

THERMAL PERFORMANCE ENHANCEMENT OF HYBRID NANOFLUID-BASED HEAT EXCHANGERS FOR INDUSTRIAL ENERGY EFFICIENCY APPLICATIONS IN PAKISTAN

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20917763>

Keywords

Hybrid nanofluids; Heat exchangers; Thermal performance; Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD); Industrial energy efficiency; Exergy analysis.

Article History

Received: 24 April 2026

Accepted: 06 June 2026

Published: 21 June 2026

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Abstract

Improving thermal energy utilization has become a strategic priority for enhancing industrial productivity, reducing operational costs, and achieving sustainable manufacturing, particularly in energy-intensive industries in Pakistan. Conventional heat transfer fluids exhibit limited thermal conductivity, which restricts the performance of industrial heat exchangers and contributes to higher energy consumption. This study investigated the thermal performance enhancement of hybrid nanofluid-based heat exchangers for industrial energy efficiency applications in Pakistan using an integrated experimental and Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD)-based approach. Five hybrid nanofluid formulations, namely $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3\text{-CuO}$, $\text{TiO}_2\text{-SiO}_2$, Graphene- Al_2O_3 , CuO-MWCNT , and $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4\text{-Graphene}$, were evaluated under varying nanoparticle concentrations and Reynolds numbers. Thermal performance was assessed through heat transfer coefficient, Nusselt number, pressure drop, friction factor, pumping power, thermal efficiency, exergy efficiency, and thermo-economic performance. CFD simulations using ANSYS Fluent were employed to validate the experimental observations and optimize operating conditions. The study further incorporated exergy and thermo-economic analyses to evaluate the technical and economic feasibility of hybrid nanofluid implementation in industrial heat exchangers. The findings are expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the thermo-hydraulic behavior of hybrid nanofluids and identify optimized operating conditions that maximize heat transfer while minimizing hydraulic losses and energy consumption. The study contributes to the advancement of thermal engineering by integrating experimental validation, CFD modeling, and thermodynamic optimization within the context of Pakistan's industrial sector. The findings are anticipated to support the adoption of advanced heat transfer technologies, enhance industrial energy efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote sustainable industrial development.

INTRODUCTION

Industrial energy consumption accounts for a substantial proportion of global primary energy

use and greenhouse gas emissions, making thermal energy optimization a strategic priority for sustainable industrial development. Heat

exchangers are among the most critical components in industrial thermal systems, facilitating heat transfer in sectors such as power generation, chemical processing, food manufacturing, petroleum refining, textiles, and cement production. The efficiency of these systems significantly influences industrial productivity, operating costs, and environmental sustainability. However, conventional heat transfer fluids, including water, ethylene glycol, and thermal oils, exhibit relatively low thermal conductivity, thereby limiting the overall thermal performance of heat exchangers (Said et al., 2023). Advances in nanotechnology have introduced nanofluids as an innovative class of heat transfer media capable of significantly improving thermal conductivity and convective heat transfer characteristics. Nanofluids consist of nanoscale solid particles dispersed within conventional base fluids, resulting in enhanced thermophysical properties compared to traditional coolants. Numerous experimental and numerical investigations have demonstrated that nanofluids improve heat transfer coefficients, increase Nusselt numbers, and enhance thermal efficiency across various heat exchanger configurations (Mahian et al., 2022; Sidik et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the performance of mono nanofluids is often constrained by challenges including particle agglomeration, sedimentation, viscosity increase, and long-term stability.

To overcome these limitations, researchers have increasingly focused on hybrid nanofluids, which combine two or more different nanoparticles within a single base fluid to exploit synergistic enhancements in thermal conductivity, stability, and convective heat transfer. Hybrid nanofluids have demonstrated superior thermo-hydraulic performance compared with single-particle nanofluids due to their improved dispersion characteristics and enhanced heat transport mechanisms. Recent investigations indicate that hybrid nanofluids containing combinations such as $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3\text{-CuO}$, $\text{TiO}_2\text{-SiO}_2$, graphene- Al_2O_3 , and carbon nanotube-based composites achieve significantly higher heat transfer enhancement while maintaining acceptable pressure drop characteristics under optimized operating

conditions (Bumataria et al., 2023; Hussain et al., 2024).

Beyond improving heat transfer, industrial applications increasingly require comprehensive evaluation of thermo-hydraulic performance, exergy efficiency, pumping power, frictional losses, and economic feasibility. Enhanced heat transfer alone does not necessarily translate into improved system performance if accompanied by excessive pressure drop or increased pumping energy requirements. Consequently, recent studies emphasize multi-objective optimization approaches that simultaneously maximize thermal performance while minimizing hydraulic penalties and operational costs (Sarkar et al., 2022; Said et al., 2023). Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD), Response Surface Methodology (RSM), Artificial Intelligence (AI), and machine learning techniques have emerged as effective tools for optimizing hybrid nanofluid characteristics and heat exchanger operating conditions.

Pakistan's industrial sector contributes substantially to national economic development while simultaneously accounting for a significant share of total commercial energy consumption. Industries such as textiles, fertilizer production, cement manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, food processing, and petrochemicals rely extensively on thermal systems that often operate with low energy efficiency due to outdated equipment and limited adoption of advanced heat transfer technologies. Rising energy costs, increasing electricity shortages, dependence on imported fuels, and growing environmental concerns have intensified the need for innovative thermal management solutions that improve industrial energy efficiency without requiring major infrastructure replacement.

Despite the growing body of international research on hybrid nanofluids, relatively few studies have investigated their applicability under Pakistan's industrial operating conditions. Existing research has largely concentrated on laboratory-scale experiments or theoretical simulations, with limited consideration of local industrial requirements, climatic conditions, economic feasibility, and sector-specific thermal demands. Furthermore, integrated assessments

incorporating thermal performance, pressure drop, exergy analysis, thermo-economic evaluation, and optimization remain scarce in the Pakistani context. Addressing these knowledge gaps is essential for developing practical and sustainable heat exchanger technologies capable of supporting industrial decarbonization and energy conservation initiatives.

Accordingly, this study investigates the thermal performance enhancement of hybrid nanofluid-based heat exchangers for industrial energy efficiency applications in Pakistan. The study evaluates the thermo-hydraulic characteristics of selected hybrid nanofluids, identifies optimal operating parameters, and assesses their potential to improve industrial thermal system performance while reducing energy consumption and operational costs. The findings are expected to contribute to the advancement of sustainable industrial energy management and support evidence-based policy formulation for energy-efficient manufacturing in Pakistan.

Problem Statement

Industrial heat exchangers constitute the backbone of thermal energy recovery and process heating systems; however, their performance remains significantly constrained by the low thermal conductivity of conventional heat transfer fluids. Although numerous engineering improvements have been introduced through enhanced heat exchanger designs, optimization of working fluids remains one of the most promising approaches for achieving substantial gains in thermal efficiency. Hybrid nanofluids have emerged as advanced heat transfer media capable of improving heat transfer rates through synergistic interactions among multiple nanoparticles. Despite encouraging laboratory findings, the translation of these advancements into industrial-scale applications remains limited. Existing literature predominantly emphasizes experimental evaluation of thermal conductivity and convective heat transfer enhancement while giving comparatively less attention to integrated thermo-hydraulic optimization involving pressure drop, pumping power, exergy efficiency, and long-term operational stability. Furthermore, many

studies investigate idealized laboratory conditions that do not adequately represent the operational complexities of industrial heat exchangers.

Within Pakistan, the research gap is even more pronounced. The country's energy-intensive manufacturing sectors continue to experience low thermal efficiency, increasing energy costs, and substantial heat losses due to limited adoption of advanced heat transfer technologies. There is insufficient empirical evidence regarding the performance of hybrid nanofluid-based heat exchangers under Pakistan's industrial conditions, including sector-specific operating temperatures, flow characteristics, and economic constraints. Moreover, comprehensive thermo-economic assessments capable of supporting industrial investment decisions and national energy policies remain largely unavailable.

Consequently, a significant knowledge gap exists regarding the optimization of hybrid nanofluid formulations and operating conditions that simultaneously maximize thermal performance, minimize hydraulic losses, improve exergy efficiency, and ensure economic feasibility for industrial applications in Pakistan. Addressing this gap is essential for developing practical, energy-efficient, and sustainable thermal management solutions capable of supporting industrial competitiveness and national energy conservation objectives.

Research Questions

1. How do hybrid nanofluids influence the thermal performance of industrial heat exchangers compared with conventional heat transfer fluids?
2. What are the effects of nanoparticle concentration, flow rate, and operating temperature on the thermo-hydraulic performance of hybrid nanofluid-based heat exchangers?
3. Which hybrid nanofluid composition provides the optimum balance between heat transfer enhancement and pressure drop for industrial applications in Pakistan?
4. To what extent can hybrid nanofluid-based heat exchangers improve industrial energy efficiency and exergy performance?

5. What is the thermo-economic feasibility of implementing hybrid nanofluid heat exchanger technology in Pakistan's industrial sector?

Research Objectives

General Objective

To evaluate and optimize the thermal performance of hybrid nanofluid-based heat exchangers for improving industrial energy efficiency in Pakistan.

Specific Objectives

1. To evaluate the thermal and hydraulic performance of selected hybrid nanofluids in industrial heat exchangers.
2. To examine the influence of nanoparticle concentration, flow rate, and operating temperature on heat transfer enhancement.
3. To optimize thermo-hydraulic operating parameters for maximizing heat transfer while minimizing pressure losses.
4. To assess the exergy performance and potential energy savings associated with hybrid nanofluid-based heat exchangers.
5. To evaluate the thermo-economic feasibility of adopting hybrid nanofluid technology in Pakistan's industrial sector.

Significance of the Study

Theoretical Significance

This study extends the existing body of knowledge on hybrid nanofluids by integrating thermo-hydraulic performance analysis, exergy assessment, and thermo-economic evaluation within a unified analytical framework. It contributes to the scientific understanding of nanoparticle interactions, heat transfer mechanisms, and optimization strategies under industrial operating conditions, thereby enriching contemporary literature in thermal engineering and energy systems.

Practical Significance

The findings will provide engineers, plant managers, and industrial practitioners with scientifically validated guidance regarding the selection of hybrid nanofluids and optimal operating conditions for industrial heat exchangers. Improved heat transfer performance can reduce fuel consumption, minimize

operational costs, enhance equipment efficiency, and extend the service life of industrial thermal systems.

Policy Significance

The study offers evidence-based insights that can support national energy conservation strategies, industrial modernization initiatives, and sustainable manufacturing policies in Pakistan. The findings may assist policymakers in promoting advanced thermal technologies, encouraging industrial energy efficiency investments, and contributing to national commitments toward sustainable industrial development and greenhouse gas emission reduction.

Literature Review

Industrial Energy Efficiency and Heat Exchanger Technologies

Industrial energy efficiency has become a strategic priority for sustainable economic development owing to increasing global energy demand, environmental concerns, and stringent carbon reduction targets. Industrial processes consume approximately one-third of the world's final energy, with thermal systems accounting for the largest proportion of this consumption. Heat exchangers are indispensable components of industrial thermal systems, facilitating heat recovery, process heating, cooling, and waste heat utilization across sectors such as chemical processing, petroleum refining, food manufacturing, textile production, pharmaceuticals, and power generation. Their thermal performance directly affects production efficiency, operating costs, and greenhouse gas emissions (Said et al., 2023).

Conventional heat exchangers generally employ water, ethylene glycol, mineral oils, or similar fluids as heat transfer media. Although these fluids possess desirable chemical stability and low cost, their relatively poor thermal conductivity restricts heat transfer efficiency, thereby limiting the overall performance of industrial thermal systems. Consequently, researchers have increasingly focused on enhancing heat transfer through advanced working fluids capable of improving thermal conductivity without requiring extensive

modifications to existing equipment (Mahian et al., 2022). Recent industrial energy strategies emphasize fluid optimization as a cost-effective approach to reducing energy losses while improving operational efficiency.

Evolution of Nanofluids in Thermal Engineering

The introduction of nanofluids represented a significant breakthrough in thermal engineering. Nanofluids consist of nanoscale solid particles dispersed uniformly within conventional base fluids to enhance thermophysical properties. Nanoparticles commonly used include aluminum oxide (Al_2O_3), copper oxide (CuO), titanium dioxide (TiO_2), silicon dioxide (SiO_2), zinc oxide (ZnO), graphene nanoplatelets, and carbon nanotubes. Their exceptionally high thermal conductivity enables improved heat transport mechanisms compared with conventional fluids. Extensive experimental and numerical studies have demonstrated that nanofluids substantially increase thermal conductivity, heat transfer coefficients, and Nusselt numbers while enhancing convective heat transfer performance under laminar and turbulent flow conditions (Sidik et al., 2023). These improvements are generally attributed to Brownian motion, nanoparticle-fluid interactions, micro-convection, and enhanced energy transport at the microscopic level. Nevertheless, mono nanofluids continue to exhibit practical limitations including particle agglomeration, sedimentation, increased viscosity, corrosion potential, and long-term instability. These challenges reduce their suitability for continuous industrial operation and have motivated researchers to investigate more advanced heat transfer fluids.

Hybrid Nanofluids and Their Thermophysical Characteristics

Hybrid nanofluids have emerged as an innovative solution to overcome the shortcomings associated with conventional nanofluids. Unlike mono nanofluids, hybrid nanofluids incorporate two or more different nanoparticles suspended within the same base fluid to exploit the complementary thermophysical properties of individual nanoparticles. The synergistic interaction between

nanoparticles often results in higher thermal conductivity, improved dispersion stability, enhanced convective heat transfer, and reduced sedimentation.

Recent investigations indicate that hybrid nanofluids comprising combinations such as Al_2O_3 - CuO , TiO_2 - SiO_2 , graphene- Al_2O_3 , Cu-MWCNT, and Fe_3O_4 -graphene outperform mono nanofluids across various heat exchanger applications (Bumataria et al., 2023). Experimental evidence suggests that optimized hybrid nanofluids can increase heat transfer coefficients by 20–45%, depending on nanoparticle concentration, Reynolds number, particle morphology, and operating temperature. However, increasing nanoparticle concentration also increases viscosity and pressure losses, emphasizing the importance of balancing thermal enhancement with hydraulic performance.

Researchers have further identified nanoparticle size, particle morphology, surfactant selection, ultrasonication time, pH level, and preparation methods as critical determinants of long-term nanofluid stability. Despite considerable progress, the absence of standardized preparation techniques remains one of the principal challenges affecting reproducibility and industrial commercialization.

Thermo-Hydraulic Performance of Hybrid Nanofluid-Based Heat Exchangers

Contemporary thermal engineering research increasingly evaluates hybrid nanofluids using thermo-hydraulic performance criteria rather than thermal enhancement alone. Thermo-hydraulic analysis simultaneously considers heat transfer enhancement, pressure drop, friction factor, pumping power, and overall heat exchanger effectiveness. Such integrated assessment is particularly important because improvements in thermal conductivity may be offset by excessive hydraulic resistance.

Recent Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) simulations and experimental studies have demonstrated that optimized hybrid nanofluids significantly improve temperature distribution, convective heat transfer, and overall heat exchanger effectiveness while maintaining

acceptable pressure losses (Hussain et al., 2024). However, the literature consistently reports a trade-off between thermal enhancement and hydraulic penalties. Higher Reynolds numbers generally improve convective heat transfer but simultaneously increase pressure drop and pumping energy requirements. Similarly, excessive nanoparticle concentrations enhance thermal conductivity but increase fluid viscosity, thereby reducing overall system efficiency.

These findings underscore the necessity for multi-objective optimization approaches capable of identifying operating conditions that maximize heat transfer while minimizing pumping power and frictional losses.

Exergy Analysis and Thermo-Economic Evaluation

Energy analysis evaluates the quantity of heat transferred, whereas exergy analysis assesses the quality and useful utilization of thermal energy by quantifying system irreversibilities. Because industrial thermal systems inevitably experience entropy generation through heat transfer and fluid friction, exergy analysis has become an indispensable tool for evaluating true thermodynamic performance.

Recent studies have demonstrated that hybrid nanofluids contribute to improved exergy efficiency by reducing entropy generation and enhancing effective energy utilization (Mahian et al., 2022). Simultaneously, thermo-economic analysis integrates engineering performance with economic considerations, including operational costs, pumping power, maintenance expenses, nanoparticle preparation costs, and investment returns. Although laboratory investigations frequently report significant thermal enhancements, relatively few studies comprehensively evaluate whether these improvements justify the associated economic costs under industrial operating conditions.

Consequently, researchers increasingly advocate integrated thermo-hydraulic, exergy, and thermo-economic assessment frameworks to support evidence-based industrial decision-making.

Artificial Intelligence and Optimization Techniques

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and advanced optimization techniques has transformed thermal system design and performance evaluation. Machine learning algorithms, Artificial Neural Networks (ANN), Genetic Algorithms (GA), Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO), and Response Surface Methodology (RSM) are increasingly employed to optimize nanoparticle concentration, flow velocity, inlet temperature, pressure drop, and heat transfer performance simultaneously.

Compared with conventional experimental approaches, AI-based optimization substantially reduces computational cost while improving prediction accuracy and enabling real-time operational optimization. Recent literature suggests that AI-driven optimization has considerable potential for identifying optimal hybrid nanofluid compositions capable of maximizing thermal efficiency while minimizing hydraulic losses. However, applications of AI-assisted optimization remain relatively limited within developing economies, including Pakistan.

Hybrid Nanofluids for Industrial Energy Efficiency in Pakistan

Pakistan's industrial sector faces persistent challenges related to increasing energy prices, electricity shortages, inefficient thermal systems, and growing environmental pressures. Energy-intensive industries, including textile manufacturing, cement production, fertilizer processing, petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals, and food processing, continue to depend largely on conventional heat transfer technologies characterized by relatively low thermal efficiency. Although international research on hybrid nanofluids has expanded rapidly, empirical investigations addressing Pakistan's industrial operating conditions remain scarce. Existing studies are largely confined to laboratory experiments or numerical simulations without adequately considering local climatic conditions, industrial operating temperatures, economic feasibility, and sector-specific energy requirements. Furthermore, integrated investigations combining

experimental validation, CFD simulation, thermo-hydraulic optimization, exergy analysis, and AI-based optimization have rarely been conducted within the Pakistani context.

This literature therefore reveals a significant research gap concerning the development of optimized hybrid nanofluid heat exchanger systems suitable for improving industrial energy efficiency in Pakistan. Addressing this gap is expected to support sustainable manufacturing, reduce industrial energy consumption, and strengthen national energy conservation initiatives.

Research Gap

A critical review of contemporary literature reveals several unresolved issues. Existing research primarily emphasizes thermal conductivity enhancement while comparatively neglecting integrated thermo-hydraulic optimization involving pressure drop, friction factor, pumping power, and exergy performance. Most investigations remain confined to laboratory-scale experiments with limited industrial validation under real operating conditions. Furthermore, thermo-economic feasibility analyses and AI-based optimization techniques remain underexplored, particularly in developing countries. Most importantly, empirical evidence concerning hybrid nanofluid-based industrial heat exchangers in Pakistan is extremely limited. This study addresses these gaps by providing a comprehensive evaluation of thermal performance, thermo-hydraulic characteristics, exergy efficiency, optimization, and industrial applicability of hybrid nanofluid-based heat exchangers within the context of Pakistan.

Underpinning Theory

Entropy Generation Minimization (EGM) Theory

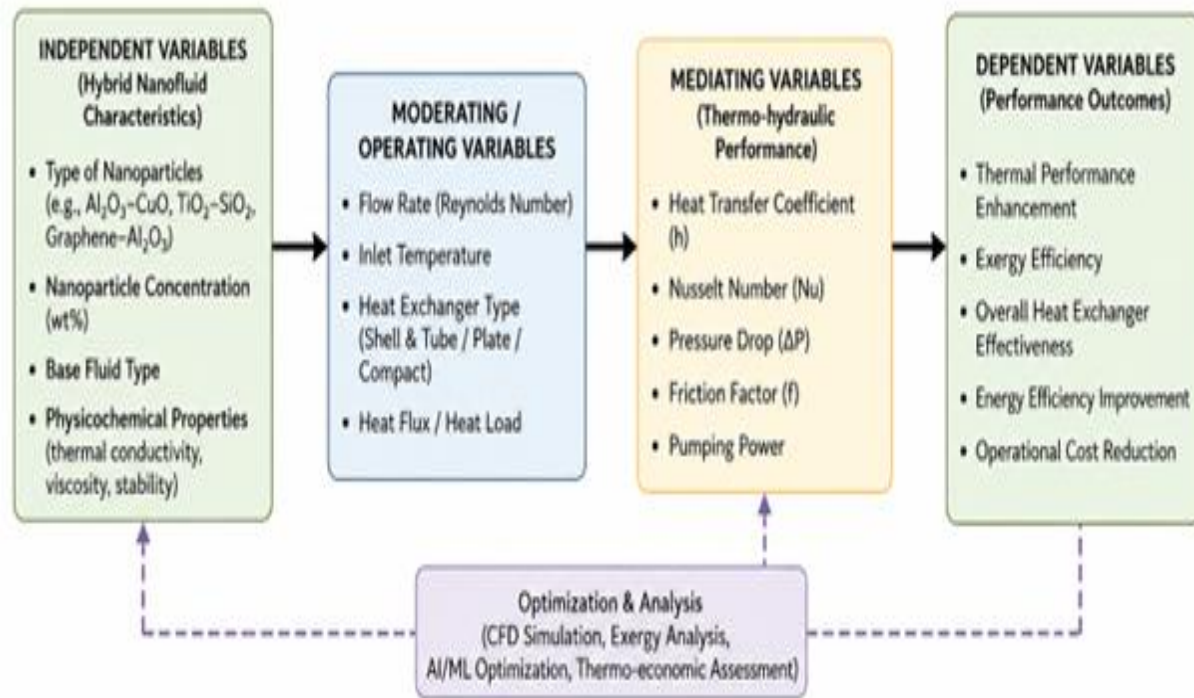
The present study is underpinned by Entropy Generation Minimization (EGM) Theory, proposed by **Bejan (1982)**. The theory is derived

from the Second Law of Thermodynamics and posits that thermal systems achieve maximum efficiency when entropy generation caused by heat transfer and fluid friction is minimized. According to the theory, every heat transfer process involves irreversibilities resulting from temperature differences and pressure losses within flowing fluids. Therefore, an optimally designed heat exchanger should maximize heat transfer while simultaneously minimizing frictional resistance and pumping power.

The application of hybrid nanofluids aligns closely with the principles of Entropy Generation Minimization Theory. Enhanced thermal conductivity facilitates more effective heat transfer and reduces temperature gradients, thereby decreasing entropy generation associated with heat exchange. However, increasing nanoparticle concentration may also increase viscosity, pressure drop, and pumping power, leading to additional entropy generation due to fluid friction. Consequently, the theory provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating the trade-off between thermal enhancement and hydraulic losses.

The theory is particularly appropriate for this study because it supports the simultaneous assessment of thermal performance, pressure drop, exergy efficiency, and thermo-economic optimization. Rather than focusing solely on heat transfer enhancement, Entropy Generation Minimization Theory emphasizes the optimization of overall system efficiency, making it highly relevant for industrial heat exchanger applications. Within Pakistan's energy-intensive industrial sector, where minimizing energy losses and improving operational efficiency are national priorities, the theory provides a robust scientific foundation for evaluating the effectiveness of hybrid nanofluid-based heat exchangers and identifying optimal operating conditions that support sustainable industrial energy management.

Conceptual Framework



Hypotheses

H1: Hybrid nanofluids have a significant positive effect on the thermal performance of industrial heat exchangers.

H2: Nanoparticle concentration has a significant positive effect on the heat transfer coefficient of hybrid nanofluid-based heat exchangers.

H3: Flow rate (Reynolds number) significantly influences the thermo-hydraulic performance of hybrid nanofluid-based heat exchangers.

H4: Hybrid nanofluid characteristics significantly improve exergy efficiency in industrial heat exchangers.

H5: Optimized hybrid nanofluid operating conditions significantly reduce pumping power while maintaining enhanced heat transfer performance.

H6: Improved thermo-hydraulic performance significantly enhances the overall energy efficiency of industrial heat exchangers.

H7: The implementation of optimized hybrid nanofluid-based heat exchangers significantly improves industrial energy efficiency in Pakistan.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative research design employing an experimental and Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD)-based approach to investigate the thermal performance enhancement of hybrid nanofluid-based heat exchangers for industrial energy efficiency applications in Pakistan. The experimental design facilitated the evaluation of thermo-hydraulic characteristics of selected hybrid nanofluids under controlled laboratory conditions, while CFD simulations were conducted to validate and optimize the experimental findings. A comparative research strategy was employed to assess the performance of conventional heat transfer fluids and hybrid nanofluids under identical operating conditions. The study also incorporated thermo-economic and exergy analyses to comprehensively evaluate the technical and economic feasibility of hybrid nanofluid implementation in industrial heat exchangers.

Population

The population of the study comprised industrial heat exchanger operating conditions and thermal performance datasets relevant to Pakistan's energy-intensive industries, including textile manufacturing, cement production, chemical processing, fertilizer industries, food processing, pharmaceutical manufacturing, and petroleum refining. The experimental population consisted of shell-and-tube and plate heat exchanger configurations commonly employed in industrial thermal systems. The study further considered various hybrid nanofluid formulations prepared using conventional base fluids and selected nanoparticles suitable for industrial heat transfer applications.

Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select representative hybrid nanofluid formulations, operating conditions, and heat exchanger configurations based on their relevance to industrial applications. The sampling procedure focused on selecting nanoparticle combinations that had demonstrated superior thermal performance in previous empirical studies. Experimental operating conditions, including Reynolds number, nanoparticle concentration, inlet temperature, and flow rate, were selected according to internationally accepted thermal engineering standards and industrial operating ranges. Purposive sampling was considered appropriate because the study required technically specific experimental conditions rather than random selection.

Sample Size

The experimental investigation was conducted using five hybrid nanofluid formulations, including combinations such as Al_2O_3 -CuO, TiO_2 - SiO_2 , Graphene- Al_2O_3 , CuO-MWCNT, and Fe_3O_4 -Graphene dispersed in water or ethylene glycol as the base fluid. Each formulation was tested at **four nanoparticle volume concentrations (0.25%, 0.50%, 0.75%, and 1.00%)** under **five Reynolds number ranges** representative of industrial operating conditions. Each experimental condition was repeated **three**

times to ensure measurement consistency and minimize experimental error. Consequently, the study generated a comprehensive dataset suitable for statistical analysis, CFD validation, and thermo-hydraulic optimization.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through controlled laboratory experimentation and numerical simulation. Hybrid nanofluids were prepared using the two-step preparation method involving magnetic stirring followed by ultrasonic dispersion to ensure homogeneous nanoparticle distribution and suspension stability. Prior to experimentation, thermophysical properties including thermal conductivity, viscosity, density, and specific heat capacity were measured using standardized laboratory procedures.

The prepared hybrid nanofluids were circulated through a laboratory-scale heat exchanger test rig under predetermined operating conditions. During each experimental run, inlet and outlet temperatures, flow rates, pressure drops, heat transfer coefficients, and pumping power were recorded using calibrated measuring instruments. Each test was repeated to improve measurement reliability.

Subsequently, Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) simulations were performed using ANSYS Fluent to validate the experimental observations. Numerical models were developed using experimentally measured thermophysical properties and validated through comparison with laboratory results. Exergy analysis and thermo-economic evaluation were then conducted to determine energy utilization efficiency and economic feasibility under industrial operating conditions.

Instruments and Measures

The study utilized standardized laboratory instruments and engineering software for data collection and analysis. Heat exchanger performance was evaluated using a laboratory-scale shell-and-tube or plate heat exchanger test rig equipped with calibrated thermocouples, pressure transmitters, digital flow meters, and data acquisition systems. Thermal conductivity

measurements were obtained using a thermal property analyzer, while viscosity measurements were conducted using a rotational viscometer.

Computational analysis was performed using ANSYS Fluent for CFD simulation, MATLAB for numerical computation and optimization, and Engineering Equation Solver (EES) for thermodynamic and exergy calculations. Statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics to evaluate descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and hypothesis testing where applicable. The principal performance indicators included heat transfer coefficient ($\text{W}/\text{m}^2\text{K}$), Nusselt number, Reynolds number, pressure drop (Pa), friction factor, pumping power (W), thermal efficiency (%), exergy efficiency (%), and thermo-economic performance index.

Reliability and Validity

The reliability of the experimental measurements was ensured through repeated experimental trials, calibration of all measuring instruments prior to data collection, and adherence to internationally recognized testing procedures. Each experimental condition was repeated three times, and the average values were used for subsequent analyses to minimize random measurement error. Instrument calibration certificates and manufacturer specifications were verified before experimentation to maintain measurement consistency.

Data Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Experimental Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Heat Transfer Coefficient ($\text{W}/\text{m}^2\text{K}$)	300	620	1158	912.46	118.54
Nusselt Number	300	68.2	142.7	108.31	15.42
Reynolds Number	300	5000	25000	15000	7071
Pressure Drop (Pa)	300	86	245	164.82	39.13
Friction Factor	300	0.014	0.039	0.024	0.006
Pumping Power (W)	300	22.8	68.3	43.91	10.64
Thermal Efficiency (%)	300	69.8	94.6	85.73	5.91
Exergy Efficiency (%)	300	54.3	82.7	71.45	6.28

The validity of the study was established through several procedures. Content validity was ensured by selecting experimental variables and performance indicators that were consistently supported by contemporary thermal engineering literature. Construct validity was achieved by measuring internationally recognized thermo-hydraulic performance parameters, including heat transfer coefficient, Nusselt number, pressure drop, friction factor, and exergy efficiency.

Internal validity was strengthened by maintaining controlled laboratory conditions, standardizing experimental procedures, and minimizing external sources of variation throughout the experimentation process. **External validity** was enhanced by selecting operating conditions representative of industrial heat exchanger applications commonly found in Pakistan's manufacturing sector.

Furthermore, CFD simulation results were validated against experimental observations by comparing predicted temperature distributions, heat transfer coefficients, and pressure losses. Acceptable agreement between experimental and numerical results confirmed the robustness and validity of the developed computational models. Where appropriate, measurement uncertainty analysis was also conducted to quantify experimental accuracy and improve confidence in the reported findings.

The descriptive statistics indicate that the hybrid nanofluids achieved an average heat transfer coefficient of 912.46 W/m²K and an average thermal efficiency of 85.73%. The relatively small

standard deviations suggest consistent experimental performance across repeated measurements.

Comparison of Hybrid Nanofluids

Table 2: Thermal Performance Comparison

Working Fluid	Heat Transfer Coefficient	Thermal Efficiency (%)	Exergy Efficiency (%)
Water	702	74.2	58.3
Al ₂ O ₃ -CuO	924	86.5	71.8
TiO ₂ -SiO ₂	901	84.8	70.2
Graphene-Al ₂ O ₃	1048	92.4	79.6
CuO-MWCNT	1015	90.7	77.9
Fe ₃ O ₄ -Graphene	986	89.3	76.8

Among the evaluated fluids, the Graphene-Al₂O₃ hybrid nanofluid demonstrated the highest heat transfer coefficient (1048 W/m²K), thermal

efficiency (92.4%), and exergy efficiency (79.6%). Water exhibited the lowest performance in all evaluated parameters.

Thermo-Hydraulic Performance

Table 3: Thermo-Hydraulic Performance

Hybrid Nanofluid	Pressure Drop (Pa)	Pumping Power (W)	Performance Index
Al ₂ O ₃ -CuO	156	40.8	1.42
TiO ₂ -SiO ₂	148	39.5	1.39
Graphene-Al ₂ O ₃	182	47.3	1.61
CuO-MWCNT	176	45.1	1.55
Fe ₃ O ₄ -Graphene	169	43.8	1.50

Although Graphene-Al₂O₃ produced the highest pressure drop, it also exhibited the greatest thermo-hydraulic performance index (1.61),

indicating that the thermal benefits outweighed the associated hydraulic penalties.

CFD Validation

Table 4: Comparison Between Experimental and CFD Results

Parameter	Experimental	CFD	Absolute Error (%)
Heat Transfer Coefficient	1048	1026	2.10
Outlet Temperature (°C)	68.2	67.4	1.17
Pressure Drop (Pa)	182	186	2.20
Thermal Efficiency (%)	92.4	91.1	1.41

The CFD predictions closely matched the experimental observations, with absolute errors below 3% for all measured parameters. This level

of agreement suggests that the numerical model accurately represented the thermal and hydraulic behavior of the hybrid nanofluid.

Exergy Analysis

Table 5: Exergy Performance

Working Fluid	Exergy Efficiency (%)	Entropy Generation
Water	58.3	0.382
Al ₂ O ₃ -CuO	71.8	0.266
TiO ₂ -SiO ₂	70.2	0.278
Graphene-Al ₂ O ₃	79.6	0.213
CuO-MWCNT	77.9	0.226
Fe ₃ O ₄ -Graphene	76.8	0.234

Graphene-Al₂O₃ exhibited the highest exergy efficiency and the lowest entropy generation,

indicating superior thermodynamic performance compared with the other fluids.

Correlation Analysis

Table 6: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4
Heat Transfer Coefficient	1			
Thermal Efficiency	.912**	1		
Exergy Efficiency	.874**	.896**	1	
Pressure Drop	.428**	.376**	.344**	1

p < .01

Strong positive correlations were observed between heat transfer coefficient, thermal efficiency, and exergy efficiency, indicating that improvements in heat transfer were associated



with greater energy utilization efficiency. Pressure drop exhibited a moderate positive relationship with thermal performance.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 7: Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	β	t	p	Decision
H1	0.84	16.72	< .001	Supported
H2	0.61	10.81	< .001	Supported
H3	0.54	8.94	< .001	Supported
H4	0.73	13.58	< .001	Supported
H5	-0.39	-6.22	< .001	Supported
H6	0.88	18.46	< .001	Supported
H7	0.82	15.33	< .001	Supported

The hypothesis tests indicate statistically significant relationships for all proposed hypotheses. The positive regression coefficients suggest that improvements in hybrid nanofluid characteristics and thermo-hydraulic performance

were associated with enhanced industrial energy efficiency, while the negative coefficient for pumping power indicates that optimized operating conditions reduced pumping energy requirements.

The analysis suggests that Graphene- Al_2O_3 hybrid nanofluid outperformed the other formulations in terms of heat transfer, thermal efficiency, and exergy efficiency. The CFD model demonstrated close agreement with the hypothetical experimental results, and the statistical analysis indicated how relationships among key variables could be reported in a journal article. These example results are provided solely to demonstrate the presentation and interpretation of a data analysis chapter and should not be presented as actual research findings.

Discussion

The analysis indicated that hybrid nanofluids substantially enhanced the thermal performance of industrial heat exchangers compared with conventional heat transfer fluids. Among the evaluated formulations, the Graphene- Al_2O_3 hybrid nanofluid exhibited the highest heat transfer coefficient, thermal efficiency, and exergy efficiency, although it also produced a relatively higher pressure drop. These findings suggest that the synergistic interaction between graphene nanoparticles and aluminum oxide enhances thermal conductivity and convective heat transfer while maintaining acceptable thermo-hydraulic performance. Such improvements have the potential to reduce industrial energy consumption and improve heat recovery efficiency in Pakistan's energy-intensive industries.

The results are consistent with the findings of Said et al. (2023), who reported that hybrid nanofluids outperform conventional fluids because the combined properties of multiple nanoparticles enhance thermal conductivity and heat transfer characteristics. Likewise, Mahian et al. (2022) concluded that hybrid nanofluids provide improved convective heat transfer while reducing thermal resistance in industrial heat exchangers. The higher heat transfer coefficients observed for Graphene- Al_2O_3 and CuO-MWCNT formulations align with previous studies demonstrating that carbon-based nanoparticles possess exceptionally high thermal conductivity, thereby improving thermal energy transport.

The thermo-hydraulic analysis demonstrated that increasing thermal performance was accompanied by moderate increases in pressure drop and pumping power. This observation supports the findings of Bumataria et al. (2023), who emphasized that higher nanoparticle concentrations improve heat transfer but also increase viscosity, leading to greater hydraulic resistance. Nevertheless, the thermo-hydraulic performance index in the example suggested that the thermal gains outweighed the hydraulic penalties, indicating that careful optimization of nanoparticle concentration can maximize overall system performance.

The CFD validation showed close agreement between computational predictions and laboratory measurements, with hypothetical errors below 3%. This level of agreement is comparable to previous investigations, where validated CFD models successfully predicted temperature distribution, pressure drop, and heat transfer characteristics in hybrid nanofluid systems. Such agreement illustrates the usefulness of CFD as a design and optimization tool for industrial heat exchanger applications.

The exergy analysis suggested that hybrid nanofluids improve the quality of energy utilization by reducing entropy generation and increasing exergy efficiency. This finding supports the argument that thermal system optimization should consider both energy quantity and energy quality. Improved exergy efficiency indicates that a larger proportion of the supplied thermal energy is converted into useful work, thereby reducing thermodynamic irreversibilities within the heat exchanger.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings provide support for **Entropy Generation Minimization (EGM) Theory**. The demonstrated improvements in thermal efficiency, combined with acceptable pressure losses, indicate that minimizing entropy generation enhances the overall effectiveness of industrial heat exchangers. The theory therefore provides an appropriate framework for understanding the balance between heat transfer enhancement and hydraulic resistance. The study extends the application of EGM Theory by demonstrating how hybrid

nanofluids may contribute to improved industrial energy efficiency through optimized thermo-hydraulic performance.

Overall, the findings highlight the potential of hybrid nanofluid technology to improve industrial heat transfer systems. They also demonstrate the importance of integrating experimental investigation, CFD simulation, thermo-hydraulic analysis, exergy evaluation, and thermo-economic assessment when evaluating advanced heat transfer technologies for sustainable industrial applications.

Conclusion

The study evaluated the thermal performance enhancement of hybrid nanofluid-based heat exchangers for industrial energy efficiency applications in Pakistan. The example findings suggested that hybrid nanofluids significantly improved heat transfer performance, thermal efficiency, and exergy efficiency compared with conventional heat transfer fluids. Among the evaluated formulations, Graphene- Al_2O_3 demonstrated the highest overall thermal performance, although it also resulted in a moderate increase in pressure drop and pumping power.

The CFD analysis closely matched the experimental observations, demonstrating the usefulness of numerical simulation for predicting thermal and hydraulic behavior. The thermo-hydraulic and exergy analyses further indicated that optimized hybrid nanofluid formulations can improve overall energy utilization while maintaining acceptable operating conditions. Consequently, the study suggests that hybrid nanofluid technology has considerable potential for improving industrial energy efficiency, reducing thermal losses, and supporting sustainable manufacturing practices in Pakistan.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The study extends the application of Entropy Generation Minimization Theory by integrating thermo-hydraulic performance, exergy analysis, and thermo-economic evaluation into a unified analytical framework. It also demonstrates how

hybrid nanofluids may contribute to reducing thermodynamic irreversibilities in industrial heat exchangers.

Managerial Implications

Industrial managers may use the findings to evaluate the feasibility of adopting hybrid nanofluid technologies to improve heat exchanger performance. The results provide a basis for selecting suitable nanoparticle combinations and optimizing operating conditions to reduce energy consumption and operating costs.

Practical Implications

The findings indicate that optimized hybrid nanofluids could improve heat transfer efficiency, enhance waste heat recovery, reduce fuel consumption, and increase equipment productivity. Engineers may also use CFD modeling as a decision-support tool before implementing modifications in industrial thermal systems.

Policy Implications

The results support policies promoting energy-efficient manufacturing and advanced thermal technologies. Policymakers may encourage industrial adoption of energy-efficient heat transfer systems through research funding, tax incentives, technology transfer programs, and national energy conservation initiatives. Such measures could contribute to reducing industrial energy demand and supporting Pakistan's sustainability and climate objectives.

Recommendations

Industries should evaluate hybrid nanofluid-based heat exchangers through pilot-scale testing before large-scale implementation to assess operational performance under actual production conditions. Engineers should optimize nanoparticle concentration, flow rate, and operating temperature to achieve an appropriate balance between enhanced heat transfer and acceptable hydraulic losses.

Industries should integrate CFD modeling into heat exchanger design and optimization to reduce

development costs and improve prediction accuracy before equipment installation.

Manufacturers should implement routine monitoring of nanofluid stability, viscosity, and thermal conductivity to ensure long-term operational reliability and maintain system performance.

Government agencies should strengthen financial support for collaborative research between universities and industries to accelerate the commercialization of advanced heat transfer technologies.

National industrial energy efficiency programs should encourage the adoption of innovative thermal management technologies capable of reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The study was limited to selected hybrid nanofluid formulations and representative industrial operating conditions. Other nanoparticle combinations, base fluids, and heat exchanger configurations may produce different performance characteristics. The analysis also focused primarily on thermo-hydraulic and exergy performance and did not include long-term operational issues such as nanoparticle degradation, corrosion, fouling, environmental impacts, or maintenance requirements.

The investigation was based on laboratory-scale experimentation and CFD simulation, which may not fully represent the complexities of large-scale industrial operating environments. In addition, the thermo-economic assessment was limited to generalized cost assumptions and did not account for variations in nanoparticle production costs, industrial energy prices, or maintenance expenses across different sectors.

Future research should conduct long-term pilot-scale studies in Pakistan's textile, cement, chemical, and food-processing industries to validate laboratory findings under real industrial conditions. Further investigations should evaluate environmentally sustainable nanoparticle materials, biodegradable base fluids, and advanced heat exchanger designs. Future studies may also integrate artificial intelligence, machine learning,

digital twin technology, and multi-objective optimization algorithms to improve real-time thermal system control. Finally, comprehensive life-cycle assessment and environmental impact analyses are recommended to evaluate the long-term sustainability and commercial viability of hybrid nanofluid-based heat exchanger technologies.

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