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# Technical, Economic, and Environmental Review of Waste to Energy Technologies from Municipal Solid Waste

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## ABSTRAK

Produksi sampah padat kota (MSW) dan permintaan listrik global secara bertahap meningkat sebagai akibat dari urbanisasi, peningkatan populasi, dan pertumbuhan ekonomi. Pemilihan teknologi konversi sampah menjadi energi (WTE) yang tepat perlu mempertimbangkan aspek efisiensi energi, finansial, dan lingkungan. Artikel ini membahas sisi teknis, finansial, dan lingkungan dari teknologi WTE yang ada. Teknologi konversi sampah menjadi energi (WTE) meliputi teknologi termal, fisika, biokimia, dan bio-elektrokimia. Pirolisis, gasifikasi, dan insinerasi merupakan teknologi termal yang digunakan untuk menghasilkan energi dari sampah berupa panas dan syn-gas. Anaerobik digestion dan landfill merupakan teknologi biokimia untuk menghasilkan energi dari limbah berupa biogas. Teknologi fisika digunakan untuk menghasilkan energi dari limbah berupa refuse-derived fuel (RDF). Microbial fuel cells (MFC) dan microbial electrolysis cells (MEC) adalah teknologi WTE terbaru yang menghasilkan listrik dan bahan bakar hidrogen. Anaerobik digestion dan landfill adalah teknologi WTE berbiaya rendah tetapi memiliki potensi produksi energi yang rendah. Gasifikasi plasma adalah teknologi WTE dengan potensi tinggi untuk produksi energi, cold gas efficiency (CGE), carbon conversion efficiency (CCE), rasio H<sub>2</sub>/CO, emisi CO<sub>2</sub> rendah, dan biaya operasi tinggi. MEC memiliki potensi energi dari H<sub>2</sub> yang tinggi, emisi CO<sub>2</sub> rendah, dan biaya investasi tertinggi. Insinerasi adalah teknologi konversi yang umum dengan potensi energi yang rendah, emisi CO<sub>2</sub> yang tinggi, dan biaya investasi yang tinggi. Pemilihan teknologi WTE dipengaruhi oleh faktor teknis, ekonomi, dan lingkungan.

**Kata kunci:** Sampah, Energi, Teknik, Ekonomi, Lingkungan

## ABSTRACT

Global municipal solid waste production and electricity demand gradually increased as a result of urbanization, population increase, and economic growth. The appropriate selection of Waste to energy (WTE) technologies needs consideration of energy efficiency, financial, and environmental aspects. This article discusses the technical, financial, and environmental side of existing WTE technologies. Waste-to-energy (WTE) technologies include thermal, physical, chemical, and bio-electrochemical technology. Pyrolysis, gasification, and incineration are thermal technology used to generate energy from waste in the form of heat and syn-gas. Anaerobic digestion and landfill are biochemical technology to generate energy from waste in the form of biogas. Physical technology is used to generate energy from waste in the form of refuse-derived fuel (RDF). Microbial fuel cells (MFC) and microbial electrolysis cells (MEC) are the most recent WTE technology that produces electricity and hydrogen fuel. Anaerobic digestion and landfill are low-cost WTE technology but have a low potential for energy generation. Plasma gasification is WTE technology with a high potential for energy generation, cold gas efficiency (CGE), carbon conversion efficiency (CCE), H<sub>2</sub>/CO ratio, low CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and high operating costs. MEC has a high H<sub>2</sub>-potential for energy generation, low CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and the highest capital cost. Incineration is a common conversion technology with a low potential for energy generation, high CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and high capital costs. The selection of WTE technologies is influenced by technical, economic, and environmental factors.

**Keywords:** Municipal solid waste, Energy, Technical, Economic, Environmental

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## 1. Introduction

Economic growth, industrialization, urbanization, and high standards of living have led to a rapid increase in demand for energy, thereby increasing the global municipal solid waste (MSW) production (Kaur et al., 2021). According to World Bank statistics, MSW

produced worldwide reached 2.01 billion tonnes in 2016 and this is predicted to increase above 3.4 billion tonnes per year by 2050 (Kaza et al., 2021). Meanwhile, energy demands still rely on fossil fuels which cause negative impacts on the environment, namely increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

Therefore eco-friendly alternative energy resources are needed to provide for the global energy demand. The issue of MSW accumulation and the demand for alternative energy can be solved by utilizing energy from MSW. The process of utilizing energy from MSW is called Waste to Energy (WTE) [3,4]. Literature reviews related to WTE technology have been carried out by previous researchers. Beyene et al., 2018 (Beyene et al., 2018), discuss the current updates of WTE technology. Kaur et al., 2021 (Kaur et al., 2021), discuss the advantages and drawbacks of WTE technology. Giusti et al., 2009 (Giusti, 2009), discuss the effects of waste management procedures on human health. Roy et al., 2022 (Roy et al., 2022), discuss the characteristics, methods, and waste-to-energy aspects of MSW management in Bangladesh. These reviews only address technical issues and are partly based on local perspectives, therefore it is important to conduct a comprehensive review related

to the existing WTE technology, technical, economical, and environmental aspects of existing WTE technology. This article review aims to discuss the existing WTE technologies, the technical, the economic, and the environmental aspect of existing technologies.

## 2. Waste to Energy

### 2.1. Municipal solid waste (MSW)

Municipal solid waste (MSW) is all useless, unwanted, and discarded materials that result from people's daily activities that come from households, industries, schools, offices, shops, and others. The quantity, composition, and characteristics of MSW vary in each country depending on the rate of population growth, income, urbanization (Kaza et al., 2021), collection methods, and lifestyle (Rezaei et al., 2018). Table 1 shows the characterization of MSW.

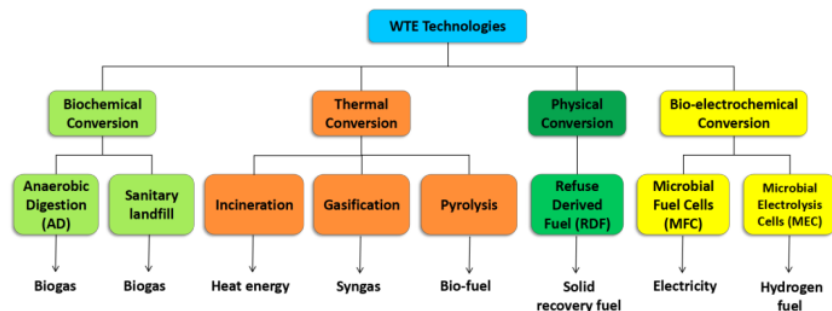
Table 1. Characteristics of municipal solid waste

Moisture content (%)	Ash content (%)	Volatile matter (%)	Fixed carbon (%)	Ultimate analysis (%)					Calorific value LHV (MJ/kg)	Ref.
				C	H	O	N	S		
8.6	24.42	52.21	24.48	22.78	5.92	46.73	0.28	0.07	11.48	(Beyene et al., 2018)
2.3	7.7	87	5.3	40.3	5.6	53	0.2	-	10.9	(Kim et al., 2012)
4.63	16.73	77.93	5.32	-	-	-	-	-	-	(Y. C. Chen, 2016)
70	29	71	9.05	-	-	-	0.89	-	25.32	(Alam & Qiao, 2020)
-	22.38	66.56	11.06	58.48	9.22	31.78	0.37	0.15	-	(H. He et al., 2021)
3.3	9.1	79.7	7.2	63.6	8.19	27	0.4	0.1	15.98	(Azam et al., 2020)

### 2.2. Waste to Energy Technologies

The WTE technologies used in each country vary depending on climatic conditions, population, generated waste types, and geographical conditions (Edjabou et al., 2015). WTE technologies can be classified into physical, thermal, biochemical, and bio-electrochemical technology. Through physical technology, MSW is converted to fuel, namely Refused derived fuel (RDF). Thermal technology includes incineration or combustion, gasification, and pyrolysis (Tomić et al., 2017). During this process heat and syngas are generated. Anaerobic digestion and landfill are

part of the biochemical conversion technology. In this process, organic matter is converted microbially into biogas in a oxygen-free environment. Microbial fuel cells (MFC) and microbial electrolysis cells (MEC) are the newest MSW processing methods that utilize the role of microbes to produce electricity and hydrogen fuel (Beyene et al., 2018). Figure 1 shows the various technologies for processing MSW into energy and the resulting products.



**Figure 1.** MSW processing technology into energy and the resulting product

The following are existing technologies to convert waste to energy.

#### 2.2.1. Physical conversion

Physical conversion is the process by which MSW is physically/mechanically processed into energy to produce fuel/RDF. This process includes screening, sorting, separation, shredding, and drying.

- **Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF)**

RDF is a fuel made from combustible materials in MSW such as non-recyclable plastic, paper, cardboard,

and other combustible materials. RDF is an alternative to landfill and includes an environmentally friendly method. MSW produced from commercial and domestic activities is chopped, dried, separated by different processes such as screening, air classification, and ballistic separation, and then packaged in pellet form to obtain a homogeneous material (Kaur et al., 2021). RDF can be utilized as fuel in cement plants, lime factories, and power plants as a substitute for conventional fuels such as coal. The characteristics and heating value of RDF are shown in table 2 below.

**Table 2.** Characteristics of refuse-derived fuel (RDF)

Moisture content (%)	Ash content (%)	Volatile matter (%)	Fixed carbon (%)	Ultimate analysis (%)					Calorific value LHV (MJ/kg)	Ref.
				C	H	O	N	S		
5.8	13.7	71.6	13.8	49.4	6.7	28.1	0.3	1.0	16.89	(Beyene et al., 2018)
10-30	20-30	50-65	12-15	20-30	3-5	20-25	1-1.5	0.2-0.3	11.32	(Subramani & Murugan, 2014)

#### 2.2.2. Biochemical conversion

Biochemical conversion is a method in which organic materials are processed micro-biologically in an oxygen-free atmosphere to produce biogas. The main components of biogas are methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). Anaerobic digestion and landfill are among the methods used to convert MSW into energy through biochemical processes. This process is carried out to treat MSW that has a high water content such as organic MSW and agricultural waste (Kaur et al., 2021).

- **Anaerobic Digestion (AD)**

Anaerobic digestion is a technique to decompose organic matter with the aid of anaerobic microorganisms under oxygen-free environment. In

this process, sorting is carried out to separate metal, glass, and plastic from the organic materials in MSW so that the organic fraction of municipal solid waste (OFMSW) is obtained. OFMSW was then chopped, inserted, and kept in a bio-reactor under oxygen-free environment conditions and in the presence of acidogenesis and methanogenic microorganisms. The yield of methane produced depends on the operating conditions, MSW composition, reactor type, and residence time (Shah et al., 2021). Table 3 shows the characteristics of biogas produced from municipal solid waste (MSW).

**Table 3.** Characteristics of biogas from MSW anaerobic digestion

CH <sub>4</sub> (%)	CO <sub>2</sub> (%)	O <sub>2</sub> (%)	Moisture content (%)	N <sub>2</sub> (%)	H <sub>2</sub> (%)	H <sub>2</sub> S (ppm)	NH <sub>3</sub> (%)	Trace gas (%)	Calorific value LHV (MJ/Nm <sup>3</sup> )	Ref.
40-75	15-60	<2%	1-5	0-5	-	0-5000	0-500	<2%	20.85	(Meng et al., 2015)
50-70	30-50	0-1	saturation	0-1	0-2	0.8	-	-	21.59	(Markoš, 2011)
50-80	30-50	0-1	saturation	0-1	0-2	0.7	-	-	23.38	(Markoš, 2011)

- **Landfill**

The landfill is the conventional and simplest biological method to obtain energy from MSW. The landfill produces biogas which can be used for heating purpose and electricity generation. The amount of

biogas produced depends on MSW composition, MSW age, water content, and temperature (Bharathiraja et al., 2018). Table 4 shows the characteristics of biogas in landfills.

Table 4. Characteristics of biogas from landfills

CH <sub>4</sub> (%)	CO <sub>2</sub> (%)	O <sub>2</sub> (%)	Moisture content (%)	N <sub>2</sub> (%)	H <sub>2</sub> (%)	H <sub>2</sub> S (ppm)	NH <sub>3</sub> (%)	CO (%)	Calorific value LHV (MJ/Nm <sup>3</sup> )	Ref.
50-80	20-50	<2%	saturation	0-3	0-5	0.1	-	<2%	23.67	(X. Y. Chen et al., 2015)
55-65	35-45	0-2	-	0-3	0-1	0.1	0-1	-	21.53	(Aich & Ghosh, 2016)

### 2.2.3. Thermal conversion

In thermal conversion, municipal solid waste (MSW) is converted in the form of heat or syn-gas to obtain the energy. This energy can be utilized to produce steam for electricity generation. Thermal conversion includes incineration, gasification, plasma gasification and pyrolysis.

- Incineration

Incineration involves burning MSW at high temperatures (800-1000 C) in excess of oxygen. Incineration is common method in developing countries (Yong et al., 2019). Incineration can reduce MSW volume by as much as 80-90% (Y. Wang et al., 2018). Table 5 shows the characteristics of MSW incineration.

Table 5. Electricity and emission generation from MSW incineration

Power generated (kWh/Ton)	CO <sub>2</sub> (kg/Ton)	H <sub>2</sub> O (kg/Ton)	N <sub>2</sub> (kg/Ton)	SO <sub>x</sub> (kg/Ton)	NO <sub>x</sub> (kg/Ton)	Particulate material (kg/Ton)	Ref.
584.95	978.28	132.39	2770.52	2.18	34.31	5.94	(Trindade et al., 2018)
614.03	978.28	132.39	2770.52	2.18	34.31	5.94	(Tsai & Kuo, 2010)
485.55	310.96	-	-	-	-	-	
497.6	318.47	-	-	-	-	-	

- Gasification

Gasification is a thermochemical method in which organic waste and carbon-containing waste materials are converted into syn-gas (Kaur et al., 2021). Gasification is a new technology in the WTE process that is widely used in developed countries (X. Y. Chen et al., 2015) and has an important role in energy production. The syn-gas consist of hydrogen, carbon

monoxide, and methane as main components. The energy content of syn-gas is equivalent to one-third of natural gas, which ranges from 4-50 MJ/Nm<sup>3</sup>. There are several types of gasifiers such as continuous fluidized bed (CFB), bubbling fluidized bed (BFB), fluidized bed (FB), and others, each of which has its advantages, disadvantages, and operating characteristics. Table 6 shows several types of gasifiers.

Table 6. Comparison of several types of gasifiers

Feed	Reactor	H <sub>2</sub> O (%)	Operating conditions	LHV (MJ/Nm <sup>3</sup> )	H <sub>2</sub> (%)	CO (%)	CGE (%)	Ref.
MSW	BFB	10	800 C, air	5.4	16.0	24.0	62	(Kartal & Överer, 2021)
MSW	FB	48	700 C, air	5.8	43	42	-	(C. Chen et al., 2013)
MSW	CFB	51.7	900 C, O <sub>2</sub>	6.174	28	25	88.9	(Shehzad et al., 2016)
MSW	FB	7.6	850 C, air	5.43	6.9	18.8	40.3	(Cao et al., 2019)
MSW	FB	50.9	650 C, air	6.37	24	30	54	(Ramzan et al., 2011)
MSW	BFB	-	687 C, air	7	6.2	9.73	53	(Couto et al., 2015)

- Plasma Gasification

Plasma gasification is a thermal conversion method to convert MSW into energy using an electric arc. Plasma is produced from the release of heat and light energy caused by the propagation of electricity through a non-conductive medium such as gas or air. Plasma gasification operated at 1400-2000° C under partial oxidation to produce high-quality of syn-gas (Prado et al., 2020). The ratio of reducing the amount

of waste in gasification plasma is 300:1, while in incineration is 5:1. Plasma gasification is carried out at high temperatures so can ensure the disappearance of harmful compounds, toxic compounds, bacteria, and deadly viruses and closed system so that ash, dust, and toxic compounds are not released in the outside environment. The electrical energy produced from the gasification process is cheaper and more efficient than incineration (Kaur et al., 2021).



**Table 7.** Characteristics of gas from the plasma gasification process

CH <sub>4</sub> (%)	CO (%)	CO <sub>2</sub> (%)	HCl (%)	N <sub>2</sub> (%)	H <sub>2</sub> (%)	H <sub>2</sub> S (ppm)	H <sub>2</sub> O (%)	COS (%)	Calorific value LHV (MJ/Nm <sup>3</sup> )	Ref.
-	37.37	1.41	0.31	17.12	28.65	0.22	14.19	0.01	7.80	(Galeno et al., 2011)
1.00	31.50	8.33	0.03	12.10	16.20	0.02	29.20	-	7.32	
0.1	41.40	16.60	5.60	5.60	34.80	-	1.5	-	9.01	(Caroline Ducharme et al., 2010)
-	41	4	-	14	33	-	8	-	8.73	
-	26	-			52		-		8.89	
< 1	45.3	4.3			42.5		0.01		10.29	(Janajreh et al., 2021)

- Pyrolysis

Pyrolysis is a new technology for WTE and is widely applied in developed countries (Meng et al., 2015). Pyrolysis can reduce MSW volume by 80-90%. Pyrolysis is an endothermic process in which heat is used to burn MSW in an oxygen-free environment. Pyrolysis produces three main products, namely pyro-oil in the form of a mixture of oil and water obtained from the condensation of steam, residue in the form of

charcoal and ash which is rich in carbon content, and gas in the form of CO, CO<sub>2</sub>, and methane (Jamilatun et al., 2022). Several factors influence pyrolysis including the pretreatment process, the composition of raw material, heating rate, temperature, residence time, a type of reactor (Pitoyo et al., 2022). Rotary kiln is the most used technique for pyrolysis of MSW (Hasan et al., 2021). Table 8 shows the characteristics of the gas from the pyrolysis.

**Table 8.** Characteristics of gas from the pyrolysis process

H <sub>2</sub> (%)	CO <sub>2</sub> (%)	CO (%)	CH <sub>4</sub> (%)	C <sub>2</sub> H <sub>4</sub> (%)	C <sub>2</sub> H <sub>6</sub> (%)	Calorific value LHV (MJ/Nm <sup>3</sup> )	Ref.
52.53	12.21	29.05	17.45	3.5	5.26	10.58	(Sipra et al., 2018)
36.18	10.81	30.12	16.23	5.32	1.34	9.6	(M. He et al., 2010)
36.18	10.81	30.12	16.23	5.32	1.34	9.6	
40.80	16.85	25.01	9.80	2.45	5.09	7.26	(N. Wang et al., 2017)

## 2.2.4 Bio-electrochemical conversion

Bio-electrochemical conversion includes microbial fuel cells (MFC) and microbial electrolysis cells (MEC). This technology is the newest WTE technology that utilizes the role of microbes to produce hydrogen fuel and electricity.

- Microbial fuel cells (MFC)

Electrochemically active microorganisms (EAM) are used in MFC technology to produce electricity.

MFCs involving both aerobic and anaerobic processes using bacteria as catalysts is a new approach to bio-hydrogen production. Various organic waste such as household waste, animal manure, and sewage sludge can be used as raw materials (Logroño et al., 2015). The use of organic waste makes MFC an eco-friendly technology that gives a dual purpose in waste management and bioelectricity generation (Xu et al., 2017). Table 9 shows electricity generation in different reactor designs and substrates.

**Table 9.** Electricity generation from MFCs

MFC design	Substrate	Power density (W/m <sup>3</sup> )	Ref.
Single chamber	wastewater	13.1	(Zuo et al., 2008)
Double chamber	Wastewater	2485	(Amend & Shock, 2001)
MFC-MBR	Wastewater	6.0	(Y. P. Wan et al., 2012)
-	Municipal wastewater	0.18	(F. Zhang et al., 2013)
-	Municipal wastewater	0.17	(Jiang et al., 2011)

- Microbial electrolysis cells (MEC)

MEC is a smart and green technology to face the challenges of global warming and meet energy demands. MEC works by utilizing electrochemically energetic bacteria to convert MSW into H<sub>2</sub> and chemicals (Kadier et al., 2017). Hydrogen production rate (HPR) in MEC is affected by the type of substrate, external voltage, electrode surface area, electrode

spacing, membrane materials, and reactor design (Kadier et al., 2016). Compared to other non-conventional technologies, MEC has some advantages such as producing H<sub>2</sub> at low energy inputs, no need for precious metals on the anode of MEC, high conversion efficiency to hydrogen, producing relatively pure hydrogen, and producing other value-added products

(Kadier et al., 2017). Table 10 shows the hydrogen production in MECs technologies from the literatures.

**Table 10.** Hydrogen production in MECs

MEC design	HPR (m <sup>3</sup> H <sub>2</sub> /m <sup>3</sup> d)	Ref.
Double chamber	1.5	(Selembo et al., 2009)
	50	(Jeremiasse et al., 2011)
	1.1	(Cheng & Logan, 2007)
Single chamber	3.4	(Lu & Ren, 2016)
	2.3	(Kadier et al., 2016)

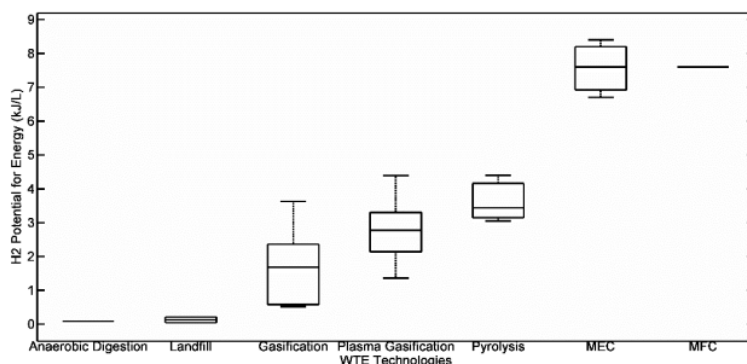
### 3. Assessment of WTE technologies

#### 3.1. Technical Assessment

##### 3.1.1. Energy Generation from H<sub>2</sub>

Hydrogen (H<sub>2</sub>) is a green fuel, a high calorific value fuel that has the highest energy density. Hydrogen (H<sub>2</sub>) has a calorific value of 120-142 MJ/kg. Figure 2 shows the potential for energy generation from H<sub>2</sub> among different WTE technologies. Bio-electrochemical technology, namely MEC has the highest, followed by thermal conversion and biochemical conversion technology. Bio-electrochemistry produces high purity of H<sub>2</sub> (up to 90%) (Khan et al., 2017), so it has a high H<sub>2</sub>-potential

for energy generation. Thermal conversion produces various gas compositions, namely CH<sub>4</sub>, CO<sub>2</sub>, CO, H<sub>2</sub>, and others with H<sub>2</sub> content between 16-52%. Among the thermal conversion, incineration technologies have the lowest value because incineration is a combustion process that produces CO<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>O as the main gas composition (Thabit et al., 2022). Meanwhile, the biochemical conversion's gaseous product is mostly CH<sub>4</sub>, CO<sub>2</sub>, and a small amount of H<sub>2</sub> (0-5%) in composition (X. Y. Chen et al., 2015) so it has a low H<sub>2</sub>-potential value.



**Figure 2.** Potential for energy generation from hydrogen in different WTE technologies

##### 3.1.2. Available Energy

Figure 3 shows a <sup>26</sup> available energy from waste which is the product of the lower heating value (LHV) of syngas and the volume of gas produced by the weight of waste in different WTE technologies. Available energy shows the potential for energy generation from waste. It can be seen from Fig. 3 that thermal conversion technology gives a greater value than biochemical conversion because thermal

conversion produces a higher yield of syngas, which is 610-1240 m<sup>3</sup>/ton (M. He et al., 2010), compared to biochemical conversion, which is 30-142 m<sup>3</sup>/ton (Rahman et al., 2018). Plasma gasification produces the highest available energy value among thermal conversion technologies because plasma gasification has the highest LHV and syngas yield. The high LHV and yields of syngas provide greater available energy.

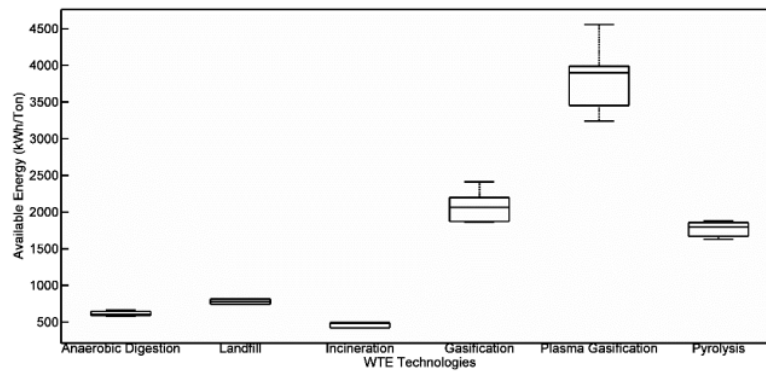


Figure 3. Available energy from waste through different WTE technologies

### 3.1.3. $H_2/CO$ ratio

Figure 4 shows the  $H_2/CO$  ratio in various WTE technologies.  $H_2$  and  $CO$  are diatomic molecules that provide the building blocks of fuel science and technology. The ratio of  $H_2/CO$  affects efficiency, combustion, and emissions. An increase in  $H_2/CO$  will increase thermal efficiency, combustion temperature, and  $NO_x$  emissions, and reduce  $HC$  and  $CO$  emissions (Sahoo et al., 2012). A high  $H_2/CO$  ratio ( $>2$ ) is required in the Fischer-Tropsch synthesis (Zaccariello & Mastellone, 2015). It can be seen from Fig. 4 that pyrolysis produces a higher  $H_2/CO$  ratio than

gasification. The high  $H_2/CO$  ratio is caused by the water-gas shift reaction that converts  $CO$  to  $H_2$ , increasing the equivalent ratio (ER) in gasification, which is the ratio of actual oxygen to stoichiometric oxygen for complete combustion, will increase the oxidation of hydrogen to  $H_2O$  thereby reducing the  $H_2$  content, and increase the oxidation of  $C$  and  $CO$  to  $CO_2$  which further reacts with  $C$  through the Boudard reaction to produce  $CO$  thereby reducing  $H_2/CO$  ratio. Pyrolysis has an ER close to zero so it has a high  $H_2/CO$  ratio.

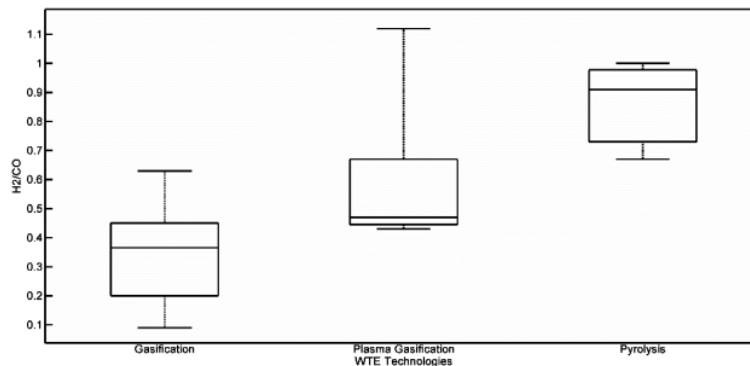


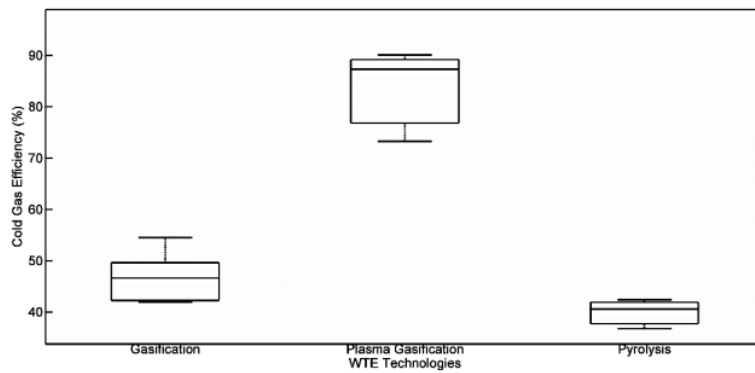
Figure 4.  $H_2/CO$  ratio among different WTE technologies

### 3.1.4. Cold gas efficiency (CGE)

Figure 5 shows the cold gas efficiency (CGE) of the three thermal conversion technologies (gasification, plasma gasification, and pyrolysis). CGE is the ratio between the calorific value of the syngas produced and the calorific value of the feedstock. CGE is related to the heat of combustion from syngas and feeds waste. CGE is a function of LHV and the volume/mass flow rate of syngas and feeds waste. The higher the

LHV and the volumetric rate of syngas, the higher the CGE. The high value of CGE results in great combustion efficiency. Plasma gasification (PG) has a high CGE value compared to other thermal conversion technologies because PG takes place at high temperatures, resulting in a large volumetric rate of syngas. Plasma gasification can convert the volume of waste into syngas and slag up to about 99% (Prado et al., 2020).



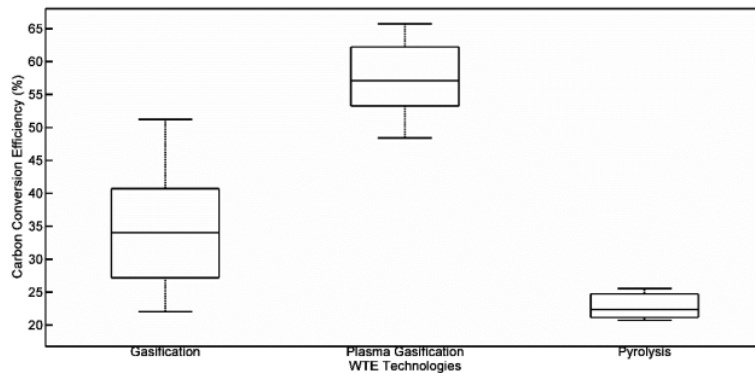


**Figure 5.** Cold gas efficiency (CGE) among different WTE technologies

### 3.1.5. Carbon conversion efficiency (CCE)

Figure 6 shows the carbon conversion efficiency (CCE) in three thermal conversion technologies (gasification, plasma gasification, and pyrolysis). CCE is defined as the amount of carbon in the waste which is converted to carbon in the syngas in the form of CO, CO<sub>2</sub>, CH<sub>4</sub>, C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>6</sub>, C<sub>3</sub>H<sub>8</sub>, etc. The CCE indicates how much of the unconverted waste should be treated by

other process. CCE also indicates the chemical efficiency of the process (Seo et al., 2018). CCE is a function of carbon fraction and volumetric/mass flow rate of syngas and feeds waste. Plasma gasification (PG) provides the highest CCE value because the high temperature in PG produces a large volumetric rate of syngas, thereby increasing the conversion of carbon from waste to syngas.

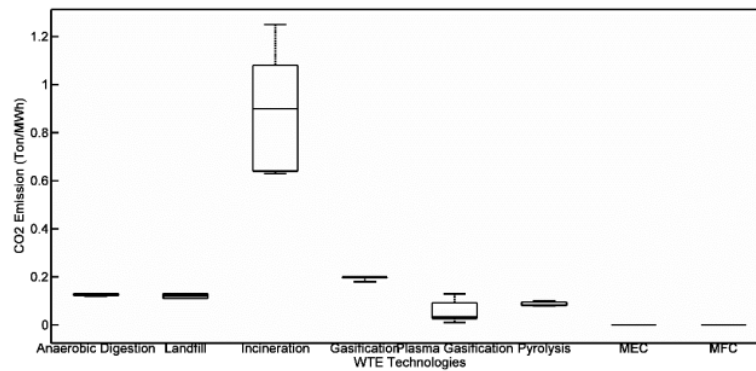


**Figure 6.** Carbon conversion efficiency (CCE) among different WTE technologies

### 3.2. Environmental Assessment

Figure 7 shows the emission factors for various WTE technologies. The emission factor shows how much CO<sub>2</sub> is released to produce a certain amount of energy from waste. CO<sub>2</sub> is the main component of greenhouse gas (GHG). It can be seen from the figure that incineration gives the highest emission factor between 0.6-1.1 tons/MWh, followed by gasification

(0.2 tons/MWh), anaerobic digestion, and the landfill (0.12 tons/MWh), plasma gasification and pyrolysis (0.08 tons/MWh).), then MFC and MEC (close to zero). The high content of CO<sub>2</sub> in incineration is because incineration is a combustion process that produces CO<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>O as the main components in the gas (Thabit et al., 2022).



**Figure 7.** Emission factor among different WTE technologies

### 3.3. Economic Assessment

The cost of energy production is a main factor in the choice of WTE technology. Table 11 shows a comparison of investment costs between conventional technology and WTE technology. Table 11 shows that the average investment cost for energy production technology from MSW is relatively higher than that of other renewable and non-renewable

resources, especially for non-conventional WTE technology (Tangri, 2017). These make conventional WTE technologies such as AD, landfill, and composting preferred because of the risk of cost, investment capital, and lower operating costs, especially in developing countries.

**Table 11.** Comparison of investment costs between WTE and non-WTE technologies

Technology for Energy Production		Estimated Capital Investment, \$/kW	Ref.
Non-WTE technologies	Oil/gas power plant	950-1000	(US Energy Information Administration, 2022)
	Onshore wind	1850	
	Offshore wind	5500	
	Solar thermal	7100	
	Solar photovoltaic	1200-1600	
	Geothermal	2800	
	Advanced Nuclear	6400-6800	
	Combustion turbine with NG	700-1200	(Li et al., 2014)
	Fuel cell	7000	
	Cogeneration with coal	1700	
	Integrated gasification combined cycle with coal (IGCC)	1700	(US Energy Information Administration, 2022)
	IGCC with carbon capture	1570	
WTE technologies	Biomass	4100	(Huiru et al, 2019)
	Landfill	1600	
	Anaerobic digestion (AD)	3700-7000	(Tangri, 2017)
	Incineration	7000-10000	
	Pyrolysis	8000-11500	
	Gasification	7500-11000	
	Plasma gasification	8000-11500	(Nasrabadi & Moghimi, 2022)
Non-conventional	MFC	14700	
	MEC	39600	(Lu & Ren, 2016)

Operational and maintenance costs related to WTE technology are shown in table 12. Operational costs include labor, overhead, insurance, depreciation, and utility costs. Operational and maintenance costs on non-conventional WTE technology are higher than

on conventional technology. Operational and maintenance costs are influenced by several parameters including socio-economic status, labor wages, high-efficiency targets, taxes, and insurance (Austin, 2013).

**Table 12.** Comparison of operational and maintenance costs on WTE technology

WTE technology for Energy Production		O & M cost USD/Tonne of MSW	Ref.
Conventional technologies	Incineration	60-90	(Mukherjee et al., 2020)
	Anaerobic Digestion	22-55	
	Sanitary landfill	30-80	
	Composting	20-60	
	Pyrolysis	100	
Non-conventional technologies	Gasification	40	(Nasrabadi & Moghimi, 2022)
	Plasma gasification	300	
	MFC	271.36	
	MEC	1185	
			(Lu & Ren, 2016)

#### 4. Conclusion

Waste-to-energy (WTE) technologies include thermal, physical, biochemical, and bio-electrochemical technolog. The selection of Waste to energy (WTE) technologies needs consideration of energy efficiency, financia, and environmental aspects Anaerobic digestion and landfill have low-cost 46 low potential for energy generation. Incineration has a low potential for energy generation and high CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and capital costs. Plasma gasification is superior in technical and environmental (high potential for energy generation, CGE, CCE, and H<sub>2</sub>/CO, and low CO<sub>2</sub> emissions) and inferior in economical aspect (high capital and operating costs). MEC has a high H<sub>2</sub>-potential for energy generation, low CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and the highest capital cost. The selection of WTE technologies is influenced by energy efficiency, economic, and environmental factors.

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