

Numerical simulation and experimental study of blade pitch effect on Darrieus straight-bladed wind turbine with high solidity: A case study under realistic conditions

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1 **Numerical simulation and experimental study of blade pitch effect on**
2 **Darrieus straight-bladed wind turbine with high solidity: A case study under**
3 **realistic conditions**

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8
9 **ABSTRACT**

10 Numerical and experimental studies were performed to examined the influence of
11 pitch angle on the aerodynamic performance of a small Darrieus straight blade
12 vertical axis wind turbine with high solidity and pitch regulation system under a
13 realistic condition. By comparing experimental and numerical results, numerical
14 results were validated. The power coefficient was measured and calculated at
15 different tip speed ratios and for two pitch angles 0 and 5. The results revealed that
16 5 degrees increase in the pitch angle led to 25% elevation in the maximum value of
17 the power coefficient (performance coefficient). Also, the numerical results showed
18 higher accuracy at lower tip speed ratios for both pitch angles. After numerical
19 method validation, numerical method employed to calculate the coefficient of
20 performance and coefficient of torque function of Azimuth position as well as the
21 flow field in the rotor affected zone and lateral distance. According to the numerical
22 results, vorticity generation increased by the rise in the pitch angle at a constant tip
23 speed ratio; the maximum performance coefficient occurred at a lower tip speed ratio
24 with elevation in the pitch angle; finally, the increment in the pitch angle led to lower
25 velocity profile in lateral distances of the rotor.

26 **KEYWORDS**

27 Darrieus VAWT, Experimental aerodynamics, Computational fluid dynamics,
28 Pitch angle, Performance coefficient

29 **NOMENCLUTURE**

30
 A_s rotor swept area

P *power*

AOA angle of attack

R *rotor radius*

| | | | |
|-------|--------------------|----------|------------------|
| C | blades chord | T | torque |
| C_L | lift coefficient | TSR | tip speed ratio |
| C_P | power coefficient | V | velocity |
| C_T | torque coefficient | ρ | air density |
| D | rotor diameter | σ | solidity ratio |
| H | rotor height | ω | rotational speed |
| N | number of blades | | |

31

32 1. INTRODUCTION

33 Interest in renewable energy technologies has increased significantly in the recent
34 decades given the growing chemical and thermal pollutions, rising energy demand
35 all over the world, and depletion of fossil fuel resources. Wind has proved to be the
36 cheapest alternative energy resource per each kWh generated electricity and has the
37 fastest developing rate in comparison to other renewable resources such as solar
38 energy. Two basic configurations of wind turbines are the horizontal axis wind
39 turbines (HAWT) and vertical axis wind turbines (VAWT). The horizontal axis
40 turbines are highly developed and used in all current large scale wind farms. On the
41 other hand, vertical axis turbines are mostly used in urban areas and high turbulent
42 conditions (Bhuta et al., 2012; Castelli et al., 2011). Darrieus turbines are a type of
43 VAWTs operating through lift force in different rotor shapes and configurations
44 (Ghasemian et al., 2017). Low start-up torque is one of the disadvantages of the
45 Darrieus type of vertical axis turbines prompting researchers to study different
46 geometrical parameters of Darrieus VAWT's rotors to improve the startup
47 performance. Numerus dimensionless parameters have been introduced in order to
48 investigate the effect of different parameters. In recent years, many researchers have
49 confirmed that high solidity ratio will improve the start-up torque and self-starting
50 of Darrieus VAWTs. Otherwise, high solidity ratio has a significant negative effect
51 on the coefficient of performance (COP) of wind turbines (Howell et al., 2009).
52 Nevertheless, high solidity is a necessary option in low wind speed conditions. Also,
53 different researchers have introduced blade pitch angle as a parameter which can
54 govern VAWTs COP (Rezaeiha et al., 2017). Considerable improvements in the

55 understanding of VAWT can be achieved through applying CFD and experimental
56 measurements. In this investigation, a straight blade Darrieus VAWT with high a
57 solidity ratio has been studied numerically and experimentally under two different
58 pitch angles in order to estimate the effect of blade pitch on the aerodynamic
59 performance of the mentioned turbine. Many researchers have studied various
60 aspects of VAWTs, which are briefly reviewed further.

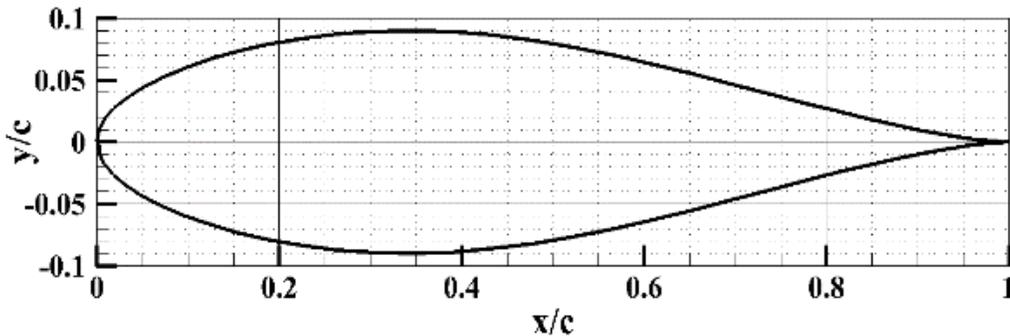
61 [Arab et al. \(2017\)](#) examined the performance and self-starting characteristics of
62 VAWTs numerically while considering the moment of inertia of the rotor. They used
63 SST transient turbulent model and revealed that increase in solidity led to diminished
64 COP average. Further, the maximum COP was calculated at lower tip speed ratios
65 (TSR). [Rezaeiha et al. \(2017\)](#) applied computational fluid dynamics technique in
66 order to study the effect of pitch angle of blades on the VAWT aerodynamics
67 performance. They found that 6.6% increase in COP can be obtained for a certain
68 condition of the studied turbine. Also, they demonstrated that dynamic pitching
69 might be a very promising approach for further performance optimization. [Rogowski
70 et al. \(2018\)](#) simulated a two-bladed Darrieus wind turbine using 2-D computational
71 fluid dynamics method. They achieved good agreement between numerical and
72 experimental results using different turbulence models such as SST k- ω and
73 realizable k- ϵ . [Castelli et al. \(2011\)](#) proposed a new performance prediction model
74 based on CFD. [Howell et al. \(2009\)](#) applied wind tunnel and numerical investigation
75 on a small VAWT and observed that 3D numerical model had less than 20% error
76 in comparison of wind tunnel data. [Li et al. \(2012\)](#) utilized 2.5-D large eddy
77 simulation (LES) to simulate a VAWT under conditions of high angle of attack
78 flows. Although 2.5-D LES was unable to the capture effects of the tip vortex, they
79 solidly confirmed that 2.5-D LES is an accurate method to evaluating VAWTs
80 aerodynamics performance. [Horb et al. \(2018\)](#) studied a variable pitch control for a
81 VAWT and expressed that the variable pitch can enhance the VAWTs COP by more
82 than 15% at the maximum power point. [Danao et al. \(2012\)](#) studied the effect of
83 chamber and thickness of blades on the aerodynamics characteristic of VAWT 2-D
84 numerically and revealed that the chamber can have a positive effect on VAWTs
85 start-up. More relevant information is available in the literature which have been
86 published recently ([Peng et al., 2016](#); [Sengupta et al., 2015](#); [Svorcan et al., 2013](#);
87 [Nobile et al., 2014](#); [Wang et al., 2018](#); [Rezaeiha et al., 2018](#); and [Sagharchi et al.,
88 2018](#)).

89 In this investigation, we intend to elucidate the effect of blades pitch angle on a
90 specific small straight bladed Darrieus VAWT with high solidity under various tip

91 speed ratios (TSR) both experimentally and numerically. For this purpose, an
 92 experimental set up was assembled in Isfahan Science and Technology town, which
 93 provides desirable wind conditions and measurement instruments. Also a 2-D
 94 numerical approach was conducted to be compared against experimental results and
 95 to be validated for future studies. K- ω SST turbulent model was used to govern the
 96 full transient simulation based on dynamic mesh and six-DOF methods. The output
 97 power was measured from experimental set-up and compared with numerical results
 98 in order to dedicate accuracy of the numerical method.

99 **2. MODEL GEOMETRY**

100 Symmetric airfoils have been used in VAWTs in order to control the L/D ratio for
 101 downstream blades causing higher COP in comparison with chambered airfoils.
 102 While Traditionally NACA 4-digit symmetric airfoil has been selected for Darrieus
 103 straight bladed VAWTs (for example, NACA0015 to NACA0022 are widely used
 104 in various numerical and experimental studies as well as commercial applications
 105 (Ghasemian et al., 2017)). Indeed, NACA6-serie is a common airfoil family in
 106 HAWT which provides a low drag coefficient because of its top line shape.
 107 NACA630018 was employed in this regard to control the laminar boundary
 108 condition explaining the high L/D ratio. Figure.1 represents NACA630018 geometry
 109 in dimensionless coordinates.



110

111 Fig. 1. NACA630018 dimensionless geometry

112 Another important geometrical parameter is solidity. The optimum solidity for the
 113 maximum COP has been reported within the range 0.3-0.5 (Sabaeifard et al., 2012).
 114 In this case, solidity was set 1.2. Further, other geometrical features of the studied
 115 turbine are summarized in Table 1.

116

Table 1. Geometrical features of the tested model

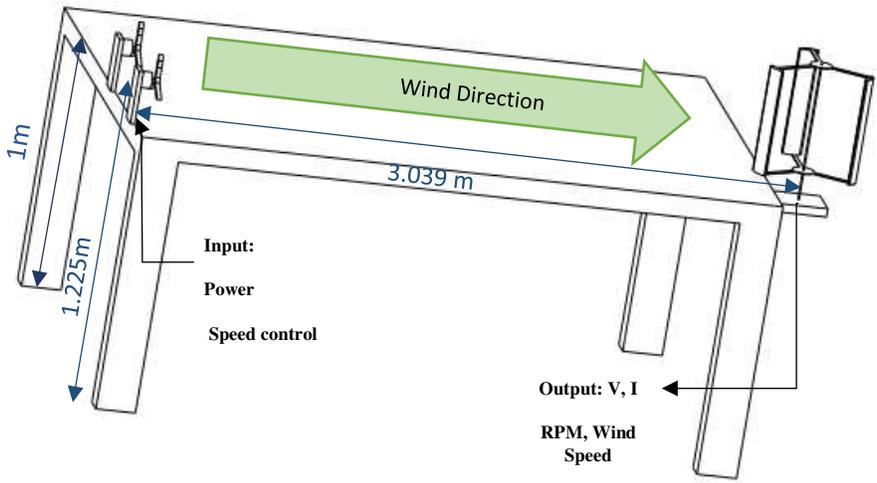
| | |
|-----------------|-----|
| D_{rotor} [m] | 0.5 |
|-----------------|-----|

| | |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| H_{rotor} [m] | 0.5 |
| N [-] | 3 |
| Blade profile | NACA630018 |
| $C_{\text{blade profile}}$ [cm] | 10 |
| σ [-] | 1.2 |
| Material | Wood |

117

118 **3.EXPERIMENTAL SET-UP**

119 While experimental tests in wind tunnels are a very common type of tests employed
 120 to characterize VAWTs aerodynamics performance, some inaccuracies will occur
 121 because of solid blockages and wake blockages. In addition, the effect of tunnel
 122 walls is not negligible at high blockage ratios (Howell et al., 2009). Meanwhile,
 123 turbulence intensity of air stream through the test section is far smaller than under
 124 realistic conditions.

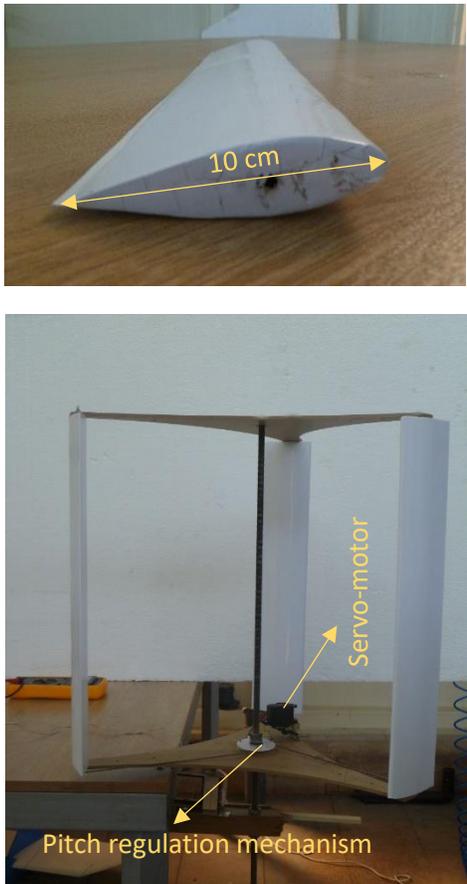


125

126 Fig. 2. Experimental setup schematic

127 Nevertheless, a unique experimental setup was developed in Isfahan Science and
 128 Technology Town in order to produce desirable wind conditions and to measure
 129 various parameters. Two variable speed DC motors were connected with RC speed
 130 controls to induce wind speed using two 3-bladed impellers. The impellers were
 131 installed symmetrically in relation to the turbine`s symmetrical plan. TESTO 400
 132 was employed to measure the wind speed and rotational speed of turbine`s shaft. A
 133 servo-motor and a mechanical mechanism were applied with turbines rotor in order
 134 to apply an accurate blade pitch angle. The servo-motor could be controlled
 135 remotely. Likewise, the turbine` shaft was coupled to a low rpm DC generator; thus,

136 the output current and voltage were measured using an ammeter. Figure 2 illustrates
137 the experimental setup employed in this investigation. In this case study, to generate
138 a lower rotor moment of inertia, blades and connecting arms were manufactured
139 using Balsa wood and employing laser cut method, see Figure 3.



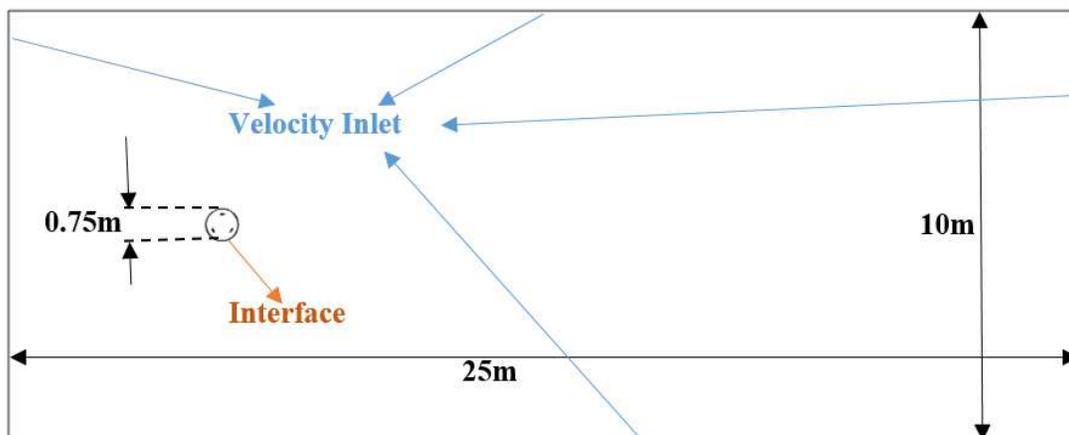
140 Fig. 3. Manufactured blade and tested turbine

141 4. NUMERICAL SETUP

142 Figure 4 displays the main dimensions and the boundary conditions of the whole
143 domain [Castelli et al. \(2011\)](#) suggested computational domain width around 80 rotor
144 diameter when the sides' boundary conditions are non-slip walls to establish the
145 domain solid blockage less than 0.32%. Also, in this study all the domain boundaries
146 were assumed velocity inlet in order to approach the realistic conditions as much as
147 possible. Since air flow was not ducted, the domain width set 20 rotor diameter.
148 Similarly, [Li et al. \(2012\)](#) set the outlet condition 12 rotor diameter after turbine to
149 ensure full development of wake flows. An initial geometry was tested with 12 rotor
150 diameter downstream size. The results revealed backflows on the boundaries
151 indicating that the wake flow will not be fully developed for this case and boundary

152 conditions. Then, 10 rotor diameter was set for the upstream and 40 rotor diameter
153 for the downstream after the turbine.

154 The numerical domain was divided into a rotational sub-grid zone simulating the
155 revolution of the turbine by moving mesh and the main outer domain. The blades of
156 turbines and rotational sub-grid rotated with an equal angular velocity. The turbines'
157 blade profile in the rotational sub-grid was enclosed with an elliptic area with
158 structured quadratic mesh and inflation of wall boundaries contributing to precise
159 flow field solution in these areas. An unstructured triangular mesh was generated for
160 the rest of the rotating sub-grid zone. Near-wall cell sizes were selected in a way that
161 determined y^+ less than unit on the blade profiles; thus, laminar sub-layer on the
162 boundary layer of airfoils have been resolvable. Also, mesh independency is studied
163 and selected grid includes 124095 cells.



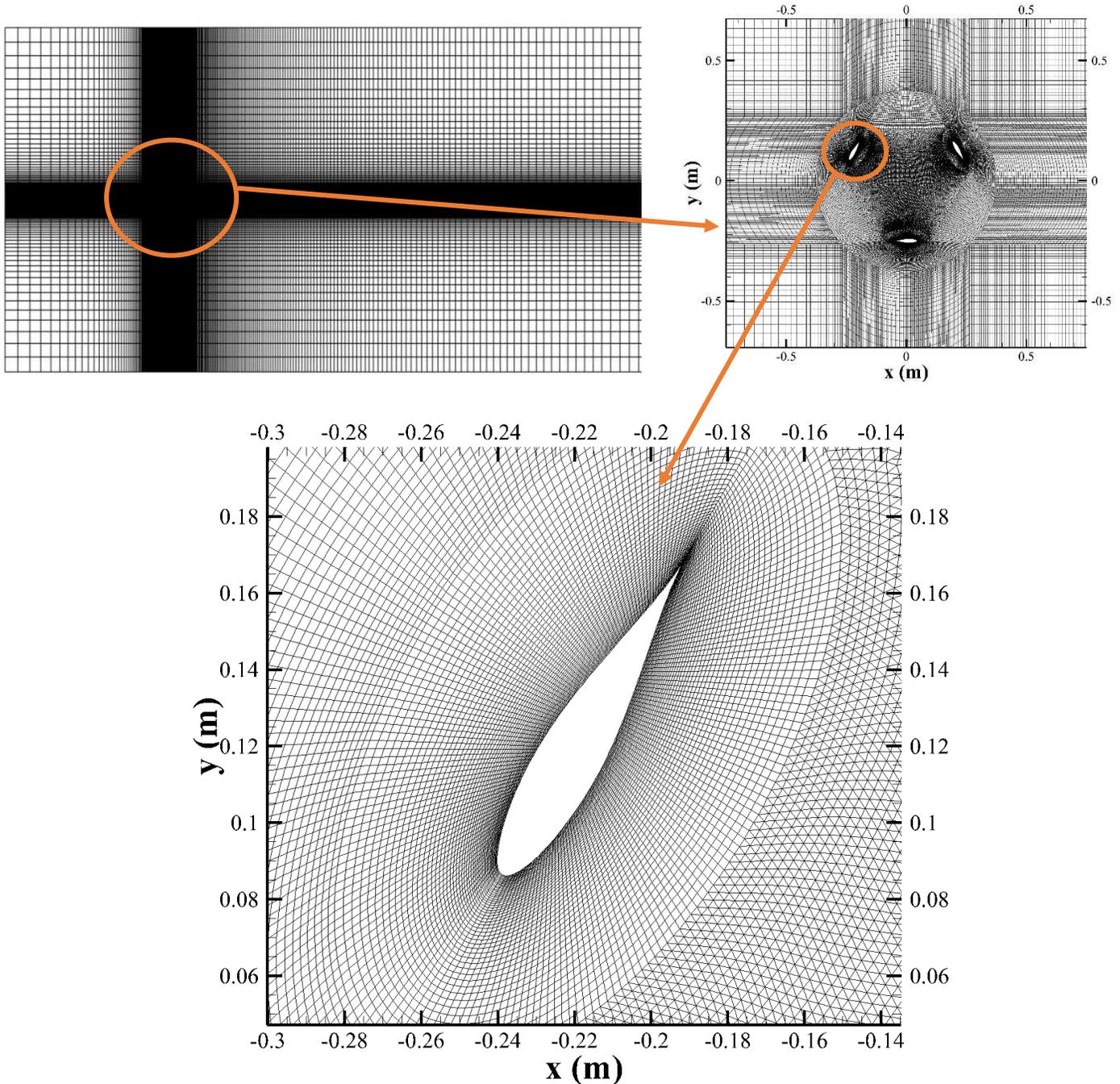
164

165 Fig. 4. Computational domain schematic and dimensions

166 A structured quadratic mesh with refinement near the rotational zone was applied to
167 the domain. Also, the wake line back of the turbine rotor was meshed finely where
168 the vortex cores were able interact completely thereby enhancing the calculation
169 accuracy in the wake flow. The interface between the rotating zone and the main
170 outer domain was a non-conformal interface with coupled grid to allow the turbine
171 rotation. Figure 5 presents detailed generated meshes in different zones.

172 The incompressible momentum equation and continuity are appropriate for solving
173 VAWT flow field, as the induced velocities are smaller than Mach number 0.3 (Li
174 et al., 2012). Various turbulence models have been employed and comprised by
175 previous researchers with both RANS and eddy simulations (LES and DES) being
176 validated with different experimental tests (Sanderse et al., 2011). Because of the

177 unsteady nature of wind turbines flow field, 3-D LES has shown the most acceptable
178 results, but the computational cost is extremely high for this method. Meanwhile, 4-
179 equation SST turbulence model was used by [Rezaeiha et al. \(2017\)](#) which yielded a
180 good agreement with experimental data. In this study, the incompressible 2-D
181 transient RANS equations were solved using coupled pressure-velocity scheme with
182 6-DOF dynamic mesh option being selected. The 4-equation Transition SST with
183 DES scale-resolving simulation option were employed as a turbulence model.



184

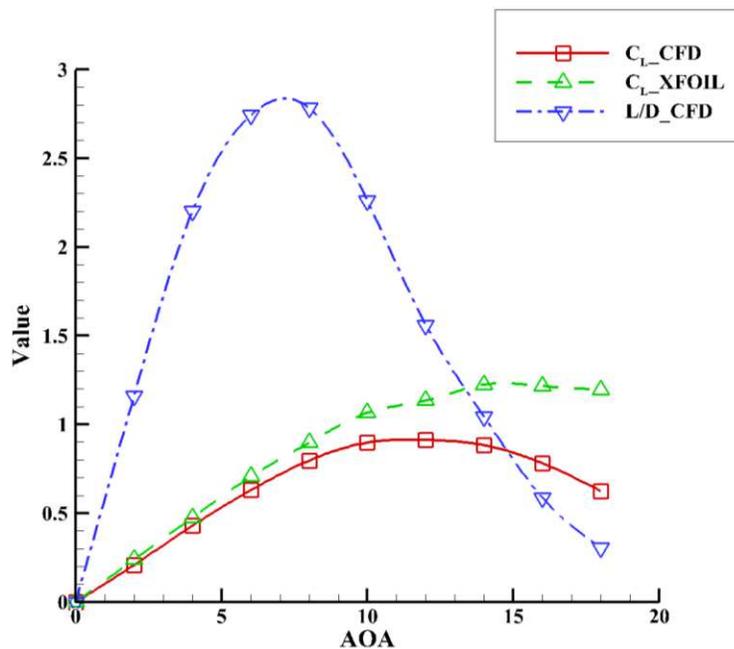
Fig. 5. Detailed generated mesh for numerical domain

185 The initial solution was based on steady state RANS and K-ε turbulence model.
186 Then, a specific time step for each TSR was set such that the turbine rotated 2
187 degrees per each time step. Converging criteria were set to 10⁻⁴ for all absolute
188 residuals. Data were extract after five complete rotations of the turbine revealing
189 convergence in the torque-time diagram.

190 regarding to $\frac{\delta}{x} = 0.385R_e^{-0.2}$ the boundary layer thickness is 5.65cm. The distance
191 between table and bottom surface of rotor is 3.2cm. According to (Orgaz et al. 2011
192 and Narayan 1977), at $\frac{\delta}{y} \geq 0.6$ velocity profile is approximately smooth. Also, only
193 4.9% of blade length is affected by this smooth area of boundary layer which is
194 negligible.

195 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

196 There are various methods for the initial design and evaluation of VAWTs. Since all
197 of them require the aerodynamics characteristic of blade profiles (Carrigan et al.,
198 2011; Ghasemian et al., 2017), an initial simulation was applied to NACA630018
199 airfoil employing viscous panel method and computational fluid dynamics to
200 estimate the lift and drag coefficient at various angles of attack. XFOIL open-source
201 code was used to apply the viscous panel method with the results being comprised
202 with 2-D CFD steady state simulation in Figure6.



203

204

Fig. 6. Aerodynamic characteristics of NACA630018

205 According to Figure 6, the viscous panel method and CFD have a good agreement
206 at low angles of attack; however, as the boundary layer separation begins, at higher
207 angles of attacks CFD shows more accurate aerodynamics load coefficients. L/D
208 ratio increased in AOAs less than 7 degree and diminished thereafter such that the
209 maximum L/D ratio occurred near 7-degree AOA for NACA630018.

210 Figure 7 depicts the averaged COP evolution calculated and measured employing
211 CFD and experimental tests for various tip speeds. The COP and Tip speed ratio
212 (TSR) are represented as below (Castelli et al., 2011):

$$213 \quad C_P = \frac{P_{ave}}{\frac{1}{2} \rho A_s V_{wind}^3}$$

214 (1)

$$215 \quad TSR = \frac{\omega R_{Rotor}}{V_{wind}} \quad (2)$$

216 Figure 7 illustrates that the maximum COP for the pitch angle 5° is 25.41671%
217 higher than the maximum COP for the pitch angle 0° with the maximum COP
218 occurring at lower TSRs with increase in the pitch angle, since the blades' relative
219 angles of attack diminish when transitioning from lower to higher TSR values. Also,
220 CFD results indicated higher accuracy at lower TSRs. Further, positive COP
221 occurred at low tip speeds because of high solidity. Solidity is one of the main
222 dimensionless ratios dictating the rotational velocity at which the turbine reaches its
223 maximum COP. Note that higher solidity leads to lower tip-speed ratios and lower
224 efficiency (Howell et al., 2009).

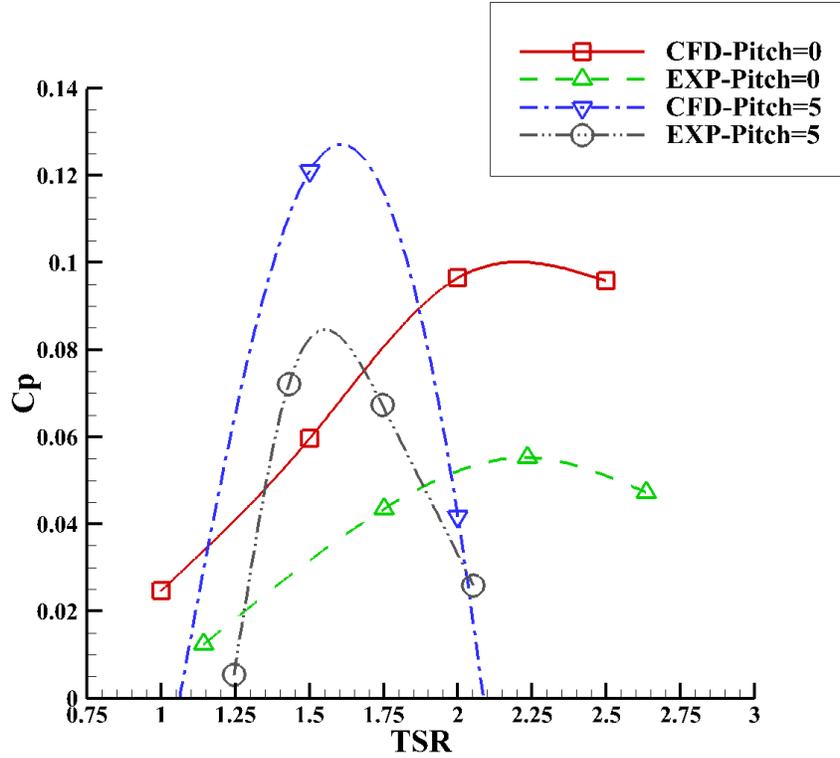
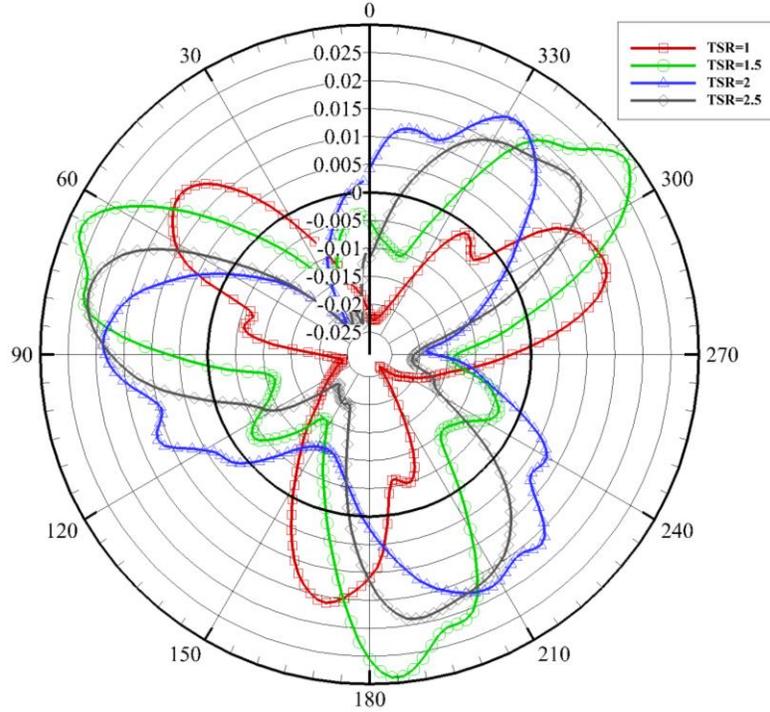


Fig. 7. Coefficient of performance in various tip speed ratios

Solidity is defined as Equation (3) (Rezaeiha et al., 2017):

$$\sigma = \frac{N_{blade} C_{blade}}{R_{rotor}} \quad (3)$$

The pitch angle has found to have significant influence for power generated of the turbine. However, the optimum fixed pitch angle should be calculated such that the maximum value of performance and positive region of CP as well as highest start-up torque are taken into account.



233

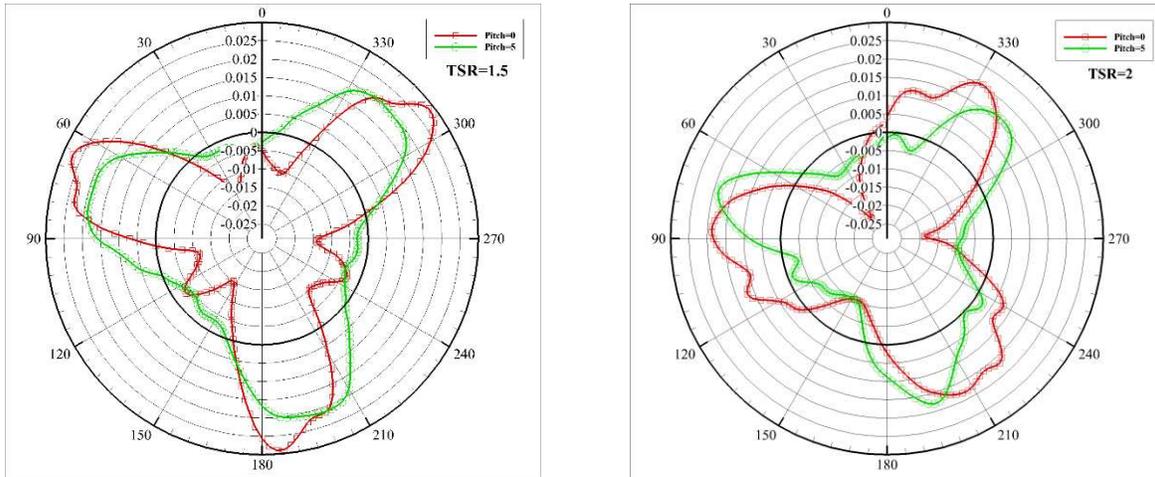
234 Fig. 8. Evolution of CT as function of Azimuth position for TSR=1, 1.5, 2, 2.5;
 235 respectively in pitch=0.

236 Comparison of the numerical simulations with experimental measurements revealed
 237 that numerical prediction using Transition SST with DES scaled-resolving
 238 turbulence model is able to replicate the shape and curve of experimental data as
 239 well as accuracy in capturing the maximum power coefficient tip speed ratio. The
 240 discrepancies between experimental and numerical results caused by different 2-D
 241 inabilities. For instance, tip losses are neglected in 2-D simulations as well as upper
 242 and bottom rotor arms effects on moment of inertia and drag force of rotor. Also,
 243 rotor arms will produce turbulent vortices which effect the aerodynamic
 244 performance of downstream blades (Castelli et al. 2011).

245 Figure 8 illustrates the evolution of the coefficient of torque for TSR=1, 1.5, 2, 2.5
 246 at a zero pitch angle. With the rotational speed being constant for each single TSR,
 247 Figure 8 represents a schematic view of COP evolution function of Azimuth angle.
 248 Based on Figure 8, the highest averaged CT occurred at TSR=1.5. Further, the
 249 positive area of CT was maximum for TSR=1.5, while TSR=1 showed the minimum
 250 area of CT. The coefficient of torque is defined as Equation (4):

$$251 \quad C_T = \frac{T_{rotor}}{\frac{1}{2} \rho A_s R_{rotor} V_{wind}^2} \quad (4)$$

252 The areas with negative CT developed as the blades travelled into the dynamic stall
253 condition causing diminished L/D ratio. Dynamic stall occurred due to high angle of
254 attack through the blades' revolution and influence of shed wakes of the upwind
255 blades on the downstream blades.

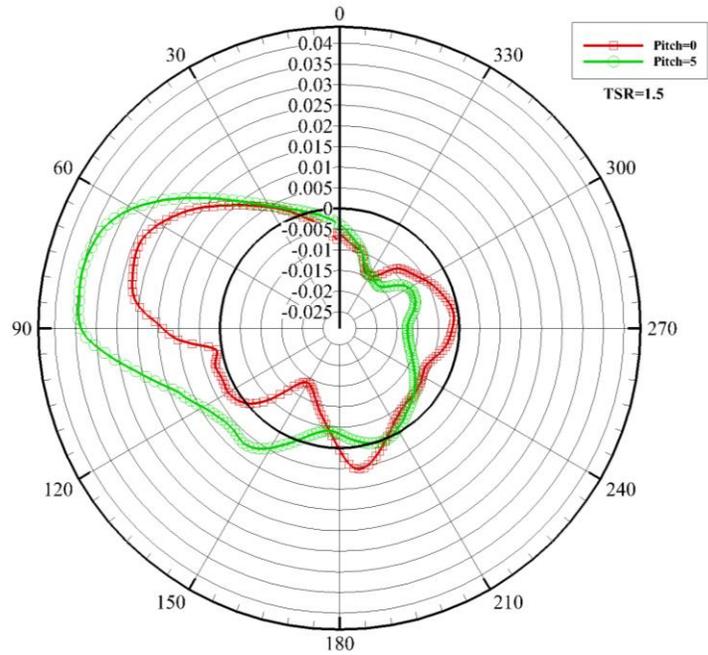


256 Fig. 9. Evolution of CT as function of Azimuth position for pitch angle 0 (red) and
257 5 (green) in TSR=1.5 and 2 respectively.

258 Figure 9 presents comparative diagrams of CT at TSR=1.5 and 2 for pitch angle 0°
259 and 5° respectively. According to Figure 9 for TSR=1.5, the average and positive
260 area of CT at pitch=5 is higher than that at pitch=0 causing a higher COP in Figure
261 7. An increase in the pitch angle led to elevated angle of attack in the downstream
262 blades condition and augmented the L/D ratio in these areas. Also, the diagram of
263 CT at TSR=1.5 for pitch=5 has a smoother peak in comparison to pitch=0 due to
264 delayed dynamic stall. On the other hand, at TSR=2, most of the area for pitch=5
265 diagram is negative suggesting more low angle of attack in the revolution of blades.

266 Figure 10 illustrates CT for a single blade function of Azimuth position at TSR=1.5
267 for pitch=0 and 5. According to Figure 10, the average torque coefficient for a single
268 blade with pitch=5 is higher than the same blade with pitch=0 at TSR=1.5. While
269 TSR is constant, the influence of shed wakes is equal for both pitch conditions. It
270 means there is an influence of angle of attack on the torque coefficient. Note that the
271 blades at TSR=1.5 experienced the optimum angle of attack with pitch angle 5.

272 Instantaneous vorticity magnitude for three Azimuth positions are presented in
273 Figure 11. Since it is a 2D simulation, according to the incompressible vorticity
274 transport equation, the vorticity is generated from the wall and diffused through fluid
275 viscosity in the x-y plane (Li et al., 2012).

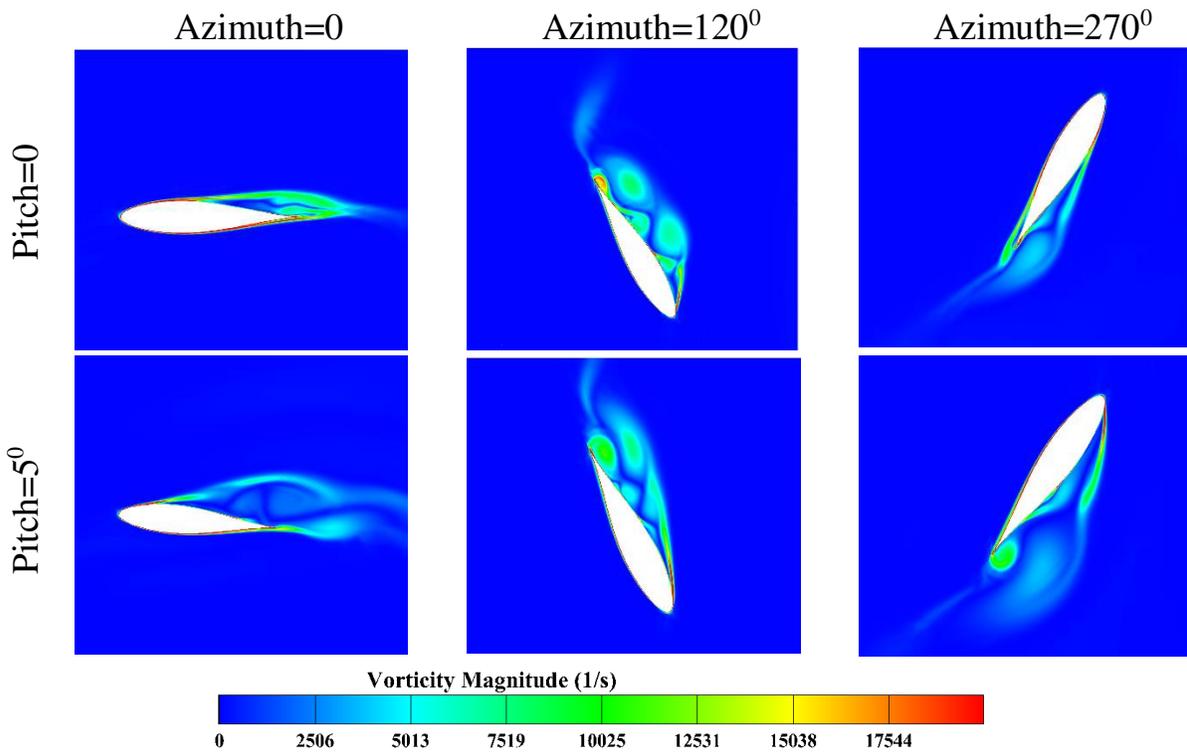


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278

Fig. 10. Evolution of CT as function of Azimuth position for a single blade at TSR=1.5; pitch=0(red) and pitch=5(green)



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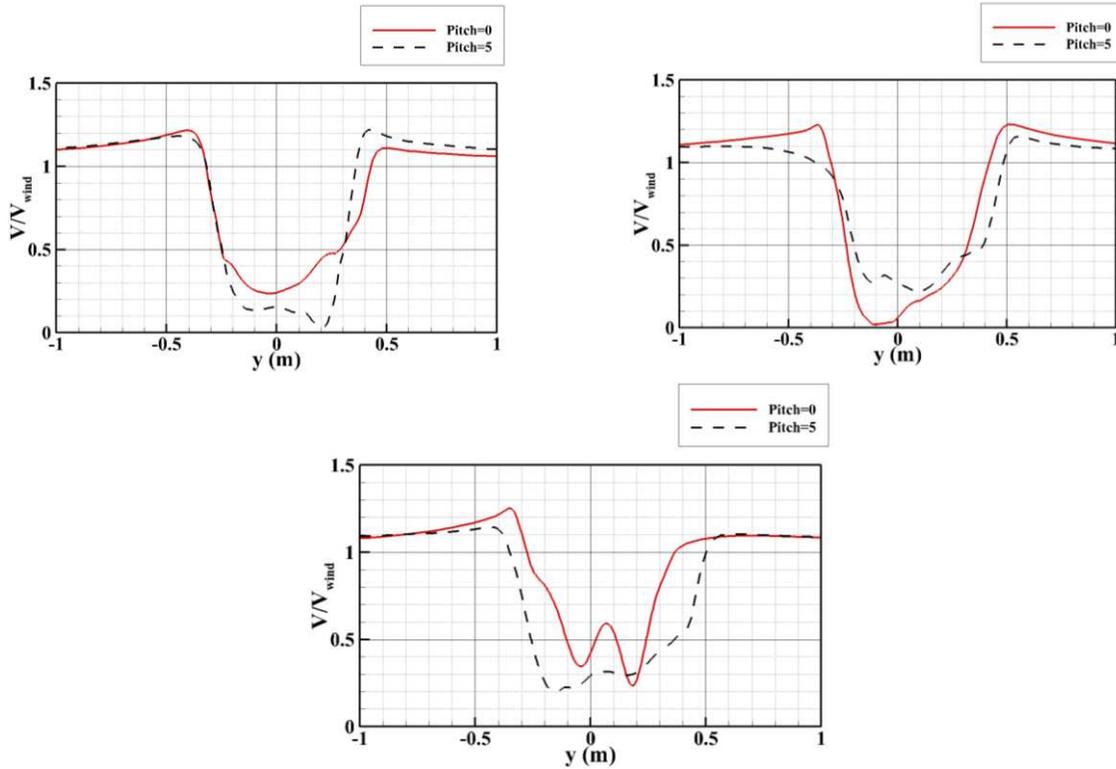
Fig. 11. Vorticity magnitude (1/s); TSR=2

280

281

Based on Figure 11, high vorticity distribution zones are wider for pitch=5. An increase in the pitch angle led to more interactions between the slويد wall and

282 viscous flow, widening high vorticity zones. Note that the shape of the vorticity
 283 distribution at both pitch angles is similar, but the distribution of high vorticity
 284 region is wider for pitch 5.



285
 286 Fig. 12. Cross stream dimensionless velocity profile in 1D, 2D and 3D lateral
 287 distance of turbine (CFD results)

288 Since wake characteristics have a significant impact on the aerodynamic design of
 289 single turbines and the optimal placement of wind-farms (Peng et al., 2015),
 290 dimensionless stream velocity in 1, 2, and 3 times of the rotor diameter were
 291 calculated and represented in Figure 12 at TSR=2 for both 0 and 5 pitch angles. This
 292 parameter was calculated after 20 revolutions of the turbine when the wake
 293 development was completed in reference of Azimuth position. According to Figure
 294 12, the averaged velocities for pitch=5 are lower than same parameter for pitch=0 at
 295 1D and 3D lateral distance. Conversely, the averaged velocity for pitch=5 is higher
 296 than the same parameter for pitch=0 at 2D lateral distance. The turbine wake
 297 developed from the generated vortices shed of blades while revolving (Rezaeiha et
 298 al., 2018). Vortices travel to downstream and make changes in the velocity profile
 299 behind the turbine. The changes in the magnitude of vortex are a function of

300 variations in the angle of attack. The wider region of vorticities in pitch=5 leads to a
301 greater influence on the velocity profile in lateral distances.

302 **6. CONCLUSION**

303 A small straight bladed VAWT with high solidity ratio was manufactured and tested
304 under realistic conditions. Further, supportive numerical simulations were
305 conducted to evaluate the aerodynamic performance of the turbine at various tip
306 speed ratios and two pitch angles 0 and 5, in order to examine the influence of the
307 pitch angle on the aerodynamic characterization of the turbine. The results revealed
308 that increase in the pitch angle caused elevated maximum COP while making the
309 CP_TSR diagram sharper. The maximum CT occurred at TSR for turbines without
310 pitch angle, but the maximum CP occurred at TSR=2. The averaged CT increased
311 upon elevation of the pitch angle at TSR=1.5, though diminished at TSR=2. Single
312 blade CT increased with the rise in the pitch angle at TSR=1.5. Likewise, the
313 vorticity generation increased due to elevation of the pitch angle causing increased
314 angle of attack. Finally, the increase in the pitch angle led to a greater influence on
315 the velocity profile in the lateral distance of turbine and generated lower velocity
316 wakes.

317

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321

322 **Authors` Contributions**

323 Corresponding author has applied numerical simulations and second author has been
324 working on prototyping and experimental set up. All the numerical results and
325 measured data have been collected by corresponding author. All authors have read
326 and approved final manuscript.

327

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329 Isfahan Science and Technology Town has granted a loan base on our business plan
330 to develop an urban vertical axis wind turbine.

331

332 **Availability of Data and Materials**

333 Parts of the data and materials are available upon request.

334

335 **Competing interests**

336 The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

337

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Figures

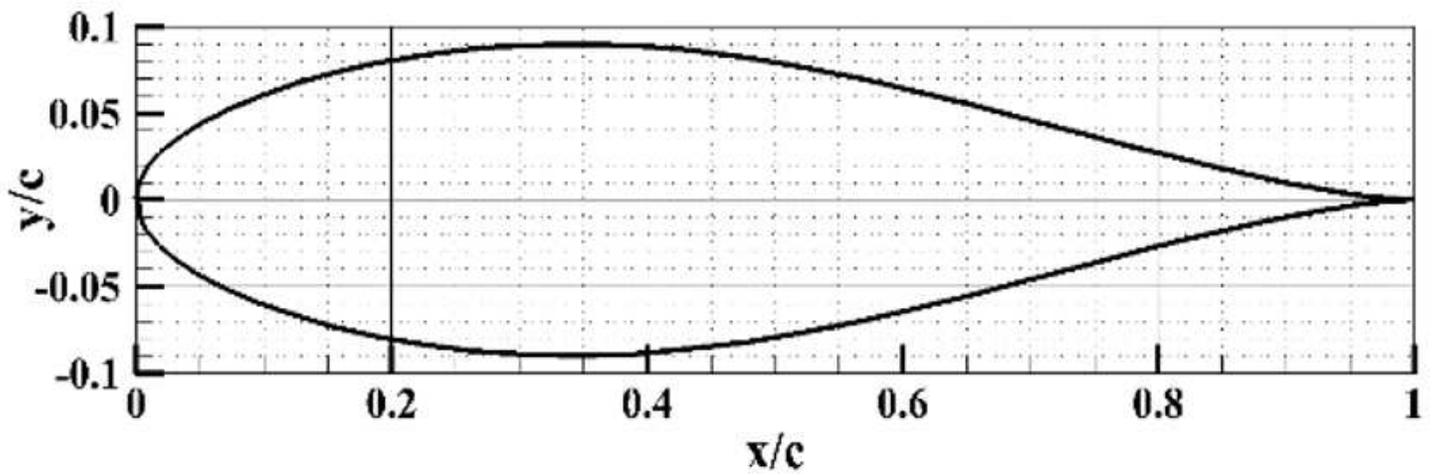


Figure 1

NACA630018 dimensionless geometry

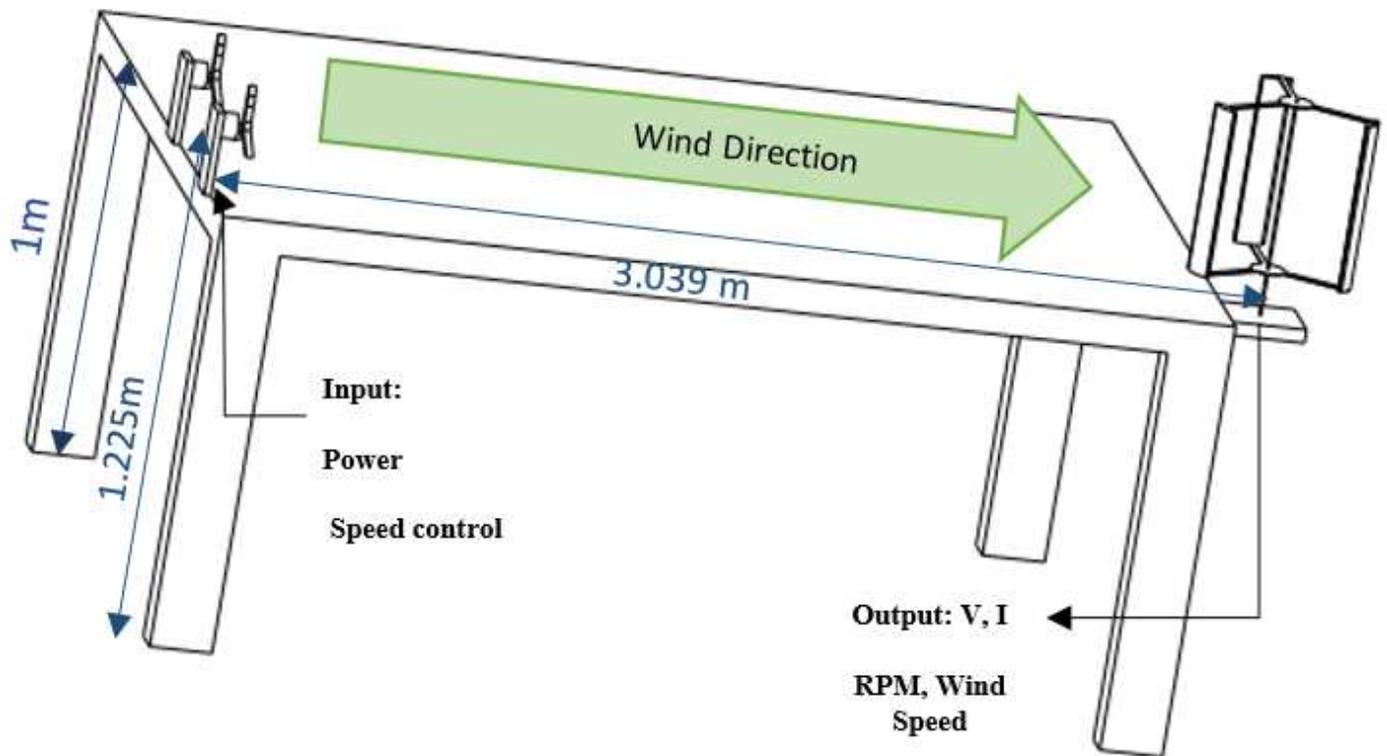


Figure 2

Experimental setup schematic

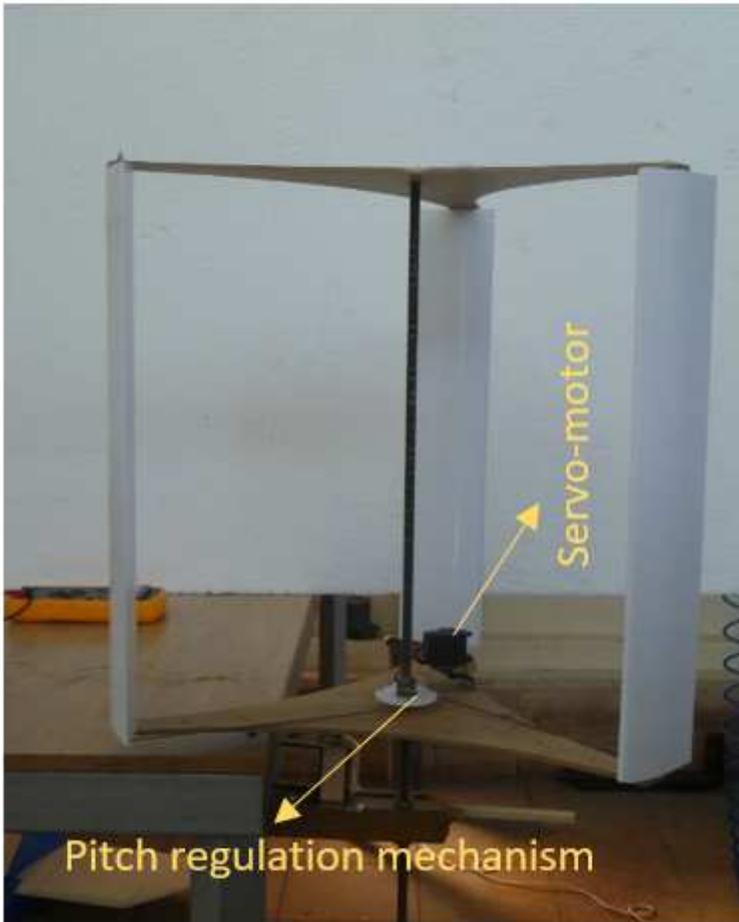
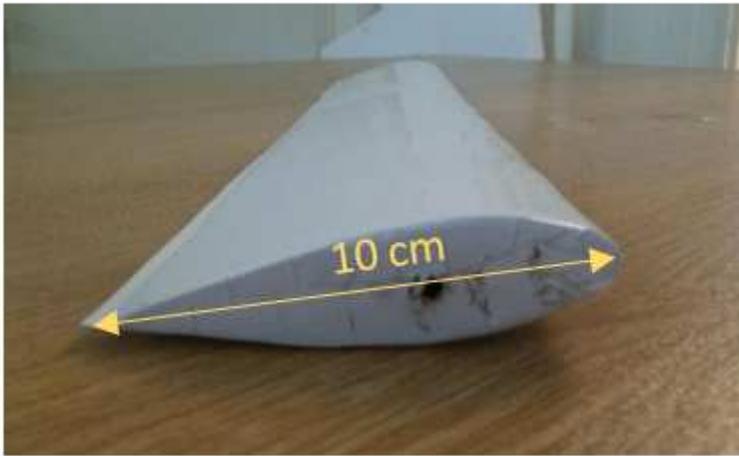


Figure 3

Manufactured blade and tested turbine

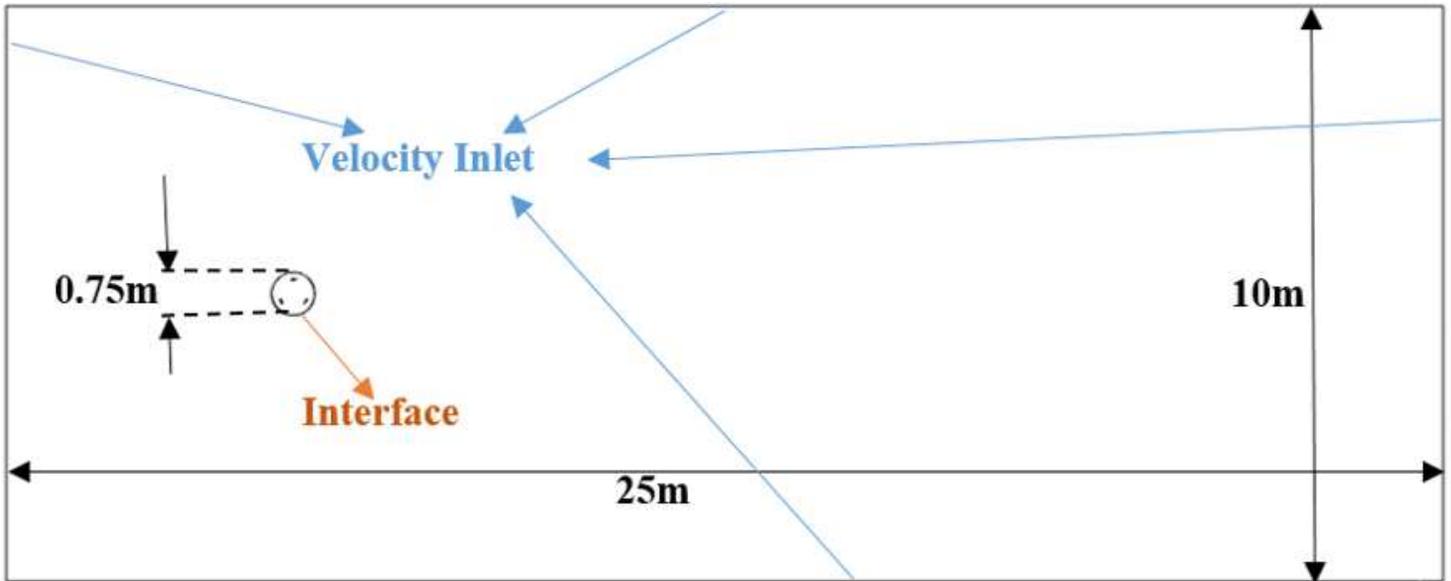


Figure 4

Computational domain schematic and dimensions

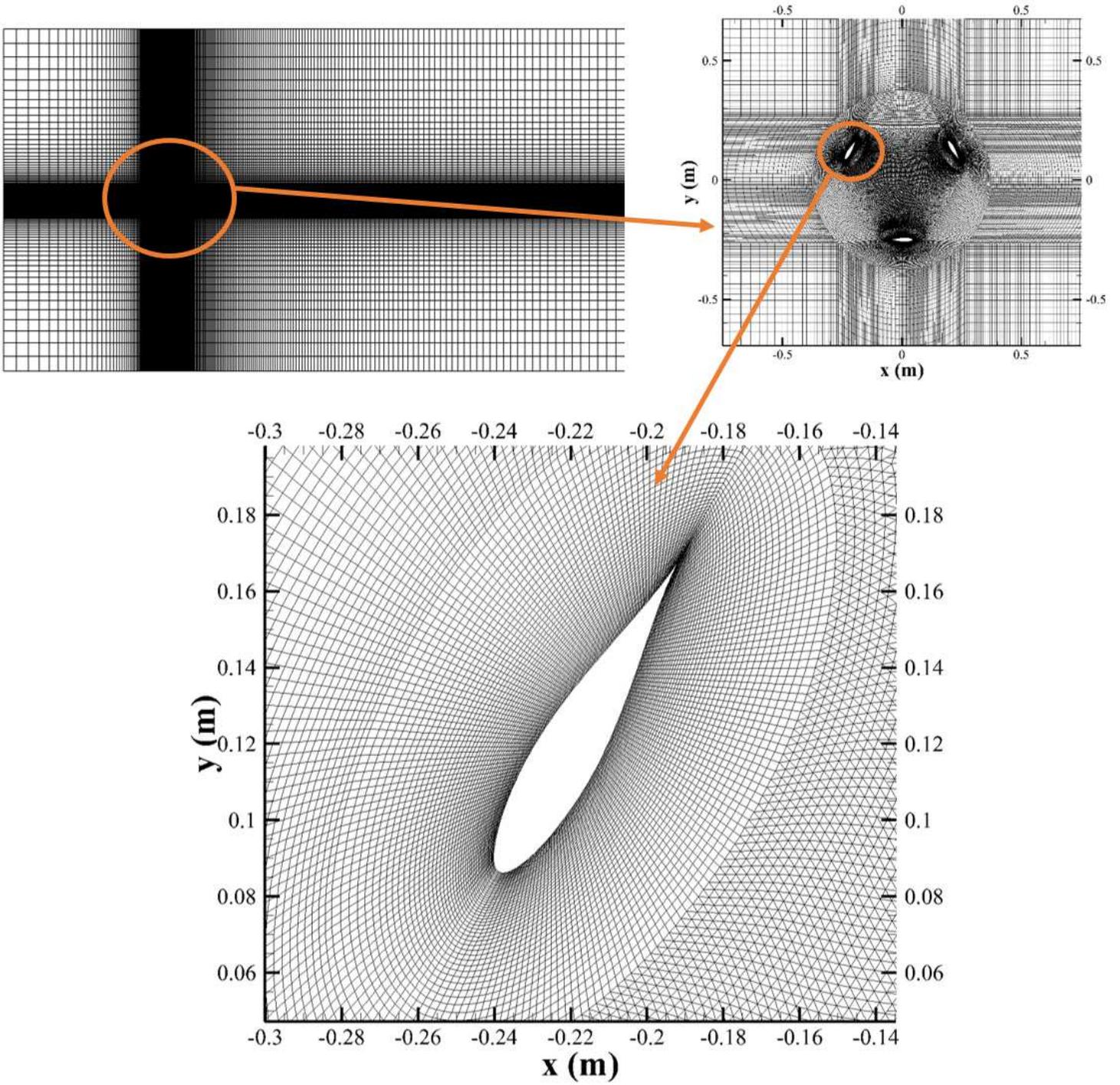


Figure 5

Detailed generated mesh for numerical domain

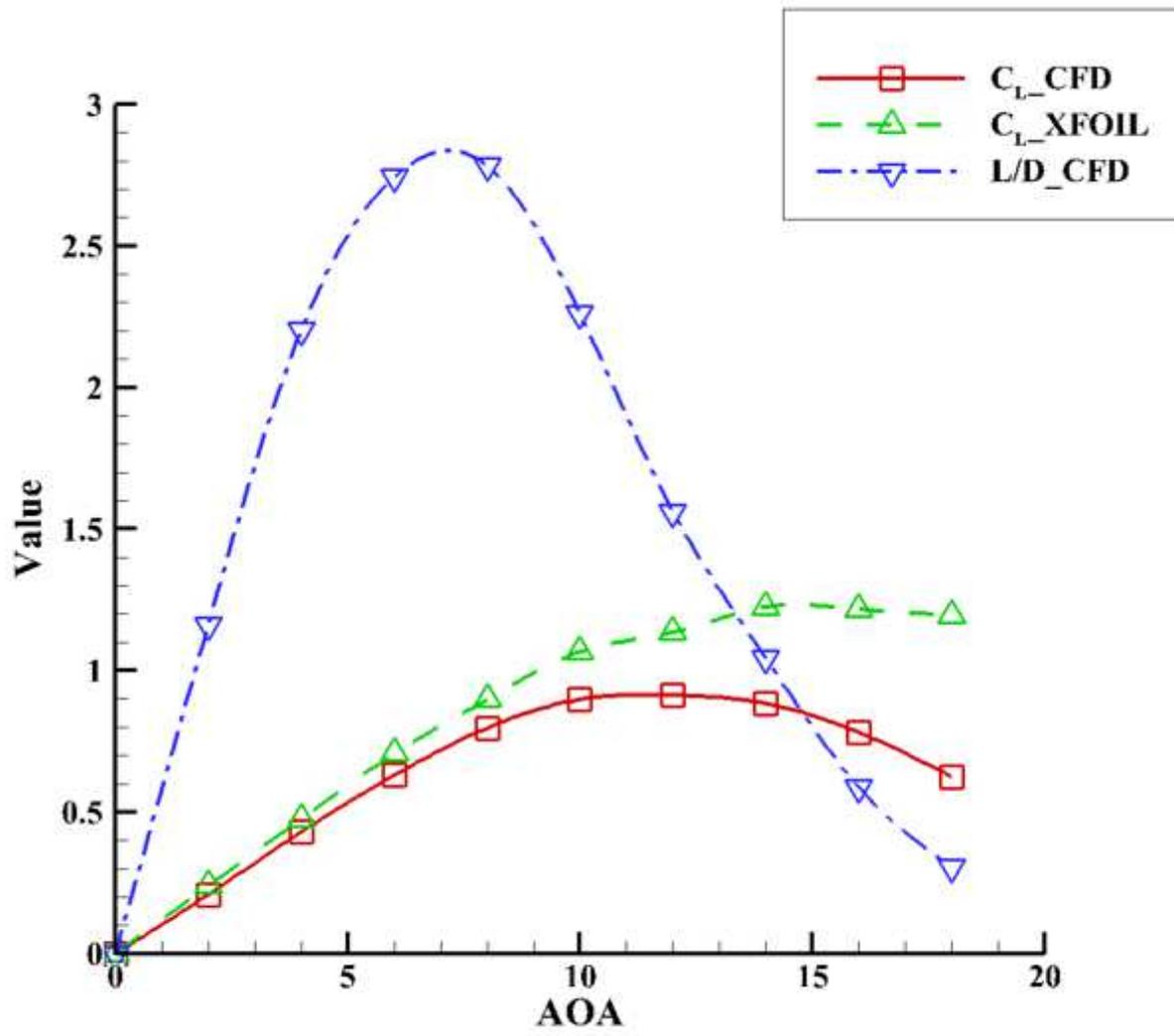


Figure 6

Aerodynamic characteristics of NACA630018

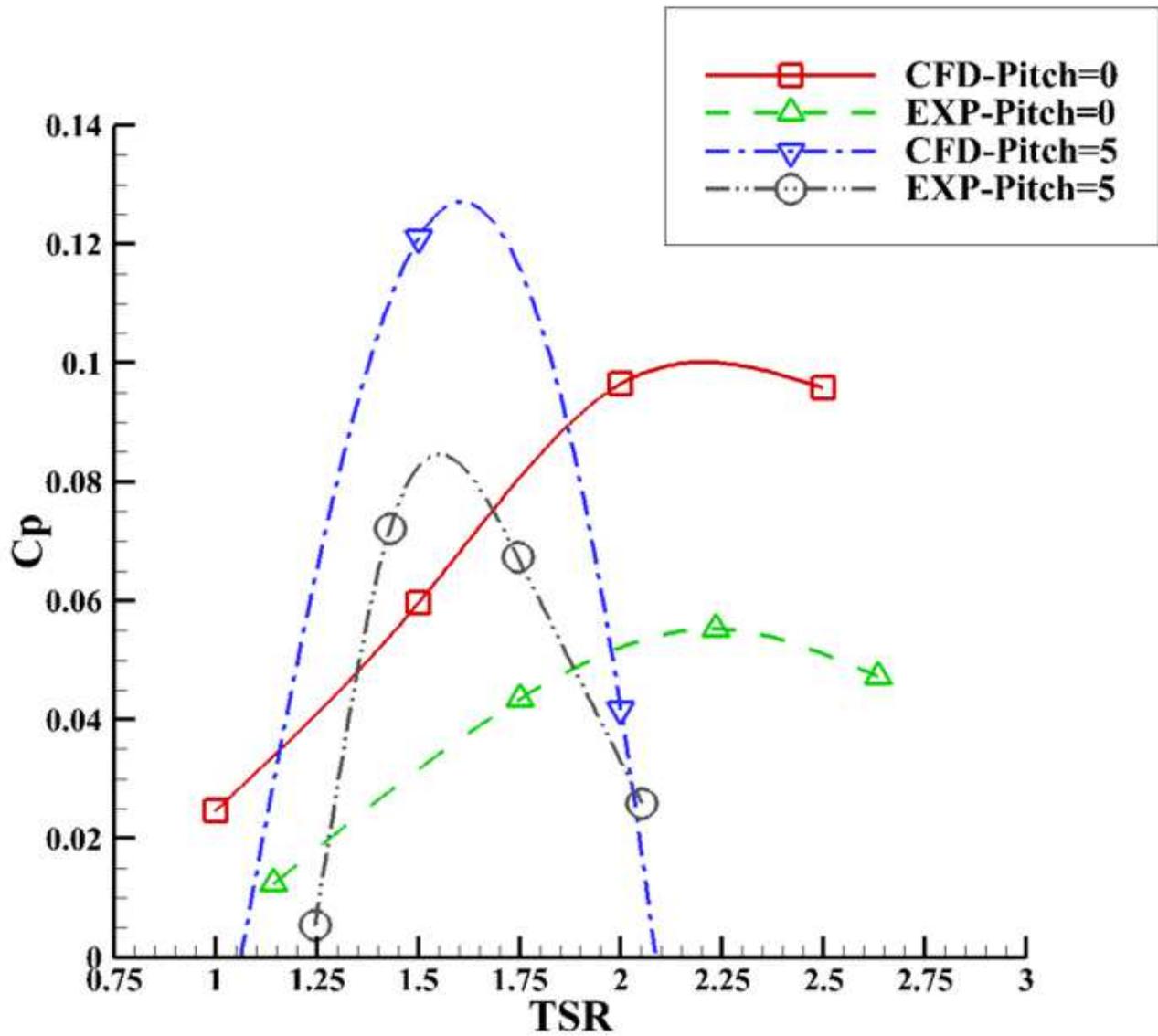


Figure 7

Coefficient of performance in various tip speed ratios

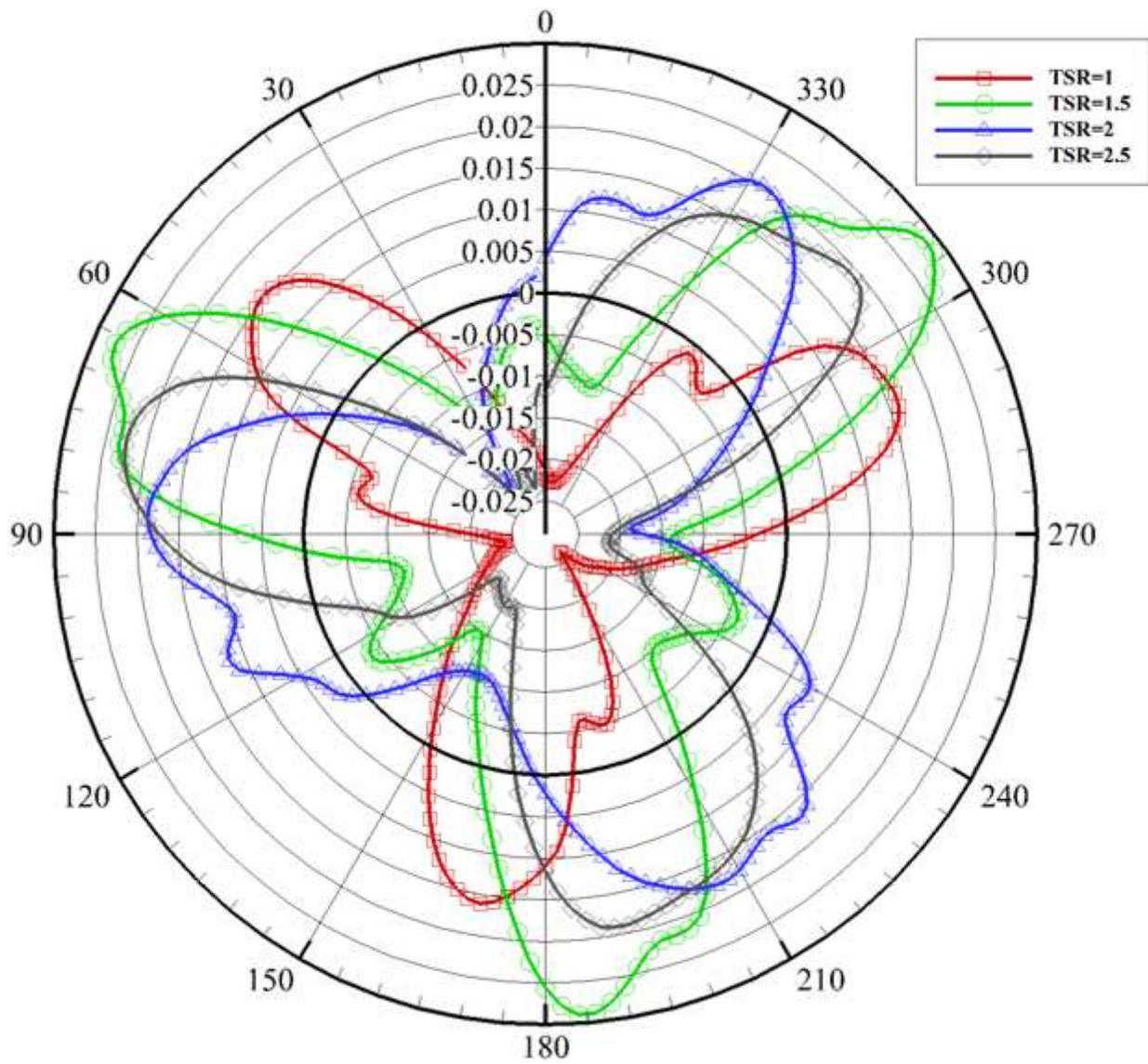


Figure 8

Evolution of CT as function of Azimuth position for TSR=1, 1.5, 2, 2.5; respectively in pitch=0

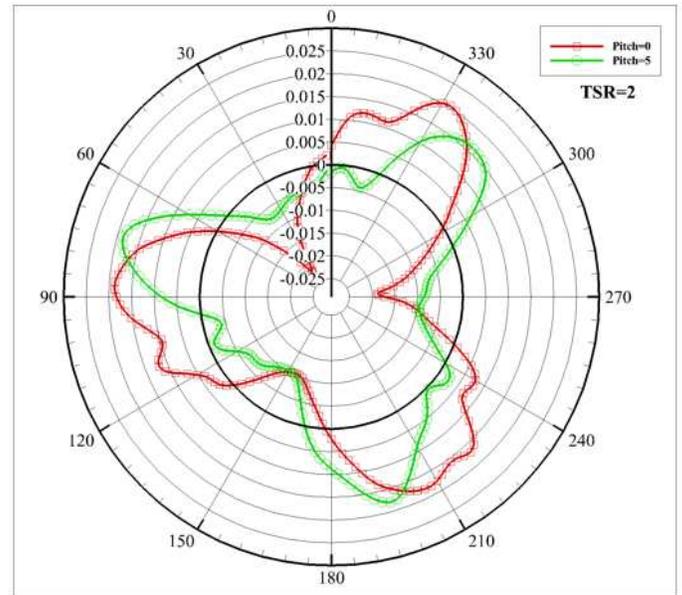
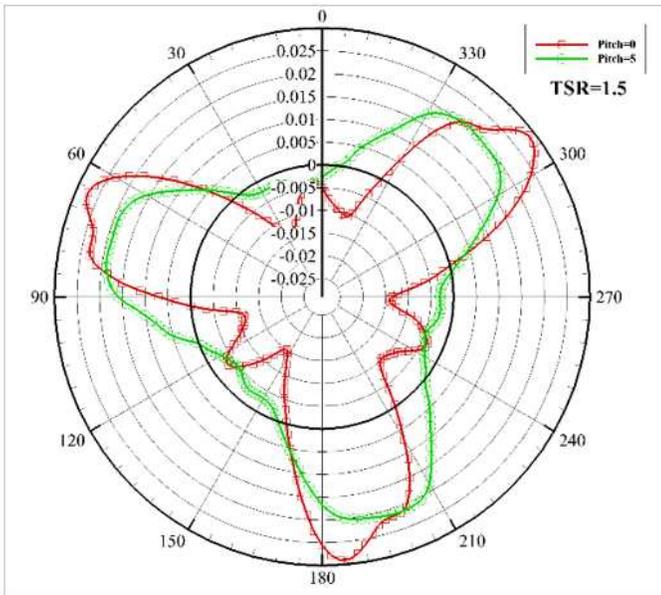


Figure 9

Evolution of CT as function of Azimuth position for pitch angle 0 (red) and 5 (green) in TSR=1.5 and 2 respectively.

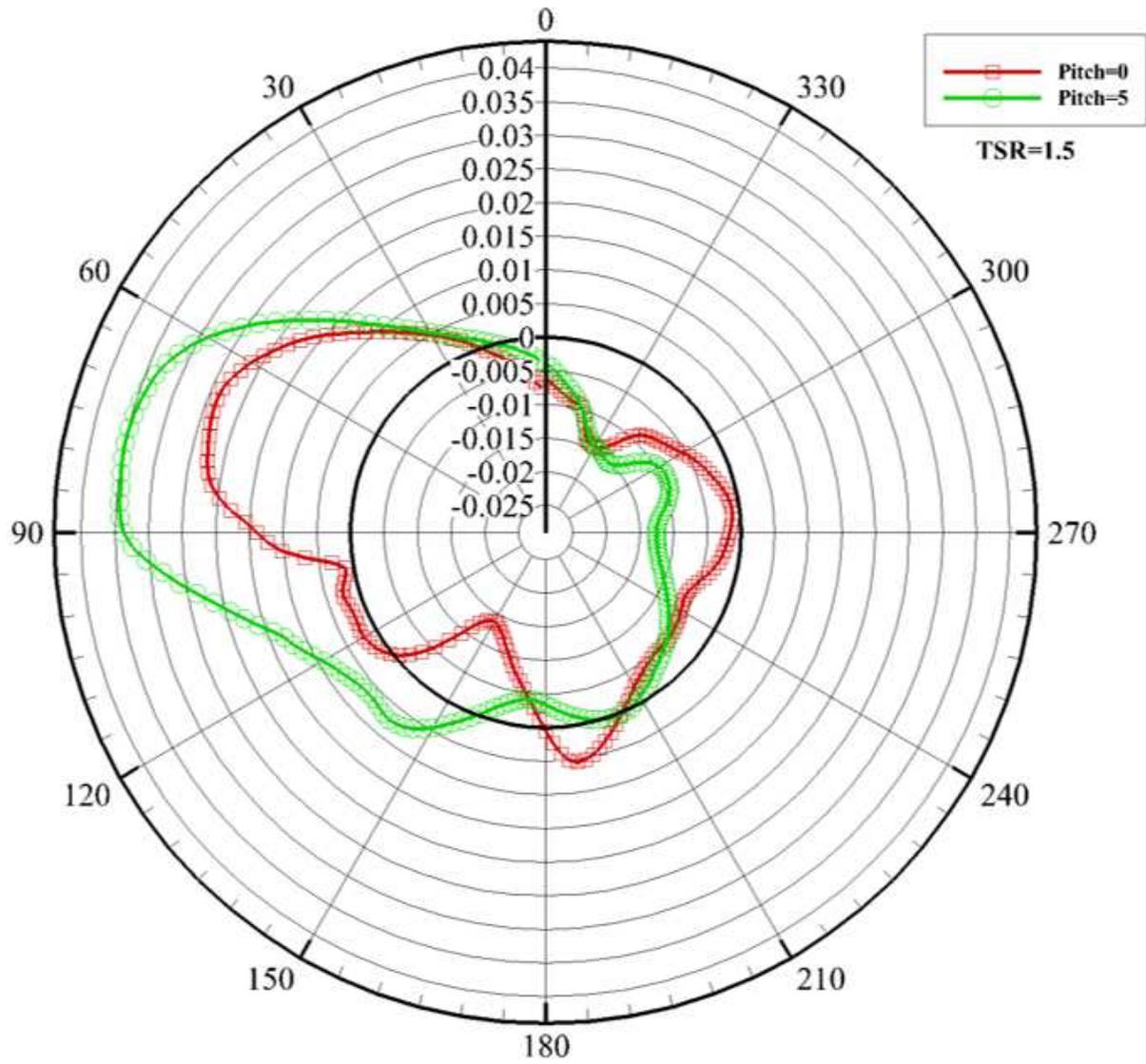


Figure 10

Evolution of CT as function of Azimuth position for a single blade at TSR=1.5; pitch=0(red) and pitch=5(green)

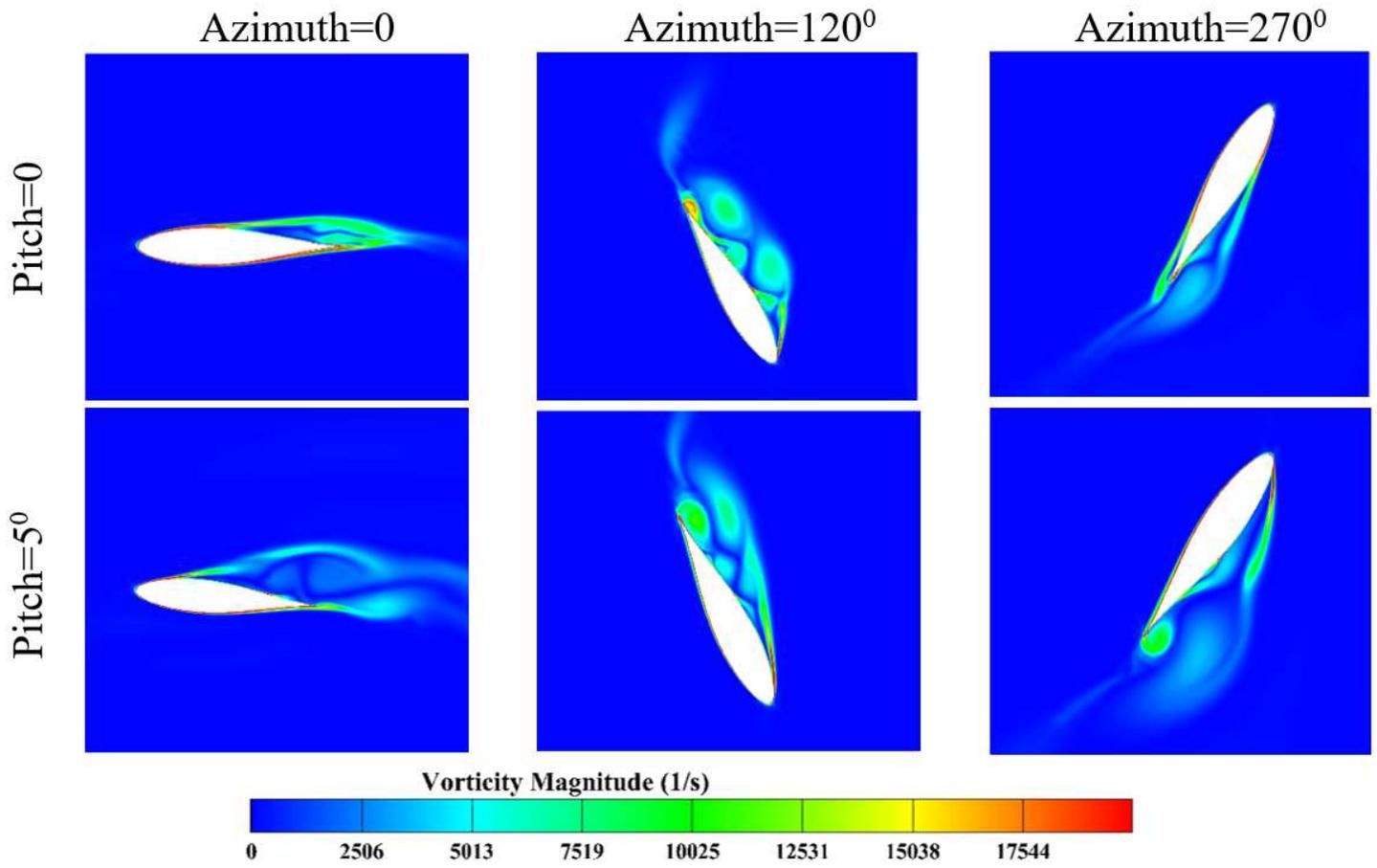


Figure 11

Vorticity magnitude (1/s); TSR=2

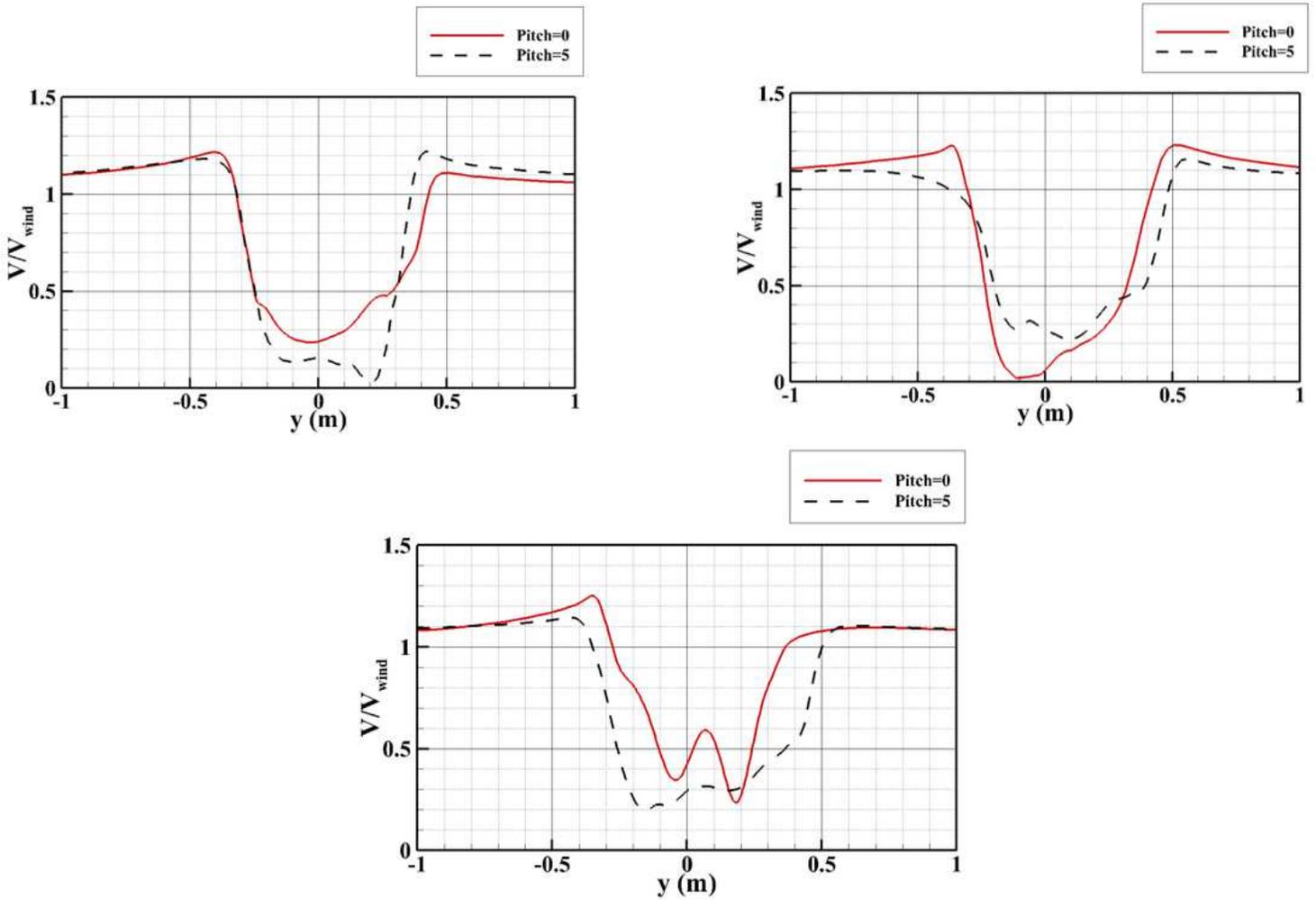


Figure 12

Cross stream dimensionless velocity profile in 1D, 2D and 3D lateral distance of turbine (CFD results)