



The Role of Sodium-Ion Batteries in Electric Vehicles: A Comparative Study

Savarinathan K¹, Sanjana S², Dinakaran V³, Sivasakthi Balan K⁴

II Year, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Sri Sairam College of Engineering, VTU
University

Associate Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Sri Sairam College of
Engineering, VTU University

ABSTRACT

The global shift toward electric vehicles (EVs) is reshaping the future of transportation, emphasizing the need for efficient, safe, and sustainable energy storage solutions. Currently, lithium-ion (Li-ion) batteries dominate the EV industry due to their high energy density, relatively fast charging times, and long cycle life. However, high costs, environmental impacts, and supply chain concerns related to lithium-ion batteries have spurred the search for alternatives. Sodium-ion (Na-ion) batteries present a promising option, offering a more abundant and less costly material—sodium—while maintaining comparable performance. This paper provides a comparative analysis of sodium-ion and lithium-ion batteries, assessing parameters such as energy density, cost, environmental impact, safety, and performance in electric vehicle applications. This evaluation highlights the opportunities and limitations of sodium-ion technology and discusses the challenges and future development pathways for its integration in the EV market.

1 Introduction

Electric vehicles have become central to global efforts in reducing carbon emissions and dependency on fossil fuels. At the heart of every EV is its battery system, which influences the vehicle's driving range, charging time, energy efficiency, and cost. Lithium-ion batteries are the current standard for EVs due to their high energy density, long cycle life, and ability to perform well at a range of temperatures. Despite their advantages, lithium-ion batteries come with significant limitations:

- **Cost:** Lithium-ion batteries are expensive to produce, primarily due to the high cost of raw materials such as lithium, cobalt, and nickel.
- **Supply Chain Risks:** Lithium and cobalt are scarce and geographically concentrated, leading to potential supply shortages and price volatility.

Environmental Impact: The mining and processing of lithium and cobalt have raised environmental and ethical concerns due to land degradation, water use, and poor labor practices.

To address these issues, researchers are exploring alternative battery chemistries, including sodium-ion batteries. Sodium-ion technology leverages sodium, which is abundant, widely



distributed, and inexpensive, making it a promising alternative for energy storage, particularly in large-scale and cost-sensitive applications. Sodium-ion batteries are similar in structure to lithium-ion batteries but use sodium ions as the charge carriers. This paper explores the potential of sodium-ion batteries in the EV sector, comparing them with lithium-ion batteries across various performance metrics and considering their suitability for different vehicle applications.

2 Recent Works

Extensive research has been conducted on lithium-ion and sodium-ion batteries to enhance their suitability for various applications, including electric vehicles. Some of the notable studies are summarized below:

- **Lithium-Ion Battery Research:** Significant advancements in lithium-ion batteries have focused on improving energy density, stability, and cost. Researchers have explored new cathode materials, such as **lithium iron phosphate (LiFePO₄)**, and **nickel-rich chemistries**, to improve battery capacity and reduce reliance on cobalt. Studies on **solid-state electrolytes** have shown potential to enhance safety and energy density by reducing the risk of thermal runaway.
- **Sodium-Ion Battery Research:** Sodium-ion batteries are still in the developmental phase, but recent progress has been encouraging. Research has focused on improving electrode materials, such as **hard carbon** for the anode and **transition metal oxides** for the cathode, to increase energy density and cycle life. Sodium-ion technology is considered highly suitable for **grid energy storage** and **low-cost EVs** due to its cost advantages.

Comparative Studies: Several studies have compared lithium-ion and sodium-ion batteries across parameters like energy density, cost, safety, and environmental impact. These studies highlight that while lithium-ion batteries are superior in energy density and charge speed, sodium-ion batteries are more cost-effective and environmentally sustainable. Researchers have suggested that sodium-ion batteries could play a vital role in applications where energy density is less critical.

3 Proposed Work Explanation

This paper aims to perform a thorough comparison of lithium-ion and sodium-ion batteries, focusing on their applicability in electric vehicles. Each of the following parameters is examined in detail:

- **Energy Density:** The capacity of each battery type to store energy per unit weight or volume, which is a major determinant of the driving range for EVs.
- **Cycle Life and Durability:** The longevity of each battery type, including its ability to retain capacity over multiple charge-discharge cycles.
- **Safety and Thermal Stability:** An analysis of each battery type's safety, specifically related to overheating, thermal runaway, and fire risk.



- **Environmental Impact:** The sustainability of the material sourcing, manufacturing, and recycling processes for each battery type.
- **Cost Efficiency:** An evaluation of production and material costs, highlighting the economic viability of each battery type for EVs.

This comparative analysis aims to provide a comprehensive perspective on whether sodium-ion batteries could serve as a viable alternative to lithium-ion batteries in electric vehicle applications, especially as the industry seeks sustainable, affordable solutions.

4 Working Methodology

The methodology for analyzing the performance of lithium-ion and sodium-ion batteries involves data collection from academic research, laboratory studies, and industry reports. Each parameter is systematically evaluated:

Energy Density Measurement: Data on energy density are sourced from standardized tests, focusing on energy stored per kilogram (Wh/kg) to assess range potential.

Cycle Life Testing: Laboratory data on cycle life and degradation rates are analyzed, with simulations replicating typical EV usage patterns to determine how each battery type performs over time.

Thermal and Safety Analysis: Testing includes monitoring temperature responses, overheating resistance, and fire hazards under stress conditions, as well as requirements for cooling systems and safety mechanisms.

Environmental Impact Assessment: Environmental impact is assessed by reviewing the lifecycle of each battery type, including the sourcing of raw materials, energy consumption in manufacturing, and ease of recycling.

Cost Comparison: Market data on the cost of lithium, cobalt, nickel, and sodium are collected to evaluate the economic feasibility of each battery type in mass production.

5 Results and Discussion

The comparative analysis reveals unique strengths and weaknesses for lithium-ion and sodium-ion batteries in the EV context:

5.1 Energy Density

Lithium-Ion Batteries: High energy density (150-250 Wh/kg) supports longer driving ranges for EVs, making them suitable for long-range and high-performance models.

Sodium-Ion Batteries: Lower energy density (100-150 Wh/kg) limits their use to short-range EVs or budget vehicles where range is less critical.

5.2 Cost Efficiency

Lithium-Ion Batteries: Expensive due to the high costs of lithium, cobalt, and nickel, and subject to price fluctuations and resource scarcity.

Sodium-Ion Batteries: Significantly cheaper due to the abundance and low cost of sodium, offering a feasible solution for low-cost EVs and potentially reducing EV prices.



5.3 Cycle Life and Durability

Lithium-Ion Batteries: Excellent cycle life (2,000-3,000 cycles) with minimal degradation, making them durable for long-term EV use.

Sodium-Ion Batteries: Competitive cycle life but may degrade faster under certain conditions, though ongoing research aims to improve durability.

5.4 Safety and Thermal Stability

Lithium-Ion Batteries: Higher risk of thermal runaway and fire hazards, requiring complex cooling and battery management systems.

Sodium-Ion Batteries: Safer and less prone to overheating, reducing the need for cooling mechanisms and potentially lowering maintenance costs.

5.5 Environmental Impact

Lithium-Ion Batteries: Negative environmental impact due to lithium and cobalt mining, which can damage ecosystems and have ethical concerns.

Sodium-Ion Batteries: Environmentally friendly, as sodium is abundantly available, and its extraction has a lower ecological footprint.

6 Conclusion

The comparative analysis illustrates that lithium-ion batteries currently outperform sodium-ion batteries in terms of energy density, cycle life, and charging speed, making them the preferred choice for high-performance, long-range EVs. However, sodium-ion batteries offer significant advantages in terms of cost, safety, and environmental impact, positioning them as a feasible alternative for applications where range is less critical, such as urban mobility or budget-friendly EVs.

As research continues to address the energy density and temperature limitations of sodium-ion batteries, they could become a more competitive option, particularly in the cost-sensitive segment of the EV market. With advancements in materials science and manufacturing processes, sodium-ion batteries have the potential to play an increasingly important role in the next generation of sustainable, affordable electric vehicles.



References

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