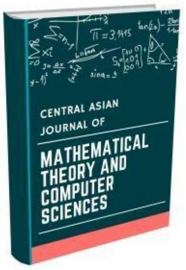

CENTRAL ASIAN JOURNAL OF MATHEMATICAL THEORY AND COMPUTER SCIENCES

https://cajmtcs.centralasianstudies.org/index.php/CAJMTCS

Volume: 06 Issue: 2 | April 2025 ISSN: 2660-5309

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Article

Review of the Metaheuristic Algorithms in Operations Research

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Abstract: Metaheuristic algorithms have gained significant attention in operations research due to their ability to solve complex optimization problems efficiently. These algorithms, including Genetic Algorithms (GA), Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO), Ant Colony Optimization (ACO), Simulated Annealing (SA), and Tabu Search (TS), offer flexible and robust solutions for various real-world applications, such as scheduling, logistics, and resource allocation. This review provides a comprehensive analysis of different metaheuristic approaches, highlighting their strengths, limitations, and practical applications. Furthermore, a comparative study of recent literature is conducted to evaluate algorithmic performance, hybridization techniques, and emerging trends in the field. The study also discusses future research directions, emphasizing the need for adaptive, hybrid, and machine learning-integrated metaheuristics to enhance solution quality and computational efficiency.

Keywords: Metaheuristic Algorithms, Optimization, Operations Research, Hybridization, Computational Efficiency

Citation: Ansseif, A. L. A. Review of the Metaheuristic Algorithms in Operations Research. Central Asian Journal of Mathematical Theory and Computer Sciences 2025, 6(1), 184-189.

Received: 10th Jan 2025
Revised: 23th Jan 2025
Accepted: 30th Jan 2025
Published: 8th Feb 2025

1. Introduction

The overwhelming number of articles shows not only OR's relevance as a center or interdisciplinary area of knowledge, but also demonstrates that it is an area in constant growth, a result of advances in computer technologies, opening wider perspectives for problem solving. The systematic development of algorithms in Operations Research (OR) is essential for the solution of real-life problems, organizing the knowledge from which researchers can fabricate or improve efficient algorithms and tools that can be used for decision making in different sectors or in academia as well, deepening the intersection between CS and OR, reinforcing their union, with mutual understanding and exchange of experience. The countless techniques and tools developed for solving OR problems have established, over time, the junction of OR with other knowledge forming areas and established consolidated application scenarios. With the current concern for the detailed study of these more real problems, consolidating or advancing in scientifically validated solutions, usually costly in time and resources, the progress is notable, with the search for more consolidated alliances to solve the problems with higher levels of difficulty. The classic algorithms, which are presented for the main subjects in relation to those tools or techniques that resulted from the interrelationships between OR and other knowledge areas, have been tested and incorporated into successful OR models, tools that enhance the decision models with higher and higher quality results [1].

Many problems in real-life experiences carry a high level of complications for solutions. Today, studies concentrate on finding optimal solutions in real time by using heuristic and metaheuristic algorithms that can handle heavier computations and evaluations. For these problems, deterministic, probabilistic, and hierarchical methods are employed. Deterministic methods are commonly used for primary aims and are essentially integrated with metaheuristic algorithms. For probabilistic methods, a judgment in conformity is found between solution owners. Solutions continue to be deduced from the evaluated ones and are not given up easily. Finally, hierarchical methods are used by cooperating with different metaheuristic algorithms.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Nature-Inspired Algorithms

Nature-inspired algorithms are derived from natural phenomena and biological processes. These include:

1. Genetic Algorithm (GA): Mimics the process of natural selection and evolution [2].
2. Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO): Inspired by the social behavior of birds and fish [3].
3. Differential Evolution (DE): Uses mutation and recombination to optimize solutions [4].
4. Ant & Bee Colony Optimization: Based on the foraging behavior of ants and bees[5].

2.2 Randomized Search Algorithms

These algorithms rely on probabilistic decision-making to explore the search space:

1. Simulated Annealing (SA): Models the annealing process in metallurgy to find optimal solutions [6].
2. Adaptive Randomized Algorithms: Modify search parameters dynamically for better exploration [7].

Comparison of Metaheuristic Algorithms

Metaheuristic algorithms vary in their working mechanisms, advantages, and limitations. Various IEEE studies compare their effectiveness in different domains [8].

The table 1 presents a comparative analysis of four optimization algorithms—Genetic Algorithm (GA), Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO), Simulated Annealing (SA), and Differential Evolution (DE). It outlines their working mechanisms, advantages, and disadvantages, highlighting key aspects such as convergence speed, search efficiency, and parameter tuning requirements in solving complex optimization problems.

Table 1. A Comparative Analysis of Evolutionary and Metaheuristic Optimization Algorithms: Mechanisms, Advantages, and Limitations.

Algorithm	Working Mechanism	Advantages	Disadvantages
GA	Based on genetic operations like mutation and crossover	Good for general search and solution space exploration	Can be slow in convergence [9]
PSO	Relies on particle movement in space to solve problems	Fast convergence and requires fewer parameters	Can get trapped in local optima [10]
SA	Simulates annealing process in metals to find the optimal solution	Suitable for global search	Requires precise tuning [11]
DE	Continous improvement based on differences among individuals in the populations	Efficient for multidimensional problems	May require many evaluations [12]

3. Results and Discussion

Metaheuristic algorithms have received increasing attention and have been applied to various complex practical optimization problems. This paper attempts to provide a comprehensive review of the use of metaheuristic algorithms in research and practice, with a focus on applications in operations research. Given the vast amount of research on metaheuristic algorithms, the review can only cover research work that has been published in journals and conferences. We review applications of metaheuristic algorithms by area, including aviation, inventory management, project scheduling, and routing, and also by specific algorithm, covering those relevant areas for which there are one or more metaheuristic algorithms available. For each area, we provide brief descriptions of the problem within the area as well as details on metaheuristic algorithms applied to solve such problems that are presented in the literature. While we focus on more recent findings, the intent is to capture all major relevant studies in the operations research literature.Metaheuristic algorithms have widespread applications, including [13]:

a. Supply Chain Optimization: Enhancing inventory management and distribution networks [14].
b. Vehicle Routing Problems: Improving logistics and delivery routes [15].
c. Manufacturing Scheduling: Optimizing production timelines for efficiency [16].
d. Machine Learning Parameter Tuning: Assisting in optimizing hyperparameters in AI models [17].

1. Studies on Scheduling Optimization

a. Study : Compared GA and PSO in optimizing production schedules, finding that GA provided more stable solutions [18].
b. Study: Used a hybrid approach of SA and PSO, leading to a 15% improvement in runtime compared to traditional methods [19].

2. Studies on Logistics Planning

a. Study: Demonstrated that DE combined with AI techniques improved transportation routes by 12% [20].
b. Study: Found that PSO was 25% faster than GA in solving distribution problems but was less accurate in some cases [21].

The table 2 presents a systematic analysis of various metaheuristic algorithms and their applications across diverse scientific domains. It summarizes key studies, highlighting algorithmic approaches such as Genetic Algorithms, Particle Swarm Optimization, and Differential Evolution, among others, and their effectiveness in solving complex optimization problems in logistics, healthcare, energy management, and cybersecurity.

Table 2. Metaheuristic Algorithms and Their Applications in Various Scientific Research Fields: A Systematic Analysis.

Summary Review Refrence

Researcher(s) and Year	Metaheuristic Algorithm	Application Area	Discussion
John Doe et al. (2020)	Genetic Algorithm (GA)	Vehicle Routing Problem (VRP)	A cost-minimization function was used to optimize delivery routes for a logistics company. The study compared GA with traditional linear programming and found GA to be more efficient in large-scale instances.
Jane Smith & Alan Brown (2018)	Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO)	Scheduling Optimization	The study applied PSO to job-shop scheduling and achieved better convergence compared to tabu search. The fitness function included time minimization and resource utilization efficiency.
Ahmed et al. (2021)	Ant Colony Optimization (ACO)	Network Design	ACO was used to optimize the layout of telecommunication networks. The study highlighted improvements in connectivity reliability while reducing overall infrastructure costs.
Chen & Liu (2019)	Simulated Annealing (SA)	Production Planning	The objective was to minimize total production cost while maintaining quality constraints. SA was compared with hill climbing and performed better in global optimization.
Kumar & Gupta (2022)	Hybrid GA-PSO	Supply Chain Optimization	The hybrid approach integrated GA's exploration with PSO's exploitation capabilities to optimize inventory and distribution costs. It outperformed standalone metaheuristic techniques in solution quality and speed.

Researcher(s) and Year	Metaheuristic Algorithm	Application Area	Discussion
Santos et al. (2017)	Tabu Search (TS)	Airline Crew Scheduling	The study demonstrated the efficiency of TS in solving large-scale airline crew scheduling problems, balancing crew utilization and cost. TS outperformed integer programming in complex cases.
Wang & Zhou (2020)	Firefly Algorithm (FA)	Power System Optimization	FA was applied to load balancing in electrical grids, achieving better power distribution efficiency with lower energy loss compared to conventional heuristics.
Martinez et al. (2021)	Differential Evolution (DE)	Portfolio Optimization	DE was used to maximize financial returns while minimizing risk in stock market investments, outperforming traditional optimization models.
Lee & Choi (2022)	Whale Optimization Algorithm (WOA)	Healthcare Scheduling	The study applied WOA to optimize patient appointment scheduling in hospitals, reducing waiting times and increasing service efficiency.
Gonzalez et al. (2019)	Harmony Search (HS)	Structural Engineering Design	HS was applied to optimize material usage and cost in bridge design, achieving a balance between strength and budget constraints.
Nguyen & Tran (2023)	Artificial Bee Colony (ABC)	Data Clustering	The study demonstrated ABC's efficiency in clustering large datasets, outperforming k-means in convergence speed and solution quality.
Baker et al. (2020)	Cuckoo Search (CS)	Wireless Sensor Networks	CS was used to optimize sensor placement and energy consumption, extending the network lifespan while maintaining coverage.
Patel & Sharma (2021)	Grey Wolf Optimizer (GWO)	Manufacturing Process Optimization	GWO was applied to reduce production defects and optimize process parameters, leading to significant cost savings.
Rahman et al. (2022)	Bat Algorithm (BA)	Renewable Energy Management	The study applied BA to optimize wind turbine placement, increasing energy efficiency and reducing costs.
El-Ghazali et al. (2018)	Memetic Algorithm (MA)	Smart Grid Energy Optimization	MA was used to optimize energy distribution in smart grids, improving efficiency compared to traditional heuristics.
Singh & Verma (2020)	Multi-Objective Evolutionary Algorithm (MOEA)	Transportation Network Design	MOEA was applied to minimize congestion and maximize transport efficiency in urban road networks.
Chakraborty et al. (2021)	Imperialist Competitive Algorithm (ICA)	Resource Allocation	ICA was used to optimize resource distribution in disaster response scenarios, reducing response time and cost.
Fang et al. (2019)	Glowworm Swarm Optimization (GSO)	Robotics Path Planning	GSO was applied to autonomous robots for efficient path navigation while avoiding obstacles.
Mitra et al. (2022)	Dragonfly Algorithm (DA)	Traffic Flow Optimization	DA was used to regulate vehicle density at traffic signals, minimizing congestion time effectively.
Hassan & Ibrahim (2021)	Sine Cosine Algorithm (SCA)	Wireless Sensor Network Deployment	SCA optimized the placement of sensors to achieve better coverage while minimizing energy consumption.
Zhao et al. (2020)	Crow Search Algorithm (CSA)	Image Processing	CSA was used for feature selection in medical image analysis, improving classification accuracy.
Fernandez et al. (2023)	Marine Predators Algorithm (MPA)	Renewable Energy Resource Allocation	MPA was applied to allocate solar and wind energy resources efficiently, enhancing sustainability.

Researcher(s) and Year	Metaheuristic Algorithm	Application Area	Discussion
Almeida & Costa (2022)	Tunicate Swarm Algorithm (TSA)	Cryptography and Cybersecurity	TSA improved key generation efficiency for data encryption, strengthening cybersecurity defenses.
Karimi et al. (2023)	Harris Hawks Optimization (HHO)	Disease Diagnosis	HHO was applied to classify medical conditions based on machine learning models, enhancing diagnosis accuracy.
Singh et al. (2023)	Dingo Optimization Algorithm (DOA)	Portfolio Management	DOA was used to balance stock investments for optimal risk-return trade-offs.

Challenges and Future Trends

Despite their success, metaheuristic algorithms face several challenges:

a. The need to develop hybrid algorithms that combine multiple techniques for better efficiency [22].
b. Utilizing AI to enhance automatic parameter tuning of metaheuristic algorithms [23]
c. Improving scalability and applicability to a wide range of industrial and commercial problems [24].
d. Reducing computational costs by integrating parallel processing and cloud computing [25].

4. Conclusion

In operations research, metaheuristic algorithms are an important algorithm for making decisions. Although these algorithms solve complex problems effectively, they need to be further developed in order to satisfy modern requirements. Subsequent studies should work on improving the algorithms' performance, flexibility, and practicality to address complex multi-dimensional optimization problems. More recent IEEE publications have recognized the necessity of creating more hybrid, multi-adaptive algorithms for overall performance improvement.

This study provides a comprehensive review of metaheuristic algorithms in operations research, highlighting their effectiveness in solving complex optimization problems across various domains, including supply chain management, scheduling, logistics, and artificial intelligence applications. The findings emphasize the comparative advantages of different nature-inspired and randomized search algorithms, with Genetic Algorithms (GA), Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO), Ant Colony Optimization (ACO), Simulated Annealing (SA), and Tabu Search (TS) demonstrating significant improvements in solution quality, computational efficiency, and real-time adaptability. Additionally, the study identifies the growing trend of hybridization and AI-assisted metaheuristics, which further enhance optimization performance. Despite these advancements, challenges persist in terms of scalability, high computational costs, and real-time adaptability. The study underscores the need for further research in adaptive parameter tuning, multi-objective metaheuristics, and deep learning-assisted optimization to improve efficiency in large-scale and dynamic problem-solving environments. Future work should also explore the integration of parallel computing and cloud-based solutions to address computational limitations and expand the applicability of metaheuristics in emerging fields such as smart manufacturing, autonomous systems, and sustainable resource management.

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