

# Exceptionally linear and highly sensitive photo-induced unipolar inverter device

Muhammad Naqi, Ji Ye Lee, Byeong Hyeon Lee, Sunkook Kim, Sang Yeol Lee, and Hocheon Yoo

**Abstract**—Oxide semiconductors are of particular interest in the field of integrated electronics due to their large-area fabrication, high uniformity, and superior performance. Here, we report an exceptionally sensitive photo-induced inverter device with high linearity based on the unipolar n-type channel material amorphous silicon indium zinc oxide (a-SIZO). The field-effect transistor (FET) based on a-SIZO exhibits maximum mobility of 9.8 cm<sup>2</sup>/Vs at V<sub>D</sub> of 5 V, high on/off ratio of ~10<sup>6</sup>, and stable threshold voltage (V<sub>Th</sub>) of -0.35 V. Additionally, the optical properties of the proposed FET include excellent V<sub>Th</sub> shift and photocurrent (I<sub>photo</sub>) with high linearity under various red-light illumination. The proposed enhancement-load type inverter device shows reliable electrical and optical characteristics with an inverter gain of 0.7 at V<sub>DD</sub> of 1 V and linear photo-response in terms of inverter gain and voltage shift, demonstrating promising potential in the field of integrated electronics for optoelectronic applications.

**Index Terms**— Unipolar inverter, amorphous silicon indium zinc oxide (a-SIZO), field-effect transistor (FET), phototransistor, photo-induced inverter.

## I. Introduction

Oxide semiconductors have gained tremendous attention in the field of integrated electronics due to their high-electrical performance, large-area fabrication, and simple processing techniques [1], [2]. Recently, the use of various organic and oxide semiconductor material systems for p- and n-type material in high-electrical performance complementary metal-oxide-semiconductor devices have been reported but limited by the complex structure and costly and complicated processing techniques [3], [4]. To overcome this issue, unipolar integrated circuits (ICs) have been reported to achieve greater electrical performance and high integration using only n- or p-type semiconductor material, having relatively simple structure

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and processing methods [5], [6]. Previously, oxide semiconductor material systems gained much attention in the electronic and optoelectronic field due to their wide bandgap (>3.2 eV) and superior carrier transport properties despite their amorphous structure and low-temperature processing requirements [2], [7]–[9]. Among the various types of photo-sensitive devices, amorphous oxide semiconductors (AOSs) are exceptionally promising channel materials due to their visible spectral wavelength detectivity and intensity-selectivity of incident light [9], [10]. Despite their integration in high-performance FET devices, much effort is still required to investigate the properties of AOS-based devices for next-generation ICs and optoelectronic applications.

Herein, we have introduced a photo-induced inverter device based on amorphous silicon indium zinc oxide (a-SIZO) channel material, exhibiting high-performance electrical and optical properties with highly linear photosensitivity and inverting properties with respect to the incident light power. In this study, an enhancement-load type inverter device has been fabricated using a conventional lithography process. The proposed a-SIZO based field-effect transistor (FET) exhibits high electrical performance with maximum mobility of 9.8 cm<sup>2</sup>/Vs, on/off current ratio of 1 × 10<sup>6</sup>, and a stable threshold voltage of -0.35 V. Optical properties of presented a-SIZO based FET are also measured, revealing stable and linear results in terms of photocurrent (I<sub>photo</sub>), threshold shift (ΔV<sub>Th</sub>), and rapid time response. The presented design of a unipolar inverter device exhibits high inverting electrical properties over a small voltage range (V<sub>DD</sub>; 0.2 V ~ 1.0 V) and maximum inverter gain of 0.7. Additionally, the optical measurements of the proposed inverter have also been analyzed under red-light illumination wavelength of 638 nm, exhibiting high linearity, and stable photo-responsive behavior. Although the proposed a-SIZO based photo-induced inverter presented in this paper was initially intended to enable excellent optical measurements in integrated electronic circuits, we believe that the present work

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M. Naqi and Sunkook Kim are with Sungkyunkwan University, Suwon, 16419, South Korea. (email: [naqisiddiqi@gmail.com](mailto:naqisiddiqi@gmail.com); [intel0616@gmail.com](mailto:intel0616@gmail.com)).

S.Y Lee and H. Yoo is with Gachon University, Seongnam 13120, South Korea. (email: [sylee2020@gachon.ac.kr](mailto:sylee2020@gachon.ac.kr); [hyoo@gachon.ac.kr](mailto:hyoo@gachon.ac.kr)).

J.Y Lee, Cheongju University, Cheongju, 28503 South Korea. (email: [je919@naver.com](mailto:je919@naver.com)).

B. H. Lee is with Korea University, Seoul 136-701, Korea and Research Institute of Advanced Semiconductor Convergence Technology, Korea. (email: [endl0824@naver.com](mailto:endl0824@naver.com)).

may provide a new platform to combine IC and optoelectronics for futuristic applications.

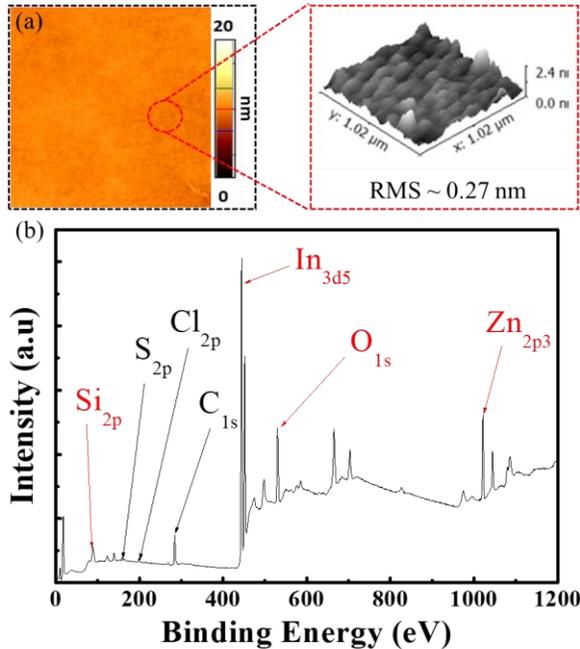


Fig. 1. (a) Surface roughness analysis of deposited a-SIZO film using the atomic force microscope (AFM) method. (b) Material characterization of a-SIZO film through x-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) analysis.

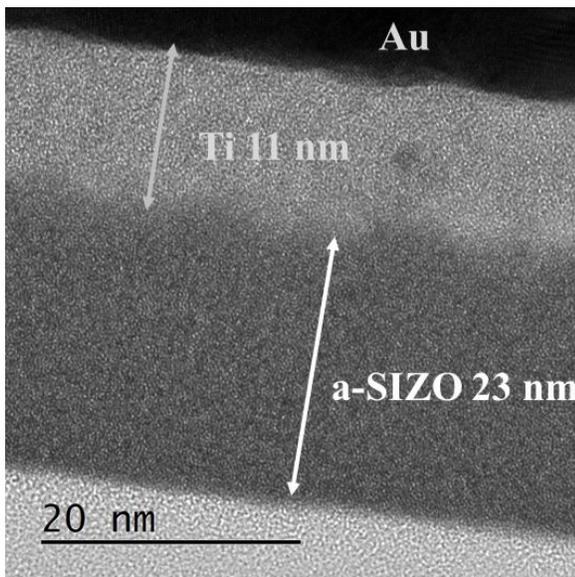


Fig. 2. Cross-sectional TEM overview of amorphous SIZO channel material.

## II. EXPERIMENTAL

To fabricate the proposed photo-induced inverter device, firstly, the gate electrode was patterned onto the cleaned rigid glass by using the photolithography process. To pattern the gate electrodes, the etching method was utilized in which the photoresist (PR-AZGXR-601, MERCK) was spin-coated onto

the titanium/gold (Ti/Au, the thickness of 10/50 nm) deposited rigid glass substrate at 3000 rpm for 20 s and then exposed to a UV light for 1.5 s in presence of patterned mask. Then, the pattern was developed in a developer solution (AZ-300MIF) for 20 s and followed by the annealing process for 15 min at 120 °C. The unwanted area of Ti/Au was then removed by putting the developed sample in Au etchant and buffer oxide etchant (BOE) for 10 s and 20 s, respectively. After patterning the gate electrode, the dielectric layer of Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (80 nm) was deposited using atomic layer deposition (ALD) method at 200 °C. To etch the unwanted area of the deposited Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> layer, the abovementioned photolithography was used. The a-SIZO channel material was deposited by radio frequency (RF) magnetron sputtering at room temperature (sputtering power of 30 W, the deposition rate of 2 mTorr, and Ar: O<sub>2</sub> flow ratio of 30:0) onto the Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> surface and then patterned by the etching process, mentioned above. Finally, the source and drain electrodes were patterned by using the lift-off process after annealing the a-SIZO patterned sample at 150 °C for 2 hours in ambient conditions. The channel length and width were defined as 20 and 100 μm, respectively. Also, the source and drain electrodes were patterned in a way to connect the gate and drain of load FET to obtain the enhancement-load type inverter device. The electrical measurements of FET and inverter devices were measured using a semiconductor characterization system (Keithley, 4200 SCS). Optical characteristics were observed under red light illumination wavelength of 638 nm (Thorlabs, SM600) at ambient conditions.

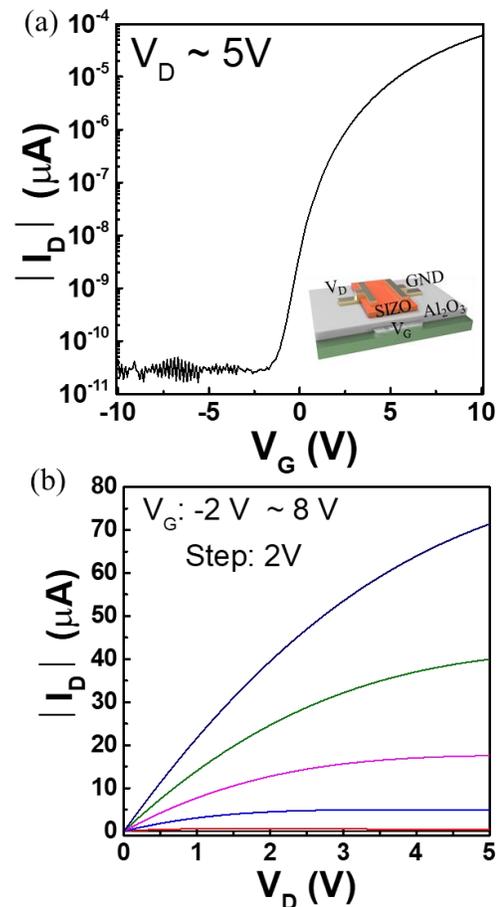


Fig. 3. Transistor characteristics in terms of (a) transfer and (b)

output curves of the proposed FET device, respectively.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The material properties of deposited a-SIZO were characterized in terms of x-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS), atomic force microscopes (AFM) morphology, and Transmission electron microscopy (TEM) at ambient conditions. Figure 1a shows the surface roughness image of the a-SIZO film using the AFM method. The root means square (RMS) roughness of 0.27 nm was obtained during experiments, elaborating a smooth surface of a-SIZO channel material which is useful for compressing scattering centers and interface traps. [11] The existence of the related elements (silicon (Si), indium (In), zinc (Zn), and oxygen (O)) was confirmed by the XPS analysis, as shown in Figure 1b. In addition, the 23 nm thickness of the proposed a-SIZO channel material was confirmed by the TEM method, shown as a cross-sectional layout in Figure 2.

Following the material measurements of the a-SIZO channel material, its electrical characteristics were measured. Figure 3a shows a transfer ( $I_D$ - $V_G$ ) curve of proposed a-SIZO based FET, exhibiting a clear n-type behavior with maximum mobility of  $9.35 \text{ cm}^2/\text{Vs}$ , a threshold voltage of  $-0.35 \text{ V}$ , and an on/off current ratio in the order of  $1 \times 10^6$  at  $V_D$  of  $5 \text{ V}$ . Additionally, the field-effect mobility was calculated by the following formula,  $\mu_{\text{eff}} = L g_m / W C_{\text{ox}} V_D$ , where the channel length ( $L$ ) and width ( $W$ ) is defined as  $20 \mu\text{m}$  and  $100 \mu\text{m}$ , respectively. High saturation current at high voltage range and linear behavior at the low voltage range can be observed in the output curve, shown in Figure 3b, where the gate-bias voltage was applied in the range of  $-2 \text{ V} \sim 8 \text{ V}$  with an interval  $-2 \text{ V}$ , that attributes an excellent ohmic contact of Ti/Au electrodes based on the proposed channel material. Additionally, the proposed a-SIZO transistor performance is compared by previously reported FETs based on oxide semiconductors with different deposition methods, revealing a stable electrical performance (Table I).

Table I  
FET characteristics comparison of proposed a-SIZO FET with previously reported oxide semiconductors.

Oxide Material	Deposition Method	Temperature Process (°C)	Mobility ( $\text{cm}^2/\text{Vs}$ )	On/Off ratio	$V_G / V_D$ (V)	Ref.
a-IZO	Spin Coating	<250	10	$10^8$	$-50 \sim 50 / 5$	[12]
a-IGZO						
ZnO	Spin Coating	500	5.25	$10^5$	$-20 \sim 60 / 50$	[13]
a-IGZO	CCP magnetron sputtering	100	26.03	$10^7$	$-20 \sim 20 / 10$	[14]
a-IGZO	RF magnetron Sputtering	150	13.40	$10^6$	$-10 \sim 20 / 0.1$	[15]
a-SIZO	Rf magnetron Sputtering	<150	9.38	$10^6$	$-10 \sim 10 / 5$	This work

To analyze the optical properties of the proposed a-SIZO based FET device, the transistor properties were measured under red-light illumination wavelength of  $638 \text{ nm}$  along with dark conditions, as indicated by the 3D section view in the inset of Figure 4a. Figure 4a shows a comparison of the transfer ( $I_D - V_D$ ) curve of proposed a-SIZO based phototransistor under

light and dark conditions, where the red-light is exposed at power intensity of  $10.32 \text{ mW}/\text{cm}^2$  and a gradual shift in threshold voltage ( $V_{\text{Th}}$ ) was observed during the experiment. Additionally, exposure to red-light at different power intensities ( $6.87 \text{ mW}/\text{cm}^2$  to  $17.18 \text{ mW}/\text{cm}^2$ ) yields a higher photogeneration current due to wide bandgap of around  $3.0 \text{ eV}$  where the photogenerated photons penetrate into the bandgap the excites electrons, so the current ( $I_D$ ) increases with  $V_{\text{Th}}$  shift, as shown in Figure 4b. The optical results obtained from the presented a-SIZO phototransistor were then compared with recently reported phototransistors based on oxide semiconductors materials, where the photo-response was obtained by different doping methods (Table II). Due to the effect of Si concentrations in a-SIZO semiconductor, the bandgap can vary and photogeneration current can obtain without any dopant. [16]

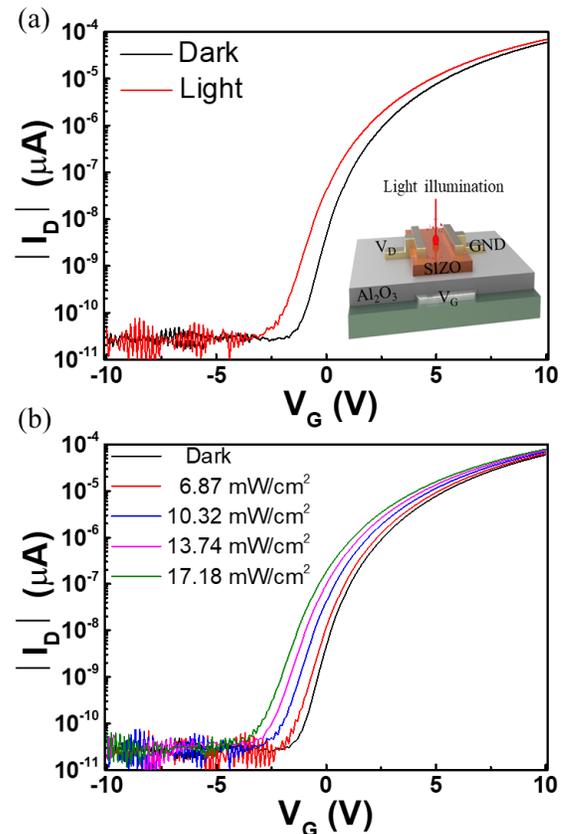


Fig. 4. Transfer curve under (a) dark/light conditions and (b) various power intensities of red illuminations.

To analyze the photo-responsive behavior of proposed a-SIZO based phototransistor, the threshold voltage shift ( $\Delta V_{\text{Th}}$ ) and photocurrent ( $I_{\text{photo}}$ ) were measured under different power intensities of red-light ranges, as shown in Figures 5a and 5b, respectively. The optical results show high uniformity and stability of the photodetection performance of the proposed a-SIZO based phototransistor. Then, the significant key figure of merit for photodetection, the time response behavior of the proposed device was measured under red-light illumination with a power intensity of  $10.32 \text{ mW}/\text{cm}^2$ . The rise time of  $0.9 \text{ s}$  and fall time of  $2.02 \text{ s}$  were observed with high stability,

describing the robustness of the proposed phototransistor, shown in Figure 5c.

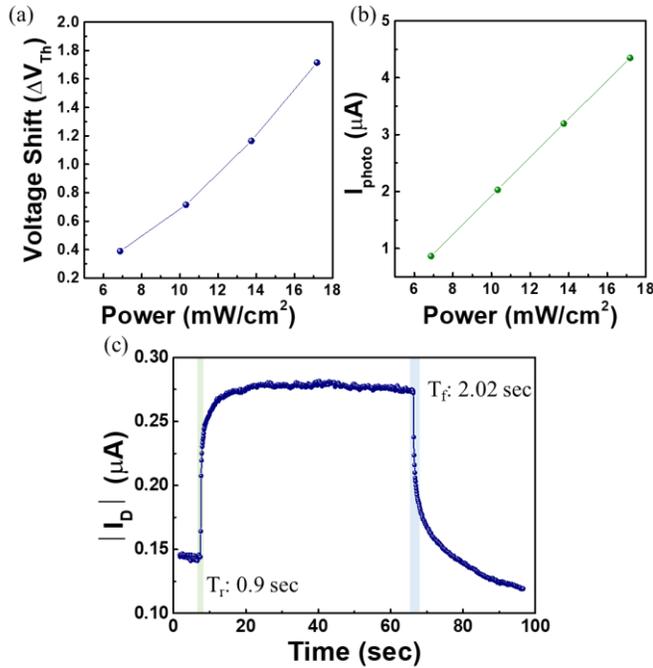


Fig. 5. The photo-responsive behavior in terms of (a)  $\Delta V_{TH}$ , (b)  $I_{photo}$ , and (c) time-domain.

Table II

Comparison of photo-responsive behavior with previously reported oxide semiconductors.

Oxide Material	Combining Material	Responsivity (A/W)	Rise time (s)	Fall time (s)	Ref.
a-IGZO	Graphene dots	5	N.A	N.A	[17]
a-IGZO	MAPbI <sub>3</sub>	0.025	0.04	0.1	[18]
a-IGZO	MoS <sub>2</sub>	0.055	2.6	1.7	[19]
ZnO	Quantum dots	0.032 (mA / W ~ red light)	N.A	N.A	[20]
a-SIZO	None	15.23	0.9	2.02	This work

To analyze the key figure of merit for photodetection, the responsivity, detectivity, sensitivity, and gain parameters were measured under different power levels. The photoresponsivity (R) was obtained in the range of 15.23 A/W ~ 7.023 A/W at different incident light power levels (6.87 mW/cm<sup>2</sup> ~ 17.18 mW/cm<sup>2</sup>), calculated by  $R = I_{photo} / P_{inc}$  (A/W), where  $P_{inc}$  represents the incident power and  $I_{photo}$  represents the total current at a specific power, shown in Figure 6a. Photocurrent, here, was obtained by  $I_{photo} = I_{total} - I_{dark}$ , where  $I_{total}$  represents the total current measured at a specific power and  $I_{dark}$  represents the current at dark conditions. Then, the specific detectivity ( $D^*$ ) was measured at various incident light power scales and the results show a linear trend in the range of 12-4.5 $\times 10^{12}$  jones for detectivity as shown in Figure 6b. Here, the

specific detectivity is calculated by  $D^* = RA^{1/2}/(2eI_{dark})^{1/2}$ , where A defines the illuminated area, and e defines the elementary charge value. Next, the sensitivity was measured, and the consequences show linear and stable response under various incident light power levels (Figure 6c). The photo-gain (G) of proposed a-SIZO phototransistor at different incident power scales was calculated by  $G = I_{photo}/(e \times \Delta n \times A)$ , where  $\Delta n$  defines the carrier concentration of the photoinduced trapped electrons [21] and the results show a gain is up to  $10^5$  (Figure 6d). The carrier concentration was obtained by the formula  $\Delta n = C_g \times \Delta V_{TH}/e$ , where  $C_g$  represents the gate capacitance of  $1.6 \times 10^{-7}$  F/cm<sup>2</sup> and  $\Delta V_{TH}$  represents the voltage shift at specific light incident power. In this regard, the results show that the photodetection behavior of the proposed a-SIZO based phototransistor exhibits highly sensitive and responsive performance.

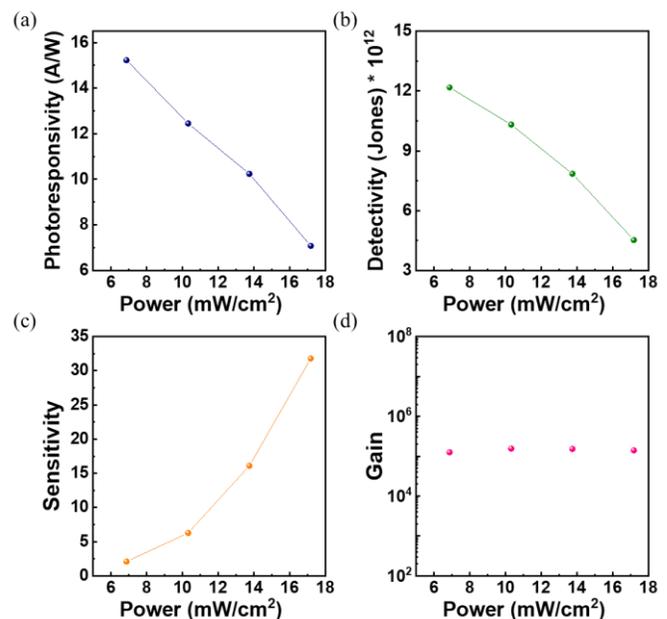


Fig. 6. The key figure of merit for photodetection parameters in terms of (a) photoresponsivity, (b) detectivity, (c) sensitivity, and (d) gain.

The enhancement-load type unipolar inverter based on n-type semiconductor material is generally designed in a way that connects the drain electrode directly to the gate electrode of load FET which fixes the current level depending on drain voltage ( $V_{DD}$ ). [22], [23] The real image of the fabricated a-SIZO based inverter can be visualized in Figures 7a. Figure 7b shows the voltage transfer and inverter gain curves of presented enhancement-load type inverter based on a-SIZO channel material at  $V_{DD} \sim 1V$ . The represented unipolar inverter devices show a maximum voltage gain of 0.645 at  $V_{DD} \sim 1V$ . The inverter gain ( $I_G$ ) is calculated by the following formula:  $I_G = \text{abs.}(dV_{OUT}/dV_{IN})$ , where  $V_{OUT}$  represents the output voltage and  $V_{IN}$  represents the input voltage of the proposed inverter device. Additionally, the voltage transfer properties and inverter gain of proposed inverter devices were analyzed under various  $V_{DD}$  values ranges from 1 V to 0.2 V, elaborating a tendency of inverter characteristics depending on different  $V_{DD}$ , shown in Figures 7c and 7d, respectively.

Next, the time-domain behavior of the proposed inverter device was characterized at constant  $V_{DD}$  pulse of 1 V and 0 V up to 250 s with an interval of 25 s, demonstrating a stable and reliable switching throughout the measurements, shown in Figure 8.

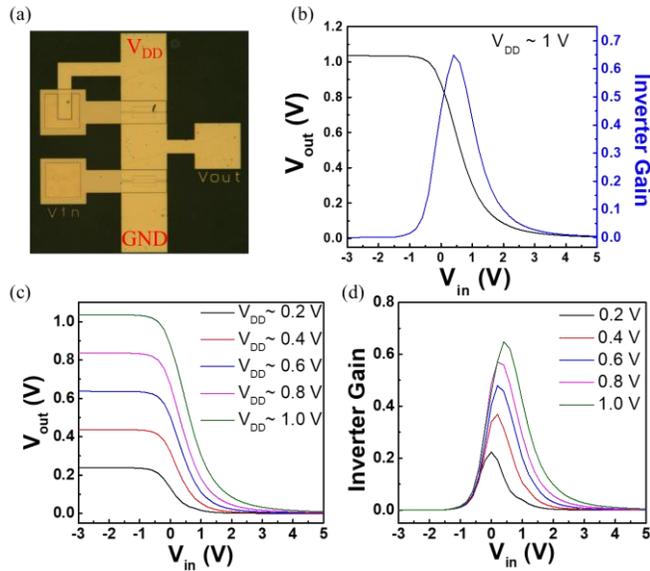


Fig. 7. (a) A real image of the proposed inverter device. (b) The inverting curve of the device with inverter gain. (c, d) Inverting and gain characteristics at different  $V_{DD}$ .

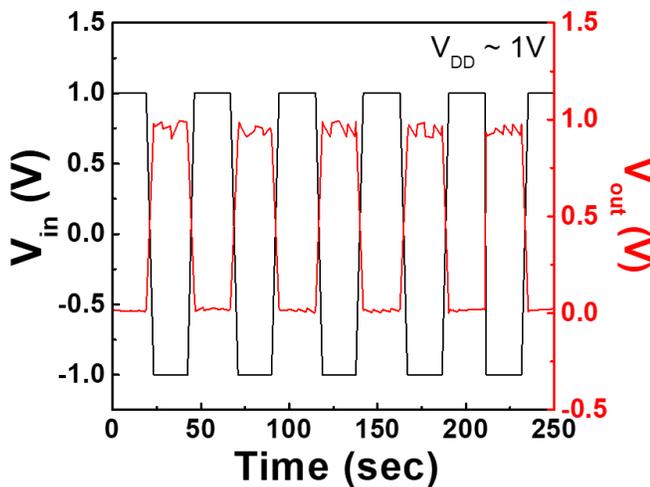


Fig. 8. Time-domain characteristics for a pulsed input voltage from -1 V to 1 V.

The optoelectronic behavior of the proposed enhancement-load type unipolar inverter device was then examined under different red-light illumination intensities ( $6.87 \text{ mW/cm}^2$  to  $17.18 \text{ mW/cm}^2$ ). Figure 9a shows a 3D section view of the proposed unipolar inverter device. A gradual shift in voltage and increase in inverter gain were observed when exposed to red-light illumination under different power intensities ranges from  $6.87 \text{ mW/cm}^2$  to  $17.18 \text{ mW/cm}^2$ , as shown in Figures 9b and 9c, respectively, revealing a stable and linear photo-responsive behavior. In addition, the proposed enhancement-load type unipolar inverter device properties were compared by

previous reported unipolar inverter devices in terms of inverter type, applied  $V_{DD}$ , gain, and possible photo-measurements (Table III), revealing an excellent photo-inducing property.

Table III

Comparison of proposed a-SIZO based inverter device with previously reported oxide semiconductor along with photo measurement system.

Semiconductor Material	Inverter - type Structure	$V_{DD}$	Gain	Photo-response Measurements	Ref.
a-IGZO	Depletion-load (Enhancement-load)	20	-20.5 (V/V) (-1.5 (V/V))	N.A	[22]
SIZO	Depletion-load	3	9.8	Photo-stressing	[7]
AuNps/P3HT	Depletion-load (Enhancement-load)	40 (40)	6.5 (No gain)	N.A	[24]
ZTO	Enhancement-load	5	1	N.A	[25]
a-SIZO	Enhancement-load	1	0.645	Photo-inducing	This work

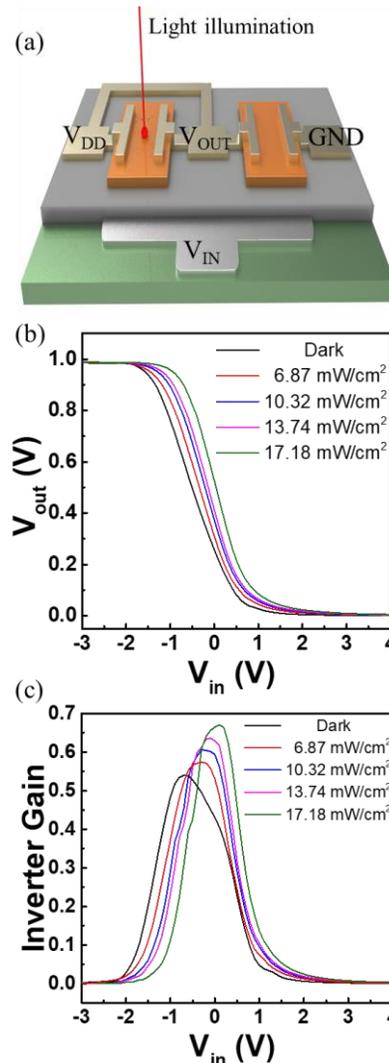


Fig. 9. (a) A schematic layout of the proposed inverter device under light illumination. (b) Inverting and (c) gain characteristics under different power intensities of red-light.

Additionally, further evaluate the key figures of merit for photodetection of the proposed photoinduced inverter device, the voltage shift difference ( $\Delta V$ ), inverter gain shift, and time response were then analyzed. The voltage shift difference ( $\Delta V$ ) was calculated by  $\Delta V = V_{\text{dark}} - V_{\text{light}}$ , where  $V_{\text{dark}}$  represents the voltage drop measured at the dark condition and  $V_{\text{light}}$  represents the voltage drop measured at different power intensities of red-light illuminations. Figures 10a and 10b show an excellent linear and stable behavior of the photoinduced inverter device in terms of voltage shift difference and inverter gain at different power levels ranges from 6.87 mW/cm<sup>2</sup> to 17.18 mW/cm<sup>2</sup>. In Figure 10b, the inverter gain shift (IGS) was calculated by  $\text{IGS} = G_{\text{photo}} - G_{\text{dark}}$ , where  $G_{\text{photo}}$  represents the inverter gain at specific incident light power and  $G_{\text{dark}}$  represents the inverter gain at dark condition. The results show highly sensitive photodetection using integrated circuits (inverter device).

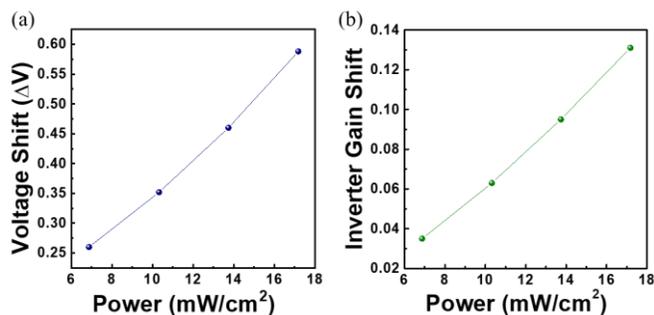


Fig. 10. The photo-responsive behavior of the proposed inverter device in terms of (a)  $\Delta V$  and (b) inverter gain shift.

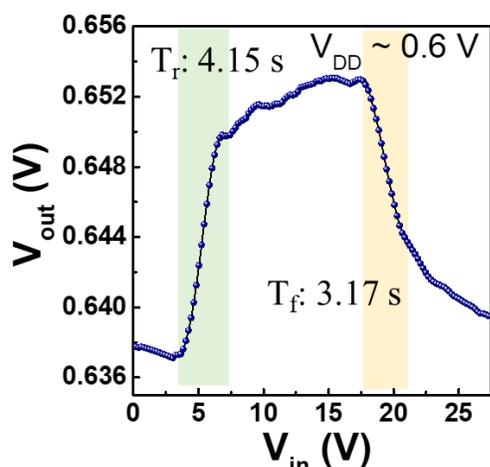


Fig. 11. Time-domain characteristics of the proposed photo-induced inverter device when exposed to red light with a power of 10.32 mW/cm<sup>2</sup>.

Then, the time-domain behavior of the proposed photoinduced inverter device was analyzed where  $V_{\text{IN}}$  (0.5 V) and  $V_{\text{DD}}$  (0.6 V) were fixed. The  $V_{\text{OUT}}$  was measured under a pulse of red-light illumination power intensity of 10.32 mW/cm<sup>2</sup>, demonstrating a gradual increase in  $V_{\text{OUT}}$  with a rise

time of 4.15 s and falling time of 3.17 s, as shown in Figure 11. The results show a highly sensitive and responsive performance of photodetection in the presented photoinduced inverter device, promising great potential for futuristic application in the field of integrated electronics.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In this work, an enhancement-load type inverter device with a-SIZO unipolar channel material was produced via low-temperature processing and analyzed. The a-SIZO based FET showed stable electrical and optical performance with maximum mobility of 9.8 cm<sup>2</sup>/Vs, high on/off ratio of  $\sim 10^6$ , and linear photo-responsive behavior. The proposed inverter device exhibited a high inverter gain of 0.7 at  $V_{\text{DD}}$  of 1 V, and linear voltage shift and inverter gain under the varying intensity of red-light illumination (80 to 200  $\mu\text{W}$ ), and hence provides a unique platform for future integrated electronic applications.

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