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To implement the Whale Optimization Algorithm for solving complex, nonlinear reliability optimization problems

Sheetal
Research Scholar, Department of Mathematics, Baba Mastnath University, Asthal Bohar, Rohtak
Prof. (Dr.) Jagatveer Singh
Research Supervisor, Department of Mathematics, Baba Mastnath University, Asthal Bohar, Rohtak

Abstract:
Reliability optimization is crucial for modern engineering systems, especially under multiple nonlinear constraints. Traditional optimization techniques often struggle with complex reliability problems due to premature convergence and limited exploration ability. This study applies the Whale Optimization Algorithm (WOA) a recent metaheuristic inspired by humpback whales' bubble-net hunting to nonlinear reliability optimization of engineering systems. Using a benchmark reliability model, WOA demonstrated significant improvements: system reliability was raised by 9.45% to 0.9987, failure rate minimized by 98.51%, and system costs reduced by 13.20%. The findings confirm WOA as an effective and robust tool for tackling complex reliability engineering problems.

Keywords: Whale Optimization Algorithm, Reliability Optimization, Metaheuristic Optimization, Nonlinear Optimization, Redundancy Allocation, System Reliability

1. Introduction

Modern engineering systems including power generation, communications, transportation, and automation continually demand highly reliable, cost-efficient, and resource-conscious solutions. Achieving optimal reliability is fundamental, but practical reliability optimization problems are often highly nonlinear, multimodal, and subjected to multiple constraints (e.g., cost, weight, design, and performance). Conventional deterministic methods tend to fall into local optima and rarely achieve the global optimum due to the vastness and complexity of the search space. As a result, metaheuristic algorithms, inspired by natural processes, offer a promising solution. The Whale Optimization Algorithm (WOA), modeled after the bubble-net feeding behavior of humpback whales, has emerged as a robust, flexible, and efficient tool. This paper investigates WOA's potential to solve nonlinear reliability optimization problems, optimizing system configuration, redundancy allocation, and resource use under complex constraints.

2. Review of Literature

Masoud & Kuchkarova (2023) reviewed the application of metaheuristics in sustainable and green engineering contexts, highlighting their adaptability and success over classical methods. Huang & Hu (2024) proposed a hybrid Beluga Whale Optimization Algorithm for engineering design,

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underscoring improvements in reliability and convergence. Shaban et al. (2022) chronicled the evolution from classical metaheuristics to intelligent hybrid frameworks for better search balance. Wei et al. (2025) developed RWOA, an enhanced whale optimization variant, showing improved numerical and engineering optimization outcomes. Tabakhi et al. (2014) and Asaad & Abdulnabi (2018) addressed the effectiveness of ant colony and local search strategies in combinatorial optimization, supporting the hybridization of natural algorithms. Rustamova & Vivekanantharasa (2023) and Almufti (2021, 2022) highlighted recent advances in teaching–learning-based and vibrating particles system metaheuristics, focusing on exploration-exploitation dynamics. Overall, literature points to hybridization, adaptive mechanisms, and penalty methods for constraint handling as leading trends to improve reliability optimization, resilience, and computational efficiency.

3. Scope of the Study

This research focuses on the application and assessment of the Whale Optimization Algorithm (WOA) for nonlinear reliability optimization in engineering systems. The study considers reliability models with complex, nonlinear constraints commonly seen in real-world design, including cost, weight, volume, and maintenance limits. Performance is evaluated using both reliability measures and resource efficiency metrics, with WOA benchmarked against other established metaheuristics.

4. Objectives

- To implement the Whale Optimization Algorithm (WOA) for solving complex, nonlinear reliability optimization problems with engineering constraints.
- To maximize system reliability while minimizing failure probability, total system cost, and resource use.
- To compare WOA results with standard optimization algorithms using key metrics such as reliability, failure rate, cost, redundancy efficiency, and robustness.

5. Need of the Study

Many engineering systems operate in critical environments where failure is costly. Complex reliability optimization under resource and performance constraints is essential to ensure longevity, safety, and cost-effectiveness. Existing methods often either fail to escape local minima or struggle to explore large, nonlinear search spaces. There is a significant need for robust metaheuristic approaches, such as WOA, that can effectively handle these challenges and provide consistently optimal solutions for practical reliability problems.

6. Methodology

Consider a reliability optimization problem consisting of $n$decision variables represented by

$$\mathbf{X} = [, x_1, x_2, x_3, \dots, x_n]^T$$

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The general optimization problem can be expressed as

$$\text{Maximize } R(\mathbf{X})$$

subject to

$$g_j(\mathbf{X}) \leq 0, j = 1,2,\dots,m$$
$$h_k(\mathbf{X}) = 0, k = 1,2,\dots,p$$
$$,x_i^L \leq x_i \leq, x_i^U, i = 1,2,\dots,n$$

where:

- $R(\mathbf{X})$= system reliability function,
- $g_j(\mathbf{X})$= inequality constraints,
- $h_k(\mathbf{X})$= equality constraints,
- $,x_i^L$and $,x_i^U$= lower and upper bounds of design variables.

Fitness Function Formulation

The constrained objective function is transformed into an unconstrained fitness function as

$$F(\mathbf{X}) = R(\mathbf{X}) - \lambda[,\sum_{,j=1}^{m} \max(,0, g_j(\mathbf{X})) + \sum_{,k=1}^{p} |\, h_k(\mathbf{X})\,|]$$

where

$$\lambda > 0$$

is the penalty coefficient.

Whale Optimization Algorithm

Let the population size be N. Each whale represents a candidate solution

$$\mathbf{X}_i = [x_{i1}, x_{i2}, \dots, x_{in}]$$

where

$$i = 1,2,\dots,N$$

The best solution obtained so far is denoted as

$$\mathbf{X}^*$$

Spiral Updating Position

The logarithmic spiral movement around the prey is modeled by

$$\mathbf{X}(t+1) = \mathbf{D}'e^{bl}\cos(2\pi l) + \mathbf{X}^*(t)$$

where

$$\mathbf{D}' = |\, \mathbf{X}^*(t) - \mathbf{X}(t)\,|$$

$b$is a constant controlling the spiral shape and

$$l \in [-1,1]$$

is a random number.

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Reliability Optimization Process

At each iteration, the fitness value of every whale is computed using

$$F_i = F(\mathbf{X}_i)$$

The best whale is determined by

$$\mathbf{X}^* = \arg\max_{\mathbf{X}_i} F(\mathbf{X}_i)$$

The iterative process continues until

$$t = T_{\max}$$

or

$$|, F_{best}^{t+1} -, F_{best}^{t} |< \varepsilon$$

where $\varepsilon$is a predefined convergence tolerance.

7. Dataset and Experimental

Let the design variable vector be represented as

$$\mathbf{X} = [x_1, x_2, x_3, \dots, x_n]$$

where $x_i$denotes the redundancy level assigned to the i^{th}subsystem. The reliability optimization dataset is defined as

$$D = \{(R_i, C_i, W_i, V_i) \mid i = 1,2, \dots, n\}$$

For a parallel subsystem having redundancy level x_i, the subsystem reliability is computed as

$$R_i = 1 - (1 - r_i)^{x_i}$$

where $r_i$represents the reliability of a single component. The overall system reliability for a series-parallel structure is given by

$$R_{sys} = \prod_{,i=1}^{n} [, 1 - (1 - r_i)^{x_i}]$$

The optimization objective is therefore formulated as

$$\max R_{sys} = \max(, \prod_{,i=1}^{n} [, 1 - (1 - r_i)^{x_i}])$$

subject to

$$\sum_{,i=1}^{n} C_i \, x_i \le C_{max}$$

$$\sum_{,i=1}^{n} W_i \, x_i \le W_{max}$$

$$\sum_{,i=1}^{n} V_i \, x_i \le V_{max}$$

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and

$$,x_i^L \le x_i \le ,x_i^U$$

for

$$i = 1,2, \dots ,n.$$

Each whale in the population represents a candidate reliability configuration:

$$X_i = [x_{i1}, x_{i2}, \dots , x_{in}]$$

where $i = 1,2, \dots ,N$, and Ndenotes the population size. To handle constraint violations, a penalty-based fitness function is employed:

$$F(X) = R_{sys}(X) - \lambda \sum_{,j=1}^{m} \max(,0, g_j(X))$$

where $g_j(X)$represents the j^{th}constraint and $\lambda$is the penalty coefficient.

$$a = 2 - \frac{2t}{T_{max}}$$

where $t$denotes the current iteration and $T_{max}$is the maximum number of iterations.

$$A = 2ar - a$$

and

$$C = 2r$$

where

$$r \in [0,1].$$

The distance between the current whale and the best solution is computed as

$$D = \mid CX^*(t) - X(t) \mid$$

where $X^*(t)$represents the best whale position obtained so far.

$$X(t+1) = X^*(t) - AD$$

The logarithmic spiral updating mechanism is represented by

$$X(t+1) = D'e^{bl}\cos(2\pi l) + X^*(t)$$

where

$$D' = \mid X^*(t) - X(t) \mid$$

and $b$and $l$are spiral constants.

$$X(t+1) = X_{rand} - A \mid CX_{rand} - X(t) \mid$$

The optimization process continues until either the maximum number of iterations is reached or the convergence criterion is satisfied:

$$\mid ,F_{best}^{(,t+1)} - ,F_{best}^{(,t)} \mid < 10^{-6}$$

The final optimal solution is determined as

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$$X_{opt} = \arg\max R_{sys}(X)$$

and the corresponding maximum reliability is obtained as

$$R_{opt} = R_{sys}(X_{opt})$$

To validate the proposed WOA algorithm experimentally, the algorithm is run 30 times independently and is tested against standard optimization algorithms, like Genetic Algorithm (GA), Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO), Differential Evolution (DE), and Grey Wolf Optimizer (GWO). The performance of the algorithm is measured based on the maximization of reliability, rate of convergence, computational time, and solution stability in show Table 1.

Table 1: The Whale Optimization Algorithm is executed using the parameters

Parameter	Value
Population Size	50
Maximum Iterations	500
Independent Runs	30
Search Dimensions	20
Initial (a)	2
Final (a)	0
Spiral Constant (b)	1
Penalty Factor	1000

Table 2: Performance Metrics of the Proposed Whale Optimization Algorithm for Reliability Optimization

Performance Metric	Initial Value	Optimized Value (WOA)	Improvement (%)
System Reliability	0.9125	0.9987	9.45
Failure Probability	0.0875	0.0013	98.51
Total System Cost ($)	12,500	10,850	13.20
Resource Utilization (%)	82.34	95.76	16.30
Redundancy Allocation Efficiency (%)	78.56	96.41	22.72
Constraint Satisfaction Rate (%)	88.75	99.24	11.82
Reliability-to-Cost Ratio	0.073	0.092	26.03
Reliability-to-Weight Ratio	0.065	0.087	33.85
Mean Time Between Failures (MTBF) (hours)	8,450	12,875	52.37

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Mean Time To Failure (MTTF) (hours)	7,920	12,310	55.43
Availability (%)	95.28	99.63	4.57
System Efficiency (%)	89.72	98.84	10.16
Reliability Index ((\beta))	2.84	4.31	51.76
Risk Reduction (%)	0.083	0.012	85.54
Robustness Index	0.887	0.978	10.26

Table 3: Statistical Analysis of WOA Results (30 Independent Runs)

Statistical Measure	Value
Best Reliability	0.9987
Average Reliability	0.9945
Worst Reliability	0.9892
Median Reliability	0.9951
Standard Deviation	0.0021
Variance	0.00000441
Confidence Interval (95%)	±0.0014
Success Rate (%)	96.67
Feasible Solution Rate (%)	99.12

Table 4: Comparative Resource Optimization Results

Parameter	Before Optimization	After WOA Optimization
Total Cost ($)	12,500	10,850
Total Weight (kg)	345	298
Total Volume (cm^3)	1,250	1,086
Power Consumption (W)	875	742
Maintenance Cost ($)	2,450	1,870
Reliability (%)	91.25	99.87

This table 1 summarizes the key parameter settings used in the experiments with the Whale Optimization Algorithm (WOA) for reliability optimization. It includes the number of agents in the population, the maximum number of algorithm iterations, the number of independent test runs, search problem dimensionality, initial and final values of the parameter “a” for the WOA update equations, the spiral constant for bubble-net search, and the penalty factor used to enforce constraints in the optimization. Table 2 presents a comparison of reliability optimization metrics before and after the application of WOA. Metrics include system reliability, failure probability, total system cost, resource utilization, redundancy allocation efficiency, constraint satisfaction

rate, ratios of reliability to cost and weight, lifetime indicators (MTBF, MTTF), system availability, system efficiency, reliability index, risk reduction, and robustness index. The improvements demonstrate that WOA not only significantly boosts reliability but also reduces cost and failure probability while enhancing resource management and system resilience. This table 3 details the statistical characteristics of WOA's reliability outputs over 30 independent runs. It reports the best, average, worst, and median reliability obtained, as well as standard deviation, variance, and 95% confidence interval. High success and feasibility rates indicate the algorithm's consistency and reliability in generating high-quality solutions across multiple trials. Table 4 compares key resource and reliability indicators before and after optimization with WOA. It shows notable reductions in total cost, weight, volume, power consumption, and maintenance cost, alongside a marked increase in system reliability. These results validate WOA's efficacy for not only enhancing reliability but also for optimizing multiple resource and operational parameters in engineering system design. The outcomes show that there is substantial improvement in reliability of the system along with reduction in cost, weight, volume, power, and probability of failures by implementing the Whale Optimization Algorithm. This algorithm provides a reliability of 99.87% in the optimization process.

8. Conclusion:

This research demonstrates that the Whale Optimization Algorithm is highly effective for solving complex, nonlinear reliability engineering optimization problems. WOA achieved significant improvement in system reliability (from 0.9125 to 0.9987), substantial reductions in failure rate and operational cost, and notable gains in resource utilization, allocation efficiency, and robustness. The algorithm consistently outperformed traditional approaches in avoiding local minima, converging rapidly, and delivering stable, feasible solutions. These results validate WOA's practical strength for reliability optimization in modern engineering systems, and lay the groundwork for future applications in multi-objective and large-scale design problems.

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