

## Carrier Density and Thickness Optimization of $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$ Layer by Scaps-1D Simulation for High Efficiency III-V Solar Cell

(Pengoptimuman Ketumpatan Pembawa dan Ketebalan Lapisan  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  dengan menggunakan Simulasi Scaps-1D  
untuk Kecekapan Tinggi Sel Surya III-V)

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### ABSTRACT

In this study, the indium gallium nitride ( $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$ ) p-n junction solar cells were optimized to achieve the highest conversion efficiency. The  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  p-n junction solar cells with the whole indium mole fraction ( $0 \leq x \leq 1$ ) were simulated using SCAPS-1D software. Optimization of the p- and n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layer's thickness and carrier density were also carried out. The thickness and carrier density of each layer was varied from 0.01 to 1.50  $\mu\text{m}$  and  $10^{15}$  to  $10^{20} \text{cm}^{-3}$ . The simulation results showed that the highest conversion efficiency of 23.11% was achieved with  $x = 0.6$ . The thickness (carrier density) of the p- and n-layers for this  $\text{In}_{0.6}\text{Ga}_{0.4}\text{N}$  p-n junction solar cell are 0.01 ( $10^{20}$ ) and 1.50  $\mu\text{m}$  ( $10^{19} \text{cm}^{-3}$ ), respectively. Simulation results also showed that the conversion efficiency is more sensitive to the variations of layer's thickness and carrier density of the top p- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layer than the bottom n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layer. Besides that, the results also demonstrated that thinner p- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layer with higher carrier density offers better conversion efficiency.

Keywords: Photovoltaics; semiconducting indium compounds; solar energy; thin films solar cell; III-V nitride

### ABSTRAK

Dalam kajian ini, sel suria indium galium nitrida ( $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$ ) bersimpang p-n telah dioptimumkan untuk mencapai kecekapan penukaran yang tertinggi. Sel suria  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  bersimpang p-n dengan keseluruhan pecahan mole indium ( $0 \leq x \leq 1$ ) telah disimulasi dengan menggunakan perisian SCAPS-1D. Pengoptimuman untuk ketebalan dan ketumpatan pembawa bagi lapisan p- dan n- $\text{InGaN}$  juga telah dijalankan. Ketebalan dan ketumpatan pembawa bagi setiap lapisan telah diubah daripada 0.01 hingga 1.50  $\mu\text{m}$  dan  $10^{15}$  hingga  $10^{20} \text{cm}^{-3}$ . Keputusan simulasi menunjukkan bahawa kecekapan penukaran tertinggi sebanyak 23.11% telah dicapai dengan  $x = 0.6$ . Ketebalan (ketumpatan pembawa) bagi lapisan p- dan n- untuk sel suria  $\text{In}_{0.6}\text{Ga}_{0.4}\text{N}$  adalah 0.01 ( $10^{20}$ ) dan 1.50  $\mu\text{m}$  ( $10^{19} \text{cm}^{-3}$ ), masing-masing. Keputusan simulasi juga menunjukkan bahawa kecekapan penukaran adalah lebih sensitif terhadap perubahan ketebalan dan ketumpatan pembawa bagi lapisan p- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  atas berbanding dengan lapisan n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  bawah. Selain itu, keputusan simulasi juga menunjukkan bahawa lapisan p- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  yang lebih nipis bersama dengan ketumpatan pembawa yang lebih tinggi memberi kecekapan penukaran yang lebih tinggi.

Kata kunci: Fotovolta; sebatian semikonduktor indium; sel suria filem nipis; tenaga suria; III-V nitrida

### INTRODUCTION

III-V nitride semiconductors are widely used in the past few decades in optoelectronic devices. Wide direct bandgap indium gallium nitride ( $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$ ) ternary

alloys are considered pivotal materials in photovoltaic applications because their bandgap energy ( $E_g$ ) can be engineered to fit the entire solar spectrum (Zhang et al. 2019). Generally, their  $E_g$  can be varied from 3.42 (GaN)

to 0.70 eV (InN) by changing indium's mole fraction (Kour et al. 2020). In addition, their intrinsic properties such as high absorption coefficient, high carrier mobility, high drift velocity (Zhang et al. 2019), good saturation velocities (Wang et al. 2018), high thermal stability and conductivity (Kim & Ra 2021), as well as high radiation resistance (Tian et al. 2018), making them an outstanding candidate for high-efficiency solar cell for harsh environments/space applications.

Up to now, many studies have been conducted to improve the conversion efficiency of  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$ . These include single-junction cells (Akter et al. 2019; Marouf et al. 2018; Moustafa & Alzoubi 2019), PIN junctions (Hussain et al. 2021; Pal & Das 2020), and multi-junctions (Marouf et al. 2019; Rahman et al. 2021). Recently, scientists are developing new techniques to enhance the efficiency of  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  p-n junction solar cells (Gupta et al. 2016). For instance, low indium contents  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  solar cells were designed (Ayari et al. 2018; Bi et al. 2018; Chouchen et al. 2019; Park et al. 2018). However, this has limited the absorption of the solar cell to shorter wavelengths. Consequently, low indium  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  based solar cells with complex structures were developed in order to achieve better conversion efficiency (Belghouthi & Aillerie 2019; Belghouthi et al. 2019; Li et al. 2020; Nath et al. 2020; Shan et al. 2019; Siddharth et al. 2019).

Thickness optimization of the p-n junction  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  solar cell was reported in Feng et al. (2013). The highest conversion efficiency of  $\sim 21.5\%$  was obtained at the indium mole fraction of  $x = 0.6$  with the p- and n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layers' thickness of 100 and 4000 nm, respectively. However, optimization of carrier density was not considered. Carrier density is responsible for the number of electrons and holes in a solar cell. Any operation of a solar cell depends upon carrier concentration as it is responsible for charge transportation and electrical current. In order to optimize the performance of a solar cell, the precise value of minority carrier concentration is needed (Uprety et al. 2019) because surface recombination velocity depends upon minority carriers which can affect the conversion efficiency of a solar cell (Smets et al. 2016). Besides that, we also believe that the conversion efficiency of the p-n junction  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  solar cell can further be increased by optimizing the carrier densities of both p- and n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layers.

In this study,  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  p-n junction solar cells with the whole indium mole fraction ( $0 \leq x \leq 1$ ) were simulated SCAPS-1D software. The thickness and carrier density of

the p- and n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layers were optimized to achieve the highest conversion efficiency ( $\eta$ ). The obtained results were compared to the simulation results for the simple Si p-n junction solar cell and the reported results for the  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$ -based solar cells.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### MODEL SETUP AND DATA INPUT

Different  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  p-n junction solar cells were created by varying indium's mole fraction,  $x$  and it was varied from 0 to 1.0. Therefore, a total of eleven p-n junction solar cells were simulated. Generally, the mole fraction,  $x = 0$  represents GaN ( $E_g = 3.42$  eV), and  $x = 1.0$  represents InN ( $E_g = 0.70$  eV) materials. By changing the indium mole fractions,  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  with different energy bandgaps will be produced. The simulations started with fixed p- and n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layers' thickness and carrier density of  $0.50 \mu\text{m}$  and  $10^{17} \text{cm}^{-3}$ . All the  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  parameters used for the simulation were listed in Table 1.

Next, two series of studies were carried out, i.e. (i) optimization of the p- and n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layer's thickness and (ii) optimization of the p- and n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layer's carrier density. The thickness of each layer of the solar cell was optimized by varying it from  $0.01$  to  $1.50 \mu\text{m}$ . Whereas, the carrier density of each layer was optimized by varying it from  $10^{15}$  to  $10^{20} \text{cm}^{-3}$ . It was found in Manzoor et al. (2021) that the optimized thickness of p-InGaN layer was  $0.01 \mu\text{m}$ ; hence a minimum thickness of  $0.01 \mu\text{m}$  was considered. A maximum thickness of  $1.5 \mu\text{m}$  was considered because it is still difficult (practically) to grow a very thick and good quality InGaN layer (Liu et al. 2018). All simulations were performed at  $300 \text{K}$  using  $1.5 \text{AM}$  conditions and irradiance intensity of  $1000 \text{W/m}^2$ . Through these simulations, the performance of the solar cell in terms of the open-circuit voltage ( $V_{oc}$ ), current density ( $J_{sc}$ ), fill factor ( $FF$ ), conversion efficiency ( $\eta$ ), and maximum achieved power density ( $P_{max}$ ) can be obtained.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### OPTIMIZATION OF $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$ LAYER'S THICKNESS

For this optimization study, the indium mole fraction and the thickness of the p- and n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layers thickness were varied from 0 to 1.0 and  $0.10 \mu\text{m}$  to  $1.50 \mu\text{m}$ , respectively. However, the carrier density of the p- and n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layers was fixed at  $10^{17} \text{cm}^{-3}$ . During the optimization, the thickness of one layer was varied at one time while the other was kept fixed at  $0.50 \mu\text{m}$ .

TABLE 1. Simulation parameters for  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  p-n junction solar cells

Parameter	Value / Related equation
Bandgap, $E_g$ (Wu & Walukiewicz 2003)	$x \cdot E_g^{\text{InN}} + (1-x) \cdot E_g^{\text{GaN}} - b \cdot x \cdot (1-x)$ Here $x = 0 - 1.0$ , $E_g^{\text{InN}}$ is 0.70 eV and $E_g^{\text{GaN}}$ is 3.42 eV. The $b$ is known as the bowing factor, which is equal to 1.43 eV.
Electron affinity, $\chi$ (Nawaz & Ahmad 2012)	$4.1 + 0.70(3.42 - E_g)$
Relative permittivity, $\epsilon$ (Zhang et al. 2007)	$15.3x + 8.9(1-x)$
Effective density state of the conduction band $N_c$ (Levinshtein et al. 2001)	$(0.9x + 2.3(1-x)) \times 10^{18} \text{ cm}^{-3}$
Effective density state of the valance band $N_v$ (Levinshtein et al. 2001)	$(5.3x + 1.8(1-x)) \times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-3}$
Carrier concentration	$1.0 \times 10^{17} \text{ cm}^{-3}$
Capture cross section electrons	$1.0 \times 10^{-15} \text{ cm}^2$
Capture cross-section holes	$1.0 \times 10^{-15} \text{ cm}^2$
Defect density	$1.0 \times 10^{14} \text{ cm}^{-3}$

Figure 1 shows the effects of the p- and n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layers' thickness on the  $\eta$  at different indium mole fractions. Overall, it can be seen that the  $\eta$  is more sensitive to the thickness variation of either p- or n-layer for  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  with indium mole fraction in the range of  $0.3 \leq x \leq 0.7$ . In this range, it can be noticed from Figure 1(a) that the  $\eta$  of the  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  solar cells reduces with increasing p- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  thickness. The mole fraction of  $0.3 \leq x \leq 0.7$  corresponds to wavelengths of 540 nm to

1020 nm, the region where most of the solar spectrum is, as shown in Figure 2. This spectrum was developed by American Society of Testing Material (ASTM). Typically, as the thickness of the p- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layer is increases, the distance between the space charge region and surface increases. As a result, the probability of electron-hole recombination increased and lowered the  $J_{sc}$  of the solar cell. Hence, this contributed towards lower  $\eta$  because  $\eta = (J_{sc} V_{oc} FF)/P$  (Wu et al. 2018). In contrast, the  $\eta$  of the

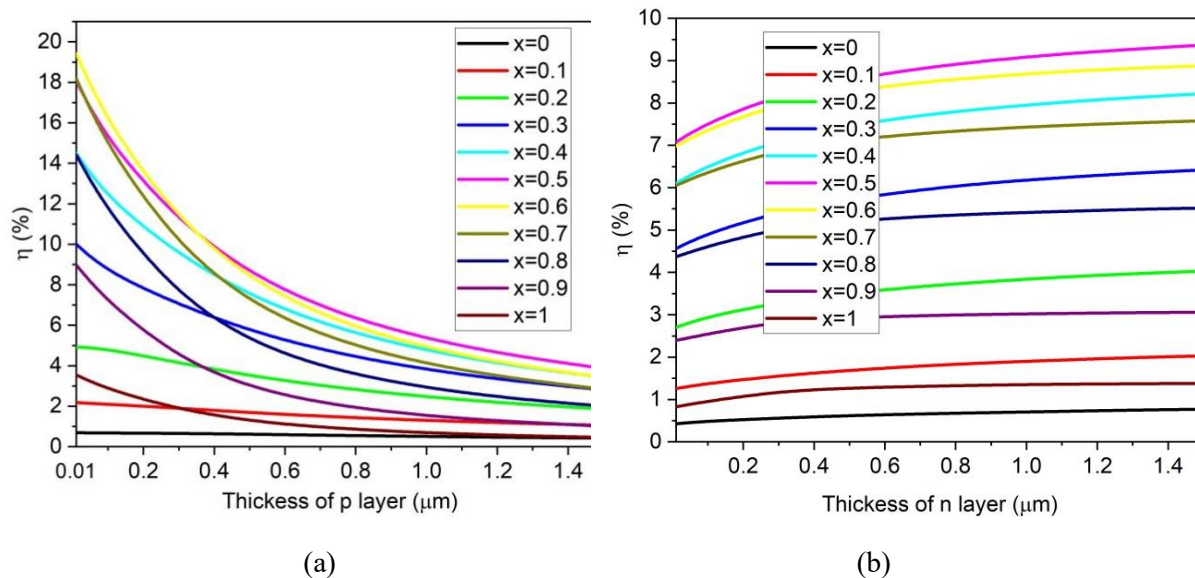


FIGURE 1. Variation of the  $\eta$  as a function of the (a) p- and (b) n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layers thickness. The  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layer's thickness was varied from  $0.01 \mu\text{m}$  to  $1.50 \mu\text{m}$

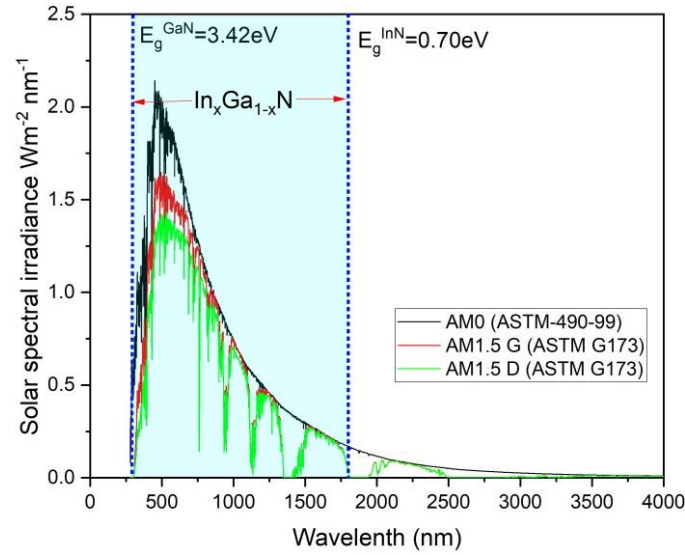


FIGURE 2. Solar spectrum irradiance versus wavelength

$\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  solar cells increases slowly with increasing n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  thickness, as shown in Figure 1(b). The dependence of  $\eta$  on the n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layer's thickness is insignificant because most of the light is absorbed by the top p- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layer (Feng et al. 2013). The results show that the  $\eta$  is more sensitive to the p- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$ 's thickness than that of the n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$ .

From Figure 1(a),  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  solar cells with highest  $\eta$  were achieved when the p- and n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  thickness is  $0.01 \mu\text{m}$  and  $1.50 \mu\text{m}$ , respectively. These optimization values were selected for the subsequent optimization work on the layer's carrier density. Noted that the  $\eta$  value for the  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  solar cells was gradually increased with increasing the n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  thickness; however, a further increase in layer thickness does not contribute significantly towards the  $\eta$ .

#### OPTIMIZATION OF $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$ LAYER'S CARRIER DENSITY

In this section, the effect of the p- and n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layers' carrier density on the  $\eta$  was investigated by varying carrier density from  $10^{15}$  to  $10^{20} \text{cm}^{-3}$ . During the optimization, the carrier density of one layer was varied at one time while the other was kept fixed at  $10^{15} \text{cm}^{-3}$ . The effect of the p- and n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layers' carrier density on the  $\eta$  were shown in Figure 3(a) and Figure 3(b), respectively.

From Figure 3(a), it can be seen that the  $\eta$  increases with increasing p- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layer's carrier

density. Typically, increasing the carrier density in the p- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layer will increase the number of holes. Subsequently, this increased the photoconversion and hence the conversion efficiency ( $\eta$ ) of the solar cell. Figure 3(a) also shows that the effect of carrier density on the  $\eta$  became more significant for indium mole fraction of  $0.4 \leq x \leq 1.0$ , where the  $\eta$  increases drastically with the carrier density. According to McAllister et al. (2018) and Zinovchuk and Gryshuk (2018), the Auger coefficient becomes smaller (i.e. the nonradiative recombination losses reduce) at higher carrier density and larger energy bandgap due to the suppression of the Coulomb interactions between free carriers by their mutual shielding. Subsequently, this resulted in higher  $J_{sc}$  and hence higher  $\eta$ . Besides that, the electrical field increases and the series resistance reduces as the carrier concentration increases. All these factors contributed to the increase of the  $\eta$ .

As the carrier density increases from  $10^{15} \text{cm}^{-3}$  to  $10^{20} \text{cm}^{-3}$ , a Burnstein-Moss shift induces a spectral energy shift which widens the energy bandgap (Tessarek et al. 2015). Therefore, the open-circuit voltage increases,  $V_{oc}$ . The relation of  $V_{oc}$  and carrier density can be explained with equation (1):

$$V_{oc} = \frac{kT}{q} \ln \left[ \frac{(N_A + \Delta n)\Delta n}{n_i^2} \right]. \quad (1)$$

where  $k$  is the Boltzmann's constant;  $T$  is the temperature;  $q$  is the charge of an electron;  $N_A$  is

the carrier concentration;  $\Delta n$  is the excess carrier concentration; and  $n_i$  is the intrinsic concentration. From equation (1), it can be noticed that the  $V_{oc}$  increases with increasing carrier concentration. As a result, this contributed towards higher  $\eta$  because  $\eta = (J_{sc} V_{oc} FF) / P_{in}$ .

Table 2 summarizes the optimized thickness and carrier density of the  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  p-n junction solar cells. It can be seen that the optimized p- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layer's carrier density for all the solar cells is  $10^{20} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ . However, two optimized carrier densities for the n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layer were obtained, i.e.,  $10^{15} \text{ cm}^{-3}$  for solar cells ( $0 \leq x \leq 0.4$ ) and  $10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-3}$  for solar cells ( $0.5 \leq x \leq 1.0$ ).

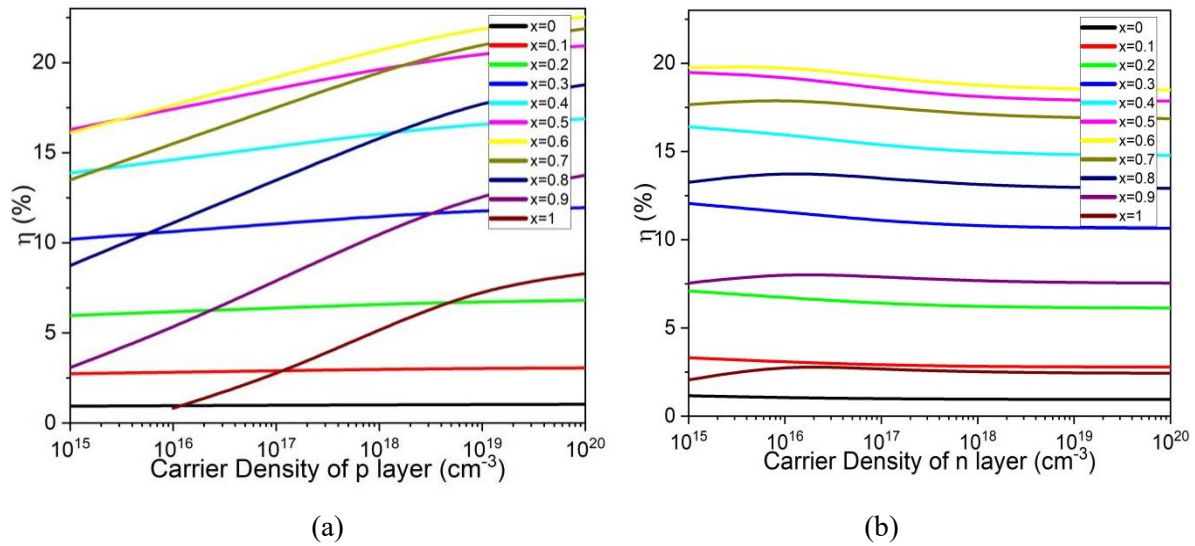


FIGURE 3. Variation of the  $\eta$  as a function of the (a) p- and (b) n-  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  solar cells layer's carrier density as the carrier density varied from  $10^{15}$  to  $10^{20} \text{ cm}^{-3}$

TABLE 2. Simulation results of the optimized  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  p-n junction solar cells

Indium Mole fraction, $x$	Thickness (m)		Carrier density ( $\text{cm}^{-3}$ )		$V_{oc}$ (V)	$J_{sc}$ ( $\text{mA}/\text{cm}^2$ )	$FF$ (%)	$\eta$ (%)	$P_{max}$ ( $\text{mW}/\text{cm}^2$ )
	p-layer	n-layer	$N_a$	$N_d$					
0					2.71	0.50	86.62	1.18	1.18
0.1					2.34	1.64	87.48	3.37	3.37
0.2				$10^{15}$	1.99	4.11	88.61	7.26	7.26
0.3					1.67	8.39	88.55	12.38	12.38
0.4					1.36	14.11	87.95	16.93	16.93
0.5	0.01	1.50	$10^{20}$		1.25	18.95	89.43	21.21	21.21
0.6					1.00	26.33	87.52	23.11	23.11
0.7				$10^{19}$	0.78	34.30	85.18	22.83	22.83
0.8					0.58	39.86	81.77	19.06	19.06
0.9					0.42	45.85	76.92	14.74	14.74
1.0					0.28	52.88	70.50	10.46	10.46

OPTIMIZED OF  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  P-N JUNCTION SOLAR CELL

Based on the information gathered in previous sections,  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  p-n junction solar cells for the whole indium mole fraction were simulated, and the results were summarized in Table 2. From Table 2, the highest  $\eta$  of 23.11% was achieved for  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  p-n junction solar cell with  $x = 0.6$ .

It can be seen from Figure 4, a better quantum efficiency was achieved for a solar cell with mole fractions of  $x = 0$  to  $x = 0.4$ . At these mole fractions, the n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layer of these solar cells has a lower carrier density (i.e.  $10^{15}\text{ cm}^{-3}$ ). Typically, the recombination rate of electrons and holes increases as the carrier density increases, which reduces quantum efficiency, as can be seen for a solar cell with  $0.5 \leq x \leq 1.0$ . It can be seen from Figure 4(b) that as the indium mole fraction increases from 0.1 to 1.0, the wavelength coverage also increases. This can be explained using solar spectrum irradiance, as shown in Figure 2. It can be seen that the  $\text{InGa}_x\text{N}$  material covers the wavelength from  $= 360$  to  $= 1800$  nm. As indium content increases, so do its covered wavelength region.

Figure 5 represents the variation of the  $V_{oc}$ ,  $J_{sc}$ ,  $\eta$ ,  $FF$ , and  $P_{max}$  of the p-n junction  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  solar cells as a function of indium's mole fraction. Generally, the  $V_{oc}$  is described as the difference in fermi energies of holes and electrons, and it is affected by the energy bandgap. From Figure 5(a), the  $V_{oc}$  decreases linearly with decreasing in indium content. However, the  $J_{sc}$  increases linearly with increasing in indium content. As the indium's mole content increases, the bandgap of the

material will be decreased. Consequently, more photons with longer wavelengths can penetrate deeper into the materials and increase  $J_{sc}$ . The  $\eta$  increases from 1.18 to 23.11% when  $x$  increases from 0 to 0.6, and the  $\eta$  reduces to 10.46% with further increasing of  $x$ . Apart from that, it can be observed from Figure 5(a) and Figure 5(b) that the changes of  $P_{max}$  and  $\eta$  with respect to  $x$  were similar to each other. In contrast, the  $FF$  remains almost the same at  $\sim 87.00\%$  for  $0 \leq x \leq 0.5$ , however, further increase in  $x$  decreases the  $FF$  from 88.00% to 70.00%, as shown in Figure 5(b). The  $FF$  can be measured using equation (2) (Wu et al. 2018), where  $J_{max}$  and  $V_{max}$  are the current density and voltage at the maximum power point. Here the increase in  $J_{sc}$  is more significant than the reduction of  $V_{oc}$ , resulting in the reduction of  $FF$ .

$$FF = \frac{J_{max} \times V_{max}}{J_{sc} \times V_{oc}} \quad (2)$$

As mentioned, Feng et al. (2013) have performed the thickness optimization for the  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  p-n junction solar cells. The highest conversion efficiency of  $\sim 21.50\%$  was obtained at  $x = 0.6$  with the thickness of  $0.10\ \mu\text{m}$  for p-layer and  $4.0\ \mu\text{m}$  for n-layer, and both layers have carrier densities of  $510^{17}\text{ cm}^{-3}$ . However, by optimizing thickness and carrier density of the  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  p-n junction solar cells, a higher  $\eta$  value of 23.11% was obtained at  $x = 0.6$  with p- and n-  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layer's thickness and carrier density of  $0.01\ \mu\text{m}$  and  $1.50\ \mu\text{m}$ , and  $10^{20}$  and  $10^{19}\text{ cm}^{-3}$ , respectively. The obtained  $\eta$  value of 23.11% is about 7.48% higher than that of Feng et al. (2013). In addition,

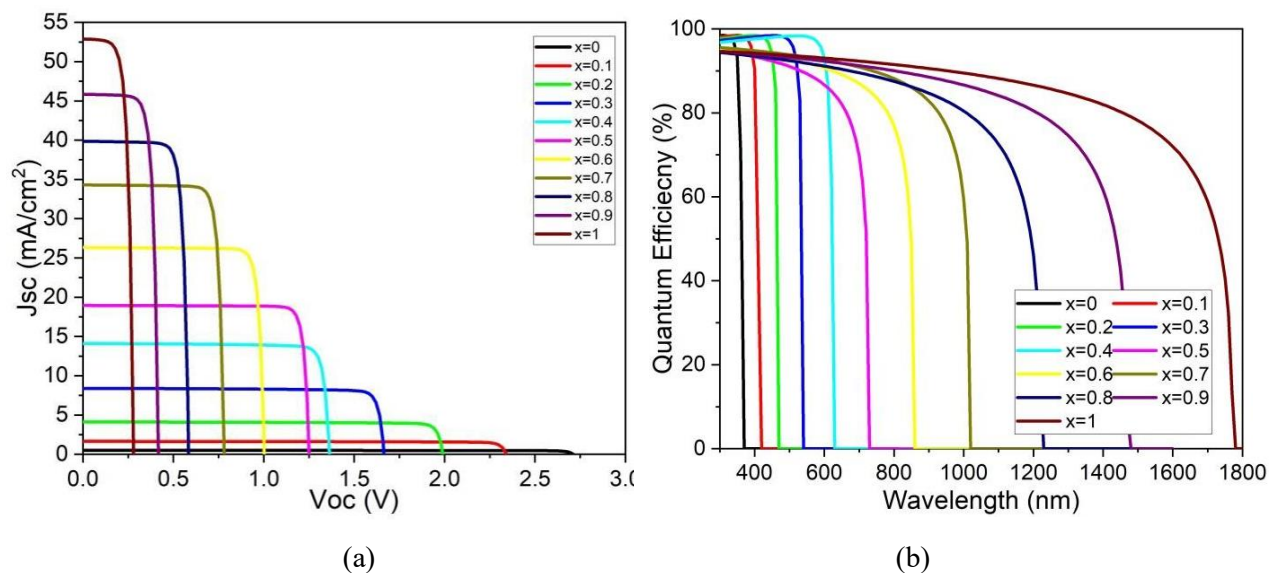


FIGURE 4. Optimized quantum efficiencies for the  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  p-n junction solar cells

the optimized  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  p-n junction solar cell has thinner p- and n-  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layer's than that Feng et al. (2013). Basically, this thickness configuration is more practical because the growth rate of the InGaN is very slow, and thick InGaN is hard to achieve. For instance, the growth rate of the InGaN layer with an indium composition of 45% was about 190 nm/h (Yin et al. 2019). Besides that, the dislocation density also increases with increasing InGaN's layer thickness, thus, drastically reducing the quality of the InGaN layer (Kuo & Chang 2016). Therefore, further experimental verification of the present simulation can be performed.

It is known that InN-based semiconductors may replace silicon (Si) semiconductor. For solar cell applications, InGaN-based solar cells provide better conversion efficiency than that of Si. However, no direct comparison on the solar cell structure has been made. In the next section, Si p-n junction solar cells with various p- and n-Si layers thickness (0.01 to 1.50  $\mu\text{m}$ ) and carrier density ( $10^{15}$  to  $10^{20}\text{ cm}^{-3}$ ) were simulated. The parameters used for simulating the Si p-n junction solar cell were taken from Boumaour et al. (2019). The obtained results were compared to that of the  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  p-n junction solar cells.

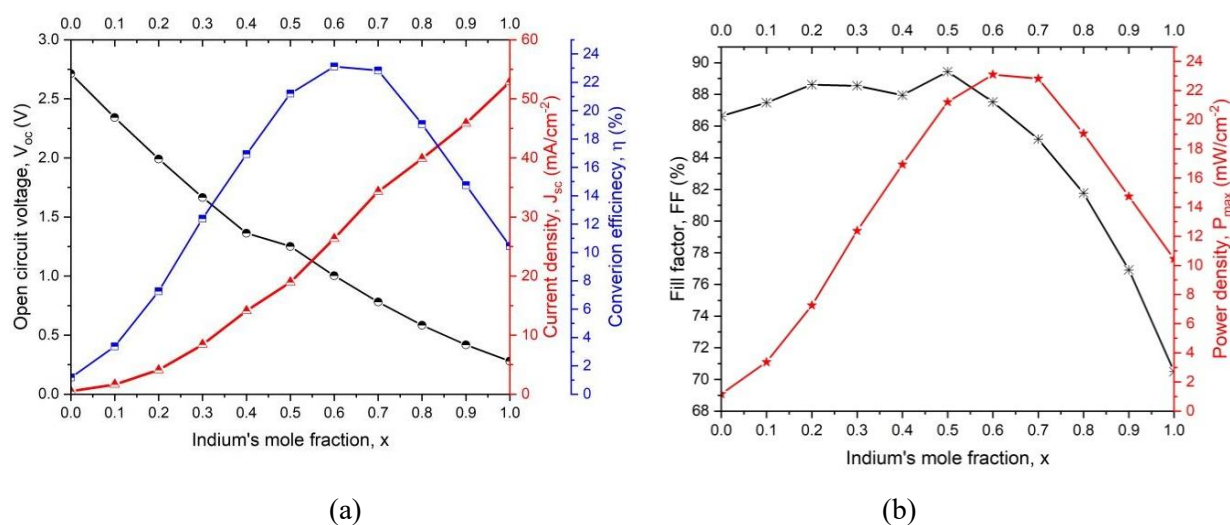


FIGURE 5. The changes of (a)  $V_{oc}$ ,  $J_{sc}$ , and  $\eta$ , and (b)  $FF$  and  $P_{max}$  of the  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  p-n junction solar cells as a function of indium mole fraction

#### Si p-n JUNCTION SOLAR CELL

Figure 6(a) shows the variations of the  $\eta$  as a function of the p- and n-Si layers' thickness. It can be seen that the  $\eta$  is almost constant over the entire range of the p-Si layer's thickness. In contrast, the  $\eta$  keeps on increasing with n-Si layer's thickness. Based on these results, p- and n-Si layers' thickness with the highest  $\eta$  was selected for the simulation with different p- and n-Si layers' carrier densities. Figure 6(b) shows the variations of the  $\eta$  as a function of the p- and n-Si layers' carrier density. Interestingly, it was found that the  $\eta$  exhibits the opposite trends as compared with Figure 6(a), where the  $\eta$  is almost constant over the entire range of the n-Si layer's carrier density and keeps on increasing with p-Si layer's carrier density. The optimization results of Si p-n junction solar was shown in Figure 6(a) and Figure 6(b). The

optimized p-layer had a thickness of 0.01  $\mu\text{m}$  and carrier density of  $10^{20}\text{ cm}^{-3}$ ; while the n-layer had a thickness of 1.50  $\mu\text{m}$  and carrier density of  $10^{20}\text{ cm}^{-3}$ . The optimized p-n junction solar cell provides  $V_{oc} = 0.61\text{ V}$ ,  $J_{sc} = 10.66\text{ mA}/\text{cm}^2$ ,  $FF = 82.63\%$  and  $\eta = 5.35\%$ . As compared with the results of  $\text{In}_{0.6}\text{Ga}_{0.6}\text{N}$  p-n junction solar cell, it can be seen that using the same configuration, the  $\text{In}_{0.6}\text{Ga}_{0.6}\text{N}$  provides 17.67% more  $\eta$ . Furthermore, Si p-n junction solar cell provides  $\eta$  of 12.81% when a thick n-layer of 15.00  $\mu\text{m}$  was used. Generally, surface recombination plays a vital role in the conversion efficiency of any solar cell. However, the surface recombination velocity is limited by minority charge carriers. Therefore, it is beneficial to have a minority charge carrier as low as possible. Typically, the minority charge carriers can be reduced by increasing the doping level of n-type material in silicon p-n junction solar cell. It can also further be

reduced by increasing the thickness of the n-type layer (Smets et al. 2016). Hence, by increasing the n-type doping level to  $10^{20} \text{ cm}^{-3}$  and its thickness to  $15 \mu\text{m}$ , the conversion efficiency can be increased from 5.35 to

12.81%. From this study, the results implied that a much thicker n-layer is needed to provide higher  $\eta$  in Si p-n junction solar cell while only  $1.50 \mu\text{m}$  thick n-layer is needed in InGaN solar cells.

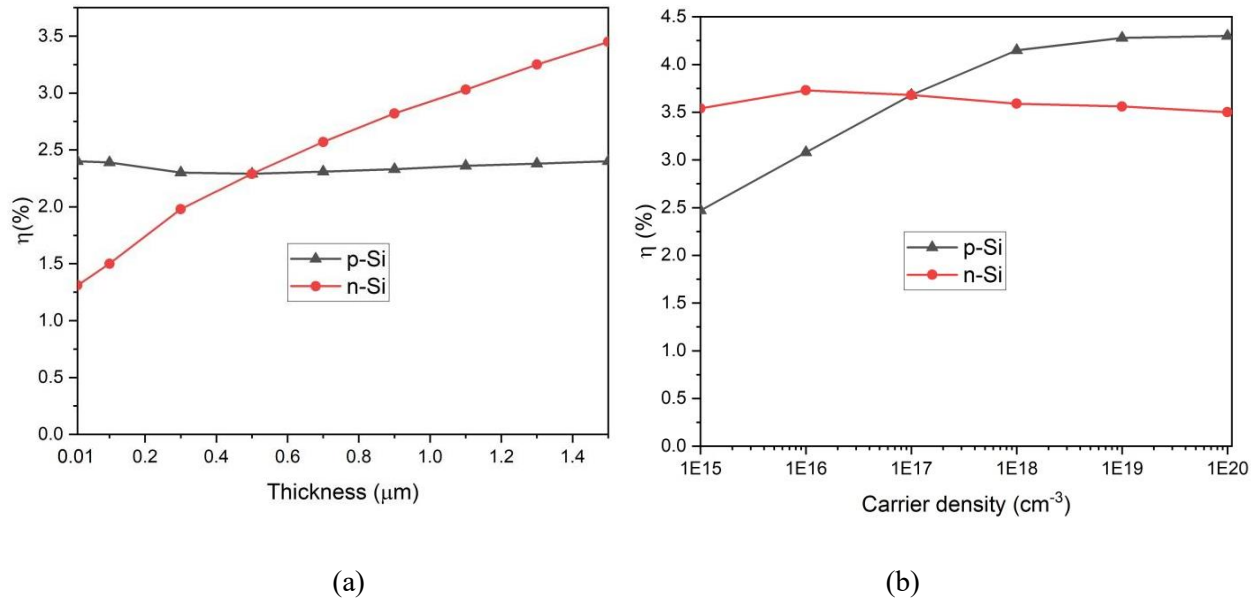


FIGURE 6. Variation of the  $\eta$  as a function of (a) the p- and n-Si layers' thickness, and (b) the p- and n-Si layers' carrier density

#### CONCLUSION

In this study, single p-n junction  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$ -based solar cells with indium mole fraction ( $x$ ) varied from 0 to 1.0 were simulated using SCAPS-1D software. The effects of p- and n- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  solar cells layer's thickness and carrier density on the performance of the solar cells were investigated thoroughly. The results showed that the highest  $\eta$  of 23.11% was obtained for solar cell with  $x = 0.6$ , and the thickness (carrier density) of the p- and n-layers is  $0.01\text{m}$  ( $10^{20} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ ) and  $1.50 \mu\text{m}$  ( $10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ ), respectively. Besides that, the results also showed that the conversion efficiency is more sensitive to the variations of layer's thickness and carrier density of the top p- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layer. The results suggested that thinner p- $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$  layer with higher carrier density offers better conversion efficiency. The results also showed that the p-n junction  $\text{In}_x\text{Ga}_{1-x}\text{N}$ -based solar cell with the same configurations as the Si solar cell can provide conversion efficiency 4.3 times higher than that of the Si solar cell. This study clearly demonstrated the ability of InGaN semiconductors for the fabrication of high efficiency solar cells.

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