

PLANAR ELECTROMAGNETIC SENSORS ARRAY FOR NITRATE AND  
SULPHATE DETECTION

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Specially dedicated to *Umi* and *Abah*  
Greatest physical and mental supporters

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## ABSTRACT

This work expounds the development of three types of sensor arrays based on planar electromagnetic for environmental monitoring. Three types of sensor array are proposed: parallel, star, and delta. The modeling and simulation of all types of sensor array have been carried out to calculate the sensor's impedance value. The contamination state has been simulated by altering the electrical property values of the environment at the model subdomain to represent water contamination. The simulation results agree with the experimental trends. The star array configuration shows the highest simulated inductance and capacitance responses with the best signal strength and sensitivity. Moreover, experiments have been conducted to determine the relationship between sensor's impedance and water contamination due to nitrate and sulphate. The sensors have been tested with added distilled water with different concentrations of nitrate and sulphate to observe the system performance. Experimental results show that the best sensor is the star array planar electromagnetic sensor. Artificial Neural Networks (ANN) is used to classify different levels of nitrate and sulphate contaminations in water sources. The impedance of star array planar electromagnetic sensors was derived to decompose by Wavelet Transform (WT). Classification of WT has been applied to extract output signal features. These features are fed into ANN to classify different nitrate and sulphate concentration levels in water. The model is capable of distinguishing contaminants concentration level in the presence of other types of contaminants with a Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) of 0.0132 with 98.68% accuracy.

## ABSTRAK

Kerja ini membicarakan penghasilan tiga jenis penderia berdasarkan susunan penderia elektromagnetik satah untuk pemantauan alam sekitar. Tiga jenis susunan penderia telah dicadangkan: selari, bintang, dan delta. Pemodelan dan simulasi terhadap semua jenis susunan penderia telah dijalankan untuk mengira nilai galangan penderia. Tahap pencemaran dalam simulasi boleh diubah dengan menukar nilai parameter elektrik pada domain sekeliling model penderia yang mewakili pencemaran air. Keputusan simulasi menunjukkan persetujuan dengan pola eksperimen. Susunan bintang telah menunjukkan nilai tindakbalas simulasi yang tinggi terhadap induktor dan kapasitor di samping mempunyai nilai kekuatan isyarat dan sensitiviti yang terbaik. Tambahan pula, eksperimen telah dijalankan untuk menentukan hubungkait antara galangan penderia dan air yang tercemar dengan nitrat dan sulfat. Penderia ini telah diuji dengan kemasukan air suling yang mempunyai kelarutan nitrat dan sulfat yang berbeza untuk mengenalpasti prestasi sistem. Keputusan eksperimen menunjukkan penderia terbaik adalah penderia satah elektromagnetik dengan susunan bintang. Rangkaian Neural Buatan (ANN) digunakan untuk mengklasifikasikan tahap pencemaran nitrat dan sulfat di dalam sumber air. Nilai galangan penderia satah elektromagnetik bintang telah diterbitkan untuk diuraikan oleh Penjelmaan Wavelet (WT). Pengasingan WT telah diaplikasikan untuk mengakstrak ciri-ciri pada isyarat keluaran. Ciri-ciri isyarat keluaran dimasukkan kepada ANN untuk pengkelasan tahap pencemaran nitrat dan sulfat yang berbeza di dalam air. Model ini mampu membezakan tahap kelarutan pencemaran dengan kehadiran bahan pencemaran lain sebanyak 0.0132 Ralat Punca Min Kuasa Dua (RMSE) dengan ketepatan sebanyak 98.68%.

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<i>FIA</i>	-	Flow Injection Analysis
<i>ICA</i>	-	Independent Component Analysis
<i>WT</i>	-	Wavelet Transform
<i>ANN</i>	-	Artificial Neural Network
<i>FEM</i>	-	Finite Element Method
<i>ppm</i>	-	Part per million
<i>metHb</i>	-	Methaheamoglobin
<i>oxyHb</i>	-	Oxygenheamoglobin
<i>ISE</i>	-	Ion Selective Electrode
<i>PVC</i>	-	Polyvine
<i>PTFE</i>	-	Polytetrafluoroethylene
<i>CMC</i>	-	Carboxymethylcellulose
<i>CPE</i>	-	Carbon Paste Electrode
<i>PCA</i>	-	Principle Component Analysis
<i>KPCA</i>	-	Kernal Principle Component Analysis
<i>IC</i>	-	Independent Component
<i>PDF</i>	-	Probabily Density Function
<i>fastICA</i>	-	Fast-point algorithm
<i>FFNN</i>	-	Feed Forward Neural Network
<i>RNN</i>	-	Recurrent Neural Network
<i>MLP</i>	-	Multilayer Perceptron
<i>SMD</i>	-	Surface Mount Resistor
<i>PCB</i>	-	Printed-on Circuit Board
<i>FGMRES</i>	-	Flexible Generalized Minimum Residual
<i>PC</i>	-	Personal Computer
<i>RMS</i>	-	Relative Mean Square

<i>BP</i>	-	Back Propagation
<i>MSE</i>	-	Mean Square Error
<i>CWT</i>	-	Continuous Wavelet Transform
<i>RMSE</i>	-	Relative Mean Square Error
<i>LM</i>	-	Local Minima
<i>MEMS</i>	-	Micro Electro Mechanical System



## LIST OF SYMBOLS

$km^3$	-	Cubic kilometre
$mg/L$	-	Milligram per litre
$mg/kg$	-	Milligram per kilogram
$Fe^{2+}$	-	Iron (II) ion
$Fe^{3+}$	-	Iron (III) ion
$NO_2^-$	-	Nitrate ion
$NO_3^-$	-	Nitrite ion
$H^+$	-	Hydrogen ion
$Fe_2O_3$	-	Iron (II) oxide
$CoO$	-	Cobalt oxide
$x_i$	-	Input for neural network
$w_{ji}$	-	Weight in the neuron
$A_j$	-	Activation function
$O_j$	-	Output function
$d_j$	-	Desired output value
$D_j$	-	Error function
$S_1$	-	Sensor $S_1$
$S_2$	-	Sensor $S_2$
$S_3$	-	Sensor $S_3$
$R_1$	-	Resistor for $S_1$
$R_2$	-	Resistor for $S_2$
$R_3$	-	Resistor for $S_3$
$3D$	-	Three dimension
$\sigma$	-	Electrical conductivity
$\epsilon_r$	-	Relative permittivity
$\mu_r$	-	Relative permeability
$^{\circ}K$	-	Degree Kelvin
$atm$	-	Atmospheric pressure

$J$	-	Current density
$E$	-	Electric field intensity
$J_e$	-	External current density
$B$	-	Magnetic field density
$A$	-	Magnetic vector potentials
$V$	-	Electric scalar potential of conductor
$I$	-	Induced current
$S$	-	Surface
$dS$	-	Surface element of the surface $S$
$V_{induced}$	-	Induced voltage across the sensor
$N$	-	Number of turns in the conductor
$E_x$	-	Electrical fields for $x$ component
$E_y$	-	Electrical fields for $y$ component
$E_z$	-	Electrical fields for $z$ component
$i_x$	-	Current direction at $x$
$i_y$	-	Current direction at $y$
$i_z$	-	Current direction at $z$
$A_i$	-	Cross sectional area at the respective $i^{th}$ element
$m^2$	-	Metre square
$I_o$	-	Current through terminal
$V_{S1}$	-	Voltage across the sensor $S_1$
$V_{S2}$	-	Voltage across the sensor $S_2$
$V_{S3}$	-	Voltage across the sensor $S_3$
$V_1$	-	Voltage across the source terminal
$I_1$	-	Current that flow through sensor $S_1$
$I Vs. U$	-	Voltage different across two point
$L_{S1}$	-	Inductance for sensor $S_1$
$w_m$	-	Magnetic energy stored in the system
$C_{S1}$	-	Capacitance value for sensor $S_1$
$f$	-	Operating frequency
$X_{total,1}$	-	Total imaginary of impedance for sensor $S_1$
$t_{samplerate}$	-	Sampling time
$F_n$	-	Fourier Transform
$f_k$	-	Data point
$f_{desiredfrequency}$	-	Desired frequency for the respective sample

$y$	-	Weight of the sample in gram
$x$	-	The desired ppm value
$Z\%$	-	Impedance sensitivity
$(Z_{total,S})_{sample}$	-	Impedance of the test sample
$(Z_{total,S})_{distilled}$	-	Impedance of the distilled water
$O$	-	Output of the network
$T$	-	Target output
$t$	-	time
$\alpha$	-	Rate of learning
$g$	-	Gradient vector
$w_t$	-	Current weight matrix
$a$	-	scale
$b$	-	translation
$KNO_3$	-	Potassium nitrate
$K_2SO_4$	-	Potassium sulphate
$\%Z''$	-	Normalized second derivative of impedance of sensor
$A4$	-	Approximation at level 4
$D3$	-	Details at level 3
$D1$	-	Details at level 1

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Research Background**

The freshwater resources in the world are approximately 2.53% of the world water sources [1]. From these freshwater, only 29.9% and 0.29% came from ground water and freshwater respectively for daily life activities. Clean water is a basic necessity for human beings to survive. Clean water is a ground or fresh water that's been treated. Humans need water for cooking, sports, recreation, etc. Meanwhile, other wildlife such as fish and shrimp depend on clean water for survival. Food sources such as fish that come from good sources can help people to get a good meal that contains proteins and other beneficial nutrients which are needed by the body.

In a normal water cycle where water is free from contaminants, water that falls as rain is absorbed by soil and is used by plants to continue blooming green. Besides, the rain water will continue to flow into the nearest body of water sources. Reservoir water such as rivers, seas and lakes would evaporate by the heat of the hot sun into the sky and will fall back into the earth as rain when the time comes. This process will be repeated and continued. Due to human civilization, the main stream and others reservoir water could be contaminated by foreign substances.

The human civilization process will keep moving forward which makes human life become more sophisticated, comfortable, easier and simple. Human civilizations resulted in the industrial, agricultural and farm areas expanding tremendously [2]. Expansion in those areas will increase the probability of water being contaminated by foreign substances such as nitrate, sulphate, nickel, phosphorus and zinc. These foreign substances come from the unused or waste product of the industry.

Foreign substances such as nitrate, nickel and sulphate could cause adverse effect to human health. The problem is compounded by the fact that these substances could not be seen by the eye. Many researchers have created devices that could detect the presence of these contaminated substances in water [3].

One of these device is known as the planar electromagnetic sensor which can calibrate the impedance of the water [4]. Different types of contaminants would have different impedance values. These are due to the different electrical properties of each substances.

However, the problem with the planar electromagnetic sensor is that it takes a lot of time to acquire data. Due to this disadvantage, this research aims to develop a planar electromagnetic sensor with different array configurations which could reduce the time taken for the sensor to perform measurement.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Reservoir water is always exposed to the unwanted or foreign substances resulting from the development in industrial and agricultural sector. Moreover, livestock also could contribute to the existence of sediment in natural water sources. Naturally, nitrate and sulphate are present in natural water resources. The presence of excessive unwanted substances such as nitrate, sulphate, phosphorus, nickel and zinc could cause adverse effect on human health. Hence, it is important to monitor and maintain the concentration of the unwanted foreign substances within the permitted amount.

Many researchers have come out with various solutions to monitor and detect the presence of unwanted material [3] as summarized in Table 1.1. However, the existing detection methods required tedious working steps and requiring meticulous lab working procedures [5]. In addition, the existing methods required preparation of extra reagent and consume a lot of time [6]. Furthermore, the test sample itself might be contaminated by unwanted substances during the preparation or testing of the sample [7].

**Table 1.1:** Advantages and disadvantages of available detection methods

Detection Methods	Advantage	Disadvantage
Potentiometry [83]	Provide high pH range and high sensitivity	Exposed toward emission of hazardous gases
Ion Chromatography [77]	Provide accurate and high reliability	Bulky and expensive equipments
Electrochemical [90-91]	Simple and small structure	Inaccurate result due to the presence of other type of ions
Biosensor [98]	Cheap and portable	Need controlled working environment
Flow Injection Analysis (FIA) [107]	Give fast response	High maintenance during breakdown

There have been a lot of concern developing a sensing system that can overcome the problem of detection methods as listed in Table 1.1. Therefore, the main problem is how to create a system that can detect nitrate and sulphate that has a better accuracy, low-cost and can produce a rapid measurement?

Looking at the disadvantages of other detection methods, the planar electromagnetic sensor has been used in determining the amount of contaminant in the water. Each contaminant has a unique criteria where different contaminant contain different electrical properties. This property makes the detection caused by induction of both electric and magnetic fields become possible. Planar electromagnetic sensors can be divided into two types: inductive and capacitive. Inductive and capacitive types of planar electromagnetic sensors occurred when either the magnetic or electric field

dominated the sensing area. The capacitive type sensor of planar electromagnetic are widely used in industry such as measurement of the level of pulp moisture [8], monitoring the growth of immobilized bacteria [9], human's food inspection [10], and skin water content that determine the human health status [11]. On the other hand, the inductive type sensors have been used as a proximity and displacement sensor [12], and inspection of different integrity of each coin [13]. Hence, it can be shown that capacitive and inductive type sensors are responsive to non-metal and metal, respectively.

By combining both types of inductive and capacitive sensors, it can estimate the relationship between sensor impedance with material under test electrical properties. Yunus *et. al.* [14] used a planar eletromagnetic sensor to estimate nitrate contamination in natural water sources. However, the planar electromagnetic sensor only provided one output channel.

Besides, previous planar electromagnetic used Independent Component Analysis (ICA) as a tool to estimate the contamination obtained from the sensor [15]. ICA is reported as a powerful tool due to its capability in reducing the dimension of the data during the analysis. The main problem in the later work was that the measurement had to be repeated many times to provide a sufficient data set for the analysis based on ICA. Therefore, three types of sensor arrays, were suggested in this thesis: parallel, star, and delta. Furthermore, the water samples with sensor arrays outputs dependency on the electrical properties of the water samples needs to be investigated thorough simulation and experimental works.

In this work, the outputs of a planar electromagnetic sensors array were observed and analyzed after testing it with different types of water samples at different concentrations of nitrate and sulphate. It is learnt from the outputs that sensitivity shows limited diferentiation between different concentrations of nitrate and sulphate. Therefore, the output parameters were derived to decompose by Wavelet Transform (WT) to obtain further informations from the sensor array outputs in order to provide sufficient inputs for the Artificial Neural Network. The energy and mean features of decomposed signals were extracted and used as inputs for an Artificial Neural Network (ANN) model.



A different approach is used to estimate using ANN method. To complete the ANN model in estimating nitrate and sulphate in water source, the following steps were required; training, validation, and testing. It is important to see the effect of estimating nitrate and sulphate without ANN. Therefore, the classification process is repeated without ANN. Hence, the importance of ANN in estimating nitrate and sulphate is proven by comparing the results of classification with and without ANN.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

By looking at the advantages and disadvantages of other detection methods, this project aims to achieve the main objective to design and fabricate novel planar electromagnetic sensors array based on the combination of meander and interdigital elements for the application of contamination detection in natural water sources. In order to achieve the main objective, the following objectives have been established:-

1. To perform modelling and simulation of the novel planar electromagnetic array sensors based on the finite element method (FEM).
2. To complete the characterization of the sensor arrays and determination of the best sensor.
3. To carry out nitrate and sulphate estimation using the best planar electromagnetic sensor array and Artificial Neural Network (ANN) method.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This research focuses on the detection of contaminants such as nitrate and sulphate in natural water sources. The concern on water quality has received a lot of attention nowadays due to the consequence of bad health effect caused by the low quality of water consumed. Sources of water contaminant have become broad due to the human civilization. An increase in industrial and agriculture areas has caused a significant increase in water contaminants such as nitrate and sulphate. The high

concentration of nitrate and sulphate in water could cause adverse effect to both human and its surrounding environments. Due to this awareness a lot of research work has been done by various researchers from all over the world to estimate the concentration of the contaminant. In order to make the detection processes become simpler and easier, the contaminant detectors have features like low-cost, convenient and suitable for in-situ measurement.

## **1.5 Scope of Study**

This work investigated the water contaminant detection method using a planar electromagnetic sensor with different array configurations known as parallel, star and delta. The study involved simulation and experimental stages, where the simulation is used to verify the experimental result. Apparatus such as personal computer, function generator, oscilloscope, and beaker was used to carry out the study. Besides, the COMSOL Multiphysic 4.2 and LabView software also used to achieve the research objectives. In this study, the impedance of each sensor was calculated in which the impedance value will determine the concentration level of each contaminant. In addition, each contaminant would have different impedance values based on its own electrical properties. Different concentrations of the same contaminant would also give different impedance values. The impedance of controlled water samples will be matched with the impedance of water from the nearest river to determine the content of river water.

## **1.6 Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis is organized into six chapters starting with the introduction of research background up to the analysis and conclusion together with the future work on planar electromagnetic sensor arrays. Chapter 2 describes the literature review for planar electromagnetic sensor array which include the source of contamination, detection method, working principles, designed array and analysis. The sensor array was modelled and simulated using COMSOL Multiphysic as discussed in Chapter 3.

In addition, the results obtained from simulated modelling are analyzed at the end of Chapter 3. Furthermore, Chapter 3 also discuss the classification of signals using Artificial Neural Network (ANN). In Chapter 4, the experimental setup is illustrated in details. The experimental results are also discussed and analyzed. Chapter 5 expounds the application of analysis tool known as ANN to classify the output of the sensor's impedance. Finally, the conclusion of current work and future work are presented in Chapter 6.

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