



Optimization of Tin-Based Lead-Free Perovskite Solar Cells Using SCAPS-1D: Investigating ETL and HTL Materials for Enhanced Efficiency

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ABSTRACT

The Solar Cell Capacitance Simulator (SCAPS-1D) software is used to investigate the optimal use of methylammonium tin chloride as the active material in perovskite solar cells (PSCs), a new class of solar cells. The formulation of PSC is as follows: FTO/ETL/CH₃NH₃SnCl₃/HTL/Au. To improve the performance of perovskite solar cells, various materials, such as IGZO, SnO₂, TiO₂, and ZnO, are tested as electron transport layers (ETLs), and Spiro-OMeTAD, NiO, Cu₂O, and CuO are tested as hole transport layers (HTLs). The study shows that among these ETLs, SnO₂ records the highest potential to achieve high energy conversion (η) when combined with Spiro-OMeTAD as the HTLs. In addition, the total defects (N_t) were studied in the PSC by keeping N_t constant in the first two layers and varying N_t in the third layer. The results show that PSC is indeed efficient; It is desirable to have a N_t of (10^{15} cm^{-3}) for the ETL (SnO₂), (10^9 cm^{-3}) for the absorber layer (CH₃NH₃SnCl₃), and (10^{14} cm^{-3}) for the HTL (SpiroOMeTAD). The power conversion efficiency has increased for this output value to (13.68 %) with an open circuit voltage (V_{oc}) of (1.6 V). This development aims to enhance the performance of environmentally friendly, lead-free solar cells based on tin-based perovskite materials.

Keywords: SCAPS-1D, ETL, HTL, Total defects density

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تحسين الخلايا الشمسية المصنوعة من البيروفسكايت الخالية من الرصاص والمعتمدة على القصدير باستخدام SCAPS-1D: دراسة مواد ETL و HTL لتحسين الكفاءة

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الملخص

تم استخدام برنامج محاكاة سعة الخلية الشمسية (SCAPS-1D) في هذه الدراسة لإيجاد أفضل طريقة لاستخدام كلوريد ميثيل أمونيوم القصدير كمكون نشط في خلية شمسية بيروفسكايت (PSC)، وهي نوع جديد من الخلايا الشمسية. تم بإعداد بنية PSC على النحو التالي: SnO_2 و IGZO. لتحسين أداء الخلايا الشمسية بيروفسكايت، تم باختبار مواد مختلفة، مثل CuO و Cu_2O و NiO و Spiro-OMeTAD و ETLs و ZnO و TiO_2 كطبقات نقل الإلكترون (ETLs) و CuO و Cu_2O و NiO و Spiro-OMeTAD و HTLs. تشير النتائج إلى أنه من بين هذه الطبقات، يُظهر SnO_2 أعلى إمكانية لتحقيق كفاءة (η) تحويل عالية للطاقة عند دمج مع Spiro-OMeTAD كطبقة نقل الثقوب. علاوة على ذلك، تم دراسة كثافة العيوب الكلية (N_t) في خلية وذلك بالحفاظ على N_t للطبقتين الأوليين ثابتة وتغيير N_t في الطبقة الثالثة. تظهر نتائج أن خلية تعمل بشكل جيد. تبين أن يكون N_t لـ (ETL SnO_2) تساوي (10^{15} cm^{-3}) و (10^9 cm^{-3}) لطبقة ($\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{SnCl}_3$) الماصة و (10^{14} cm^{-3}) لـ (HTL SpiroOMeTAD). بذلك تم الحصول على كفاءة تحويل الطاقة (13.68 %) وفولتية دائرة مفتوحة (V_{oc}) تساوي (1.6 V). من المتوقع أن يعزز هذا التقدم أداء الخلايا الشمسية الصديقة للبيئة والخالية من الرصاص والتي تستخدم مواد البيروفسكايت القائمة على القصدير.

INTRODUCTION

Perovskite solar cells are a breakthrough in renewable energy research that addresses the limitations of silicon solar cells. Its superior performance has the potential to benefit humanity (1,2) greatly. The inclusion of lead (Pb) in PSCs can have adverse environmental effects, making it undesirable for society. The non-poisonous detail tin (Sn) is placed in the same institution as lead (Pb) on the periodic desk (3). It would be interesting to examine the consequences of replacing Pb by Sn in $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbX}_3$. To achieve efficient solar-cell performance, lead-free natural PSCs must possess the same optical, structural, and photovoltaic properties as their lead counterparts (4). The replacement of Pb by Sn in the open field for the fabrication of $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{SnCl}_3$ photoelectric cells in the presence of high chlorine (Cl) and excess Cl has

a positive effect on system improvement of the film (3,5). In addition, it prevents the oxidation of Sn in atmospheric oxygen, thereby maintaining the same chemical state as the raw materials (3,5-7). In this regard, $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{SnCl}_3$ has been used as an adsorbent to reduce the toxicity (4). The direct band gap of these materials ranges from (2.15 to 3.59 eV) (3,8). Consequently, it is believed that these solar cells, which are based on perovskite, will exhibit a substantial short-circuit current. Several challenging elements must be addressed to improve the performance of Sn-based devices (9). In their 2018 study, they demonstrated that the created perovskite solar cell, which utilized a solid polymer electrolyte based on polyethylene oxide, exhibited a consistent η of (0.17 %) for powdered perovskite and ultimately achieved (0.55 %) for crystalline

perovskite of $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{SnCl}_3$ under one sun condition (100 mW/cm^2) in ambient air ⁽¹⁰⁾. In addition, employed SCAPS-1D to model a lead-free device with an absorber layer composed of $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{SnCl}_3$ (9). They aimed to optimize the device by manipulating variables such as temperature, acceptor density, thickness, and total defect density. Based on thermal stability analysis, Cl halide-based perovskites exhibit higher thermal stability. Nevertheless, the power conversion efficiency reached a value of (10.52 %). This work aims to select the best ETL and HTL layers and find the effect of total defect density of various layers on the electrical output of the perovskite solar cell and record the maximum power conversion efficiency.

ANALYTICAL METHODS

SCAPS 1D 3.3.09 is a software tool designed to model the functioning of photovoltaic cells in a one dimension. It is specifically created to simulate perovskite solar cells ^(11,12). These solar cells have a glass base with a fluorine-doped tin oxide (FTO) coating that supports their standard n-i-p structure. Figure 1 illustrates the process of fabricating the different cell components, using layers of FTO as the front contact and gold (Au) as the back contact. The cell design features a layer of perovskite material ($\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{SnCl}_3$) that acts as a barrier between the ETLs and HTLs ^(13,14). The common solar spectrum (AM1.5G) is used to generate the incident power density (1000 W/m^2) at (300 K).

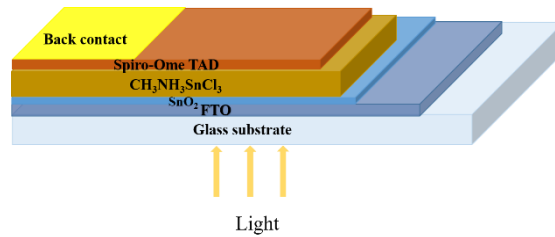


Fig. 1: Cell structure of this study: FTO/ SnO_2 / $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{SnCl}_3$ /Spiro OMe-TAD/Au

The researchers use SCAPS-1D to accurately determine the electrical properties under various lighting conditions and temperatures, as mentioned by ⁽¹⁵⁾. Additionally, the SCAPS-1D program employs advanced methods based on three key equations: Poisson's equation (1), the electron transport equation (2), and the hole transport equation (3).

$$\frac{d}{dx} \left(-\epsilon(x) \frac{d\psi}{dx} \right) = q [p(x) - n(x) + N^+ - N^- + p_t(x) - n_t(x) \dots (1)$$

$$\frac{dp_n}{dt} = G_p - \frac{p_n - p_{no}}{\tau_p} - p_n \mu_p \frac{dE}{dx} - \mu_p E \frac{dp_n}{dx} + D_p \frac{d^2 p_n}{dx^2} \dots (2)$$

$$\frac{dn_p}{dt} = G_n - \frac{n_p - n_{po}}{\tau_n} + n_n \mu_n \frac{dE}{dx} + \mu_n E \frac{dn_p}{dx} + D_n \frac{d^2 n_p}{dx^2} \dots (3)$$

Where D represents the diffusion coefficient, n, p, nt, and pt stand for free electrons, free holes, trapped electrons, and trapped holes, respectively. On the other hand, G is the generation rate, τ_p is the hole

lifetime, τ_n is the electron lifetime, μ_p is the electron mobility, μ_n is the hole mobility, q is the electron charge, E is the electric field, Ψ is the electrostatic potential, and ϵ is the dielectric constant. N^+ represents the ionizing acceptor-like doping concentration, while N^- represents the ionizing donor-like doping concentration, and X represents the thickness of the cell ⁽¹⁶⁾. SCAPS-1D simulates PSCs using four layers, with n-type (IGZO, SnO_2 , TiO_2 , and ZnO) materials used to evaluate the effectiveness of each layer as an ETM. The perovskite layer (i-layer) serves as the absorber layer. Additionally, p-type materials (Spiro-OMeTAD, NiO, Cu_2O , and CuO) are used individually as HTMs. Table 1 presents the material characteristics for each layer as reported in publications ⁽¹⁶⁻²⁹⁾. The total defect density optimization technique is utilized to detect and maintain the Nt of the previous two layers and adjust

the N_t of the third layer. Firstly, the N_t of ETL was altered from (10^{13} cm^{-3}) to (10^{20} cm^{-3}), and the total defect density of the two other layers (perovskite (10^{13} cm^{-3}) and HTL (10^{14} cm^{-3})) remained fixed. In the second phase, the total defect density of perovskite ranged from (10^9 cm^{-3}) to (10^{13} cm^{-3}) while the total defect density of the two other layers (ETL (10^{14} cm^{-3}) and HTL (10^{14} cm^{-3})) remained constant. Furthermore, according to the most

effective, the total defect density of HTL were observed, ranging from (10^{10} cm^{-3}) to (10^{19} cm^{-3}) while the total number of defects in the other two layers (ETL (10^{14} cm^{-3}) and perovskite (10^7 cm^{-3})) remained stable. Finally, using the model results, the ETL (10^{15} cm^{-3}), the absorbing layer (10^9 cm^{-3}), and the HTL (10^{14} cm^{-3}) were kept at their original total defect densities.

Table 1: Input parameters for the proposed ETL, perovskite, and HTL materials

Parameters	FTO	IGZO	SnO ₂	TiO ₂	ZnO	CH ₃ NH ₃ SnCl ₃	Spiro-OMeTAD	NiO	Cu ₂ O	CuO
Thickness(nm)	400	35	35	35	35	900	350	350	350	350
E_g (eV)	3.5	3.05	3.6	3.2	3.3	2.15	3.17	3.8	2.17	1.48
χ (eV)	4	4.16	4	4.1	4	3.71	2.05	2.1	3	4.07
ϵ_r	9	10	9	9	9	3.5	3	10.7	7.1	18.1
N_c (cm ⁻³)	2.2×10^{18}	5×10^{18}	2.2×10^{17}	2.2×10^{18}	2.2×10^{18}	1×10^{18}	2×10^{20}	2×10^{19}	2×10^{17}	2.1×10^{19}
N_v (cm ⁻³)	1.8×10^{18}	5×10^{18}	2.2×10^{16}	1.8×10^{19}	1.9×10^{19}	1×10^{19}	2×10^{20}	1×10^{19}	1.1×10^{19}	5.5×10^{19}
μ_n (cm ² /Vs)	20	15	20	5×10^{-2}	100	1.6	2.1×10^{-3}	12	200	100
e^- thermal-velocity (cm.s ⁻¹)	1×10^7	1×10^7	1×10^7	1×10^7	1×10^7	1×10^6	1×10^7	1×10^7	1×10^7	1×10^7
h^+ thermal-velocity (cm.s ⁻¹)	1×10^7	1×10^7	1×10^7	1×10^7	1×10^7	1×10^6	1×10^7	1×10^7	1×10^7	1×10^7
μ_p (cm ² /Vs)	10	0.1	10	5×10^{-2}	25	1.6	2.16×10^{-3}	2	80	0.1
N_d (cm ⁻³)	1×10^{19}	1×10^{17}	1×10^{17}	1×10^{19}	1×10^{18}	3.2×10^{18}	0	0	0	0
N_a (cm ⁻³)	0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	2×10^{19}	1.6×10^{14}	1×10^{18}	1×10^{16}
N_t (cm ⁻³)	1×10^{14}	1×10^{15}	1×10^{15}	1×10^{15}	1×10^{15}	1×10^{13}	1×10^{14}	1×10^{14}	1×10^{14}	1×10^{14}

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Simulation of different inorganic metals ETLs:

Perovskite and Spiro-OMeTAD were used independently, with thicknesses of 900 nm and 350 nm, respectively. Table 2 reports the results of the numerical simulations. It is clear the cell-based SnO₂ layer, as compared to others, has the highest short circuit current density (J_{sc}) and η , which is (7.28 mA/cm^2) and (10.19%), respectively. In contrast, the fill factor (FF) of the cell-based SnO₂ layer (88%) was slightly higher than that of the cell-based TiO₂ layer (87.67%). Furthermore, the V_{oc} of SnO₂-based cell (1.58 V) is slightly increased than that of cell-based IGZO (1.53 V), TiO₂ (1.57 V), and ZnO (1.58 V). That is because the band gap energy of SnO₂ is larger than that of ZnO (3.5 eV vs. 3.3 eV) (20,30,31).

Table 2: Effects of ETLs on the output parameters of the n-i-p PSC

Cell parameters	TiO ₂	SnO ₂	ZnO	IGZO
V_{oc} (V)	1.57	1.58	1.58	1.53
J_{sc} (mA/cm ²)	4.79	7.28	7.10	2.33
FF (%)	87.67	88.00	87.96	87.27
η (%)	6.60	10.19	9.92	3.12

The illuminated J-V features of cell-based (IGZO, SnO₂, TiO₂, and ZnO) with a (35 nm) thickness are shown in Figure 2a. The SnO₂ layer is more transparent than the IGZO, TiO₂, and ZnO layers, thereby facilitating light absorption by the perovskite layer. (32). This indicates that SnO₂-based cells exhibit slightly better cell parameters than those based on their layers. Furthermore, both SnO₂ and ZnO exhibit substantial efficiency improvements, with values of 10.19% and 9.92%, respectively. The increased quantum efficiency (QE) of SnO₂ is based on the cell, attributed to the quantum size effect (Figure 2b).

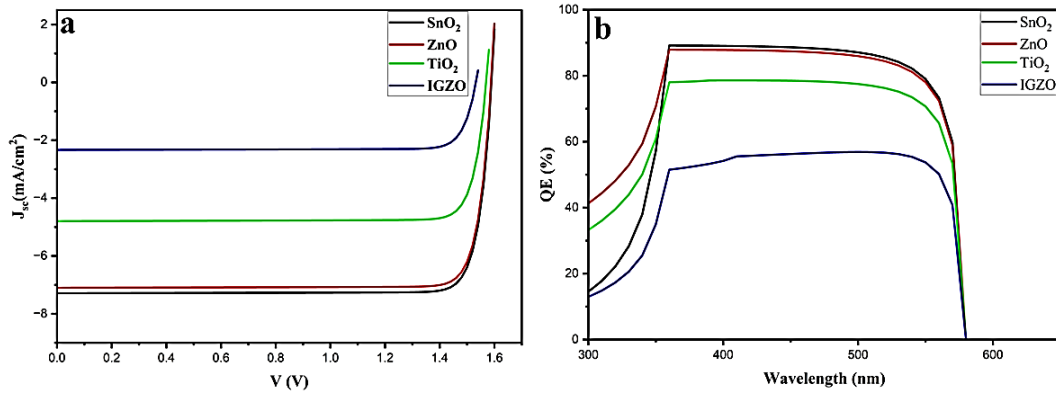


Fig. 2: (a) illuminated J-V and (b) different QE of different configuration of various ETL of the same thicknesses using Spiro-OMeTAD as HTL

Simulation of various inorganic metal HTLs

In simulations, the same parameters as in Table 1 are used to analyze the impact of different HTLs (Spiro-OMeTAD, NiO, Cu₂O, and CuO) on PCE across a variety of solar cell-based devices. Figure 3 revealed that Spiro-OMeTAD has a higher η (10.19%) than Cu₂O, CuO, and NiO (9.96%,

8.79%, and 8.66%, respectively). Using Spiro-OMeTAD as the HTL increased the η in perovskite solar cells as demonstrated by (33). As well as, (34), also stated that the stable Spiro-OMeTAD produces a typical HTL as the top layer of a perovskite solar cell.

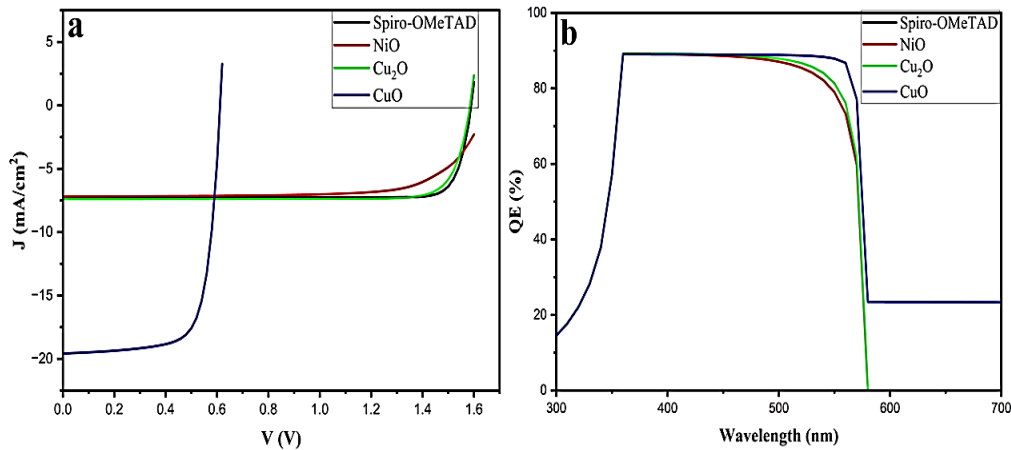


Fig. 3: (a): illuminated J-V and, (b): QE of different-configuration using of various HTL and SnO₂ as ETL.

SnO₂ and Spiro-OMeTAD serve as the ETL and HTL, respectively, in the n-i-p configuration. They are (35 nm) thick for SnO₂, (350 nm) thick for Spiro-OMeTAD, and (900 nm) thick for methyl ammonium tin chloride (CH₃NH₃SnCl₃). Under AM (1.5 G), the output parameters are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Effects of HTL on the output parameters of the n-i-p PSC

Cell parameters	Spiro-OMeTAD	NiO	Cu ₂ O	CuO
V _{oc} (V)	1.58	1.66	1.58	0.61
J _{sc} (mA/cm ²)	7.28	7.19	7.39	19.58
FF (%)	88.00	72.26	85.02	73.34

η (%)	10.19	8.66	9.96	8.79
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Effect of total Defect Density of Tin oxide

The N_t influences the performance of photovoltaic solar cells because defects accelerate the recombination of photo-generated carriers in perovskite solar cells, leading to increased recombination. We have investigated the impact of the N_t of SnO₂ on the performance of perovskite solar cells by varying the number from (10¹³ cm⁻³) to (10²⁰ cm⁻³). Figure 4 presents the simulation results. The rise in total defect density to values higher than (10¹⁵ cm⁻³) for SnO₂ leads to a reduction

in PV parameters. The result agreed with ⁽³⁵⁾, which revealed that the presence of recombination centers resulting from the defect reduces the device's open-

circuit voltage (V_{oc}) by reducing shunt resistance. This recombination reduces the quasi-Fermi level splitting in the device, which directly lowers V_{oc} .

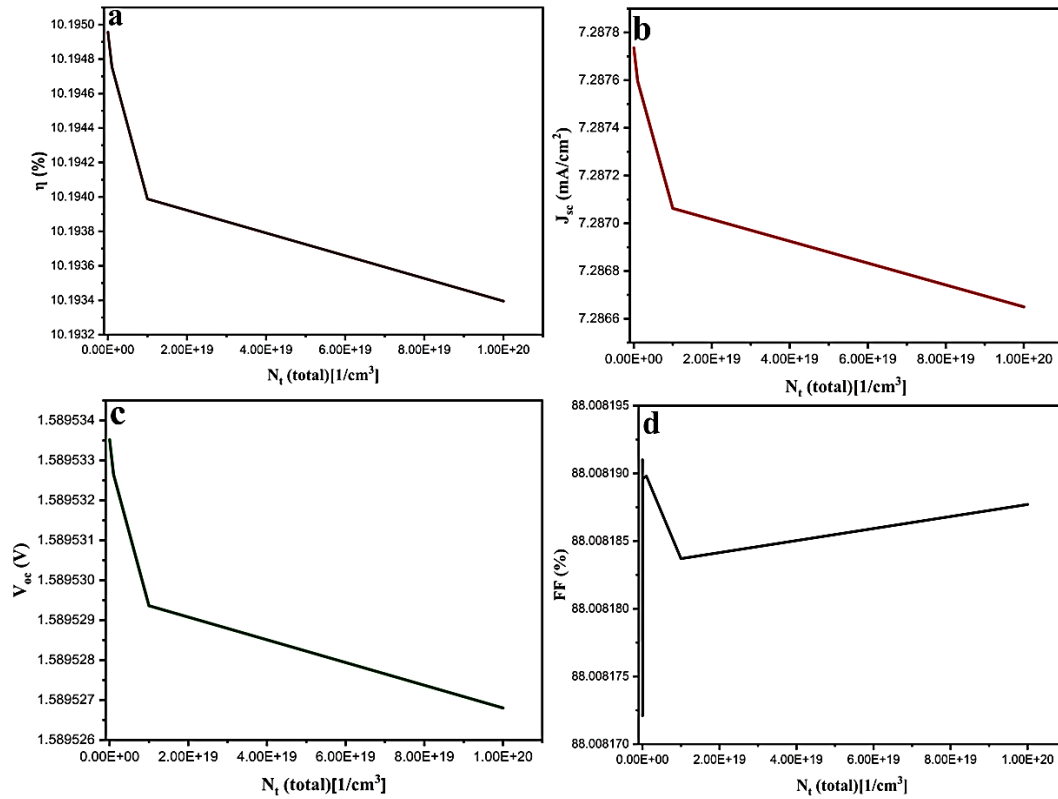


Fig. 4: Varying (a) η , (b) J_{sc} , (c) V_{oc} and (d) FF with total defect density of tin oxide

Effect of total Defect Density of absorbers layer

Figure 5 shows a numerical analysis of suggested Sn-based perovskite solar cell response to variations in total defect density of absorber layer, which directly influence the perovskite solar cell efficiency. The total defect density (N_t) of the absorbers layer varies from (10^9 cm^{-3}) to (10^{13} cm^{-3}). The output parameters decrease from η (13.68 % to

10.19 %), V_{oc} (1.6 V to 1.58 V), J_{sc} ($9.65 \text{ mA}/\text{cm}^2$ to $7.28 \text{ mA}/\text{cm}^2$) and FF (88.38 % to 88 %) as the defect density exceeds (10^9 cm^{-3}) leading to an increase in recombination rates. Furthermore, the effectiveness decreases as the quantity of total defect density increases, mostly lead to a decrease in the distance that the charge-carriers travel ^(36,37).

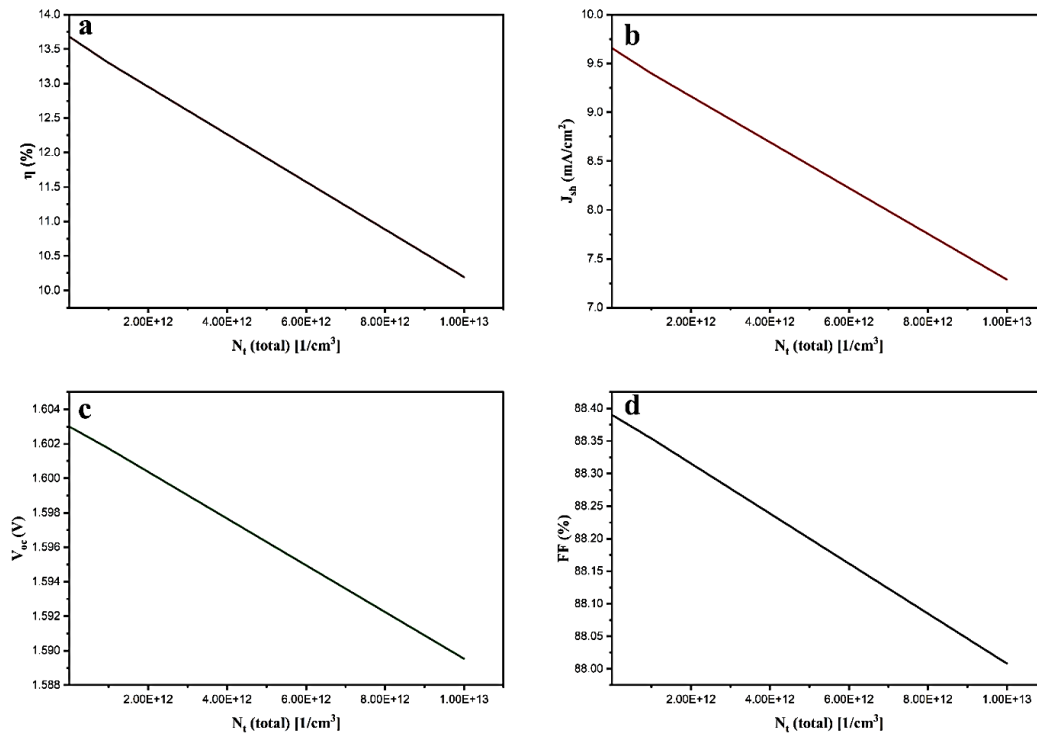


Fig. 5: Varying (a) η , (b) J_{sc} , (c) V_{oc} and (d) FF with N_t in absorber layer

Effect of total Defect Density on HTLs

Defects in solar cells are undesirable because they adversely affect both efficiency and stability. The total N_t of the Spiro-OMeTAD is within the range of (10^{10} cm^{-3}) to (10^{19} cm^{-3}), as suggested. The results depicted in Figure 6 demonstrate an increase in defect density for Spiro-OMeTAD, leading to slightly decreasing output PV parameters as total N_t were larger than (10^{14} cm^{-3}). While, the performance of solar cells does decline as the defect density

increases, the overall impact on the results was not substantial. A higher defect density leads to an increased recombination rate, thereby reducing carrier lifetime. The performance of solar cells is highly sensitive to defect density. While low defect levels have minimal impact, increasing defect density exponentially accelerates recombination and efficiency loss. Optimizing material quality and defect management is key to sustaining high-performance solar cells.

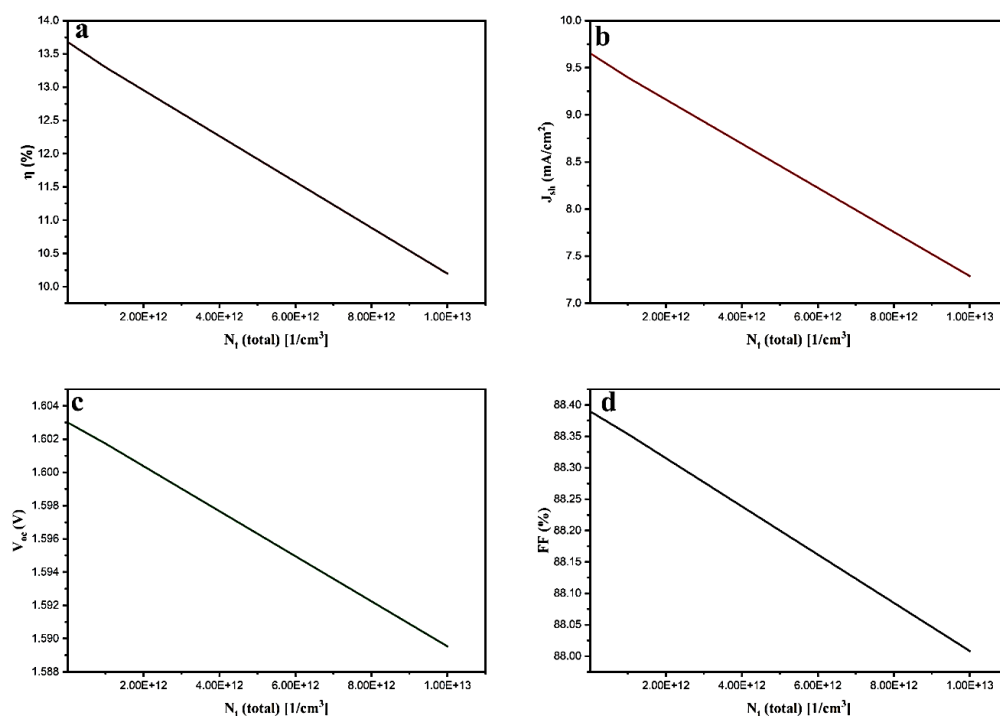


Fig. 6: Varying (a) η , (b) J_{sc} , (c) V_{oc} and (d) FF with total defect density of HTL.

Figure 7 illuminates J-V characteristics of the final model of an optimized cell which consist an ETL, absorbers, and HTL layers. Each of the layers had a total defect density of (10^{14} cm^{-3} , 10^7 cm^{-3} , and 10^6 cm^{-3}), respectively. The efficiency was (13.68 %) as illustrated in Table 4. As the overall defect density of the absorber layer increases, Jsc decreases. This is because an increased defect density results in a higher recombination rate, which in turn affects carrier lifetimes. (38,39). Shockley-Read Hall (SRH) recombination occurs due to defects in the energy band gap, leading to a decrease in efficiency (40).

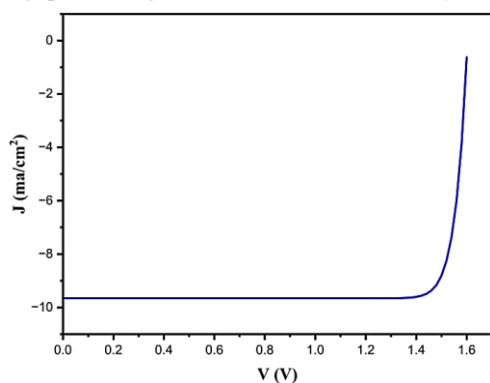


Fig. 7: Illuminated J-V characteristics of optimized (FTO/glass/ SnO_2 / $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{SnI}_3$ /Spiro OMe-TAD/ Au) solar cell

Table 4: Final device performance (FTO/glass/ SnO_2 / $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{SnCl}_3$ /Spiro OMe-TAD/Au) on the basis of optimized parameters

V_{oc}	1.60 (Volt)
J_{sc}	9.65 mA/cm^2
FF	88.34 %
H	13.68 %

CONCLUSION

This study employed several n-i-p configurations to identify more appropriate ETL and HTL for the lead-free absorbent layer ($\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{SnCl}_3$). The investigation of IGZO, SnO_2 , TiO_2 , and ZnO as ETL -layers and Spiro-OMeTAD, NiO , Cu_2O , and CuO as HTL and tin oxide revealed greater η and is thought to be suitable for ETLs and a good HTL is Spiro-OMeTAD. The results showed that the ($\text{SnO}_2/\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{SnCl}_3/\text{Spiro-OMeTAD/gold}$) structure of the perovskite solar cell is the most efficient configuration, with output parameters of ($V_{oc} = 1.58 \text{ V}$, $J_{sc} = 7.28 \text{ mA}/\text{cm}^2$, $\text{FF} = 88.00\%$, and $\eta = 10.19\%$). Additionally, the total defect densities of SnO_2 , $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{SnCl}_3$, and Spiro-OMeTAD are optimized, and the results suggest that SnO_2 (10^{15} cm^{-3}), perovskite layer (10^9 cm^{-3}), and Spiro-OMeTAD (10^6 cm^{-3}) are the most appropriate defect densities for the ETL, absorber, and HTL layers, respectively.

³), and Spiro-OMeTAD layer (10^{14} cm^{-3}) to attain high performance of perovskite solar cells: ($V_{oc}=1.6 \text{ V}$, $J_{sc}=9.65 \text{ mA/cm}^2$, $FF=88.34 \%$, and $\eta=13.68 \%$). The absorber layer is more affected by the N_t than the two other layers (SnO_2 and Spiro-OMeTAD). The simulation results used to create environmentally friendly, high-efficiency perovskite solar cells.

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