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The Energy Impacts of using Top-Light Daylighting Systems for Academic Buildings in Tropical Climate

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Abstract**—**Careful design and selection of daylighting systems can greatly help in reducing not only artificial lighting use, but also decrease cooling energy consumption and, therefore, potential for downsizing air-conditioning systems. This paper aims to evaluate the energy performance of two types of top-light daylighting systems due to the integration of daylight together with artificial lighting in an existing examination hall in University Kebangsaan Malaysia, based on a hot and humid climate. Computer simulation models have been created for building case study (base case) and the two types of top-light daylighting designs for building energy performance evaluation using the VisualDOE 4.0 building energy simulation program. The finding revealed that daylighting through top-light systems is a very beneficial design strategy in reducing annual lighting energy consumption and the overall total annual energy consumption.

Keywords**—**Academic buildings, Daylighting, Top-lighting, Energy savings, Tropical Climate

I. Introduction

PEOPLE have become more conscious of the interaction between buildings, energy, and the environment. There has also been a growing concern among architects and building designers on energy consumption in buildings and its likely adverse affect on the environment [1, 2]. As a point of reference in the United States, commercial buildings consume more than one-third of the nation’s primary energy. Electrical lighting is estimated to account for 25–40% of the total electrical energy consumption [3]. Over the last three decades, several studies have been carried out to reduce electricity use associated with artificial lighting. These studies indicated that daylighting can offer a cost-effective alternative to electrical lighting for commercial and institutional buildings. Through the use of daylighting controllers, daylighting can reduce and even eliminate the use of electrical lighting required to provide sufficient illuminance levels inside building spaces. Simulation analysis as well as field-monitoring studies have reported that daylighting controls can result in significant lighting energy savings ranging from 30% to 77% [4-7].

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Moreover, daylighting offers a lighting source that most closely matches human visual response and provides more pleasant and attractive indoor environment. It is reported that daylighting improves student performance and health in schools [8]. However, surveys have shown that daylighting control strategies are not commonly incorporated in commercial buildings [1-3, 8, 9]. The Malaysia sky has a lot of potential for daylighting applications due to the high daylight availability. According to a study conducted by S. Chirarattananon et al (2002), during office hours (8:00am-16:00pm), global, beam, and diffuse illuminance are typically at more than 20 Klux for Thailand sky [10]. Only a 2.5% daylight factor is needed then for the interior illuminance to reach 500 lux, which is the recommended illuminance level for academic buildings use[11]. Moreover, the study found that the differences of the illuminance availability between each month are small, as compared with those of locations far from the equator. The efficacy of daylight is also high at about 105-115 lumen/watt [12]. Kuala Lumpur sky type is not much different from Bangkok sky type since both cites have tropical climate. Malaysia, which is in a hot and humid climate, has a high potential for energy savings resulting from the use of daylighting because of daylight availability. However, heat gain is a major concern in this type of climate. Therefore, the ideal top-lighting system designs for this tropical region should perform well without adding excessive heat gain to the space. The objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of top-light daylighting systems on energy performance in an academic hall building. In addition, the study presents useful information and better insights on the relationship between top-lighting shapes, glazing types, top-light area, spacing-to-ceiling height ratio, top-lighting orientation, and their impacts on the artificial lighting and total energy consumption.

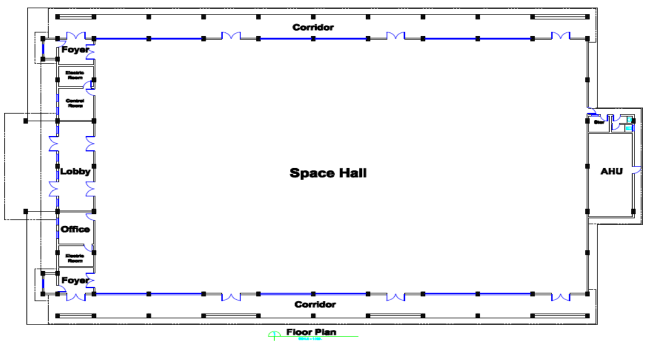
II. Methodology

A. Location and climate

The case study academic hall building investigated in this study is located in the University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia (Latitude 3^0.12' North, Longitude -101^0.6' East, Alt. 25m), which is situated 25 km from the city of Kuala Lumpur. Malaysia has uniform temperature throughout the year. The annual variation is less than 2^0C except for the east coast areas of Peninsular Malaysia which are often affected by cold surges originating from Siberia during the northeast monsoon. Even there, the annual variation is less than 3^0C. Malaysia has high humidity. The mean monthly relative humidity is between 70 to 90%, varying from place to place and from month to month. Rainfall is high and the total annual rainfall of around 2600 millimetres, which is above the global average, but considered normal for an equatorial region. The sky type of Malaysia is 40% cloudy sky, 40% intermediate, and 20% clear sky [12].

B. Energy analysis

The VisualDOE 4.0 building energy analysis program was used to carry out the energy analysis for the case study. The selected tool was VisualDOE 4.0, which is a commercial version with a graphic interface developed by Eley Associates [13] that utilizes the DOE-2.1E calculating engine but works with the WINDOWS® operation system. The DOE-2.1E code has the ability to simulate a wide variety of potential energy conservation measures in buildings and it has been widely validated by comparing its results with thermal and energy use measurements on actual buildings [14]. DOE-2.1E has undergone validation by Los Alamos National Laboratory, LBL and at various US and international institutions to show that the program is sufficiently accurate in energy prediction. Validation gives users confidence that the DOE-2 results are reliable for building energy analysis [15]. The Kuala Lumpur hourly weather data is used with the VisualDOE 4.0 software for this study. For the proposed study, an examination hall building in the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia has been selected as a base case and the characteristics of the building were needed as input data. A floor plan of the hall building used and east and west elevations are presented in Figure 1.The data were obtained from the Department of Development Management of the university which covers official statistics about the existing hall building. Inspection of the site and the selected building was done. All the relevant electrical and mechanical as built drawings, hourly weather data for 2010 and 2011, operation schedules, occupant's density, lighting density and mechanical systems information were procured. The measured electric energy consumption (utility bills) for the selected building of the past two years was also obtained. As-built drawings to gather information about the thermal zoning was reviewed. A computer simulation model in the VisualDOE4.0 energy simulation program based on the hourly weather data of Kuala Lumpur was created. The base hall building and its HVAC equipment information and the measured energy consumption were described. The measure energy consumption for the selected building was compared with the simulated results for similar time and weather conditions. The characteristics of building, HVAC system, and operating conditions for the simulated examination hall single story building are displayed in Table 1 and 2. The weekday and weekend schedules for occupancy, infiltration, lighting, air-conditioning, and equipment are illustrated in Table 3.



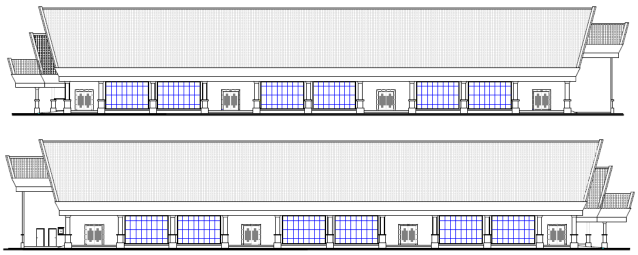


Fig. 1 Floor plan and east and west elevations of the case study UKM examination hall

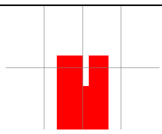
TABLE I
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BASE CASE STUDY UKM EXAMINATION HALL BUILDING

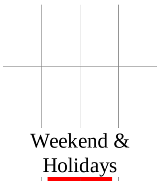
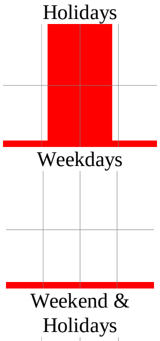
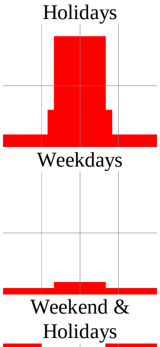
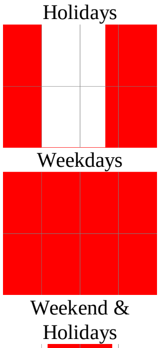
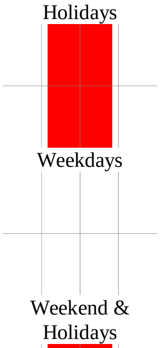
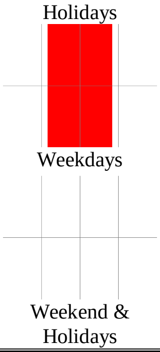
Component	Description
Location	Kuala Lumpur (Lat. 3^0.12' N, Long - 101^0.6' East, Alt. 25m)
Plan Shape	Rectangular
Number of floors	One Story Building
Window-Wall-Ratio	27.8% Estimate
Floor-to-Ceiling Height	6 m
Gross Floor Area	1890 m^2
Number of People	630 students
Lighting Type	Holophane Crystal Glo. 400 Watt
Exterior Wall Structure	151 mm thick. Brick wall with cement 15 mm plaster and paint on both sides
Roof Structure	Metal roof installation deck equivalent 0.48 mm thick, colored 50 mm thick. fiber glass insulation 1 layer of chicken wire mesh
Ground Floor Structure	1 00mm concrete slabs 20mm terrazzo tile with cement Waterproof layer
Window Glazing Type	Single Bronze 6mm Shading Coefficient (SC) = 0.71
Solar Absorbance	0.5 for external walls and 0.5 for the roof
Surface Reflectance	80% for the ceiling, 50% for the walls and 20% for the floor
Occupant Density	4.6 m^2/person
Lighting Power Density LPD	15.1 W/m^2
Equip. Power Density EPD	1.1 W/m^2
Infiltration (Air-changes/hour)	0.5 ACH Average tightness Building
Operation Hours	Weekdays from 07:30 AM to 05:30 PM

TABLE II
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HVAC SYSTEM OF THE BASE CASE UKM EXAMINATION HALL

Characteristics	Description
System Type	Tow Packaged Single Zone System
Cooling Design Temp. (°C)	24 °C Estimate from the actual data
Heating Design Temp. (°C)	21 °C Estimate from the actual data
Cooling Only	Available year round
Ventilation	10 l/s (ASHRAE 62, 1999)
Weather File	Kuala Lumpur weather file

TABLE III
BASE CASE UKM EXAMINATION HALL OCCUPANCY AND OPERATION SCHEDULES

Schedule	Day-Schedule	Schedule Description
Occupancy	 Weekdays	60% during occupied period, 0 % for unoccupied period, weekends and holidays

		
Lighting		100 % during Occupied period and 5 % for unoccupied period, weekends and holidays
Equipment		90% occupied period , 5-10% during unoccupied period, weekends and holidays
Infiltration		0 % occupied period , 100% during unoccupied period, weekends and holidays
Fan Profile		100% for occupied period and 0 % during unoccupied period, weekends and holidays.
Outside Air		100% for occupied period and 0 % during unoccupied period, weekends and holidays.

III. Results of Energy Analysis

The calculated annual energy consumption for the base case study hall building is about 295,356 kWh and the required annual cooling and lighting energy consumption is 79,033 kWh and 206847 kWh respectively. The distribution of the electrical end-use, calculated by the simulation program, for the base hall building is shown in Figure 2. It can be seen from the figure that the most important factors affecting the energy consumption of the building are the cooling about50.8%, lighting about 26.8%, HVAC fans about 19.2%, equipment 1.6% and domestic hot water about 1.6%. In addition, part of the cooling energy consumption is resulting from the associated sensible cooling load due to artificial lighting. Therefore, the lighting parameter was investigated to see the potential lighting energy reductions and associated lighting internal loads impacts of integrating artificial lighting with daylight admitted through skylights and saw-tooth daylighting systems. The effect of different types of glazed, different glazed area and for different orientations on the annual lighting energy saving was also evaluated in this analysis.

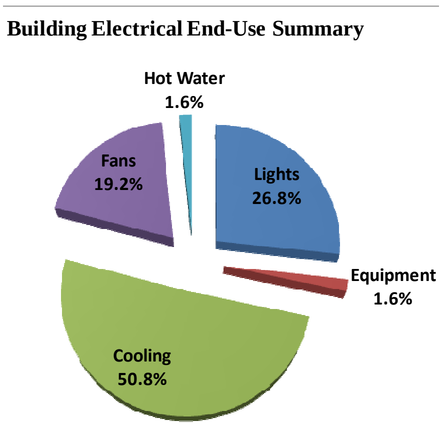


Fig. 2 Electrical end-use summary for the base case examination hall building

The effect of the integrating top-light daylighting and artificial lighting on the annual lighting and total annual energy consumption of the base case hall building are shown in Figure 3. The results of the simulation study demonstrated that utilization of the daylighting in the base hall building results in reduction of the electric lighting consumption by about 70% and cooling energy needs by about 4.6% when compared to the base case hall building (without daylighting); and consequently, the total annual energy consumption is reduced by about 22%. Cooling is used to evacuate the internal loads, which are mainly due to artificial lighting. The utilization of the natural light implies a large reduction of all energy needs for the building (except equipment and hot water) when daylight-linked by automatic continuous dimming daylighting control systems.

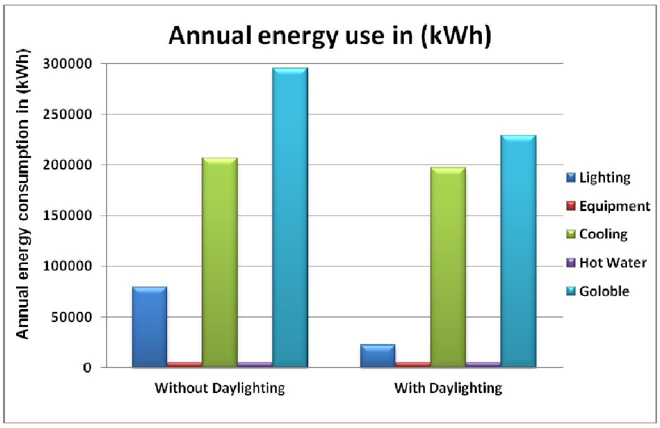


Fig. 3 Total annual energy use in (kWh)

The effect of the glazing area on the building energy consumption was also considered. Increasing the glazing area of the top-lighting system from 0% to 5% reduces the lighting energy consumption by 70% and the total energy consumption by 22% compared to that of the base hall building, as shown in Table 4, but this has insignificant effect on the cooling energy consumption. A simulation run for the base case hall building was also made for second type of top-lighting system (saw-tooth) instead of the roof without top-lighting system. It is observed from the table that the saw-tooth system reduce the lighting energy consumption by 71.9%. The corresponding reduction in the cooling energy consumption is 19.3 %.

TABLE IV
EFFECT OF GLAZING-TO-ROOF RATIO ON THE ENERGY CONSUMPTION FOR THE BASE CASE HALL BUILDING

GRR		Annual building energy consumption (kWh)			
		Lighting	Cooling	Total	Energy savings %
Base case without daylighting		79,033	206,847	295,356	-------
Skylights	5%	23,753	197,242	230,471	-21.97
	10%	20,942	219,453	249,871	-15.4
	15%	20,860	227,100	257,436	-12.8
	20%	20,120	241,736	271,332	-8.1
	25%	19,759	256,449	285,684	-3.3
	30%	19,408	197,242	302,637	2.5
	35%	19,256	219,453	318,418	7.8
	40%	19,082	227,100	333,684	12.97
	45%	18,929	241,736	350,729	18.75
	50%	18,823	256,449	363,909	23.2
Saw-tooth	5%	25,133	206,516	241,125	-18.4
	10%	20,723	251,587	281,786	-4.6
	15%	19,778	297,639	326,893	10.7
	20%	19,201	341,335	370,012	25.3
	25%	18,992	379,485	407,953	38.1
	30%	18,821	423,126	451,423	52.8
	35%	18,778	462,008	490,262	65.9
	40%	19,488	479,037	508,001	71.9
	45%	19,404	521,613	550,493	86.3
	50%	18,801	577,368	605,645	105

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The present study shows that the major parameters consuming the building energy are the cooling, lighting, equipments and hot water. It was found that daylighting the base case hall building causes significant reduction in the lighting and cooling energy consumption and consequently reduction in the total energy consumption by about 22 %. The combined effect of the top-lighting shapes, glazing types, glazing area and top-lighting orientations causes significant reduction in the annual lighting energy consumption in terms of (kWh/m^2 yr). It is found that an increase in the top-lighting-to-roof ratio results in a significant savings of lighting energy consumption. In addition, it was found that glass with higher visible transmittance leads to increased daylighting benefits and higher savings in electrical lighting consumption. Moreover, the use of natural light to illuminate indoor spaces is a free cost method of energy conservation. Eventually, it is worth to mention that the gain from reducing the electrical energy consumption in artificial lighting and air conditioning systems of buildings is not only affecting the building users but also affecting the national economy.

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