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Veronika Bolgova, Andrey Leonov, Stéphane Lefebvre, S Hlioui. AGING INVESTIGATION OF INVERTER-FED LOW VOLTAGE MOTOR WINDING INSULATION SUBJECTED TO HIGH DV/DT. XXVème Symposium sur les phénomènes électromagnétiques dans les circuits non linéaires (EPNC 2018), Jun 2018, Arras, France. <hal-02363181>

HAL Id: hal-02363181

<https://hal.science/hal-02363181v1>

Submitted on 14 Nov 2019

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AGING INVESTIGATION OF INVERTER-FED LOW VOLTAGE MOTOR WINDING INSULATION SUBJECTED TO HIGH DV/DT

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Abstract – The relevance of this paper determines by oncoming implementation of wide bandgap power semiconductors as SiC in inverters feeding motors. Hence, it is indispensable to investigate the influence of intensified electric stresses on winding insulation. In this regard, comparative corona resistance tests on pulse voltage with μ s- and ns-level of rise/fall time were carried out. A novel specimen form for rectangular section wires is proposed. Considerations related to aging of dielectrics subjected to high dV/dt and high frequency pulse voltage are introduced.

I. INTRODUCTION

During the service life electrical machines insulation system is subjected to various stresses, such electrical, thermal, mechanical, and environmental ones [1]. Their significance on dielectrics aging and deterioration process depends on electrical machine type, application, supply and control system. The thermal stress was the most recognized cause of low voltage electrical machines insulation deterioration and failure because the voltage magnitude and overvoltage were much lower than the breakdown one either the ionization start voltage, so there were no partial discharges (PD) [2, 3]. That was confirmed in case of sinusoidal 50-Hz AC supply voltage in [3].

In variable frequency drives based on voltage source inverters with pulse width modulation (PWM) repetitive surges due to voltage pulsed waveform with very straight rise/fall fronts and reflection phenomena [1, 2] lead to PD inception in motor winding insulation. It notably decreases the low voltage insulation service life.

The modern advances in semiconductors technology allow to create very powerful inverters using wide bandgap power semiconductors as SiC and GaN. Nevertheless, their higher switching speed and frequency range in comparison with silicon components lead to the raise of common mode currents and dV/dt with very fast rise/fall time (10-50 ns) [4]. The increasing electrical stress can drastically accelerate the motor insulation aging and failure.

Since the presence of PD in inverter-fed low voltage motors have been recognized, numerous studies were related to characterize PD, inception conditions and the influence of their presence on the insulation [5], or to detect insulation defects [6] and to develop insulation lifetime models depending on the applied stresses and their interaction [7].

Despite this, aging and deterioration process in insulation subjected to high dV/dt and high frequency repetitive pulses are not thoroughly investigated. In this article, results of enameled winding wires aging tests are presented and

discussed. The designed test benches make it possible to reproduce the severe stresses affecting to the winding insulation, adjusting voltage waveform parameters and temperature, in order to characterize the electrothermal aging and to highlight the influence of dV/dt and carrier frequency.

II. TESTING METHOD

The proposed method is based on wires corona resistance test using a mean time to breakdown as an end-point criterion. The designed experimental benches allow to test enamelled wires for low voltage electric motor winding [8].

A. Specimens

Specimens in form of twisted pairs (Fig.1, a) made of enamelled copper round section wires having 1 mm external diameter have been tested: two conventional wires and corona resistant one. A rectangular section (1 mm thickness and 3 mm width) enamelled copper wire (conventional) has been also tested. Specimens represented small coils made of two parallelly wound pieces of wire (Fig.1, b).



Fig.1. Specimens: a – twisted pair, b - coil

B. Test benches

The both test benches represent pulse generators with climate chambers (allow heating during the test at temperature corresponding to wires thermal index, 180 °C) where specimens are installed (Fig.2).

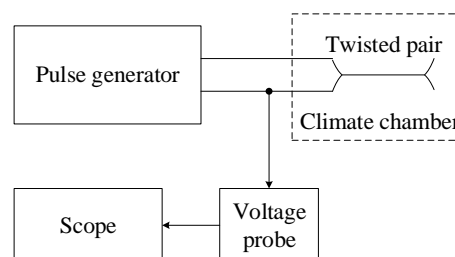


Fig.2. General scheme of test benches

The first test bench is made using Si IGBT transistors; generated signals parameters are: an alternating rectangular voltage with the steady-state amplitude equal to 1,2 kV, the frequency of 400 Hz, the carrier frequency of 5 kHz, the rise time equal to 4 μ s, and dV/dt equal to 0,3kV/ μ s (Fig.3, a).

Designed with SiC MOSFET transistors, the second test bench can generate adjustable pulse voltage waveforms with high dV/dt and steep rise front: rise time $t_r \leq 50$ ns, 24 kV/ μ s for 1,2 kV voltage amplitude (Fig.3, b).

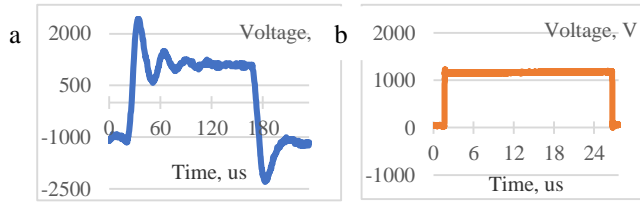


Fig.3 Voltage waveforms: a – μ s-level pulses, b – ns-level pulses

III. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

Two types of corona resistance test: at μ s-level rise time pulses with low dV/dt, and at ns-level pulses with high dV/dt, were carried out.

TABLE I
TEST CONDITIONS AND RESULTS

Test conditions			Experimental results			
Voltage, kV	Carrier frequency, kHz	Temperature, °C	Mean time to breakdown, min			
			1	2	3	4
<i>μs-level pulses</i>						
1,2	5	180	161,53	51,38	16,79	25,92
<i>ns-level pulses</i>						
1	20	20		10,16	5,69	100,42
1,2			> 420	5,57	1,60	14,24
1,4	9,52		3,76	0,76	6,74	
1	50		11,23	2,31	0,70	13,05
1,2			5,78	1,87	0,29	7,73
1,4	0,56		0,59	0,20	2,35	
1	20	180	130,27	4,65	0,61	26,37
1,2			64,82	3,93	0,23	19,89
1,4			1,45	1,68	0,12	5,39

In Table I: 1 corona resistant wire, 2 – conventional wire type 1, 3 – conventional wire type 2, 4 – conventional wire rectangular section.

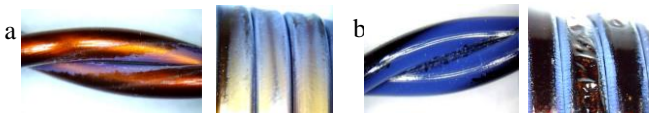


Fig.4 Specimens microscope views after electrothermal aging at 180 °C, 1,2 kV: a – μ s-level pulses, b – ns-level pulses

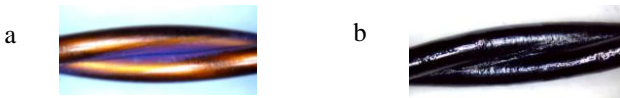


Fig.5 Specimens microscope views after electrical aging at 20 °C, ns-level pulses: a – 1,4 kV, 20 kHz, b – 1,4 kV, 50 kHz

VI. DISCUSSION

During the all tests the partial discharges in form of corona on wires surface were observed. Analysis of obtained experimental results and insulation destruction confirmed the significant influence of voltage and temperature interaction on insulation aging. Thus, in low voltage insulation subjected to sinusoidal 50 Hz, deterioration is mostly caused by thermal aging. At rectangular voltage pulses with μ s-rise time electrical stress leads to PD inception degrading the insulation up to breakdown at defective or weakened area, then thermal stress accelerates the aging. Meanwhile, ns-rise time voltage high dV/dt pulses extremely speed up insulation aging and destruction. When such electrical stress reaches a critical value (1,4 kV, 50 kHz), the tested at ambient temperature specimens insulation is “burned” during just 30-50 s before the breakdown occurs.

Taking into account the drastic destruction in such short terms, dielectrics aging is considerably caused by dielectric losses fast rising and not only PD activity. The high dV/dt combined with high frequency lead to forced fast redistribution of electrical charge due to dipole and resonant polarization types in dielectric material.

V. CONCLUSION

With regard to minimize the risk of unexpected motor failures it is indispensable to analyze comprehensively voltage waveform parameters influence, such rise/fall time, dV/dt, frequency, combined with thermal and other stresses.

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