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Load Prioritization and Smart Switching System in Off-Grid Solar EV Charging Stations

D.Sathiyaraj
Professor, Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering
Sengunthar Engineering College (Autonomous), Tiruchengode, India
dsathiyaraj.eee@scteng.co.in
https://doi.org/0009-0008-9539-1062
Jeeva SP, Sanjeeth K, Gobinath T
UG Students, Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering
Sengunthar Engineering College (Autonomous), Tiruchengode, India
jeevapseee2026@scteng.co.in, sanjeethkeee2026@scteng.co.in, gobinatheee2026@scteng.co.in

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Abstract: This project focuses on managing solar energy in off-grid EV charging stations using a load prioritisation and smart switching system. It ensures that essential loads receive power first based on availability, improving energy efficiency and reliability. The system uses smart controllers to monitor power levels and automatically switch loads, making solar-based EV charging more sustainable and efficient. Goals are to maximize EV charging availability. The proposed model prioritizes loads based on their importance and energy requirements using an automated microcontroller-based smart switching system. Critical loads, such as EV chargers and essential station operations, are supplied first, while non-essential loads are disconnected during low energy availability. Keywords: Load prioritization, Smart switching, Solar photovoltaic (PV), State of charge, Microcontroller, Priority-based load scheduling, Fast charging.

INTRODUCTION

The organization of the project report is detailed over these chapters describes about the short introduction, the necessity, objectives and theme of the project. 1.1. Overview of the Project The rapid global transition towards sustainable transportation has spotlighted electric vehicles (EVs) as a key component of a greener future. However, the widespread adoption of EVs is heavily reliant on robust and accessible charging infrastructure. In regions with unreliable grid access or a desire for complete energy independence, off-grid solar EV charging stations present a compelling solution. These stations harness the abundant energy of the sun, converting it into electricity to power EVs, thereby reducing reliance on fossil fuels and minimizing carbon footprints. A critical challenge in off-grid solar EV charging, particularly in scenarios with fluctuating solar availability and varying energy demands, is efficient energy management. Without a grid connection, the system must intelligently balance power generation, storage, and consumption to ensure continuous and reliable service. This project delves into the design and implementation of a "Load Prioritization and Smart Switching System" specifically tailored for off-grid solar EV charging stations. This system aims to optimize energy flow, extend battery life, enhance charging reliability, and ensure that critical loads (such as essential station operations or high-priority EV charging) are always met, even under suboptimal solar conditions.

1.2. Objectives

The primary objectives of this project are: To design a comprehensive load prioritization scheme that categorizes various loads within an off-grid solar EV charging station based on their criticality and importance. To develop a smart switching mechanism that intelligently connects and disconnects loads based on real-time data from solar generation, battery state-of-charge (SoC), and load priority. To enhance the overall efficiency and reliability of off-grid solar EV charging by minimizing power wastage and maximizing the utilization of available solar energy. To extend the operational lifespan of battery storage systems by implementing intelligent charging and discharging strategies that prevent over-discharge and over-charge cycles. To ensure continuous power supply for essential station functionalities and high-priority EV charging, even during periods of low solar irradiance or high demand. To create a scalable and adaptable system that can be integrated into various off-grid solar EV charging station designs.

1.3. Theme of the Project

The central theme of this project revolves around intelligent energy management for sustainable EV infrastructure.

It specifically focuses on leveraging advanced control strategies to maximize the efficiency, reliability, and economic viability of off-grid solar-powered EV charging. By addressing the inherent intermittency of solar energy and the fluctuating demands of EV charging, the project contributes to the broader goal of making renewable energy solutions more practical and pervasive in the transportation sector.

1.4. Summary

This report outlines the development of a Load Prioritization and Smart Switching System for off-grid solar EV charging stations. It begins by establishing the necessity of such a system in the context of growing EV adoption and the challenges of off-grid power management. The project's objectives highlight the focus on optimizing energy flow, ensuring reliability, and prolonging battery life. The overarching theme emphasizes intelligent energy management as a cornerstone for sustainable EV infrastructure. The subsequent sections will delve into a detailed literature review, exploring existing solutions and identifying gaps that this project aims to address.

2. EXISTING SYSTEM

2.1. Introduction

Most existing off-grid solar power systems, including rudimentary EV charging setups, employ a relatively straightforward approach to energy management. These systems primarily focus on charging a battery bank from solar panels and then inverting that DC power to AC to supply loads.

2.2. Block Diagram

A typical existing off-grid solar EV charging station, without advanced load prioritization and smart switching, generally consists of the following components:

2.3. Working

In an existing, basic off-grid solar EV charging system, the operation is largely sequential and reactive: The system primarily consists of a solar photovoltaic (PV) array, charge controller (MPPT), battery storage system, DC/AC inverter, smart switch controller, and load units (EV chargers, lights, etc.). The solar PV panels convert sunlight into DC electricity, which is regulated by the MPPT controller to achieve maximum power output. The generated energy is first used to charge the battery storage unit, which stores excess energy for use during low-sunlight or night-time conditions. The Energy Management and Smart Switching Unit continuously monitors the system's parameters such as solar power availability, battery state of charge (SoC), and load demand. Based on these real-time readings, the system decides how to allocate power among connected loads. The microcontroller or PLC acts as the brain of the system, programmed with specific priority logic. When solar power is sufficient, all loads (including low-priority EV chargers) operate normally using direct solar energy. However, when solar generation drops or battery voltage becomes low, the controller activates the load prioritisation algorithm. This algorithm ensures that high-priority loads (such as essential EV chargers or control circuits) continue to receive power, while low-priority loads are temporarily disconnected to prevent system overload and deep battery discharge

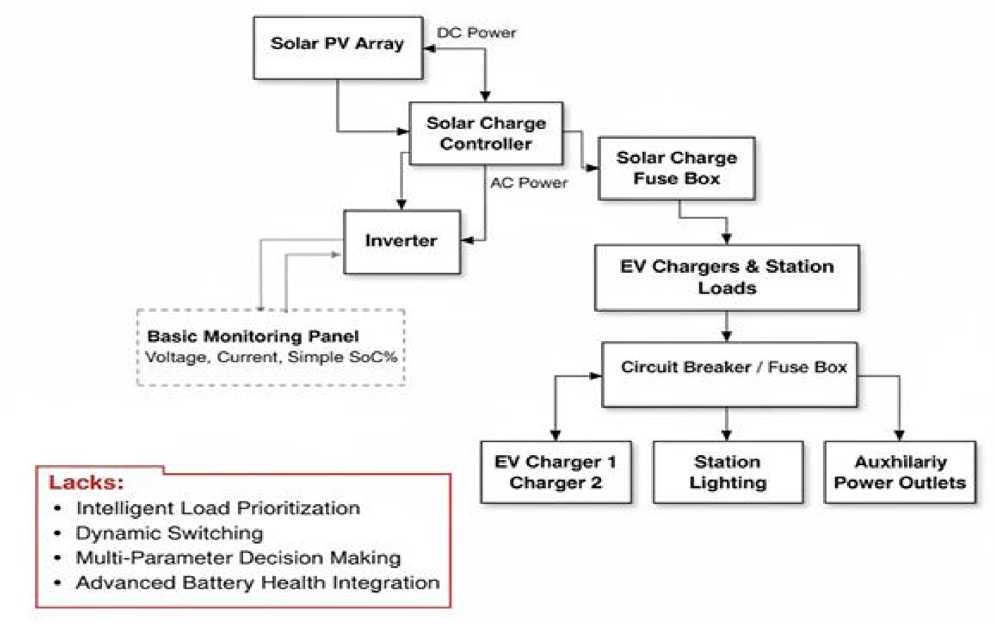

Figure1 - Block diagram for Existing system

3. PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

Problem Identification While the existing system provides a functional off-grid power solution; it suffers from several significant drawbacks, particularly for a dynamic and critical application like EV charging:

1. **Lack of Intelligent Load Prioritization:** All loads are treated equally. When power is scarce, the system either supplies all loads or disconnects all of them. There's no mechanism to prioritize essential services (e.g., station control, emergency lighting, high-priority EV charging) over non-essential ones (e.g., slower EV charging, auxiliary outlets).

2. Inefficient Energy Utilization: Without smart management, valuable solar energy might be wasted if batteries are full and loads aren't optimally matched to available generation. Conversely, power could be insufficient, leading to prolonged charging times or complete service interruptions.

3. Reduced Battery Lifespan: Relying solely on a low-voltage disconnect to protect batteries often means batteries are subjected to deep discharge cycles. Frequent deep discharges significantly shorten battery lifespan and reduce the system's overall economic viability.

4. Poor Reliability and User Experience: Unscheduled and complete shutdown of all loads due to low battery voltage can lead to frustrated EV users (interrupted charging) and operational issues for the station. There's no graceful degradation of service.

PROPOSED SYSTEM

Introduction

The proposed "Load Prioritization and Smart Switching System" is designed to overcome the limitations of existing basic off-grid solar EV charging stations. By integrating advanced sensing, intelligent control logic, and dynamic load management, this system aims to optimize energy utilization.

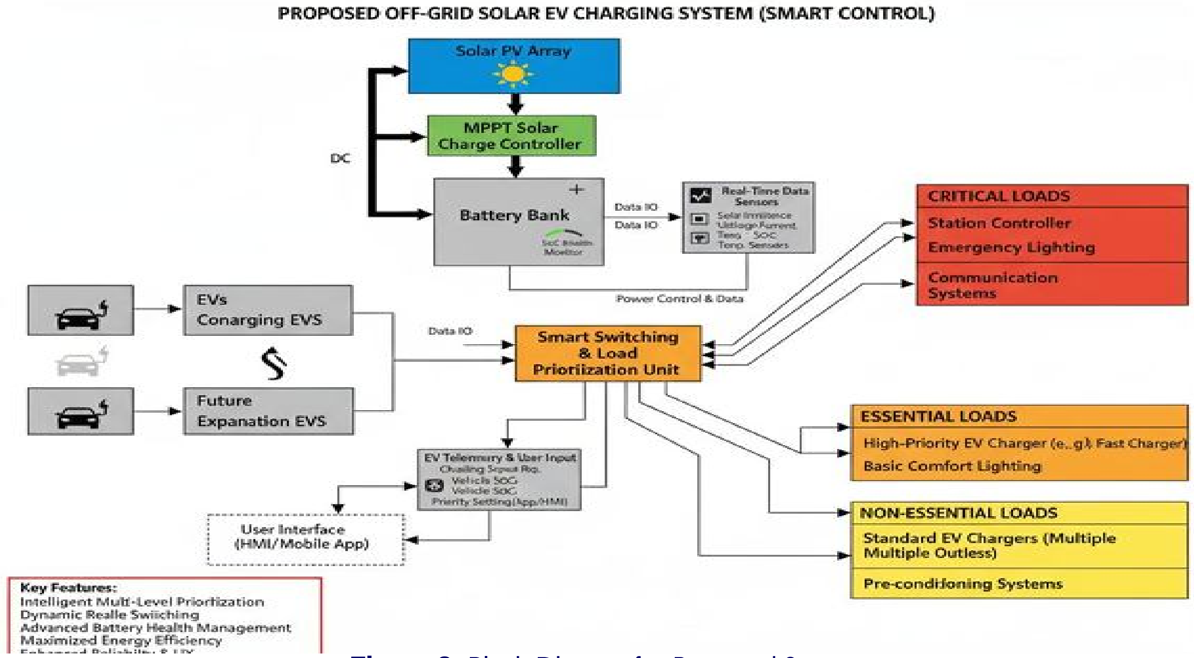

Figure 2- Block Diagram for Proposed System

WORKING :

The proposed Load Prioritisation and Smart Switching System for Off-Grid Solar EV Charging Stations is designed to ensure continuous, efficient, and intelligent energy distribution among various electrical loads and EV chargers in areas where grid power is unavailable. The system intelligently monitors the solar energy generation, battery condition, and load requirements to maintain reliable operation while maximizing solar energy utilization. Load Prioritisation Priority 1 (High Priority): Critical EV chargers or control systems. Priority 2 (Medium Priority): Secondary EV chargers or lighting loads. The smart switching unit consists of relays or solid-state switches controlled by the microcontroller. It performs automatic connection and disconnection of For instance: loads based on the controller's decisions. 1. During high solar availability, all loads (Priority 1, 2, and 3) remain ON. 2. During medium solar generation or low battery SoC, only Priority 1 and 2 loads are active. 3. During very low power conditions, only Priority 1 loads remain powered.

SIMULATION

INTRODUCTION:

A pivotal role in the design, validation, and optimization of complex electrical and energy management systems like the Off-Grid Solar EV Charging Station. Before physical prototyping, simulation allows for the virtual testing of various operational scenarios, component sizing, control algorithms, and fault conditions in a safe, cost-effective, and repeatable environment. This section details the methodology for simulating the proposed system using MATLAB, Simulink, and Simscape, highlighting the tools' capabilities in modeling renewable energy sources, battery storage, power electronics, and intelligent control logic. The simulation aims to demonstrate the effectiveness of the load prioritization and smart switching strategy in ensuring stable power supply, efficient battery usage and reliable EV charging under varying solar irradiance and load demands.

MATLAB:

MATLAB (Matrix Laboratory) is a high-performance language for technical computing. It integrates computation, visualization, and programming in an easy-to-use environment where problems and solutions are expressed in familiar mathematical notation. For this project, MATLAB serves as the foundational platform for: Data Analysis and Pre-processing: Analyzing real or synthetic solar irradiance data, EV charging profiles, and battery characteristics.

Algorithm Development: Developing and refining the load prioritization and smart switching algorithms (e.g., in .m scripts) before integrating them into Simulink models. Parameter Management: Storing and managing system parameters (e.g., battery capacities, panel specifications, control thresholds) in .m files, which can then be easily loaded and updated for Simulink models. Post-simulation Analysis: Processing and visualizing the simulation results (e.g., plots of battery SoC, EV charge status, power flows) generated from Simulink.

SIMULINK:

Simulink is a block diagram environment for multi-domain simulation and Model-Based Design. It is an add-on to MATLAB and is extensively used for dynamic system modeling, simulation, and analysis. In the context of the Off-Grid Solar EV Charging Station, Simulink is the primary tool for: System-Level Modeling: Constructing a comprehensive block diagram model that integrates all the major components of the off-grid system. Control Logic Implementation: Implementing the load prioritization and smart switching algorithms using Stateflow charts (for state-based logic) and Simulink function blocks (for continuous control). Power Electronics Modeling: Using blocks from the Simscape Electrical libraries (or specialized toolboxes like Simscape Power Systems) to model the MPPT charge controller, DC-AC inverter, and associated switching components. Renewable Energy Source Modeling: Modeling solar PV panels as a power source with varying output based on irradiance and temperature inputs. Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Modeling: Representing the lithium-ion battery bank with its charging/discharging characteristics, SoC estimation, and voltage dynamics. EV Charger Load Modeling: Simulating the variable power demand of the EV charger as a dynamic load. Sensor and Display Integration: Modeling the inputs from voltage/current sensors and outputs to a virtual display or data logger.

SIMSCAPE

Simscape is a suite of physical modeling tools that allows users to model and simulate physical systems within the Simulink environment. Unlike traditional block diagrams that use signal flow, Simscape uses physical connections, allowing models to represent real-world components more intuitively. For this project, Simscape (particularly Simscape Electrical™) is crucial for: Realistic Component Modeling: Creating detailed and accurate models of electrical components such as: Solar PV Cells/Arrays: Modeling the I-V characteristics of solar panels under different irradiance and temperature conditions. DC-DC Converters (MPPT): Implementing the buck/boost converter topologies and the MPPT algorithm to accurately track maximum power from the PV array. DC-AC Inverters: Modeling the full-bridge or half-bridge inverter topologies, along with their switching control, to convert DC battery power into AC for the EV. Battery Models: Using detailed battery models (e.g., Equivalent Circuit Model) that accurately represent the charge/discharge behavior, open-circuit voltage, internal resistance, and capacity fade of the Lithium-ion cells.

MATLAB SIMULATION DIAGRAM

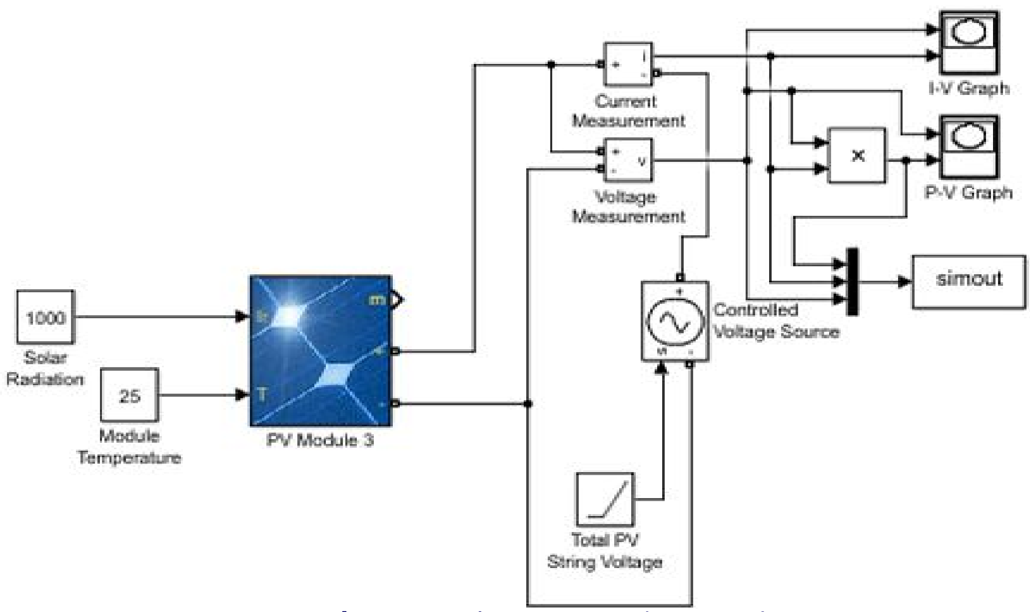

Figure 4 - Solar PV Array Subsystem Diagram

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MPPT Charge Controller :

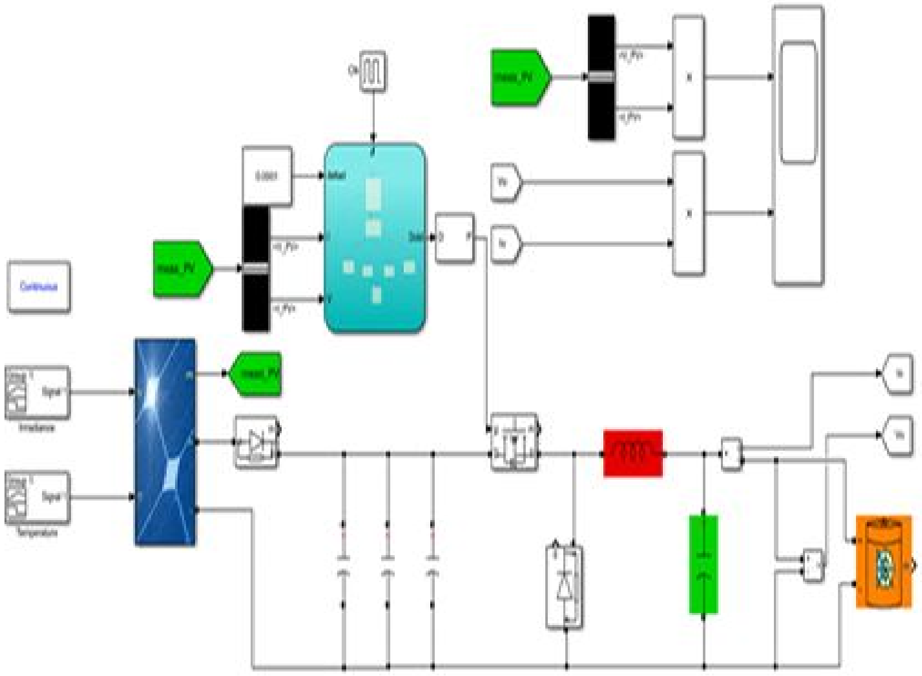

Fig.5 MPPT Charge Controller Subsystem Diagram

Lithium-Ion Battery Bank Subsystem:

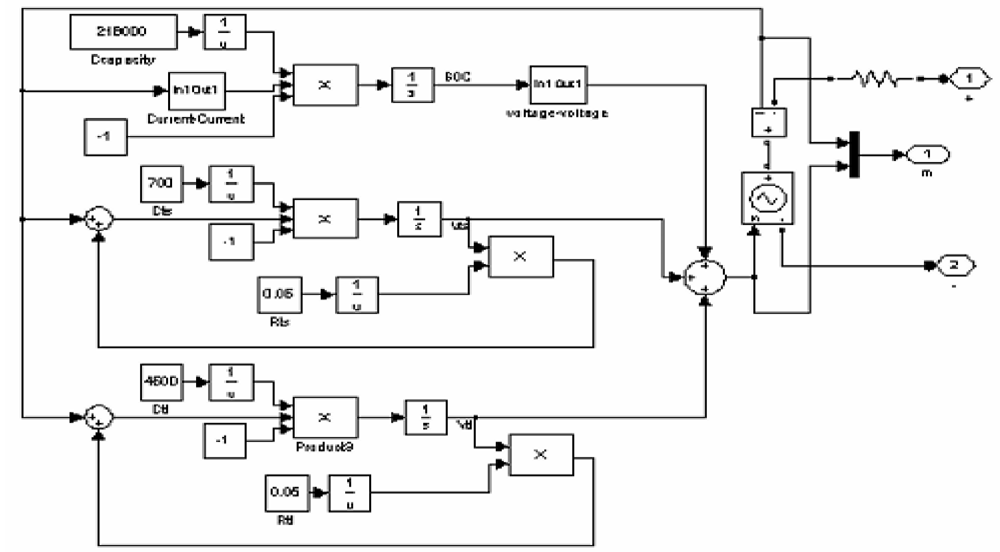

Fig.6.3 Lithium-Ion Battery Bank Subsystem Diagram

OUTPUT

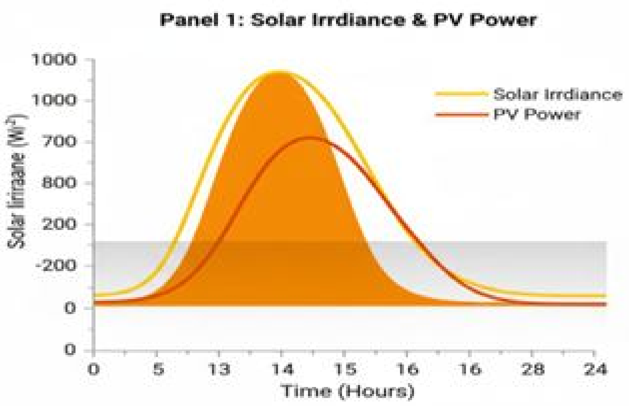

Fig.6.6 Solar Irradiance & PV Power

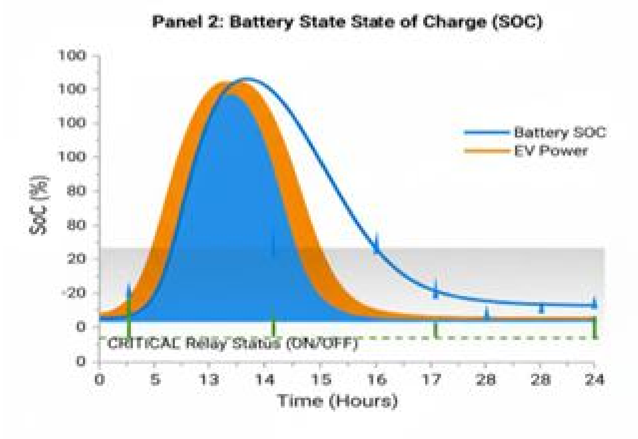

Fig.6.7 Battery State of Charge (SoC)

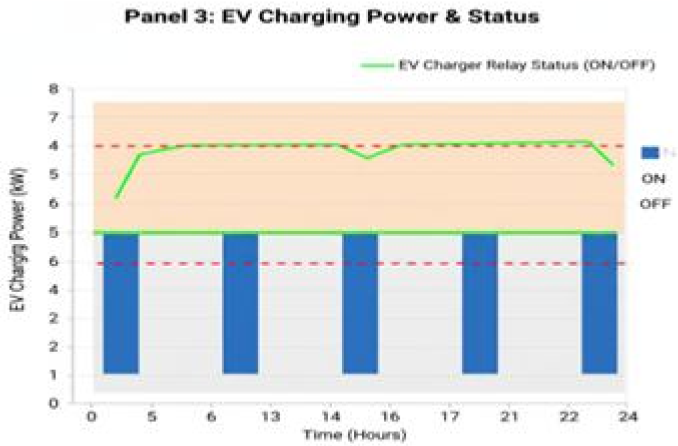

Fig.6.8 EV Charging Power & Status

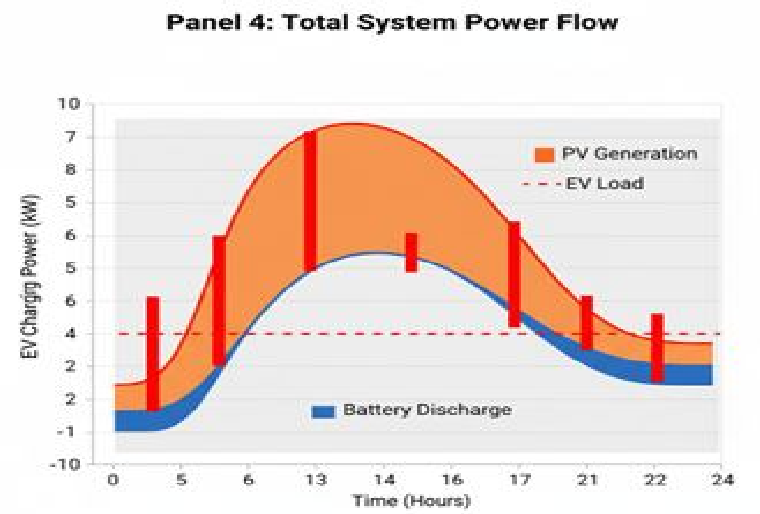

Figure 5 - Total System Power Flow

CONCLUSION

The Load Prioritisation and Smart Switching System successfully addresses the critical challenges of reliable and efficient electric vehicle (EV) charging in off-grid solar environments. By integrating an intelligent microcontroller with robust hardware components such as high-efficiency solar PV panels, a resilient lithium-ion battery bank, MPPT charge controllers, DC-AC inverters, and comprehensive sensing capabilities, this system provides a sustainable and autonomous charging solution. The core strength of the system lies in its smart switching and load prioritization logic. This intelligent management ensures that the available solar energy and stored battery power are optimally allocated, balancing the immediate demand for EV charging with the long-term health and stability of the battery storage. Critical decisions are made in real-time based on solar irradiance, battery State of Charge (SoC), and EV charging requests. This prevents over-discharge of the battery, maximizes energy harvest, and ensures consistent service delivery, even in fluctuating environmental conditions. Furthermore, the integration of an IoT module and display elevates the system beyond basic functionality, offering remote monitoring, control, and local status feedback.

This connectivity empowers operators with vital insights into system performance, facilitates proactive maintenance, and enables data-driven optimization. In essence, this project demonstrates a viable and scalable approach to expanding EV infrastructure into areas without grid access, reducing reliance on fossil fuels, and contributing significantly to a decentralized, renewable energy future. It proves that intelligent energy management is key to unlocking the full potential of off-grid renewable energy systems for demanding applications like EV charging. Future Scope The foundation laid by this system offers numerous avenues for further development and enhancement, pushing towards greater efficiency, reliability, and user-centric functionality.

Advanced Battery Management and Predictive Analytics:

1. State of Health (SoH) Estimation: Implement algorithms to estimate battery SoH more accurately, enabling predictive maintenance and optimizing battery replacement cycles.
2. Predictive Charging: Integrate weather forecasting data to predict future solar availability. This would allow the system to make more intelligent decisions about pre-charging the battery or limiting EV charging during anticipated low-solar periods.
3. Enhanced Communication and User Interface: i).Mobile Application Integration: Develop a dedicated mobile application for users to check charging status, estimated charge time, system health, and even reserve charging slots.

ii).Vehicle-to-Grid (V2G) / Vehicle-to-Home (V2H) supply power back to the station's local loads or even the battery bank during emergencies or peak demand, turning EVs into mobile storage units.

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