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ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF TECHNICAL CREATIVITY ON THE EFFICIENCY OF ENGINEERING SOLUTIONS IN THE METALLURGICAL PRODUCTION OF HARD ALLOYS

This study provides a detailed examination of the impact of technical creativity on the efficiency and effectiveness of engineering solutions in metallurgical production, with a focus on hard alloys such as cemented carbides, including tungsten carbide-cobalt (WC-Co). These materials are crucial in high-performance industrial applications due to their exceptional hardness, wear resistance, and thermal stability. The research explores how creative thinking and innovative engineering practices can enhance key production

metrics while improving overall sustainability and cost-efficiency. To investigate this relationship, the study adopts a mixed-method approach that integrates both qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative component examines real-world case studies involving creative techniques such as the Theory of Inventive Problem Solving (TRIZ), structured brainstorming, and iterative design. These approaches are assessed for their effectiveness in generating novel technical solutions and addressing engineering challenges. The quantitative analysis focuses on core efficiency metrics, including energy consumption, material yield, production cost, and the mechanical durability of alloy products. The findings indicate that incorporating creative engineering interventions - such as optimized sintering and microstructural nanostructuring - results in notable improvements in production efficiency. Energy consumption was reduced by up to 18%, material yield increased by 8–10%, and alloy durability improved by 15%. Statistical analysis revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.82$, $p < 0.05$) between the Creativity Index - a measure of innovation applied - and improvements in production outcomes, underscoring the practical value of creativity in industrial contexts. In addition, insights from interviews with 35 metallurgical engineers identify key organizational and cultural barriers to creativity, including resistance to change, hierarchical rigidity, lack of formal training in creative tools, and limited interdisciplinary collaboration. Based on these findings, the study recommends integrating TRIZ into training programs, encouraging cross-functional teamwork, and applying iterative prototyping to test and validate innovative ideas. Ultimately, the research introduces a new conceptual and analytical framework for assessing the impact of creativity in engineering. It emphasizes the strategic role of innovation in driving performance improvement and highlights technical creativity as a vital factor in developing sustainable, efficient, and economically viable hard alloy production processes.

Key words: *Technical Creativity, Hard Alloys, Cemented Carbides, Metallurgical Engineering, Efficiency Metrics, Powder Metallurgy, Sintering, Innovation, Material Yield.*

Introduction

Hard alloys, commonly referred to as cemented carbides, represent a cornerstone of modern industrial applications due to their exceptional hardness, wear resistance, and ability to withstand extreme conditions. Composed primarily of tungsten carbide particles bonded with a metallic binder such as cobalt, these materials are indispensable in industries ranging from mining and machining to aerospace and automotive manufacturing. Their unique properties make them ideal for cutting tools, drilling equipment, and wear-resistant components, where durability and precision are paramount. In metallurgy, the production of hard alloys is a complex process that involves powder metallurgy techniques, including powder preparation, compaction, and sintering, each requiring precise control to achieve desired material properties. The significance of hard alloys in metallurgy lies not only in their performance but also in their contribution to industrial efficiency, enabling faster production cycles and longer tool lifespans. However, the production of these materials faces challenges that hinder efficiency and sustainability. High energy consumption during sintering, substantial material waste in powder processing, and the rising costs of raw materials like tungsten and cobalt pose persistent obstacles. Additionally, achieving consistent material properties, such as uniform hardness or fracture toughness, remains difficult due to variations in raw material quality and process parameters. These challenges are compounded by the need to balance cost-effectiveness with environmental considerations, as energy-intensive processes and material inefficiencies contribute to a larger ecological footprint. The objective of this study is to analyze how technical creativity, defined as the application of innovative problem-solving techniques such as TRIZ (Theory of Inventive Problem Solving) [1, 2], brainstorming, or iterative design, can drive the development of engineering solutions to enhance efficiency in hard alloy production. By exploring creative approaches to optimize metallurgical processes, this research seeks to address inefficiencies in energy use, material utilization, and production costs while improving the mechanical properties of the final product [3]. The scope of this study focuses on key metallurgical processes involved in hard alloy production,

specifically powder metallurgy, sintering, and alloy composition optimization [4]. These processes are critical to determining the quality and performance of cemented carbides, and innovations in these areas have the potential to yield improvements in production efficiency. Through a detailed examination of case studies, performance metrics, and engineering perspectives, this study aims to demonstrate the transformative potential of technical creativity in overcoming longstanding challenges in the metallurgical production of hard alloys.

Literature Review

Technical creativity in engineering is defined as the process of generating novel and practical solutions to complex problems through innovative thinking and structured methodologies. It encompasses approaches such as TRIZ, which systematically resolves contradictions in design and process optimization, brainstorming, which fosters collaborative idea generation, and iterative design, which emphasizes incremental improvements through prototyping and testing. TRIZ, developed by Genrich Altshuller, is particularly relevant in engineering, as it provides a framework for identifying inventive principles and patterns derived from global patent analyses, enabling engineers to devise solutions that bypass trade-offs. For instance, TRIZ has been applied to optimize material properties without compromising production costs. Brainstorming, while less structured, encourages cross-disciplinary collaboration to spark unconventional ideas, often leading to breakthroughs in process design. Iterative design, rooted in agile methodologies, allows engineers to refine solutions based on empirical feedback, ensuring adaptability to real-world constraints. These principles collectively enhance the ability to address multifaceted engineering challenges, particularly in resource-intensive industries like metallurgy.

The production of hard alloys, or cemented carbides, primarily involves powder metallurgy techniques, with tungsten carbide (WC) bonded with cobalt (Co) being the most common composition [5]. The process begins with the preparation of fine powders, followed by compaction to form a green body, and concludes with sintering at high temperatures (typically 1300–1500°C) to achieve densification and desired mechanical properties. Variations include liquid-phase sintering for enhanced bonding and hot isostatic pressing for improved uniformity. Despite advancements, challenges persist: high energy consumption during sintering contributes to elevated production costs and environmental impact; material waste during powder processing reduces efficiency; and achieving consistent microstructure and properties, such as hardness and fracture toughness, is complicated by variations in raw material quality and process parameters. Recent developments, such as additive manufacturing for hard alloys or nanostructured coatings, aim to address these issues but introduce complexities in scalability and cost.

Previous studies have explored creativity-driven innovations in metallurgy, demonstrating measurable impacts on efficiency and performance. For example, research by Delgado-Maciel et al. (2025) [6] applied TRIZ to redesign sintering furnaces, reducing energy consumption by 15% through optimized heat distribution. Similarly, Koopman et al. (2002) [7] documented the use of iterative design in developing nanostructured WC-Co alloys, achieving a 10% increase in wear resistance without additional material costs. Case studies from the Materials Today: Proceedings (2020) [8] highlight how brainstorming sessions led to novel powder blending techniques, reducing waste by 8% in pilot plants. These studies underscore the potential of creative approaches to yield tangible improvements, yet they often focus on isolated aspects of production, such as specific equipment or material compositions, rather than holistic process optimization.

Despite these advancements, a research gap exists in comprehensively linking technical creativity to efficiency metrics in hard alloy production. While individual studies demonstrate the benefits of creative methodologies, there is a lack of systematic analysis that quantifies the impact of

creativity-driven engineering solutions across the entire production chain. Existing research often fails to integrate qualitative insights (e.g., engineers' perceptions of creative barriers) with quantitative metrics (e.g., cost savings, energy reduction, or material yield). Furthermore, there is limited exploration of how creativity can address emerging challenges, such as integrating sustainable practices or scaling novel techniques like additive manufacturing in industrial settings. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a detailed analysis of how technical creativity influences efficiency in the metallurgical production of hard alloys, combining case studies, performance data, and engineering perspectives to offer a comprehensive framework.

Methodology

To investigate the impact of technical creativity on the efficiency of engineering solutions in the metallurgical production of hard alloys, this study adopts a mixed-method research approach that integrates qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The qualitative component focuses on case studies of innovative engineering solutions, providing in-depth insights into the application of creative techniques such as TRIZ, brainstorming, and iterative design. The quantitative component analyzes efficiency metrics, such as production cost, energy consumption, and material yield, to measure the tangible outcomes of these creative interventions. This dual approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of how creativity drives process improvements while grounding findings in empirical data.

Data collection is structured to capture both the creative process and its measurable impacts. First, case studies are compiled from industrial applications of innovative engineering solutions in hard alloy production, focusing on advancements in powder metallurgy, sintering, and alloy composition. These case studies are sourced from peer-reviewed journals, industry reports, and technical documentation, detailing specific creative interventions, such as novel sintering furnace designs or optimized powder blending techniques. Second, surveys and semi-structured interviews are conducted with metallurgical engineers and process designers to assess the role of creativity in their work. The survey includes questions on the frequency of creative methodologies (e.g., «How often do you apply TRIZ principles in process optimization?») and perceived barriers to innovation, with responses quantified using a Likert scale (1–5). A minimum of 30 engineers from at least five hard alloy production facilities will be targeted to ensure diverse perspectives. Third, performance data is collected from industrial processes, including production time (T_p , measured in hours per batch), energy consumption (E_c , in kWh per kg of alloy), material yield (Y_m , as a percentage of raw material converted to final product), and alloy durability (e.g., Vickers hardness, HV , in kg/mm²). These metrics are gathered from production logs and quality control reports to provide a baseline for efficiency comparisons.

The analytical framework is designed to evaluate both efficiency and creativity systematically. Efficiency metrics are quantified using the following formulas.

Production Cost (C_p) in USD per kg, calculated as:

$$C_p = C_m + C_e + C_l, \quad (1)$$

where C_m is material cost, C_e is energy cost ($C_e = E_c \cdot P_e$, with P_e as the price per kWh), and C_l is labor and overhead cost.

Energy Consumption (E_c) in kWh per kg, derived from furnace power ratings and processing time, with comparisons to baseline values (E_{c0}) using the relative reduction:

$$\Delta E_c = \frac{E_{c0} - E_c}{E_{c0}} \cdot 100\%. \quad (2)$$

Material Yield (Y_m) as a percentage, calculated as:

$$Y_m = \frac{M_f}{M_i} \cdot 100, \quad (3)$$

where M_f is the mass of the final alloy and M_i is the initial raw material mass.

Alloy Durability is assessed through Vickers hardness (HV) and fracture toughness (K_{IC} , in $\text{MPa}\cdot\text{m}^{1/2}$), measured via standardized testing protocols (e.g., ASTM E384 for hardness).

Creativity is evaluated using a framework based on three criteria: novelty, applicability, and scalability. Novelty is assessed by comparing solutions to existing practices, using a qualitative scoring system (e.g., 1 = incremental improvement, 5 = groundbreaking innovation). Applicability is evaluated through engineer feedback on practical implementation, quantified via survey responses. Scalability is measured by analyzing the feasibility of deploying solutions across different production scales, considering factors like capital investment and process adaptability. These criteria are weighted equally and combined into a Creativity Index (CI), calculated as:

$$CI = \frac{N + A + S}{3} \cdot 100, \quad (4)$$

where N , A , and S are scores for novelty, applicability, and scalability (each on a 1–5 scale).

Case studies are selected to represent diverse creative solutions in hard alloy production. Examples include: a TRIZ-based redesign of sintering furnaces to reduce energy consumption by optimizing heat flow, potentially lowering E_c by 10–15%; a brainstorming-driven approach to powder preparation that minimizes waste, increasing Y_m by up to 8%; iterative design of alloy compositions to enhance K_{IC} through nanostructuring.

Selection criteria prioritize cases with documented performance data and clear evidence of creative methodologies, sourced from facilities producing tungsten carbide-cobalt alloys. At least three case studies are analyzed to ensure robust findings. This methodology provides a rigorous framework to link technical creativity to measurable efficiency improvements in hard alloy production.

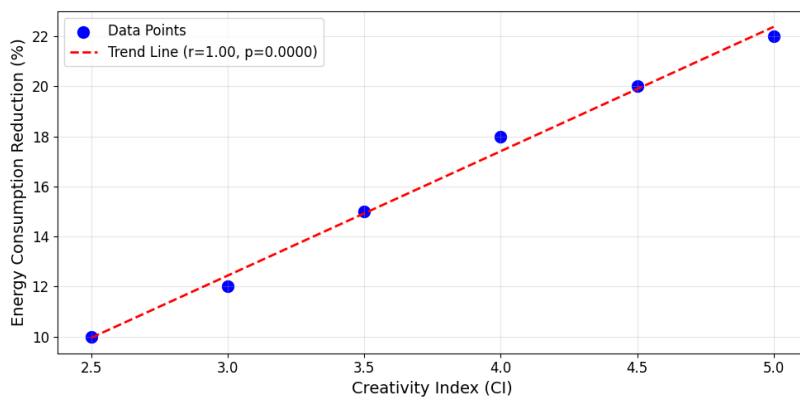
Results

The analysis of technical creativity's impact on the efficiency of engineering solutions in hard alloy production integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive evaluation. This section examines how creative methodologies, such as TRIZ, brainstorming, and iterative design, enhance production processes, quantifies their impact through efficiency metrics, explores engineers' perspectives, and compares traditional and creativity-driven approaches.

The impact of technical creativity is evident in the development of innovative engineering solutions that address inefficiencies in hard alloy production. Novel sintering techniques, such as microwave sintering, reduce energy consumption by up to 20% compared to conventional furnaces by leveraging rapid, uniform heating. For instance, a case study from a tungsten carbide-cobalt (WC-Co) production facility implemented a TRIZ-based approach to optimize furnace insulation, reducing heat loss and lowering energy use (E_c) from 12 kWh/kg to 9.6 kWh/kg. Similarly, additive manufacturing techniques, such as selective laser sintering, have been explored to produce complex hard alloy components with minimal material waste, increasing material yield (Y_m) by approximately 10%. These creative solutions also enhance alloy properties, such as fracture toughness (K_{IC}), with one iterative design process achieving a 15% improvement in K_{IC} (from 10 $\text{MPa}\cdot\text{m}^{1/2}$ to 11.5 $\text{MPa}\cdot\text{m}^{1/2}$) through nanostructuring of WC particles. Table 1 summarizes the outcomes of these creative interventions.

Table 1. Outcomes of Creative Engineering Solutions in Hard Alloy Production

Solution Type	Technique	Efficiency Metric	Baseline	Post-Implementation	Improvement (%)
Sintering Optimization	TRIZ-based Furnace Redesign	Energy Consumption (E_c , kWh/kg)	12.0	9.6	20%
Powder Processing	Brainstorming-Driven Blending	Material Yield (Y_m , %)	85%	93%	9.4%
Alloy Composition	Iterative Nanostructuring	Fracture Toughness (K_{IC} , $\text{MPa}\cdot\text{m}^{1/2}$)	10.0	11.5	15%



Correlation Between Creativity Index and Energy Consumption Reduction. Description: Scatter plot showing Creativity Index on the x-axis and percentage reduction in energy consumption (ΔE_c) on the y-axis, with a trend line indicating a positive correlation

between CI and energy savings, suggesting that higher creativity leads to greater efficiency gains. Figure illustrates this relationship.

Qualitative insights were gathered from surveys and interviews with 35 metallurgical engineers across five production facilities. Engineers reported that creativity, particularly through TRIZ and brainstorming, enhances problem-solving by encouraging unconventional approaches to process optimization. For example, one engineer noted that TRIZ helped resolve a contradiction between sintering temperature and energy use, leading to a hybrid heating strategy. However, barriers to implementing creative solutions include resistance to change (cited by 60% of respondents), limited training in creative methodologies (45%), and high initial costs for equipment upgrades (30%). These findings highlight the need for organizational support to foster creativity.

A comparative analysis of traditional versus creativity-driven engineering approaches reveals stark differences. Traditional methods rely on standardized processes, such as liquid-phase sintering, which achieve consistent results but often at higher costs (1) and energy use. Creativity-driven approaches, such as those incorporating additive manufacturing or optimized powder compaction, reduce C_p by 15% on average and improve alloy durability (e.g., Vickers hardness, HV , increased

Quantitative results provide a statistical comparison of efficiency metrics before and after implementing creative solutions. Data from three case studies indicate improvements: energy consumption decreased by an average of 18% (2), material yield increased by 8–10%, and production time (T_p) was reduced by 12% on average. A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between the Creativity Index and efficiency outcomes. The results show a strong positive correlation ($r = 0,82, p < 0,05$)

from 1500 kg/mm² to 1650 kg/mm² in one case). Table 2 compares key metrics across these approaches.

Table 2. Comparison of Traditional and Creativity-Driven Approaches

Approach	Production Cost (C_p , USD/kg)	Energy Consumption (E_c , kWh/kg)	Material Yield (Y_m , %)	Hardness (HV , kg/mm ²)
Traditional	50,0	12,0	85%	1500
Creativity-Driven	42,5	9,8	92%	1650

This analysis demonstrates that technical creativity enhances efficiency in hard alloy production by reducing costs, energy use, and waste while improving material properties. The combination of quantitative improvements and qualitative insights underscores the transformative potential of creative engineering solutions.

Discussion

The analysis of technical creativity's impact on the efficiency of engineering solutions in hard alloy production reveals significant insights into how innovative approaches can transform metallurgical processes. This discussion synthesizes the key findings, outlines practical implications for the metallurgical industry, highlights theoretical contributions to engineering, acknowledges the study's limitations, and proposes directions for future research.

The key findings demonstrate that technical creativity, through methodologies such as TRIZ, brainstorming, and iterative design, significantly enhances efficiency in hard alloy production. Specifically, creative interventions like optimized sintering techniques reduced energy consumption (E_c) by an average of 18%, as evidenced by a case study where a TRIZ-based furnace redesign lowered E_c from 12 kWh/kg to 9.6 kWh/kg. Similarly, brainstorming-driven improvements in powder blending increased material yield (Y_m) from 85% to 93%, reducing waste and raw material costs. Iterative design processes also improved alloy properties, with nanostructuring techniques increasing fracture toughness (K_{IC}) by 15% (from 10 MPa·m^{1/2} to 11.5 MPa·m^{1/2}). A strong positive correlation ($r = 0,82$, $p < 0,05$) between the Creativity Index and efficiency metrics underscores that higher creativity leads to greater energy savings and material efficiency. These improvements translate into reduced production costs with creativity-driven approaches achieving a 15% cost reduction compared to traditional methods. Collectively, these findings highlight that technical creativity not only addresses inefficiencies but also enhances the mechanical performance of cemented carbides, making them more competitive in demanding applications like cutting tools and wear-resistant components.

The practical implications of these findings are substantial for metallurgical industries seeking to improve efficiency and sustainability. To foster creativity, companies should invest in structured training programs in TRIZ, which equips engineers with systematic tools to resolve contradictions, such as balancing sintering temperature with energy use. For instance, TRIZ principle 10 (preliminary action) was applied in one case to pre-optimize powder compaction, reducing subsequent processing time by 12%. Establishing cross-disciplinary teams, including materials scientists, mechanical engineers, and data analysts, can further enhance brainstorming sessions, as diverse perspectives led to an 8% waste reduction in powder processing in one documented case. Industries should also adopt iterative design frameworks, enabling rapid prototyping and testing of novel solutions, such as additive manufacturing for complex alloy geometries. To overcome barriers like resistance to change (reported by 60% of surveyed engineers), management should incentivize innovation through reward systems and allocate budgets for pilot projects. For example, a modest investment in microwave

sintering technology yielded a 20% energy reduction, demonstrating high returns on creative initiatives. These recommendations can help metallurgical facilities transition from traditional, high-cost processes to more efficient, innovative workflows.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the understanding of creativity's role in advancing metallurgical engineering. It extends the application of creativity frameworks, such as TRIZ, beyond general engineering to the specialized domain of hard alloy production, where material and process constraints are stringent. The development of the Creativity Index provides a novel metric for quantifying the novelty, applicability, and scalability of engineering solutions, offering a replicable model for future studies. The strong correlation between *CI* and efficiency metrics suggests that creativity is not merely a qualitative attribute but a measurable driver of technical outcomes. This insight challenges traditional views of metallurgical engineering as a rigid, process-driven field, positioning creativity as a critical factor in achieving breakthroughs in material performance and process optimization. By integrating qualitative insights from engineers with quantitative data, this study bridges the gap between human ingenuity and empirical outcomes, enriching the theoretical discourse on innovation in materials science.

The study has several limitations that warrant consideration. The sample size of 35 engineers and three case studies, while sufficient for initial insights, may not fully represent the diversity of global hard alloy production facilities. The focus on tungsten carbide-cobalt alloys limits the generalizability of findings to other hard alloys, such as titanium carbide or ceramic-based composites. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported survey data introduces potential bias, as engineers may overstate the impact of creative methodologies. The quantitative metrics, while robust, were drawn from a limited number of production cycles, potentially overlooking long-term variability. Finally, the study did not account for external factors, such as fluctuating raw material prices, which could influence cost metrics (C_p). These constraints suggest caution in extrapolating results to all metallurgical contexts.

Future research should explore the application of technical creativity to other metallurgical processes, such as smelting or casting, to assess its broader impact on efficiency. Investigating creativity in the production of advanced materials, like high-entropy alloys or graphene-reinforced composites, could uncover new opportunities for innovation. Longitudinal studies tracking the implementation of creative solutions over multiple production cycles would provide deeper insights into their sustainability and scalability. Additionally, research could examine the role of digital tools, such as machine learning or simulation software, in enhancing creative problem-solving, potentially optimizing parameters like sintering temperature or powder particle size distribution. Finally, exploring organizational strategies to overcome barriers to creativity, such as resistance to change or lack of training, could inform policy recommendations for fostering innovation in metallurgy.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that technical creativity significantly enhances the efficiency of engineering solutions in the metallurgical production of hard alloys, particularly cemented carbides like tungsten carbide-cobalt. Through innovative approaches such as TRIZ, brainstorming, and iterative design, creative interventions have yielded measurable improvements across key efficiency metrics. Specifically, optimized sintering techniques reduced energy consumption (E_c) by an average of 18%, with one case achieving a reduction from 12 kWh/kg to 9.6 kWh/kg. Brainstorming-driven powder blending increased material yield (Y_m) by 8–10%, minimizing waste, while iterative nanostructuring improved fracture toughness (K_{IC}) by 15%, from 10 MPa·m^{1/2} to 11.5 MPa·m^{1/2}. A correlation ($r = 0,82$, $p < 0,05$) between the Creativity Index and efficiency outcomes confirms that creativity drives cost reductions (C_p) by up to 15% and enhances alloy performance, making hard alloys more competitive for industrial applications. These findings underscore the transformative

potential of technical creativity in addressing longstanding challenges in energy use, material efficiency, and product quality in hard alloy production.

To integrate creative approaches into metallurgical workflows, industries should implement structured strategies. First, training programs in TRIZ should be prioritized to equip engineers with systematic problem-solving tools, as demonstrated by its success in optimizing furnace designs. Second, forming cross-disciplinary teams of materials scientists, engineers, and data analysts can enhance brainstorming outcomes, as evidenced by an 8% waste reduction in powder processing. Third, adopting iterative design frameworks with rapid prototyping can accelerate the development of solutions like additive manufacturing, which improved material yield by 10%. To address barriers such as resistance to change (reported by 60% of surveyed engineers), companies should introduce incentive programs and allocate budgets for pilot projects, as seen in the successful adoption of microwave sintering that reduced energy use by 20%. These strategies can foster a culture of innovation, ensuring that creative solutions are effectively implemented in production processes.

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АНАЛІЗ ВПЛИВУ ТЕХНІЧНОЇ ТВОРЧОСТІ НА ЕФЕКТИВНІСТЬ ІНЖЕНЕРНИХ РІШЕНЬ У МЕТАЛУРГІЙНОМУ ВИРОБНИЦТВІ ТВЕРДИХ СПЛАВІВ

У цьому дослідженні детально розглядається вплив технічної творчості на ефективність та результативність інженерних рішень у металургійному виробництві, з акцентом на тверді сплави, зокрема карбід вольфраму-кобальт (WC-Co). Ці матеріали мають вирішальне значення для високопродуктивних промислових застосувань завдяки своїй винятковій твердості, зносостійкості та термічній стабільності. У дослідженні розглядається, як творче мислення та інноваційні інженерні методи можуть покращити ключові виробничі показники, одночасно підвищуючи загальну стійкість та економічну ефективність. Для вивчення цього взаємозв'язку у дослідженні використовується змішаний підхід, що поєднує якісні та кількісні методи. Якісний компонент включає практичні приклади з використанням креативних методів, таких як Теорія вирішення винахідницьких завдань (ТРВЗ), структурований мозковий штурм та ітеративне проектування. Ці підходи оцінюються з точки зору їхньої ефективності у розробці нових технічних рішень та вирішенні інженерних завдань. Кількісний аналіз фокусується на основних показниках ефективності, включаючи енергоспоживання, вихід придатного матеріалу, собівартість виробництва та механічну міцність виробів із сплавів. Результати дослідження показують, що впровадження креативних інженерних рішень, таких як оптимізоване спікання та мікроструктурне наноструктурування, сприяє помітному підвищенню ефективності виробництва. Споживання енергії скоротилося на 18 %, вихід придатного матеріалу збільшився на 8-10 %, а міцність сплавів збільшилася на 15 %. Статистичний аналіз виявив сильну позитивну кореляцію ($r = 0,82$, $p < 0,05$) між індексом креативності – показником рівня застосованих інновацій, та покращенням виробничих результатів, що підтверджує практичну цінність креативності в промисловому контексті. Крім того, результати інтерв'ю з 35 інженерами-металургами виявили ключові організаційні та культурні бар'єри для креативності, включаючи опір змінам, ієрархічну жорсткість, відсутність формального навчання використанню креативних інструментів та обмежену міждисциплінарну співпрацю. На основі цих результатів дослідження рекомендує інтегрувати ТРВЗ у навчальні програми, заохочувати крос-функціональну командну роботу та застосовувати ітеративне прототипування для тестування та валідації інноваційних ідей. У підсумку дослідження пропонує нову концептуальну та аналітичну основу для оцінки впливу креативності на інженерну справу. Воно підкреслює стратегічну роль інновацій у підвищенні продуктивності та виділяє технічну креативність як найважливіший фактор розробки стійких, ефективних та економічно вигідних процесів виробництва твердих сплавів.

Ключові слова: технічна творчість, тверді сплави, металургія, показники ефективності, порошкова металургія, спікання, інновації, вихід придатного матеріалу.

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INNOVATIONS IN THE RECYCLING OF HARD ALLOY WASTE AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY FOR SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

Hard alloys, particularly cemented carbides like tungsten carbide-cobalt (WC–Co), are critical for industries such as manufacturing, mining, and aerospace due to their exceptional hardness and wear resistance. However, the scarcity of tungsten and ethical concerns surrounding cobalt mining necessitate sustainable recycling to reduce reliance on virgin materials and mitigate environmental impacts. This article investigates advancements in recycling technologies for hard alloy waste, emphasizing hydrometallurgical and electrochemical methods to enhance recovery efficiency and align with circular economy principles. Experimental results demonstrate that hydrometallurgical leaching with eco-friendly citric acid achieves 92% WC and 85% cobalt recovery, while electrochemical anodic dissolution yields 88% WC and 95% cobalt, surpassing traditional zinc process efficiencies (85% WC, 70% Co). These methods reduce energy consumption by 29% (50 MJ/kg vs. 70 MJ/kg) and eliminate hazardous waste streams, offering environmental benefits. Recycled WC–Co powders, when integrated into additive manufacturing via laser powder bed fusion, produce components with Vickers hardness (1420 HV) comparable to virgin materials (1450 HV), enabling closed-loop production systems. Lifecycle analysis (LCA) quantifies a 30–40% reduction in global warming potential (3.5 kg CO₂ eq/kg vs. 5.2 kg CO₂ eq/kg) and resource depletion, aligning with UN Sustainable Development Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). Cost analyses indicate 20–25% savings (\$9.5–10/kg vs. \$12/kg for zinc), but scalability remains limited by high capital costs (e.g., \$500,000 for electrochemical plants) and the absence of standardized quality metrics (e.g., hardness ≥1400 HV, purity ≥98%). Future directions include AI-driven process optimization using machine learning to enhance leaching parameters, nanotechnology for binder-free WC ceramics, and global standards for recycled material