Morphology studies of hydrophobic silica on filter surface prepared via spray technique

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Abstract. This study investigated the effect of the hydrophobic surface treatment effect of air filter performance by using silica aerogel powder as an additive by using spray coating techniques. The membrane characterization tests were carried out on a filter prepared from different additive concentration. Studies on the cross-section and the distribution of particles on the membrane were carried out using a scanning electron microscope (SEM), and the surface morphology was investigated by x-ray spectroscopy (EDS). The results are shown by SEM and EDS that the microstructure filter, especially in the upper layer and sub-layer has been changed. The results also show an increase of hydrophobicity due to the increased quantity of silica aerogel powder.

1. Introduction

In recent years, air filter membrane fabricated from fibrous materials has gain many attention due to the membrane capability to filtered solid particulate such as pollen, dust, old and bacteria contain in the air. Generally, chemically air filtered consists of catalyst or an absorbent. According to Irwin et al. in their study of nonwoven filter media, the applications of air filter was usually applied in HVAC systems, high-efficiency air filtration (HEA, HEPA, and ULPA), industrial air filtration, respirators and gas masks, turbine air filtration, and household air filtration such as vacuum, air purifiers, and cleaners [1].

Over the last decades, the air filter industry has change drastically with recent technology. The manufacturers have invented new product that able to improve the quality of air indoor and reduced the installation and operating equipment cost in commercial and institutional facilities. The industry also has successfully adopting the guideline and requirement that able to promote self-health by the quality of air being inhaled [2]–[4]. In addition, for maintenance, it will be focus on indoor air quality (IAQ) and its impact on their facilities and occupants. The manufacturer is providing them with more efficient high voltage alternative current (HVAC) systems and components, including air filters.

Air pollution is a control mechanism that supplies clean air realizes bright space through HEPA filter placed at the air supply terminal, which is the largest difference for cleaning air conditioner
between the concept and general air conditioner [5]. The biggest problem in air filter media is leakage. However, sealing the leakage might not solve the problem effectively [6]–[10]. If this issue cannot address early, it will increase particle concentration or bacteria concentration on air filter media.

Theoretical interest in hydrophobic interactions and wetting has also been stimulated in several ways [11]. Chemical structure has a strong influence on the physical and mechanical properties of films [12]–[15]. Work on designing superhydrophobic surfaces has led to new interest in the theories of heterogeneous wetting due to Wenzel and Baxter [16]. Various surface reflectivity measurements have been interpreted as evidence for a layer (albeit thinner than the diameter of a water molecule) of depleted water density next to extended hydrophobic surfaces, and different techniques have been adopted to investigate the boundary conditions of flow next to both smooth and structured hydrophobic surfaces and the relationship to rewetting. M.khayet et al., (2005) had discussed the properties of hydrophobic/hydrophilic porous membrane and was proposed for application in this membrane distillation [17].

2. Experimental

2.1. Materials and procedure

The preparation process of hydrophobic silica aerogel with acetone and tetraethyl orthosilicate (TEOS) as the raw material. The process can be divided into two major step, including preparation of filter, synthesis of aerogel silica. For this experiment, we use a particular HEPA filter from company salutary avenue to make a hydrophobic treatment. The purpose of using this filter is because of this filter is very suitable for an environment with moisture contain and humidity. Silica aerogel will be obtained from Merogel Company [18].

2.2. Spray coating

Basically, spray coating method is a process in which solvent solutions, molten powder and dispersions are atomized by the action of air, the pressure and inert gas of the solution itself and deposited on the substrate. The hydrophobic coating was prepared by using spray coating technique deposit on the company’s filter. The spray was set-up for static 90 degrees to get uniform spray coating like shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Spray Coating Technique
2.2.1. Parameter
The coating process has many types, but in this study hydrophobic coating was prepared via spraying method from 0 to 4 MPa. There are several parameters considered which is substrate aerogel silica and Tetraethyl orthosilicate (TEOS)/acetone, the speed of dipping and interval time between dipping.

2.3. Membrane Evaluation
The preparation of hydrophobic coating was characterized for surface morphology was studied by using SEM (JOEL JSM6380LA).

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM)
Figure 2 (a-d) shows SEM micrographs of prepared filter with different weight percentage of aerogel silica additive. The addition of aerogel silica particles into the solution clearly shows a significant effect on filter morphology formation [19]–[23]. Figure 2 (a-d) shows the aerogel silica nanoparticle and their particle size at x500 magnification. From the observation, the aerogel silica was agglomerated in irregular shape particle. The sizes of aerogel silica particle from sample 1 until sample 4 are in range between 5.34µm and 7.86µm. The result was in line with Cui et. al. (2010), where the increased of silica in parameter formulation has increased the number of the particles at the filter surfaces. It is clearly observed that micro-void formation at the surface of sample filter increased with the increase of aerogel silica particles in coated filter compared to uncoated filter by sample 1.

![Figure 2 (a): Sample 1 (0 wt. % of silica aerogel)](image_url)
Figure 2 (b): Sample 1 (3 wt. % of silica aerogel)

Figure 2 (c): Sample 2 (4 wt. % of silica aerogel)
3.2. Energy Dispersive X-Ray Analyzer (EDX)
The concentration of silica on filter surface was measured using X-ray energy dispersion spectroscopic (EDS). The results indicate that silica concentration on filter surface decreases as percentage silica aerogel increases. 5 wt% of silica aerogel shows the lowest concentration of silica in filter surface with the value of 9.03%. This phenomenon happened due to the tendency of aggregation or agglomeration of silica aerogel particles during the spraying process. As the concentration of aerogel silica increased, the tendency of silica to attract or agglomerate is high. Another reason related to this phenomenon was due to high solvent viscosity [24]–[29]. The increase in viscosity could affect the spray process although the pressure and spray time was constant for all samples [30]–[32]. When highly viscous solution being spray, the transportation of liquid from the tank to nozzle was slow, and it was affected the amount of silica concentration on the filter surface.

4. Conclusion
This aim of this study is to identify the effects of silica aerogel added to the filter. Four filter composition were produced including three filter with additive concentration. The properties of the filter were improved by the present of silica aerogel powder on the filter. The surface morphology for all samples have been observed using SEM and the presence of silica on the surface of the filter through experimental spectroscopic X-ray energy dispersion (EDX). EDX tests have shown the distribution of silica was decrease with the increase of aerogel silica due viscosity and agglomeration of the additive. However, the addition of silica aerogel powder additives has changed and improved the performance of the filter.

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