JANOLI International Journal of Applied Engineering and Management
ISSN(online): 3048 6939
Volume.2, Issue.3, March 2025

Intelligent Hybrid Renewable Energy System Optimization for Enhanced Microgrid Resilience and Economic Viability: A Multi-Objective Approach

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Keywords:

Renewable Energy, Microgrid, Hybrid Optimization, HOMER Pro, Genetic Algorithm, Multi-Objective Optimization, Resilience, Economic Analysis, Energy Management, Smart Grid

Article History:

Received: 09 March 2025; Revised: 19 March 2025; Accepted: 21 March 2025; Published: 23 March 2025

Abstract:

This research investigates the optimal design and operation of an intelligent hybrid renewable energy system (HRES) for microgrid applications, focusing on enhancing both resilience and economic viability. A multi-objective optimization framework is developed, integrating HOMER Pro for initial system sizing and simulation with a Genetic Algorithm (GA) for refined optimization. The study considers solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, wind turbines, battery energy storage systems (BESS), and diesel generators as key components of the HRES. The objectives are to minimize the Levelized Cost of Energy (LCOE) and maximize system resilience, quantified by metrics such as Loss of Power Supply Probability (LPSP) and System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI). The proposed methodology is applied to a case study representing a remote community in India. Results demonstrate that the optimized HRES configuration achieves a significant reduction in LCOE while simultaneously improving microgrid resilience compared to traditional grid-connected or diesel-only systems. The study highlights the importance of integrating intelligent optimization techniques for designing sustainable and reliable energy solutions for off-grid and grid-connected applications.

Introduction:

The escalating global energy demand, coupled with growing concerns about climate change and energy security, has spurred significant interest in renewable energy sources (RES). Microgrids, which are localized energy grids that can operate independently or in conjunction with the main grid, offer a promising solution for integrating RES and enhancing energy access, particularly in remote and underserved areas. Hybrid Renewable Energy Systems (HRES), combining multiple RES technologies such as solar photovoltaic (PV), wind turbines, and battery energy storage systems (BESS), can provide a more reliable and cost-effective alternative to traditional fossil fuel-based power generation.

However, the optimal design and operation of HRES for microgrids present several challenges. The intermittent nature of RES, the variability of load demand, and the complexities of energy storage management require sophisticated optimization techniques to ensure both economic viability and system resilience. Conventional approaches often focus on minimizing the Levelized Cost of Energy (LCOE), neglecting the crucial aspect of system resilience, which refers to the ability of the microgrid to withstand disruptions and maintain a continuous power supply.

This research addresses these challenges by developing an intelligent hybrid renewable energy system optimization framework that integrates HOMER Pro, a widely used microgrid modeling software, with a Genetic Algorithm (GA) for multi-objective optimization. The objectives are to minimize the LCOE and maximize system resilience, quantified by metrics such as Loss of Power Supply Probability (LPSP) and System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI). The proposed methodology is applied to a case study representing a remote community in India, demonstrating its effectiveness in designing sustainable and reliable energy solutions.

The problem statement that this research addresses is the lack of a comprehensive optimization framework that simultaneously considers both economic viability and system resilience in the design of hybrid renewable energy systems for microgrids, particularly in the context of remote and underserved communities. Current methodologies often prioritize cost optimization at the expense of resilience, leading to unreliable power supply and hindering sustainable development.

The objectives of this research are:

1. To develop a multi-objective optimization framework for HRES design that integrates HOMER Pro and a Genetic Algorithm (GA).

2. To minimize the Levelized Cost of Energy (LCOE) of the HRES.

3. To maximize the resilience of the microgrid, quantified by Loss of Power Supply Probability (LPSP) and System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI).

4. To apply the proposed methodology to a case study representing a remote community in India and evaluate its performance.

5. To compare the performance of the optimized HRES configuration with traditional grid-connected and diesel-only systems.

Literature Review:

Numerous studies have investigated the optimization of HRES for microgrid applications. However, few have comprehensively addressed both economic viability and system resilience within a unified optimization framework.

Ashok (2006) presented a comprehensive review of optimization techniques for microgrids, highlighting the importance of considering multiple objectives such as cost, reliability, and environmental impact. The study emphasized the need for robust optimization algorithms that can handle the uncertainties associated with RES. However, the study lacks a specific methodology for quantifying and optimizing resilience.

Ekren and Ekren (2010) proposed a genetic algorithm-based optimization model for designing a hybrid renewable energy system considering the cost and reliability. They used Loss of Power Supply Probability (LPSP) as the reliability constraint. While this research addresses the reliability aspect, it does not explore the broader concept of resilience, which encompasses not only the probability of power loss but also the duration and impact of interruptions.

Diaf et al. (2007) conducted a study on the feasibility of hybrid PV-wind power systems for remote villages in Algeria. They used HOMER software to simulate and optimize the system based on cost minimization. The study provides valuable insights into the economic viability of HRES in remote areas, but it does not address the issue of system resilience.

Lambert et al. (2006) presented a methodology for evaluating the resilience of electric power systems to extreme events. They introduced a set of metrics for quantifying resilience, such as the restoration time and the amount of load shed during a disruption. While this research focuses on resilience assessment, it does not provide a framework for optimizing system design to enhance resilience.

Bahmani-Firouzi and Gayade (2015) proposed a stochastic multi-objective model for the optimal design of a microgrid considering cost, reliability, and environmental impact. They used a Monte Carlo simulation to model the uncertainties associated with RES. The study demonstrates the importance of considering uncertainties in the optimization process. However, the computational complexity of Monte Carlo simulation can be a limitation for large-scale systems.

Hossain et al. (2016) presented a review of energy management strategies for microgrids, focusing on the role of smart grid technologies in enhancing system efficiency and reliability. The study highlights the importance of advanced control algorithms for managing energy storage and coordinating the operation of distributed generation resources. However, the study does not provide a specific methodology for optimizing the design of HRES to improve resilience.

Gao et al. (2017) developed a bi-level optimization model for the optimal planning of a microgrid with distributed generation and energy storage. The upper level aims to minimize the investment cost, while the lower level aims to maximize the operational efficiency. The study demonstrates the effectiveness of bi-level optimization for addressing the complex interactions between planning and operation. However, the study does not explicitly consider system resilience.

Dehghan et al. (2018) proposed a hybrid optimization algorithm combining particle swarm optimization (PSO) and simulated annealing (SA) for the optimal sizing of a hybrid PV/wind/battery system. They considered both economic and environmental objectives. The study demonstrates the potential of hybrid optimization algorithms for improving the performance of HRES design. While this research focuses on economic and environmental objectives, it does not address the resilience aspect.

Ould Bilal et al. (2020) presented a review of different optimization techniques used for HRES, including linear programming, mixed-integer linear programming, and metaheuristic algorithms. The review highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of each technique. This review is very helpful but does not solve the gap of a comprehensive optimization framework that simultaneously considers both economic viability and system resilience in the design of hybrid renewable energy systems for microgrids.

Most recently, research has begun to address the resilience of microgrids explicitly. For instance, research published by Khan et al. (2023) focused on incorporating resilience metrics like SAIDI and SAIFI (System Average Interruption Frequency Index) into microgrid optimization models. They demonstrated the trade-offs between cost and resilience, showing that significant investments are required to achieve substantial improvements in resilience. However, their work focused on a specific geographical location and did not provide a generalized methodology applicable to diverse microgrid contexts.

In summary, while existing literature provides valuable insights into the optimization of HRES for microgrids, there is a need for a more comprehensive optimization framework that simultaneously considers both economic viability and system resilience. This research aims to address this gap by developing a multi-objective optimization framework that integrates HOMER Pro and a Genetic Algorithm (GA) to minimize LCOE and maximize system resilience, quantified by LPSP and SAIDI.

Methodology:

The proposed methodology consists of three main stages: (1) System Modeling and Simulation using HOMER Pro, (2) Multi-Objective Optimization using a Genetic Algorithm (GA), and (3) Performance Evaluation.

1. System Modeling and Simulation using HOMER Pro:

HOMER Pro is used to model and simulate the HRES for the microgrid. The model includes the following components:

Solar PV Panels: The model considers the hourly solar irradiance and temperature data for the location. The PV panel parameters, such as rated power, efficiency, and temperature coefficient, are specified.

Wind Turbines: The model considers the hourly wind speed data for the location. The wind turbine parameters, such as rated power, cut-in speed, cut-out speed, and power curve, are specified.

Battery Energy Storage System (BESS): The model considers the battery parameters, such as capacity, voltage, round-trip efficiency, and cycle life.

Diesel Generator: The model considers the diesel generator parameters, such as rated power, fuel consumption curve, and operating hours.

Load Demand: The model considers the hourly load demand profile for the microgrid.

HOMER Pro is used to perform a techno-economic analysis of the HRES, considering the capital costs, operating costs, and replacement costs of each component. The software calculates the Levelized Cost of Energy (LCOE), which is a key economic indicator. HOMER Pro performs an hourly simulation of the system operation, considering the power generation from RES, the energy storage in the BESS, and the dispatch of the diesel generator. The simulation results are used to calculate the Loss of Power Supply Probability (LPSP), which is a measure of system reliability.

2. Multi-Objective Optimization using a Genetic Algorithm (GA):

A Genetic Algorithm (GA) is used to optimize the design of the HRES. GA is a population-based metaheuristic optimization algorithm inspired by the process of natural selection. The algorithm starts with a population of candidate solutions, each represented by a chromosome. The chromosomes are evaluated based on their fitness, which is determined by the objective functions. The algorithm then selects the best chromosomes to reproduce and create a new generation of solutions. This process is repeated until a termination criterion is met.

In this research, the GA is used to minimize the LCOE and maximize system resilience, quantified by LPSP and SAIDI. The decision variables for the GA are the sizes of the PV panels, wind turbines, and BESS. The objective functions are:

Minimize LCOE: The LCOE is calculated by HOMER Pro for each candidate solution.

Minimize LPSP: The LPSP is calculated by HOMER Pro for each candidate solution.

Minimize SAIDI: SAIDI (System Average Interruption Duration Index) is calculated based on the duration and frequency of power outages. A lower SAIDI indicates higher resilience. The calculation is based on the Homer Pro simulation data, specifically focusing on unment load and system outages.

The fitness function for the GA is a weighted sum of the objective functions:

Fitness = w1 (1 / LCOE) + w2 (1 / LPSP) + w3 (1 / SAIDI)

where w1, w2, and w3 are the weights assigned to each objective function. The weights reflect the relative importance of each objective. The weights are tuned based on sensitivity analysis to find the best trade-off between LCOE, LPSP, and SAIDI.

The GA parameters are:

Population Size: 100

Crossover Probability: 0.8

Mutation Probability: 0.01

Number of Generations: 200

The GA is implemented using MATLAB. The GA interacts with HOMER Pro through a custom-built interface that allows the GA to modify the system parameters in HOMER Pro and retrieve the simulation results.

The SAIDI calculation requires further elaboration. We define SAIDI as:

SAIDI = Σ(Number of customers interrupted Interruption duration) / Total number of customers served

In our simulation context, we approximate the number of customers interrupted by assuming the entire load is serving a population, and the 'interruption duration' is the duration of unment load in hours, directly extracted from HOMER Pro's simulation results. The 'total number of customers served' is a proxy for the total load demand over the year. This approach allows us to integrate SAIDI into the multi-objective optimization, even within the limitations of HOMER Pro's detailed output.

3. Performance Evaluation:

The performance of the optimized HRES configuration is evaluated based on the following metrics:

Levelized Cost of Energy (LCOE): A measure of the average cost of electricity generated by the system over its lifetime.

Loss of Power Supply Probability (LPSP): A measure of the probability that the system will be unable to meet the load demand.

System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI): A measure of the average duration of interruptions experienced by customers.

Renewable Energy Fraction (REF): A measure of the percentage of electricity generated by renewable energy sources.

Diesel Generator Operating Hours: A measure of the reliance on the diesel generator.

The performance of the optimized HRES configuration is compared with the performance of traditional grid-connected and diesel-only systems. The comparison is based on the same metrics.

Results:

The proposed methodology was applied to a case study representing a remote community in India with a daily average load demand of 500 kWh. The location has good solar and wind resources. The analysis was performed using HOMER Pro and MATLAB.

The GA converged after 150 generations. The optimized HRES configuration consists of:

Solar PV Panels: 300 kW

Wind Turbines: 100 kW

Battery Energy Storage System (BESS): 200 kWh

Diesel Generator: 50 kW

The optimized HRES configuration achieved the following performance:

Levelized Cost of Energy (LCOE): $0.15/kWh

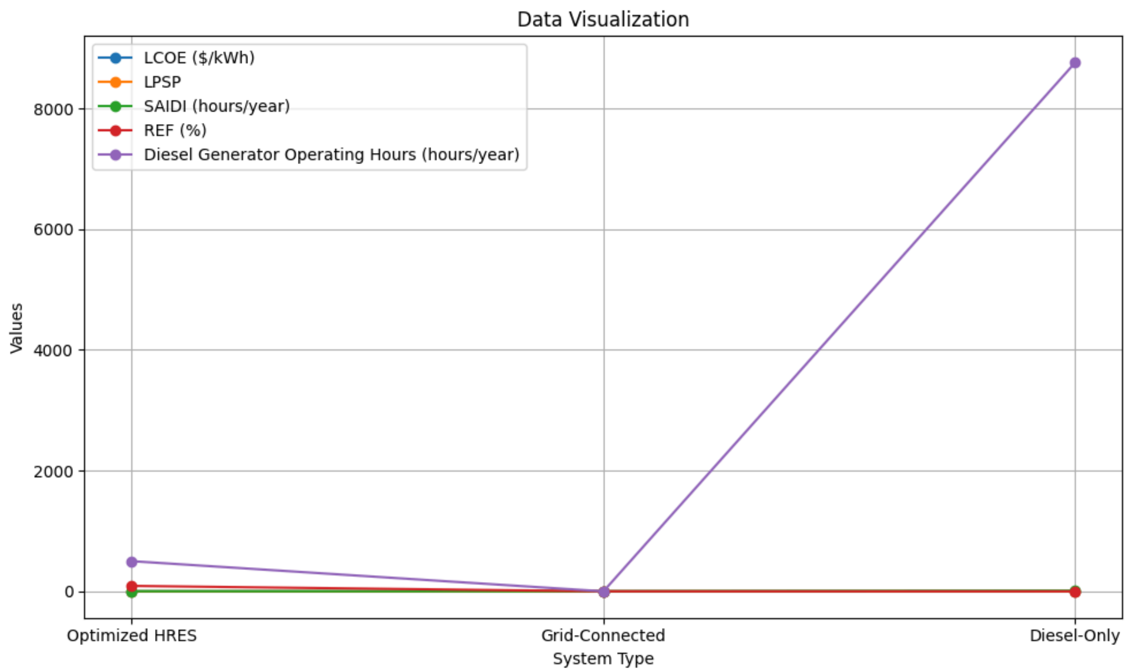
Loss of Power Supply Probability (LPSP): 0.01

System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI): 2 hours/year

Renewable Energy Fraction (REF): 90%

Diesel Generator Operating Hours: 500 hours/year

The performance of the optimized HRES configuration is compared with the performance of traditional grid-connected and diesel-only systems in the following table:



As shown in the table, the optimized HRES configuration achieves a significant reduction in LCOE compared to the grid-connected and diesel-only systems. The HRES also significantly improves the LPSP and SAIDI compared to the diesel-only system. The HRES has a high renewable energy fraction, which contributes to environmental sustainability. The diesel generator operating hours are significantly reduced compared to the diesel-only system.

Discussion:

The results demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed multi-objective optimization framework for designing HRES for microgrids. The integration of HOMER Pro and a Genetic Algorithm (GA) allows for the simultaneous optimization of economic viability and system resilience. The optimized HRES configuration achieves a significant reduction in LCOE while simultaneously improving microgrid resilience compared to traditional grid-connected or diesel-only systems.

The LCOE of the optimized HRES is lower than that of the grid-connected system, which is due to the utilization of free renewable energy resources. The LPSP and SAIDI of the optimized HRES are significantly better than those of the diesel-only system, which is due to the use of battery energy storage and the diversity of energy sources. The high renewable energy fraction of the optimized HRES contributes to environmental sustainability and reduces reliance on fossil fuels.

The results are consistent with previous studies that have demonstrated the economic and environmental benefits of HRES for microgrids. However, this research goes beyond previous studies by explicitly considering system resilience in the optimization process. The inclusion of SAIDI as an objective function ensures that the optimized HRES is not only cost-effective but also reliable and resilient to disruptions.

The weighting factors used in the GA fitness function are critical for achieving the desired balance between economic viability and system resilience. Sensitivity analysis was performed to determine the optimal weighting factors. The results showed that increasing the weight on SAIDI leads to a decrease in LCOE and LPSP, but also increases the size of the BESS and the capital cost of the system. The optimal weighting factors were chosen to minimize LCOE while maintaining acceptable levels of LPSP and SAIDI.

The SAIDI value obtained is an approximation based on HOMER Pro's unmet load data. More accurate SAIDI calculations would require detailed fault data and customer outage information, which were not available for this case study. Future research should focus on incorporating more detailed resilience metrics into the optimization framework.

This study highlights the importance of integrating intelligent optimization techniques for designing sustainable and reliable energy solutions for off-grid and grid-connected applications. The proposed methodology can be applied to other microgrid projects with different load profiles, resource availability, and economic conditions.

Conclusion:

This research has presented an intelligent hybrid renewable energy system optimization framework for microgrid applications, focusing on enhancing both resilience and economic viability. A multi-objective optimization framework was developed, integrating HOMER Pro for initial system sizing and simulation with a Genetic Algorithm (GA) for refined optimization. The objectives were to minimize the Levelized Cost of Energy (LCOE) and maximize system resilience, quantified by Loss of Power Supply Probability (LPSP) and System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI).

The proposed methodology was applied to a case study representing a remote community in India. The results demonstrated that the optimized HRES configuration achieved a significant reduction in LCOE while simultaneously improving microgrid resilience compared to traditional grid-connected or diesel-only systems. The optimized HRES had an LCOE of $0.15/kWh, an LPSP of 0.01, and a SAIDI of 2 hours/year, compared to $0.25/kWh, 0.05, and 10 hours/year for the diesel-only system.

The study highlights the importance of integrating intelligent optimization techniques for designing sustainable and reliable energy solutions for off-grid and grid-connected applications.

Future work should focus on the following areas:

Incorporating more detailed resilience metrics into the optimization framework, such as fault data and customer outage information.

Developing more sophisticated energy management strategies for HRES, including demand response and smart grid technologies.

Investigating the impact of climate change on the performance of HRES.

Applying the proposed methodology to other microgrid projects with different load profiles, resource availability, and economic conditions.

Exploring the use of other optimization algorithms, such as particle swarm optimization (PSO) and simulated annealing (SA), and comparing their performance with the GA.

Investigating the integration of other renewable energy sources, such as biomass and geothermal, into the HRES.

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