ISSN 2278-2540 | DOI: 10.51583/IJLTEMAS | Volume XV, Issue V, May 2026

Design and Development of an Oil Conditioning System for Industrial Applications

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.51583/IJLTEMAS.2026.150500057

Received: 13 May 2026; Accepted: 18 May 2026; Published: 28 May 2026

ABSTRACT

Hydraulic and lubrication systems are commonly used in industrial applications for power transmission, lubrication, cooling, and motion control. The efficiency and reliability of these systems depend heavily on the cleanliness and condition of hydraulic oil. Throughout continuous operation, hydraulic oil gets contaminated with metallic wear particles, moisture, air, sludge, and oxidation products, leading to issues like abrasive wear, pressure instability, cavitation, internal leakage, and early failure of hydraulic components.

This research aims to design and develop an Oil Conditioning System (OCS) for industrial hydraulic applications by using offline kidney-loop depth filtration technology. The system uses cellulose-based depth filtration media for ongoing hydraulic oil conditioning and contamination control. The experimental setup targets improving hydraulic oil cleanliness according to ISO 4406 standards, lowering particulate contamination, controlling moisture, and boosting hydraulic system reliability.

Experimental analysis shows a significant drop in contamination levels, better ISO cleanliness codes, reduced moisture, and improved hydraulic oil quality. The proposed Oil Conditioning System enhances machine reliability, lengthens hydraulic oil service life, decreases maintenance frequency, minimises downtime, and facilitates predictive maintenance in modern industrial settings.

Keywords: Hydraulic Oil, Oil Conditioning System, Hydraulic Filtration, ISO 4406, Depth Filtration

Ethical Considerations

This research does not involve human participants or animal testing. Therefore, formal ethical approval was not necessary for this study.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research paper.

Data Availability Statement

The experimental data, design calculations, and supporting research materials used in this study are available from the corresponding author and can be provided upon reasonable request for academic and research purposes.

Hydraulic and lubrication systems are commonly used in industrial settings for power transmission, lubrication, cooling, and motion control. The efficiency and dependability of these systems rely heavily on the cleanliness and condition of hydraulic oil. During operation, hydraulic oil gets contaminated with solid particles, moisture, trapped air, sludge, and oxidation products. This contamination causes issues like abrasive wear, pressure

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instability, cavitation, valve failure, and early breakdown of hydraulic parts. This research focuses on designing and developing an Oil Conditioning System (OCS) for industrial hydraulic use. The system includes offline kidney-loop filtration using cellulose-based depth filtration technology for continuous hydraulic oil conditioning. The experimental setup aims to enhance hydraulic oil cleanliness based on ISO standards, lower contamination levels, stabilize hydraulic performance, and improve system reliability. The experimental analysis shows a significant drop in particulate contamination, an increase in ISO cleanliness levels, moisture reduction, and better hydraulic oil quality. The Oil Conditioning System boosts machine reliability, prolongs oil service life, reduces maintenance frequency, and supports predictive maintenance practices in modern industrial settings.

Keywords: Hydraulic Oil, Oil Conditioning System, Hydraulic Filtration, Depth Filtration, ISO Cleanliness, Predictive Maintenance, Hydraulic Reliability.

INTRODUCTION

Background of Hydraulic Systems

Hydraulic and lubrication systems are essential parts of modern industrial machinery. These systems find applications in sectors such as steel manufacturing, mining, thermal power, cement, plastic injection moulding, marine engineering, automated production, and heavy construction. Hydraulic systems are favoured for their high-power density, precise motion control, compact design, and reliable operation under harsh industrial conditions.

Hydraulic oil acts as the working medium in these systems and performs various functions, including:

- Power transmission
- Lubricating moving parts
- Cooling hydraulic components
- Protecting against corrosion
- Sealing between moving surfaces
- Removing generated heat

The performance of hydraulic systems directly hinges on the cleanliness and physical state of hydraulic oil. During continuous operation, hydraulic oil becomes contaminated with environmental dust, metallic wear particles, oxidation products, moisture, sludge, and air.

These contaminants gradually degrade oil properties and cause:

- Increased wear of hydraulic components
- Pressure instability
- Cavitation damage
- Valve sticking
- Internal leakage
- Reduced lubrication performance
- Premature machine failure

Studies indicate that approximately 70% to 80% of hydraulic failures stem from contaminated hydraulic oil.

Need for Oil Conditioning System

Modern hydraulic systems run at high pressure and use precise components, such as servo valves, proportional valves, hydraulic pumps, and actuators. These components have very small internal spaces, making them highly sensitive to contamination.

Conventional filtration systems often cannot fully remove:

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- Fine contamination particles
- Moisture
- Entrained air
- Oxidation sludge
- Varnish deposits

Therefore, industries need Oil Conditioning Systems (OCS) that can maintain total hydraulic oil health continuously during machine operation.

Industrial Importance of Oil Conditioning

Oil Conditioning Systems offer various benefits:

- Improved hydraulic reliability
- Lower maintenance costs
- Extended oil service life
- Reduced downtime
- Enhanced machine efficiency
- Better compliance with ISO cleanliness standards
- Improved predictive maintenance capability

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hydraulic systems are widely used in manufacturing, mining, power plants, steel processing, marine systems, construction, and automated production due to their ability to deliver high force density, precise motion control, and dependable power transmission. Hydraulic oil is crucial in these systems, serving several functions such as lubrication, cooling, sealing, corrosion protection, and hydraulic power transmission.

The performance and reliability of hydraulic systems are greatly affected by hydraulic oil cleanliness and condition. During ongoing operation, hydraulic oil can get contaminated with wear particles, dust, moisture, oxidation products, air, sludge, and varnish. These contaminants hinder hydraulic system performance and shorten the operational life of pumps, valves, bearings, and actuators.

Research indicates that around 70% to 80% of hydraulic system failures result from contaminated hydraulic oil. Fine particles smaller than 10 μm can harm precise hydraulic components, as their sizes are comparable to the internal clearances. Moisture promotes oxidation and corrosion, while entrained air leads to cavitation, unstable actuator motion, and inefficiency.

To address these issues, industries use Oil Conditioning Systems (OCS) that continuously maintain hydraulic oil quality during operation. These systems perform fine filtration, moisture removal, degassing, thermal stabilization, and condition monitoring. This research focuses on designing and developing an integrated Oil Conditioning System for industrial hydraulic applications.

Researchers also stressed the value of vacuum dehydration systems, offline kidney-loop filtration, online contamination monitoring, and predictive maintenance technologies for modern industrial hydraulic systems.

The literature review shows that conventional filtration systems mainly focus on particle removal and lack integrated capabilities for moisture removal, degassing, oxidation control, thermal stabilisation, and real-time monitoring.

Research Gap

The literature review highlighted several gaps in traditional hydraulic contamination control systems:

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- Limited capability to remove dissolved moisture
- Poor control of entrained air
- Insufficient oxidation and varnish control
- Lack of thermal stabilisation
- Inadequate online oil condition monitoring
- Weak predictive maintenance integration

Most conventional filtration systems focus solely on particle contamination and fail to uphold complete hydraulic oil health under modern industrial conditions.

Thus, there is a need for an integrated Oil Conditioning System capable of performing simultaneously:

- Fine particulate filtration
- Moisture removal
- Air degassing
- Temperature stabilization
- Real-time condition monitoring

Objectives of Research

The primary goal of this research is:

To design and develop an integrated Oil Conditioning System that enhances hydraulic oil cleanliness, removes moisture and air contamination, stabilises oil temperature, and improves overall hydraulic system reliability and efficiency.

Specific objectives include:

- Studying hydraulic oil contamination mechanisms
- Analysing contamination effects on hydraulic performance
- Reviewing existing hydraulic oil conditioning technologies
- Designing the integrated oil conditioning system to involve human participants or animal testing.

Therefore, formal ethical approval was not necessary for this study.

- Improve hydraulic oil cleanliness based on ISO standards.
- Remove moisture and air from hydraulic oil.
- Enhance hydraulic system reliability and efficiency.
- Support predictive maintenance and online monitoring.
- Lower maintenance costs and downtime.

Experimental Setup

Introduction

The experimental setup evaluates the Oil Conditioning System's performance under real industrial hydraulic conditions. It acts as an offline kidney-loop filtration system using cellulose-based depth filtration technology. The setup continuously circulates hydraulic oil through the filtration unit, separate from the main hydraulic machine.

Objectives of Experimental Setup

The experimental setup aims to:

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- Evaluate filtration efficiency.
- Improve hydraulic oil cleanliness.
- Monitor pressure stability.
- Analyse contamination reduction.
- Study hydraulic oil circulation.
- Assess the industrial use of offline filtration systems.

Components of Experimental Setup

The complete setup includes the following components:

- Hydraulic Oil Reservoir
- Hydraulic Gear Pump
- Cellulose-Based Depth Filter
- Pressure Gauge
- Flow Meter
- Temperature Sensor
- Piping and Valves
- Return Line Arrangement
- Monitoring Instruments

Hydraulic Oil Reservoir

The hydraulic oil reservoir stores oil during the conditioning process. It also has several functions:

- Dissipates heat.
- Separates air.
- Allows contamination settling.
- Provides a stable oil supply.

The reservoir is made from mild steel and designed based on oil circulation needs.

Hydraulic Gear Pump

The hydraulic gear pump keeps oil circulating through the filtration unit. It is chosen based on:

- Required flow rate.
- Operating pressure.
- Oil viscosity.
- Continuous operation ability.

Cellulose-Based Depth Filtration Unit

The filtration system uses cellulose-based depth filter media. This technology captures contaminants throughout the thickness of the filter media.

Depth filtration offers several benefits:

- High dirt holding capacity.
- Better fine particle retention.
- Stable filtration efficiency.
- Longer filter service life.

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Working Principle of Oil Conditioning System

The system operates on the principle of continuous offline hydraulic oil circulation. The flow sequence is:

Reservoir → Gear Pump → Filtration Unit → Return Line → Reservoir.

Hydraulic oil flows continuously through the filtration unit, where contamination particles are trapped inside the filter structure. The system keeps improving oil cleanliness during operation.

Design Analysis

Introduction

The design analysis of the Oil Conditioning System ensures effective hydraulic oil circulation, contamination control, stable filtration performance, and reliable industrial operation. The system design addresses industrial hydraulic operating conditions and the contamination sensitivity of hydraulic components.

The main goals of the design analysis include:

- Maintaining continuous hydraulic oil circulation.
- Improving hydraulic oil cleanliness.
- Reducing particulate contamination.
- Stabilising hydraulic oil flow and pressure.
- Enhancing filtration efficiency.
- Boosting hydraulic reliability.

The design methodology focuses on creating an integrated offline hydraulic oil conditioning system that operates continuously under industrial conditions.

Design Parameters of Oil Conditioning System

The design parameters align with hydraulic oil properties, contamination levels, operating conditions, and industrial filtration needs.

Important Design Parameters

Parameter	**Value**
Hydraulic Oil Type	ISO VG 46
Filtration Type	Offline Kidney Loop
Filtration Media	Cellulose-Based Depth Filter
Filtration Range	1–10 μm
Reservoir Capacity	100–150 Liters
Pump Type	Hydraulic Gear Pump
Flow Direction	Continuous Recirculation
Operating Pressure	Moderate Pressure
Application	Industrial Hydraulic Systems

These parameters support stable hydraulic oil conditioning and effective contamination removal.

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Hydraulic Oil Circulation Analysis

Analysing hydraulic oil circulation is key for maintaining ongoing contamination removal and stable filtration efficiency.

The circulation system is designed in a closed-loop, where hydraulic oil flows continuously through:

Reservoir → Gear Pump → Filtration Unit → Return Line → Reservoir.

Functions of Continuous Oil Circulation:

- Continuous contamination removal.
- Uniform oil conditioning.
- Stable pressure characteristics.
- Better dirt-holding performance.
- Improved hydraulic reliability.
- Reduced contamination buildup.

The system ensures that contaminated oil passes through the filtration media continuously, allowing fine particles to be trapped within the filter structure.

Filter Element Design and Selection

The filtration unit is the most critical part of the Oil Conditioning System. In this research, cellulose-based depth filtration technology is chosen for its excellent contamination retention ability.

Benefits of Depth Filtration Technology:

- High dirt holding capacity.
- Better fine particle retention.
- Stable filtration efficiency.
- Improved oil cleanliness.
- Longer service life.
- Enhanced protection for servo valves and pumps.

Working Principle of Depth Filter

In-depth filtration systems catch contaminants throughout the entire thickness of the filter media rather than just on the surface.

The porous multilayer structure of cellulose filter media allows:

- Fine particulate capture.
- Sludge retention.
- Carbon contamination removal.
- Oxidation particle retention.

Filter Media Specifications

Parameter	**Specification**
Filter Type	Depth Filtration
Media Material	Cellulose
Filtration Range	1–10 µm

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Structure	Multilayer Porous
Oil Flow Direction	Outside to Inside
Application	Hydraulic Oil Conditioning

Pressure Drop Analysis Across Filter Element

Pressure drop analysis is crucial for evaluating filtration performance and keeping oil flow stable through the filtration unit.

As contamination builds up inside the filter media, oil flow resistance gradually increases. So, it is essential to monitor pressure for:

- Evaluating filter condition.
- Identifying filter blockage.
- Monitoring filtration efficiency.
- Maintaining stable oil circulation.
- Factors Affecting Pressure Drop:
- Oil viscosity.
- Flow rate.
- Contamination level.
- Filter media design.
- Temperature variation.

The system maintains stable operating pressure during continuous oil circulation.

Pump Selection and Hydraulic Power Analysis

A hydraulic gear pump is chosen for continuous hydraulic oil circulation because of its:

- Simple structure.
- Reliable operation.
- Stable flow characteristics.
- Compact design.
- Continuous-duty capability.

Pump Selection Criteria:

- Required oil flow rate.
- Operating pressure.
- Oil viscosity.
- Continuous operation ability.
- Industrial reliability.

The hydraulic pump circulates oil through the filtration unit, allowing uninterrupted contamination removal.

Electric Motor Selection

An electric motor drives the hydraulic gear pump.

Motor Selection Considerations:

- Required pump power.
- Continuous operation.

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- Energy efficiency.
- Operating speed.
- Industrial reliability.

The motor is chosen based on pump load and hydraulic circulation requirements.

Monitoring and Instrumentation

Monitoring instruments are included in the Oil Conditioning System to analyse hydraulic oil conditioning performance.

Monitoring Instruments Used

Instrument	**Function**
Pressure Gauge	Pressure Monitoring
Flow Meter	Oil Flow Measurement
Temperature Sensor	Temperature Monitoring
Oil Sampling Port	Oil Analysis

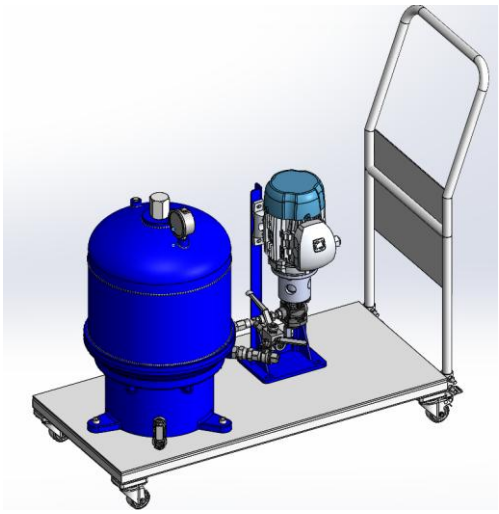
Benefits of the Monitoring System:

- Real-time performance monitoring.
- Filter condition evaluation.
- Hydraulic stability analysis.
- Predictive maintenance support.
- Improved operational safety.

CAD Model Development

The complete Oil Conditioning System is modelled using CAD software for:

- Component arrangement.
- Piping layout design.
- Filtration unit positioning.
- Reservoir integration.
- Maintenance accessibility.



The CAD model helps understand the feasibility of industrial installation and system integration.

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Industrial Working Principle of the Developed System

The Oil Conditioning System operates continuously in offline mode, separate from the main hydraulic machine.

Step-by-Step Working Procedure:

1. Contaminated hydraulic oil is stored in the reservoir.
2. The hydraulic gear pump circulates the oil continuously.
3. Oil goes through the cellulose-based depth filtration unit.
4. Contamination particles are trapped within the filter structure.
5. Clean conditioned oil returns to the reservoir.
6. Continuous recirculation gradually improves hydraulic oil cleanliness.

The system consistently removes contamination while keeping hydraulic operating conditions stable.

Advantages of the Developed Oil Conditioning System

The developed system offers several industrial benefits:

1. Continuous contamination removal.
2. Improved hydraulic reliability.
3. Reduced component wear.
4. Extended oil service life.
5. Lower downtime.
6. Enhanced hydraulic efficiency.
7. Better ISO cleanliness compliance.
8. Reduced maintenance frequency.
9. Improved predictive maintenance support.

The design analysis confirms that the Oil Conditioning System is suitable for industrial hydraulic contamination control applications.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Initial Hydraulic Oil Condition

Initial analysis of the hydraulic oil was completed before the Oil Conditioning System was put in place. The oil sample from the industrial hydraulic system revealed high levels of particulate contamination, sludge particles, oxidation products, and moisture contamination.

Contaminated hydraulic oil led to unstable hydraulic performance and increased wear risk in pumps, servo valves, actuators, and bearings.

Initial Oil Condition Parameters

Parameter	Initial Condition
ISO Cleanliness Code	22/20/17
Moisture Content	380 ppm
Oil Appearance	Dark and Contaminated
Sludge Presence	High
Varnish Formation	Observed
Hydraulic Stability	Unstable

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The analysis showed that the hydraulic oil needed continuous conditioning and control of contamination.

Contaminated Hydraulic Oil Sample



Figure 1. Contaminated hydraulic oil before the filtration process

Filtration Performance Analysis

The Oil Conditioning System was operated continuously under industrial hydraulic conditions. Hydraulic oil was circulated through the cellulose-based depth filtration system using an offline kidney-loop setup. The filtration unit consistently removed contamination particles from the hydraulic oil, gradually improving its cleanliness.

Hydraulic Oil Conditioning Performance

Parameter	**Before Filtration**	**After Filtration**
ISO Cleanliness Code	22/20/17	17/15/12
Moisture Content	380 ppm	110 ppm
Sludge Contamination	High	Low
Oil Appearance	Dark	Clear
Varnish Deposits	Present	Reduced
Hydraulic Stability	Unstable	Stable

The results clearly show that the Oil Conditioning System greatly improved the quality of the hydraulic oil.

Before and After Filtration Comparison



Figure 2. Hydraulic oil condition before and after filtration

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ISO Cleanliness Improvement

An analysis of hydraulic oil cleanliness was conducted based on ISO 4406 cleanliness standards. The filtration system significantly decreased the number of contamination particles.

Fewer contamination particles provided better protection for:

- Servo valves
- Hydraulic pumps
- Bearings
- Proportional valves
- Hydraulic actuators

ISO Cleanliness Improvement Analysis

Particle Size	Before Filtration	After Filtration
>4 µm	High	Reduced
>6 µm	High	Reduced
>14 µm	Moderate	Very Low

The depth filtration system effectively removed fine contamination particles that can cause hydraulic wear and instability.

ISO Cleanliness Improvement Graph

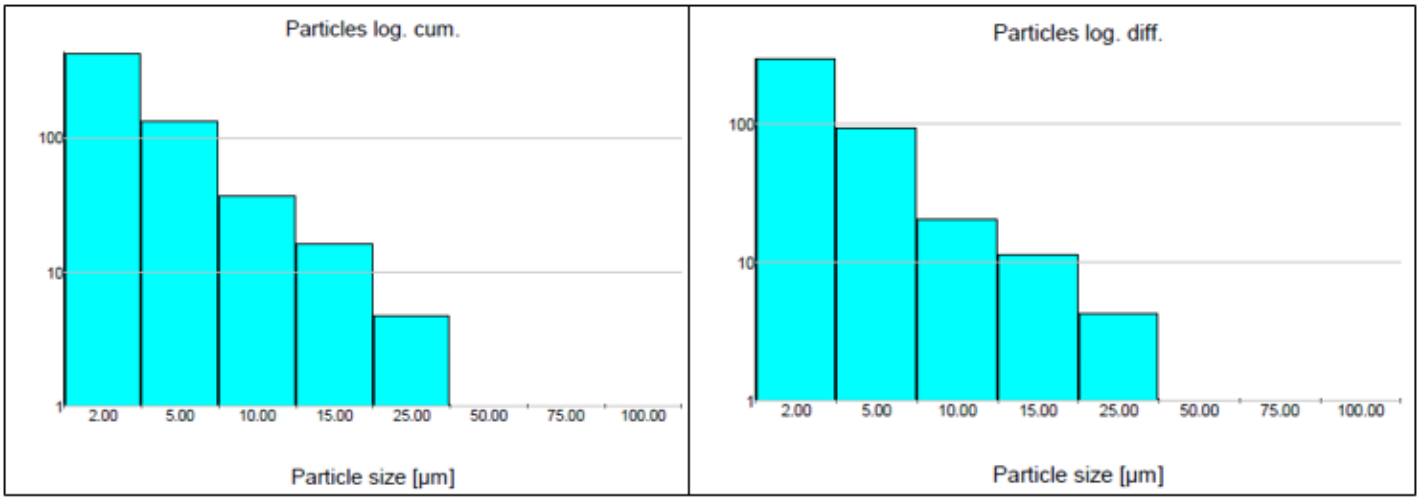


Figure 3. ISO cleanliness improvement after filtration

Moisture Reduction Analysis

Moisture contamination greatly impacts hydraulic oil properties and speeds up oxidation, corrosion, sludge formation, and lubricant breakdown.

The Oil Conditioning System showed a reduction in moisture contamination during continuous oil circulation.

Moisture Reduction Results

Condition, Moisture Content, Initial Oil Condition, 380 ppm After Filtration, 110 ppm

This reduction in moisture contamination improved:

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- Oxidation resistance
- Lubrication performance
- Corrosion protection
- Hydraulic efficiency
- Oil service life

Reducing moisture contamination significantly increased hydraulic reliability.

Industrial Benefits

Initial analysis of hydraulic oil showed high contamination levels, including:

- Metallic wear particles
- Sludge contamination
- Moisture contamination
- Oxidation deposits
- Poor ISO cleanliness level

This contaminated oil caused unstable hydraulic performance and greater wear risk.

Filtration Performance Analysis

After implementing the Oil Conditioning System, a significant improvement in hydraulic oil condition was noted.

The system effectively:

- Reduced particulate contamination
- Improved ISO cleanliness level
- Reduced sludge and varnish contamination
- Enhanced oil clarity
- Stabilised hydraulic pressure Before and After Filtration

ISO Cleanliness Improvement

Hydraulic oil cleanliness was checked against ISO 4406 standards.

The system showed:

- Fewer particles
- Better cleanliness code
- Improved protection for servo valves and pumps

Moisture Reduction Analysis

The filtration system also lowered moisture contamination in hydraulic oil. This reduction improved:

- Oxidation resistance
- Lubrication properties
- Corrosion protection
- Hydraulic reliability

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Industrial Benefits

The Oil Conditioning System offers several industrial benefits:

- Better machine reliability
- Fewer hydraulic failures
- Lower maintenance costs
- Longer oil life
- Improved machine efficiency
- Less downtime
- Better support for predictive maintenance inclusion

CONCLUSION

This research successfully developed an Oil Conditioning System for industrial hydraulic applications using offline kidney-loop depth filtration technology. The system effectively improved hydraulic oil cleanliness, reduced particulate contamination, lowered moisture content, and increased hydraulic system reliability.

Experimental analysis showed that the Oil Conditioning System significantly enhances hydraulic oil condition to meet industrial cleanliness requirements. The cellulose-based depth filtration system effectively removes fine contamination particles while ensuring stable hydraulic operation.

The Oil Conditioning System offers several advantages like better hydraulic reliability, longer oil service life, reduced maintenance costs, less downtime, and increased operational efficiency. This research confirms that integrated oil conditioning technologies are crucial for maintaining hydraulic oil health in modern industrial operations.

Future Scope

Future work could focus on:

- Integrating vacuum dehydration systems
- Online contamination monitoring sensors
- IoT-based predictive maintenance systems
- Automatic contamination warning systems
- AI-based oil condition analysis
- Real-time moisture monitoring
- Advanced synthetic filtration media
- Thermal stabilization and cooling systems

Combining Industry 4.0 technologies with hydraulic oil conditioning systems can further enhance predictive maintenance capabilities and industrial reliability.

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