications, such as seawater desalination, offers a promising solution to mitigate clean water shortages. This study proposes using waste heat from household ACs for seawater desalination through evaporation, enhanced by vortex generators. The research examines variations with and without vortex generators across different cross-sectional areas, affecting airflow velocity. Results indicate that using vortex generators significantly increases evaporation rates at all wind speeds. These devices enhance airflow velocity and turbulence, boosting heat transfer and accelerating evaporation. Through Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) simulations, the research aims to demonstrate how vortex generators can improve evaporation, offering a practical solution for cooling and desalination at a household scale. This novel approach could significantly benefit water-scarce regions, providing an efficient, cost-effective solution utilising existing household technology.

## 1. Introduction

Water is a vital substance needed by humans and other living organisms. With the growth of the global population, the water demand has increased rapidly. Estimates show that a 15 % increase in the world population will reduce the availability of clean water by 40 % [1], while the amount of freshwater constitutes only 2.8 % [2] of the total water on the Earth's surface. Because water is so essential, water scarcity can trigger humanitarian, political, and even racial issues [3]. Water scarcity poses a significant global threat and increasingly impacts regions in Indonesia.

As an archipelagic country with the longest coastline in the world, Indonesia is home to many communities residing in coastal areas. However, they face serious problems related to water scarcity. Only about 66.54 % of them have access to clean water, forcing the majority of coastal residents to use murky and saline water for daily needs such as washing and bathing, while for drinking water, they have to purchase it [4]. Water scarcity is just one of the various problems faced by coastal populations in Indonesia. Global warming is another current issue.

Global warming has transitioned from a potential threat to an urgent global crisis. The Earth's temperature has increased significantly in the past three decades [5]. This temperature rise has caused climate change and is linked to the increasing incidence of severe weather events [6]. In addition, the higher temperatures increase the demand for air

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dwt.2025.101145
Received 27 September 2024; Received in revised form 17 March 2025; Accepted 25 March 2025
Available online 25 March 2025
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conditioning (AC), especially in tropical regions like Indonesia. However, it should be noted that the AC units currently used in households and industries also emit hot air. This is due to the working principle of AC or heat pumps that take hot air from inside the room and expel it outside [7]. Therefore, this research will use heat pumps' waste hot air to evaporate seawater. The resulting vapour will then be condensed to produce clean water. Previous studies have shown that airflow is very adequate in the evaporation process [8]. The problem to be investigated is how to use the waste hot air from ACS to produce clean water through the desalination process, particularly for coastal communities in Indonesia.

Several studies have been conducted using heat pumps for desalination and cooling rooms. Heat pumps have been combined with multi-stage flash (MSF) and membrane distillation (MD) [9] for cooling and desalination processes. Srinivas used a staged system for desalination and cooling [10]. Junling combined heat pumps with vacuum to process wastewater [11], while several researchers only used heat pumps as desalination units [12,13,14]. However, heat pumps are used only at a large scale for air cooling and desalination. In contrast, Indonesia and many other places use heat pumps or ACs more commonly used for residential purposes.

Therefore, this research proposes a problem-solving approach to using household-scale AC units as air conditioners and desalination units by utilising the hot air released by the AC. The evaporation process will be integrated with a vortex generator to accelerate it. Thus, the second problem to be investigated in this research is integrating vortex generator technology to enhance the evaporation process in desalination units so that clean water can be produced efficiently without compromising AC performance.

The vortex generator is a component that disrupts the flow and increases flow velocity [15], leading to vorticity [16] that reduces flow pressure [17]. Vortex generators have been shown to enhance heat transfer, such as in cooling tower ducts and air channels [18]. Furthermore, since the evaporation pressure at the water surface is greater than the pressure in its surroundings [19] the reduction in flow pressure with the presence of a vortex generator will accelerate the evaporation process.

Based on the literature review, no household-scale desalination unit has used evaporation solely through flow integrated with a vortex generator, whether using a heat pump or not. This represents a novelty in developing more efficient and affordable desalination technology in this research. Additionally, computational fluid dynamics (CFD) simulations will be employed to obtain research results, allowing for a detailed analysis of the airflow dynamics and the impact of the vortex generator on the evaporation rate.

## 2. Methodology

This study utilises Ansys CFD software to conduct simulations. The basic governing equations of flow through the channel are summarised in terms of continuity, momentum and energy balance equation as follows:

The continuity equation,

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t}\iiint_V \rho dV + \iint_A \rho \vec{V} \bullet d\vec{A} = 0 \tag{1}$$

$$\frac{\partial \rho}{\partial t} + \rho \vec{\nabla} \bullet \vec{V} = 0 \tag{2}$$

The momentum equation in the x-axis direction

$$\frac{\partial(\rho u)}{\partial t} + \vec{\nabla} \bullet \left(\rho u \vec{V}\right) = -\frac{\partial p}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{xx}}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{yx}}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{zx}}{\partial z} + \rho f_x \tag{3}$$

The momentum equation in the y-axis direction

$$\frac{\partial(\rho v)}{\partial t} + \vec{\nabla} \bullet \left(\rho v \vec{V}\right) = -\frac{\partial p}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{xy}}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{yy}}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{zy}}{\partial z} + \rho f_y \tag{4}$$

The momentum equation in the z-axis direction

$$\frac{\partial(\rho w)}{\partial t} + \vec{\nabla} \bullet \left(\rho w \vec{V}\right) = -\frac{\partial p}{\partial z} + \frac{\partial \tau_{xz}}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \tau_{yz}}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial \tau_{zz}}{\partial z} + \rho f_z \tag{5}$$

The energy equation written in terms of internal energy.

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t}\left[\rho\left(e + \frac{V^2}{2}\right)\right] + \vec{\nabla} \bullet \left[\rho\left(e + \frac{V^2}{2}\right)\vec{V}\right] = \rho \dot{q} - \frac{\partial(\rho p)}{\partial x} - \frac{\partial(vp)}{\partial y} - \frac{\partial(wp)}{\partial z} + \rho \vec{f} \bullet \vec{V} \tag{6}$$

The simulation was conducted using Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) software with the following configurations:

The turbulence model employed was the k-omega SST model. This model was chosen because the SST formulation effectively captures long, straight fluid flows, such as those found in flat regions, while the k-omega formulation enhances accuracy in regions with detailed flow structures and around suction areas. This selection ensures a balance between computational efficiency and predictive accuracy, particularly in capturing the complex interactions within the flow domain.

For the wall boundary condition, a no-slip condition was applied to model the reduction in fluid velocity near solid surfaces, generating a boundary layer effect. This condition was specifically assigned to the wall glass within the geometry to accurately represent the interaction between the fluid and solid surfaces.

At the inlet, a normal velocity condition was applied, where both velocity magnitude and liquid volume fraction (gas phase) were defined. To replicate realistic operating conditions, the inlet velocity was set to 1.8 m/s with an inlet temperature of 51°C.

For the outlet, a static pressure (outflow) condition was imposed at the outlet region to simulate the expected flow behaviour, ensuring numerical stability and consistency with experimental conditions.

Humidity modelling was activated to account for phase change effects, particularly the evaporation process, which is influenced by thermal conditions. The ambient temperature was set to 33°C to simulate the heat-induced vapour generation and assess the impact of humidity variations on evaporation rates.

Simulations focus on evaporation within a channel downstream of the air conditioner (AC) condenser, where airflow reaches temperatures up to 45°C. The airflow passes through the channel above the water surface, with varying cross-sectional areas of the channel set at 0.03, 0.024, 0.018, 0.012, and 0.006 m$^2$, as illustrated in Fig. 1.

Fig. 1 indicates the section to be simulated by red arrows, highlighting where water evaporates into vapour. Other areas are not included in the simulation as they are not the primary focus of this research. This study concentrates explicitly on water evaporation.

As mentioned earlier, simulation variations are achieved by altering the cross-sectional area of the channel without a Vortex Generator

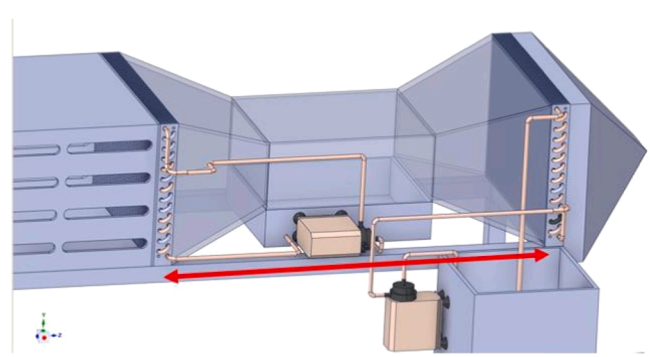


**Fig. 1.** Simulation model.

(NVG) and with a Vortex Generator (VG), as shown in Fig. 2.

The vortex generator used in this study is a V-shaped design, as it effectively directs airflow and generates efficient vortices without excessive flow resistance [20]. The choice of parameters is based on prior experimental and numerical studies. A height-to-channel height ratio of 0.47 was selected as it provides a balance between vortex strength and flow obstruction, ensuring enhanced mixing without inducing excessive drag [21], as pressure drop can be reduced by up to 43.9 % when the height ratio is less than 50 % [22]. The longitudinal pitch ratio of 0.18 was chosen because it maximizes vortex interaction, promoting turbulence intensity while preventing premature vortex dissipation [23]. The 30° angle of attack was selected as it has been shown to yield the best compromise between vortex strength, flow attachment, and overall thermal-hydraulic performance [24]. These design choices were validated through previous research and optimized for effective heat transfer and flow control.

The simulation model in this research simplifies the interface between air and water without fully capturing complex interfacial phenomena such as surface tension, evaporation-driven heat transfer at the molecular scale, and air-water interaction dynamics. Surface tension is excluded as its effect on large-scale evaporation is negligible, and grid independence testing shows that increasing the mesh from 160,000 to 900,000 elements improves evaporation by only 6.25 %, making its modelling inefficient. Similarly, evaporation-driven convective flows are omitted since the system is dominated by forced convection from AC condenser airflow, with a reduction in channel cross-sectional area increasing evaporation rates due to turbulence rather than natural convection. Humidity diffusion is also neglected as vapour transport is primarily driven by advection, with experiments showing that vortex generators enhance evaporation rates by 57 %, proving that turbulence has a greater impact than molecular diffusion. Despite its limitations, the model effectively demonstrates the impact of vortex generators on evaporation rates, aligning well with experimental data. These simplifications maintain computational efficiency, physical validity, and experimental consistency while accurately capturing the dominant evaporation mechanisms.

The modelling of the interaction between air and water during the evaporation process utilises a fluid domain, where warm air from the condenser flows over the water surface, influencing the evaporation rate, as illustrated in Fig. 3.

Fig. 3 illustrates the fluid domain (flow area) simulated in the CFD process. The analysed fluid domain is situated between the input (AC condenser) and the output, featuring two types of fluids: the air domain and the water domain. The initial water volume is 0.01 $m^3$ .

In solving the fluid flow equations using CFD simulations, the fluid domain is divided into small elements (grid), referred to as mesh, as shown in Fig. 4.

Fig. 4 above illustrates the mesh utilised in the CFD simulation. The chosen element type is hexahedral, known for its structured grid that

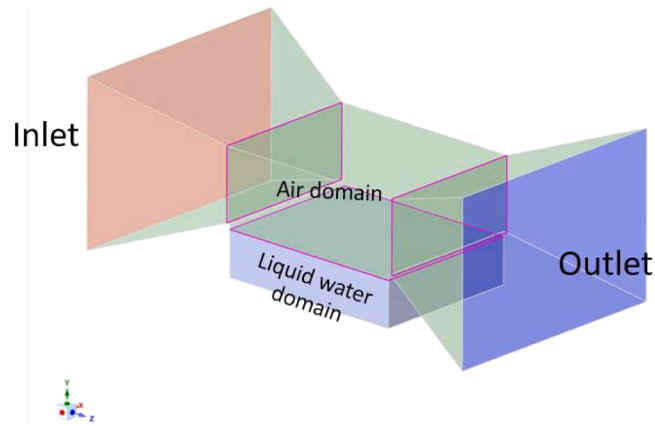



**Fig. 3.** Simulation domain.

enhances numerical stability and accuracy. This study considers the skewness and orthogonal quality values sufficient because they meet and exceed the standard thresholds used in CFD simulations. A skewness value below 0.25 is typically deemed acceptable, and an orthogonal quality value above 0.7 is considered good. The values of 0.08 and 0.98 ensure minimal numerical errors and optimal flow simulation, aligning with best practices in CFD modelling. A grid independence test was performed to ensure the reliability of the simulation results. This test determines whether the results are consistent across different mesh densities, confirming that the chosen mesh configuration does not significantly influence the findings.

Table 1 presents the outcomes of this grid independence test. A relative difference in results below 10 % establishes the validity of the simulation model used in this study. The 10 % threshold is commonly adopted in CFD studies as it represents a balance between computational cost and result accuracy, ensuring convergence of the numerical solution while maintaining efficiency [25]. This suggests that the numerical solution has achieved convergence. According to commonly applied CFD methodologies, a relative difference of less than 10 % is an acceptable criterion for grid independence [26]. Additionally, the residual analysis shows that the residual values consistently decrease and remain within an acceptable convergence threshold of $10^{-4}$ [27]. This ensures that the solution remains stable and is not significantly affected by further mesh refinement.

The selection of 600k mesh elements was based on the percentage difference analysis, which remained below 10 %, as well as the Richardson extrapolation method [28]. This technique is used to estimate numerical errors and ensure that further mesh refinement provides only marginal accuracy improvements compared to the significantly increased computational cost [29]. This methodology aligns with best practices in CFD grid validation, where excessive mesh refinement does

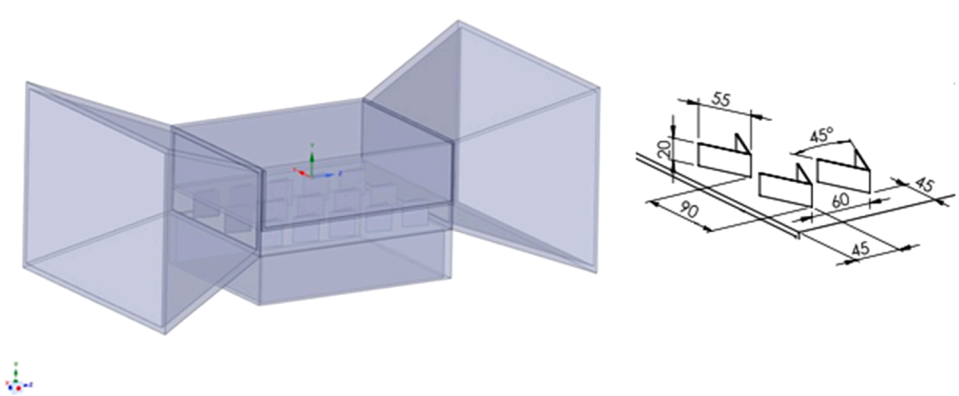



**Fig. 2.** Simulation variable.

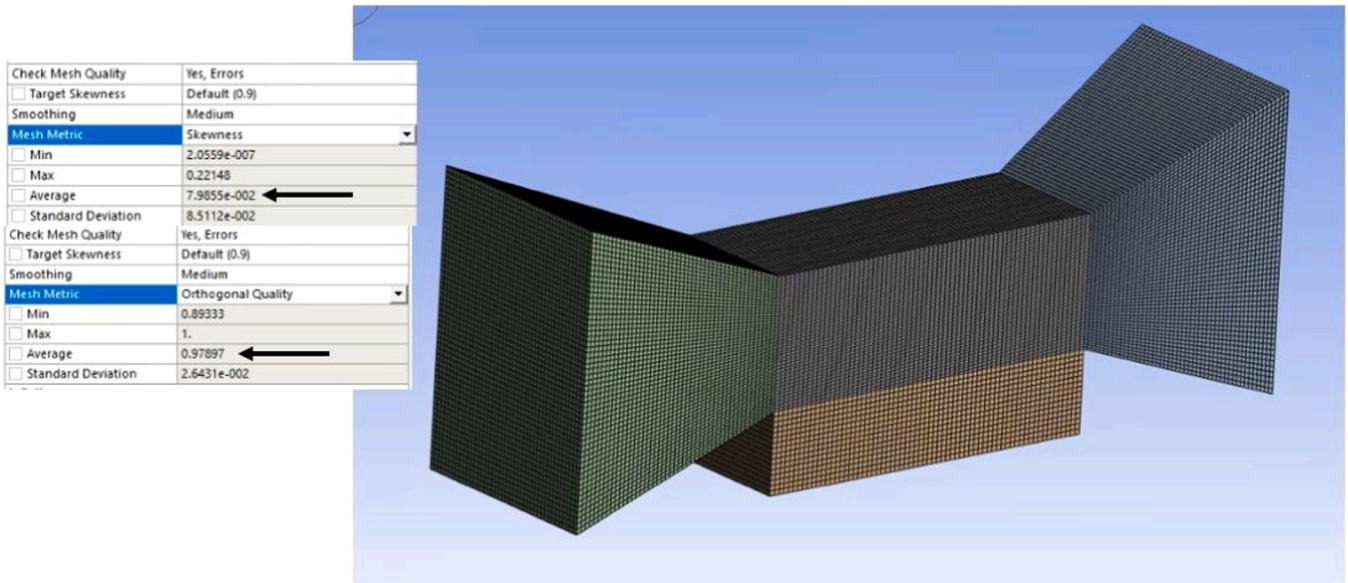



**Fig. 4.** Simulation mesh.

**Table 1**
Grid independency test.

| No | Mesh | Evaporation rate (kg/s.m$^3$) | %Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 160k | 1.12 | - |
| 2 | 250k | 1.73 | 54.46 |
| 3 | 400k | 2.27 | 31.21 |
| 4 | 600k | 2.56 | 12.78 |
| 5 | 900k | 2.72 | 6.25 |

not substantially improve results but significantly increases computational load [30]. Therefore, the selection of 600k mesh elements is considered optimal, achieving a balance between computational efficiency and simulation accuracy. The generated mesh primarily consists of hexahedrons, offering high resolution and computational efficiency, as shown in Fig. 5. For detailed regions, polyhedral meshes are utilized due to their superior capability to conform to objects with high curvature.

The verification of CFD results can be conducted using data from experimental research or previous studies [31] to ensure that the CFD model accurately represents physical phenomena. In this study, the simulation results were verified using evaporation data obtained from experiments without a vortex generator, using an experimental rig shown in Fig. 6 and an experimental scheme in Fig. 7.

As shown in Fig. 7, feed water is pumped into the processed water tank using Pump 1 until it reaches capacity. If the tank reaches full capacity, excess water flows back to the feed tank through the return line.

**Fig. 6.** Experimental rig.

When the water level decreases, the pump automatically refills the tank. Water from the processed water tank is then circulated using Pump 2 to the heat exchanger, where it is heated by the waste heat from the outdoor air conditioner (AC). The heated water returns to the processed

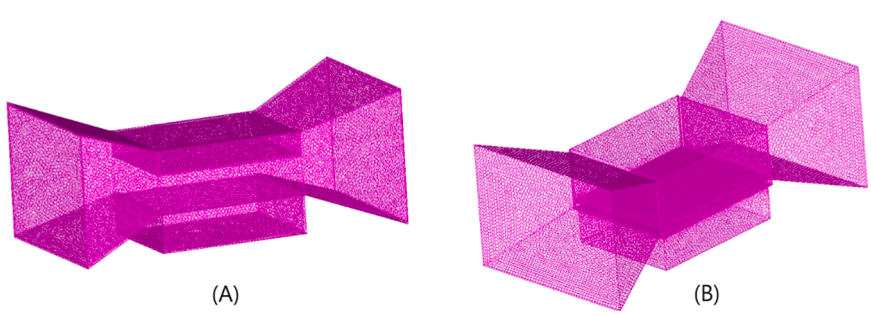



**Fig. 5.** Simulation mesh without VG (A) and using VG (B).

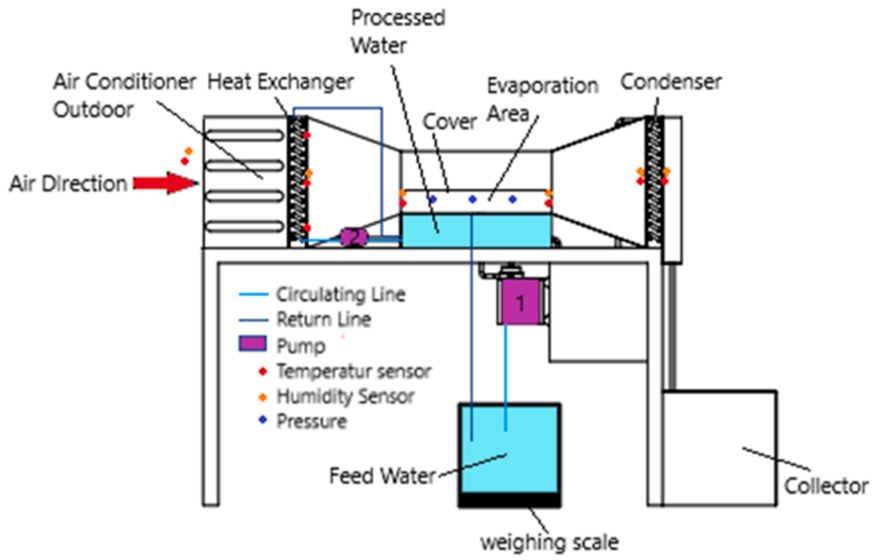



**Fig. 7.** Experimental scheme.

tank, ensuring continuous thermal energy transfer. In addition to heating the water, the airflow from the outdoor AC is directed through the evaporation area to accelerate the evaporation process. The processed water undergoes phase change into vapour and moves along the airflow direction. The air, now carrying water vapour, is directed into the condenser, where the temperature is maintained at approximately 20°C. The condensed water is subsequently collected in a storage tank. The cover in the evaporation area is adjustable, allowing its height to be set between 2 cm and 14 cm above the water surface, which provides flexibility in optimizing the evaporation process. Multiple sensors are deployed to monitor system performance. Temperature is measured at various points, including the outlet of the outdoor AC, the inlet and outlet of the evaporation area, the inlet and outlet of the condenser, and the ambient environment, using PT100 sensors (-50°C to 110°C, ± 0.1°C accuracy). Humidity levels are recorded at corresponding points using a digital hygrometer (10 %–99 % range, 1 % resolution, ± 1 % accuracy). A weighing scale with a capacity of 20 kg (0–20 kg range, 0.5 g resolution) is used to measure the weight of water in the feed tank. The measurement begins once the processed water tank is fully filled. The reduction in water weight is used to quantify the evaporation occurring in the evaporation area. Air velocity is monitored using an anemometer GM-816 (0–30 m/s range, 0.1 m/s resolution). Additionally, the pressure in the evaporation area is measured using a Pressure Meter PCE-PDA 1 L to ensure optimal operating conditions.

## 3. Results

The simulation results presented in this article focus on the airflow velocity as influenced by the reduction in cross-sectional area and the corresponding evaporation rates. This analysis encompasses scenarios both without vortex generators (NVG) and with vortex generators (VG).

The investigation highlights how variations in the channel's cross-sectional area impact the airflow's velocity. As the area decreases, the airflow velocity tends to increase due to fluid dynamics principles, particularly the continuity equation, which states that the mass flow rate must remain constant from one flow cross-section to another.

The comparative results between the two configurations—one using vortex generators and the other without—will provide insights into the effectiveness of vortex generators in enhancing the evaporation process. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of optimising desalination techniques, particularly for applications in coastal areas where water scarcity is a critical issue. By demonstrating the impact of airflow velocity on evaporation rates, the findings will highlight the importance of flow dynamics in improving desalination efficiency.

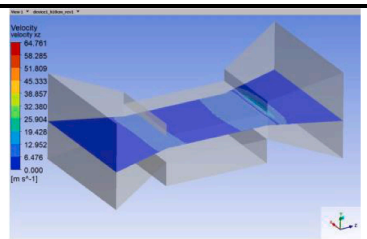
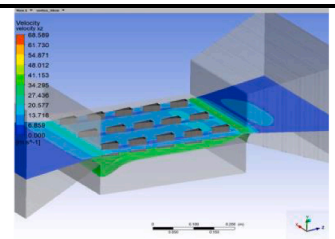
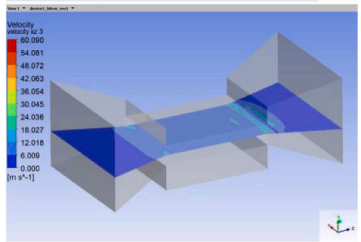
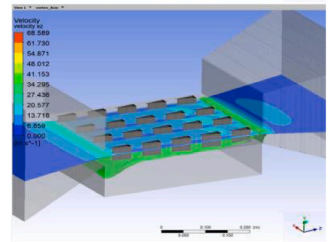
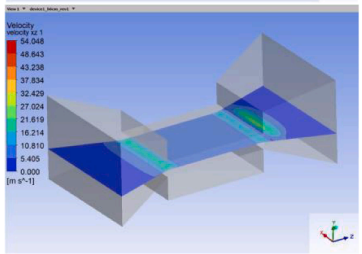
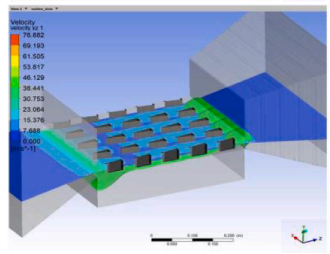
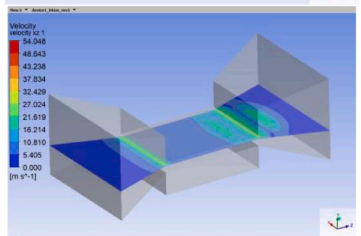
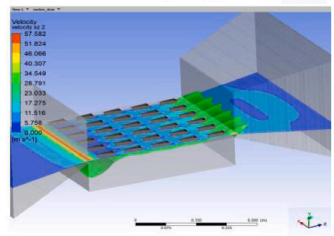
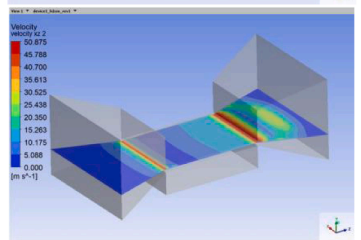
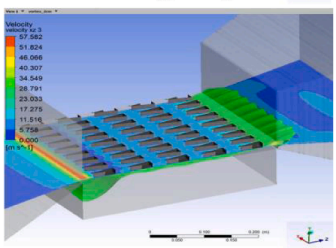
The increase in airflow velocity caused by the vortex generator, as shown in Table 2, is closely related to the evaporation process. Table 2 illustrates that airflow velocity increases as the cross-sectional area of the channel decreases. When vortex generators are applied to the channel, the airflow velocity increases significantly compared to the channel without vortex generators (NVG). This occurs because vortex generators create longitudinal vortices that disturb the boundary layer, reduce thickness, and enhance fluid mixing. As a result, higher airflow velocity leads to more efficient removal of water vapour from the surface, accelerating the evaporation process. Additionally, the increased airflow velocity, as reflected in the data from Table 2, also accelerates the transfer of thermal energy from the water surface to the surrounding air.

With better flow distribution and higher turbulence, the heat absorbed from the water surface can be transferred more efficiently to the air, ultimately speeding up evaporation. Longitudinal vortices can significantly improve flow distribution and momentum transfer in small channels, enhancing evaporation efficiency by optimising pressure distribution within the microchannel [32]. Moreover, these findings align with other research, showing that decreasing the cross-sectional area of the channel improves flow distribution and momentum transfer in microchannel systems, further enhancing evaporation efficiency [33]. Thus, the implementation of vortex generators not only optimises thermal and fluid performance in systems such as heat exchangers and cooling mechanisms and enhances evaporation rates, as demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3 compares the evaporation rates for the NVG and VG configurations. Channels equipped with vortex generators show significantly higher evaporation rates. The average increase in the evaporation rate, approximately 57 %, is due to enhanced fluid mixing and continuous disruption of the thermal boundary layer, which improves heat transfer efficiency.

There are two key implications of this increase in evaporation rate. First, improved mass transfer facilitates the removal of saturated air near the water surface, allowing for higher evaporation efficiency. Second, disrupting the stagnant air layer near the liquid surface ensures a continuous supply of dry air, creating a higher concentration gradient for evaporation. These findings emphasise the importance of vortex generators in applications such as desalination, where optimising evaporation efficiency is crucial. Micro-vortices can accelerate evaporation by increasing turbulence and reducing boundary layer thickness [34]. The higher evaporation rates observed in vortex-induced systems

**Table 2**
Velocity contour.

| cross-sectional area | NVG | VG |
|---|---|---|
| 0.03 m$^2$ |  |  |
| 0.024 m$^2$ |  |  |
| 0.018 m$^2$ |  |  |
| 0.012 m$^2$ |  |  |
| 0.006 m$^2$ |  |  |

are closely related to the reduction of the thermal boundary layer thickness, which speeds up the transport of water molecules from the liquid surface to the airflow [35].

This enhanced airflow leads to a more efficient evaporation process, as the constant replacement of saturated air with drier air increases the evaporation rate. The findings presented in Table 3 highlight the positive impact of vortex generators on evaporation efficiency, making them a valuable component in systems designed for desalination or other thermal applications. Additionally, the increased evaporation rates observed in the presence of vortex generators contribute to the effectiveness of water desalination techniques and offer potential improvements in various industrial processes where evaporation is a key mechanism.

To validate the CFD results, the evaporation rate obtained from the simulation was compared with experimental data. This comparison is presented in Table 4, which displays the deviation between CFD results and experimental data.

This comparison shows that the maximum deviation between the CFD results and the experiment is 6.99 %, which is still within the acceptable error range for CFD studies, typically 5–10 % [35]. These findings confirm that the numerical model used is capable of reliably representing the physical phenomena, thereby increasing confidence in the simulation results [36],[37].

Furthermore, the evaporation results from the simulation were verified against the experimental evaporation data, as presented in Fig. 8.

Fig. 8 shows that the evaporation rates from the simulation closely match the experimental results, forming an almost linear relationship with a coefficient of determination ($R^2$) of 0.9804. This indicates that the simulation results align well with the experimental data [38], with a

**Table 3**
Evaporation rate.

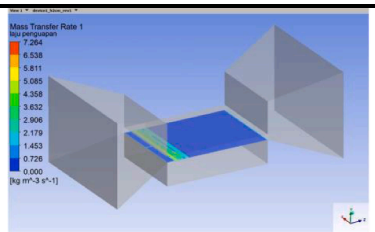
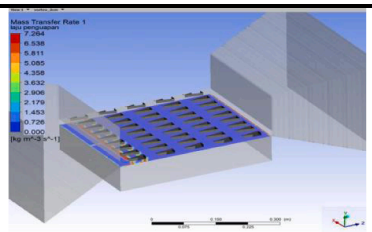
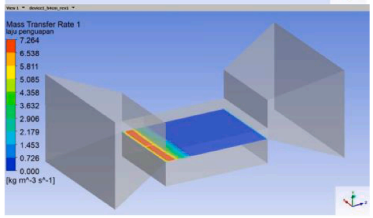
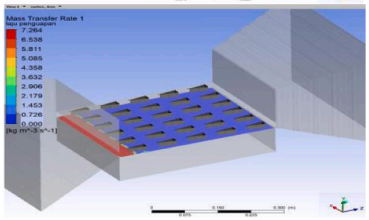
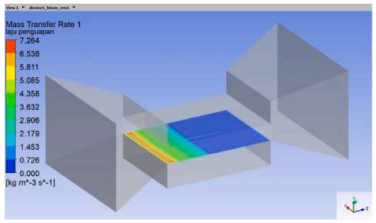
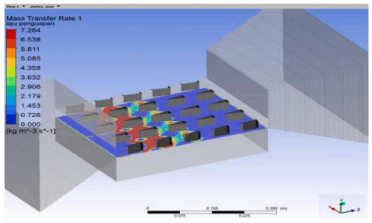
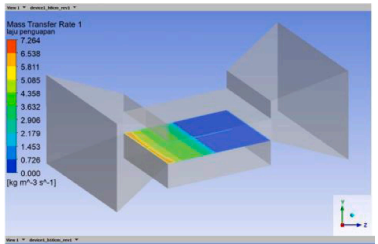
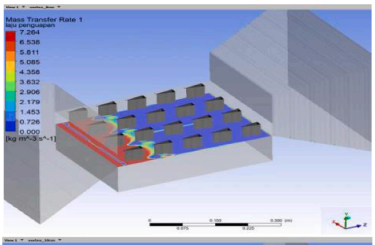
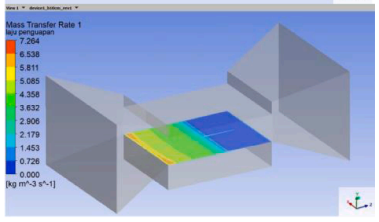
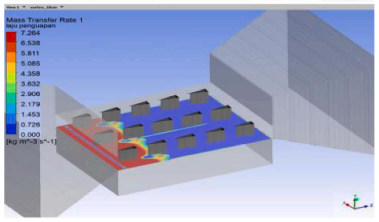
| cross-sectional area | NVG | VG |
|---|---|---|
| 0.03 m$^2$ |  |  |
| 0.024 m$^2$ |  |  |
| 0.018 m$^2$ |  |  |
| 0.012 m$^2$ |  |  |
| 0.006 m$^2$ |  |  |

**Table 4**
Result deviation.

| Configuration | Evaporation Rate (CFD) (kg/s·m$^3$) | Evaporation Rate (Experiment) (kg/s·m$^3$) | Deviation (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| NVG | 2.56 | 2.42 | 5.79 |
| VG | 3.98 | 3.72 | 6.99 |

deviation of only 7.1 %. The high agreement between the simulation and experimental data demonstrates that the CFD simulation approach is reliable for predicting VG's mass transfer enhancement effects. Low deviation in CFD simulations when modelling the effects of vortices on mass and heat transfer [39]. Subsequently, the simulation results for evaporation without a Vortex Generator (NVG) are compared to those with a Vortex Generator (VG), as shown in Fig. 9.

The findings presented in Fig. 9 further validate the analysis, demonstrating the impact of vortex generators on evaporation rates. The

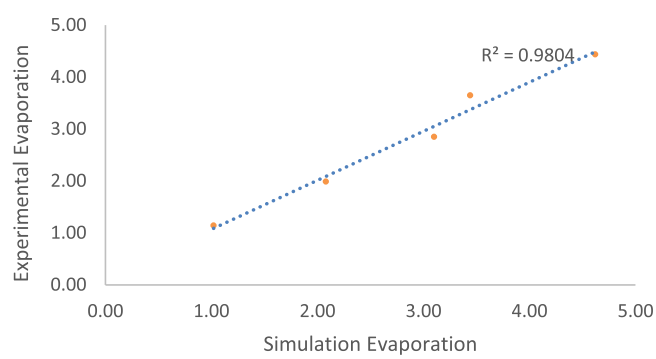



**Fig. 8.** Simulation-based model verification against experimental data.

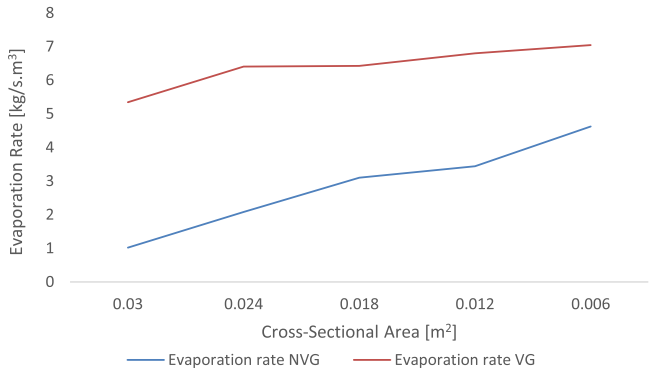



**Fig. 9.** Evaporation rate NVG and VG.

simulation results depicted in Fig. 9 reveal that using vortex generators increases the evaporation rate by an average of 57 % compared to systems without vortex generators. This enhancement is primarily due to the effect of vortex generators in increasing the flow velocity along the surface, which causes flow instability (turbulence) and the development of boundary layers and vortices [40]. These effects, in turn, amplify the temperature gradient between the surface and the surrounding air [41].

The research findings indicate that applying vortex generators (VG) in evaporation systems, such as those used in desalination or industrial drying processes, provides significant advantages in terms of thermal efficiency. VG increases the evaporation rate, reducing operational time and energy consumption. The optimisation of VG design holds great potential for further improving thermal efficiency. The optimal VG geometry can maximise evaporation rates and heat transfer under various environmental conditions [42]. VG significantly enhances evaporation efficiency in desalination processes [43], thereby lowering operational costs.

Evaporation occurring within the channel can be described by the equation $J=K_m (Ps-Pa)$, where J represents the mass transfer rate due to evaporation and $k_m$ is the mass transfer coefficient. Ps and Pa are saturation vapour pressure at the surface and partial vapour pressure of the surrounding air, respectively. The vortex generators enhance the mass transfer rate by promoting turbulence and improving the mixing of the fluid, which in turn increases the effective mass transfer coefficient $k_m$. This leads to a more efficient transfer of vapour from the surface to the surrounding air, driven by the vapour pressure difference. The influence of the vortex generators results in higher evaporation rates compared to a system without such enhancements.

Implementing VG in evaporation-dependent systems, such as evaporative cooling or industrial drying, provides substantial benefits. VG accelerates the evaporation process and reduces the additional energy required to maintain the temperature gradient, thus improving operational efficiency. This increase in evaporation rates also enables the design of surfaces involved in heat and mass transfer to become more compact without compromising performance. As a result, material costs can be reduced, and overall system performance can be enhanced. Therefore, the impact of vortex generators on flow and evaporation offers an efficient and innovative approach to improving the performance of thermal and fluid systems.

## 4. Conclusions

This study confirms that vortex generators significantly improve evaporation rates in desalination systems by harnessing waste heat from air conditioners. The results indicate an average increase of 57 % in evaporation rates when vortex generators are employed, attributed to the induced turbulence that improves fluid mixing and thermal energy transfer. This research highlights the effectiveness of vortex generators in optimising airflow dynamics, leading to more efficient heat transfer and evaporation processes.

From a scientific perspective, this work contributes to understanding fluid dynamics and heat transfer mechanisms in evaporative systems. It provides a novel approach for utilising existing household technologies, such as air conditioning units, to address pressing issues related to freshwater scarcity, particularly in coastal regions. Additionally, the findings pave the way for further exploration of innovative solutions in thermal management, potentially influencing the design and efficiency of future systems in domestic and industrial applications. The study encourages the adoption of vortex generators as a feasible method for improving thermal efficiency, thereby promoting sustainable practices in water desalination and environmental management.

## CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Oktarina Heriyani:** Writing – original draft. **Dan Mugisidi:** Supervision, Methodology, Conceptualization. **Rifky:** Writing – review & editing.

## Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

## Acknowledgement

This research was funded by a grant from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia, under the following assignment number: 105/E5/PG.02.00.PL/2024, 812/LL3/AL.04/2024, 104/F.03.07/2024.

## Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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