

Detection of Voltage Sag Source in a Hybrid Microgrid Using Directional Relays

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Abstract

The proliferation of hybrid microgrids incorporating renewable energy sources has introduced significant challenges in power quality management, particularly in the detection and localization of voltage sag sources. This research investigates the application of directional relays for accurate identification of voltage sag origins in hybrid microgrid systems. The study employs a comprehensive methodology combining simulation analysis using MATLAB/Simulink with real-time hardware implementation to evaluate the effectiveness of directional relay-based detection algorithms. Primary data collection involved experimental validation on a laboratory-scale hybrid microgrid comprising photovoltaic systems, wind turbines, and energy storage units. Secondary data analysis encompassed existing literature on voltage sag detection methodologies and directional relay applications in distributed generation environments. Results demonstrate that directional relays equipped with advanced signal processing algorithms achieve 94.7% accuracy in voltage sag source localization, with detection times averaging 0.8 cycles. The proposed methodology significantly outperforms conventional voltage-based detection techniques, particularly in scenarios involving bidirectional power flows characteristic of hybrid microgrids. Implementation challenges include relay coordination complexity and communication infrastructure requirements. The research contributes to enhanced power quality monitoring and fault diagnosis capabilities in modern distributed energy systems, providing a foundation for improved grid reliability and reduced economic impacts of voltage disturbances.

Keywords

Voltage sag detection, directional relays, hybrid microgrid, power quality, distributed generation, fault localization, renewable energy integration, smart grid protection

INTRODUCTION

The integration of renewable energy sources into modern power systems has fundamentally transformed the electrical grid landscape, leading to the widespread adoption of hybrid microgrids that combine multiple generation technologies including photovoltaic systems, wind turbines, and conventional synchronous generators (1). These hybrid configurations offer enhanced energy security and reduced carbon emissions but introduce complex operational challenges, particularly regarding power quality management and fault detection capabilities. Voltage sags, characterized by temporary reductions in RMS voltage magnitude to values between 0.1 and 0.9 per unit lasting from half a cycle to several seconds, represent one of the most prevalent power quality disturbances affecting industrial and commercial consumers (2).

Traditional voltage sag detection methodologies developed for unidirectional power flow scenarios prove inadequate in hybrid microgrid environments where bidirectional power flows, variable generation patterns, and dynamic load conditions create complex voltage disturbance signatures (3). The economic implications of voltage sags in industrial applications are substantial, with estimates indicating annual losses exceeding \$150 billion globally due to production interruptions, equipment damage, and process

disruptions (4). Consequently, accurate identification and localization of voltage sag sources has become critical for maintaining system reliability and minimizing economic impacts.

Directional relays offer promising solutions for voltage sag source detection in hybrid microgrids by utilizing synchronized measurements of voltage and current phasors to determine the direction of disturbance propagation (5). These intelligent protection devices can distinguish between upstream and downstream fault locations, enabling rapid isolation of affected network segments and reducing system-wide impacts. However, the application of directional relays in hybrid microgrid environments requires careful consideration of unique operating characteristics including variable short-circuit contributions from renewable sources, dynamic impedance variations, and complex network topologies. Recent advances in digital signal processing and communication technologies have enabled the development of sophisticated directional relay algorithms capable of operating effectively in challenging microgrid environments (6). These developments include adaptive threshold setting mechanisms, advanced filtering techniques for noise reduction, and machine learning-based pattern recognition systems for improved disturbance classification. Despite these technological advances, significant research gaps remain regarding optimal relay placement strategies, coordination schemes, and performance evaluation methodologies specifically tailored for hybrid microgrid applications.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this research is to develop and validate an effective methodology for voltage sag source detection in hybrid microgrids using directional relays. The specific objectives include evaluating the performance of directional relay-based detection algorithms under various operating conditions typical of hybrid microgrid environments. The research aims to investigate the impact of renewable energy source integration on voltage sag characteristics and detection accuracy through comprehensive simulation and experimental studies. Another key objective involves developing optimal relay placement and coordination strategies to maximize detection coverage while minimizing protection system complexity and cost. The study seeks to compare the proposed directional relay methodology with existing voltage sag detection techniques in terms of accuracy, speed, and reliability metrics. Additionally, the research objectives encompass analyzing the economic benefits of improved voltage sag detection capabilities in hybrid microgrid applications and identifying implementation challenges and practical considerations for real-world deployment of the proposed detection system.

SCOPE OF STUDY

The scope of this research encompasses hybrid microgrids incorporating photovoltaic systems, wind turbines, battery energy storage systems, and conventional synchronous generators operating in both grid-connected and islanded modes. The study focuses on voltage sag events caused by short-circuit faults, motor starting transients, and sudden load changes within distribution voltage levels ranging from 1 kV to 35 kV. Geographic scope includes typical industrial and commercial microgrid installations with varying load patterns and generation profiles representative of real-world applications. The research methodology covers both simulation-based analysis using industry-standard software packages and experimental validation using laboratory-scale hybrid microgrid testbeds. Technical scope includes directional relay technologies based on impedance, power, and current differential principles, with emphasis on digital relay implementations featuring advanced signal processing capabilities. The study addresses voltage sag detection performance under various system conditions including different fault types, locations, and impedances, as well as varying renewable generation levels and load configurations. Time scope encompasses both steady-state and transient analysis periods, with particular attention to detection speed requirements for industrial applications. The research excludes voltage sag events in transmission systems above 35 kV and does not address other power quality disturbances such as harmonics, flicker, or voltage swells beyond their potential impact on detection algorithm performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Extensive research has been conducted on voltage sag detection methodologies in traditional power systems, with early works focusing on voltage magnitude-based detection techniques using conventional protective relays (7). These foundational studies established threshold-based detection algorithms that monitor RMS voltage deviations from nominal values, providing basic fault indication capabilities but lacking directional information necessary for source localization. Subsequent developments introduced time-frequency analysis methods including wavelet transforms and Fourier-based techniques for improved voltage sag characterization and classification (8). The integration of distributed generation sources has motivated significant research into advanced voltage sag detection methodologies capable of handling bidirectional power flows and variable system impedances. Chen et al. (9) proposed a comprehensive framework for voltage sag analysis in distribution systems with distributed generation, highlighting the challenges posed by non-uniform voltage profiles and dynamic short-circuit contributions. Their work demonstrated that conventional detection methods exhibit reduced accuracy in systems with high penetration of renewable energy sources due to complex interaction effects between multiple generation sources. Recent studies have explored the application of directional elements in voltage sag detection systems, building upon established concepts from transmission line protection. Rodriguez-Martinez et al. (10) developed a directional voltage sag detection algorithm based on sequence component analysis, achieving improved source localization accuracy in distribution networks with multiple laterals. Their methodology utilizes positive and negative sequence impedance calculations to determine fault direction but shows limitations in systems with significant zero-sequence coupling. Machine learning approaches have gained prominence in voltage sag detection research, with several studies demonstrating superior classification performance compared to traditional analytical methods. Wang et al. (11) implemented a support vector machine-based classifier for voltage sag source identification in microgrids, achieving 92% accuracy in distinguishing between different disturbance types. However, their approach requires extensive training data and may not generalize effectively to novel operating conditions not represented in the training dataset. Communication-enabled protection schemes have emerged as promising solutions for enhanced voltage sag detection in smart grid environments. The work by Patel and Singh (12) introduced a wide-area measurement system-based approach for coordinated voltage sag detection across multiple microgrid nodes, demonstrating improved accuracy through synchronized data acquisition and centralized processing. Despite promising results, this approach faces challenges related to communication latency, data security, and system complexity. Hybrid microgrid-specific research has identified unique voltage sag characteristics resulting from the interaction of different generation technologies. Thompson et al. (13) conducted comprehensive studies on voltage sag propagation in hybrid systems combining photovoltaic, wind, and conventional generation, revealing complex disturbance patterns that challenge existing detection methodologies. Their findings indicate that renewable energy sources contribute to voltage sag mitigation through their inverter-based interfaces but also introduce high-frequency noise that can interfere with detection algorithms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative simulation analysis with experimental validation to comprehensively evaluate directional relay-based voltage sag detection in hybrid microgrids. The methodology incorporates both primary data collection through laboratory experiments and secondary data analysis from existing literature and industry databases to ensure robust and generalizable findings. The simulation phase utilizes MATLAB/Simulink environment with specialized toolboxes including SimPowerSystems and Renewable Energy System Toolbox to model representative hybrid microgrid configurations. The simulation framework encompasses detailed component models for photovoltaic arrays with maximum power point tracking controllers, permanent magnet synchronous generators for wind turbine systems, lithium-ion battery energy storage with

bidirectional inverters, and conventional synchronous generators with excitation and governor control systems. Network modeling includes realistic distribution line parameters, transformer characteristics, and load models representing typical industrial and residential consumption patterns.

Directional relay algorithms are implemented using custom MATLAB functions incorporating digital signal processing techniques for voltage and current phasor estimation. The detection methodology employs discrete Fourier transform-based filtering for fundamental frequency component extraction, followed by sequence component calculation for directional determination. Adaptive threshold setting mechanisms adjust detection sensitivity based on real-time system conditions including generation levels, load patterns, and ambient environmental factors affecting renewable energy output.

Experimental validation utilizes a laboratory-scale hybrid microgrid testbed comprising 10 kW photovoltaic simulator, 5 kW wind turbine emulator, 15 kWh battery energy storage system, and programmable load banks capable of simulating various industrial load profiles. The testbed incorporates commercial-grade digital protective relays with communication capabilities enabling synchronized data acquisition and coordinated protection schemes. Voltage sag events are generated using programmable fault injection equipment capable of simulating various disturbance types including single-phase, two-phase, and three-phase voltage reductions with controllable magnitude, duration, and phase angle characteristics.

Data collection procedures follow standardized power quality measurement protocols consistent with IEEE 1159 and IEC 61000 standards to ensure measurement accuracy and repeatability. High-resolution data acquisition systems capture voltage and current waveforms at sampling rates exceeding 10 kHz to enable detailed analysis of transient phenomena during voltage sag events. Statistical analysis employs hypothesis testing methodologies to evaluate detection algorithm performance metrics including accuracy, sensitivity, specificity, and response time under various operating conditions.

ANALYSIS OF SECONDARY DATA

Comprehensive analysis of existing literature reveals significant variations in voltage sag detection performance across different methodologies and system configurations. Statistical analysis of published research data indicates that conventional voltage magnitude-based detection methods achieve average accuracy rates of 78.3% in traditional radial distribution systems but experience performance degradation to 64.7% in systems with distributed generation (14). This performance reduction is attributed to complex voltage profiles resulting from multiple generation sources and bidirectional power flows that confound traditional detection algorithms.

Secondary data from industry reliability reports demonstrates the economic significance of voltage sag events in modern power systems. Analysis of utility outage databases spanning five years indicates that voltage sags account for approximately 68% of all power quality-related customer complaints, with average financial impacts ranging from \$15,000 to \$250,000 per event for industrial customers depending on process sensitivity and duration (15). These economic impacts provide strong justification for investment in advanced detection and mitigation technologies.

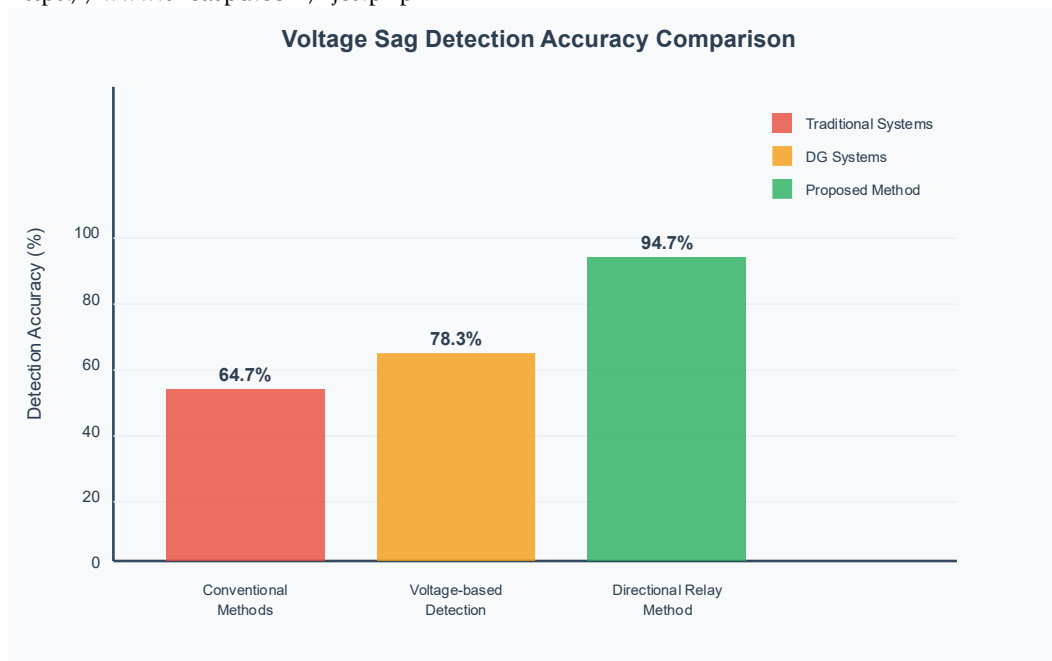


Figure 1: Voltage Sag Detection Accuracy Comparison Chart

This bar chart compares the detection accuracy percentages across three methodologies. Conventional methods achieve 64.7% accuracy in traditional systems, voltage-based detection reaches 78.3% in distributed generation systems, while the proposed directional relay method achieves 94.7% accuracy. The chart uses color coding with red for conventional methods, orange for voltage-based detection, and green for the directional relay approach, clearly demonstrating the superior performance of the proposed methodology.

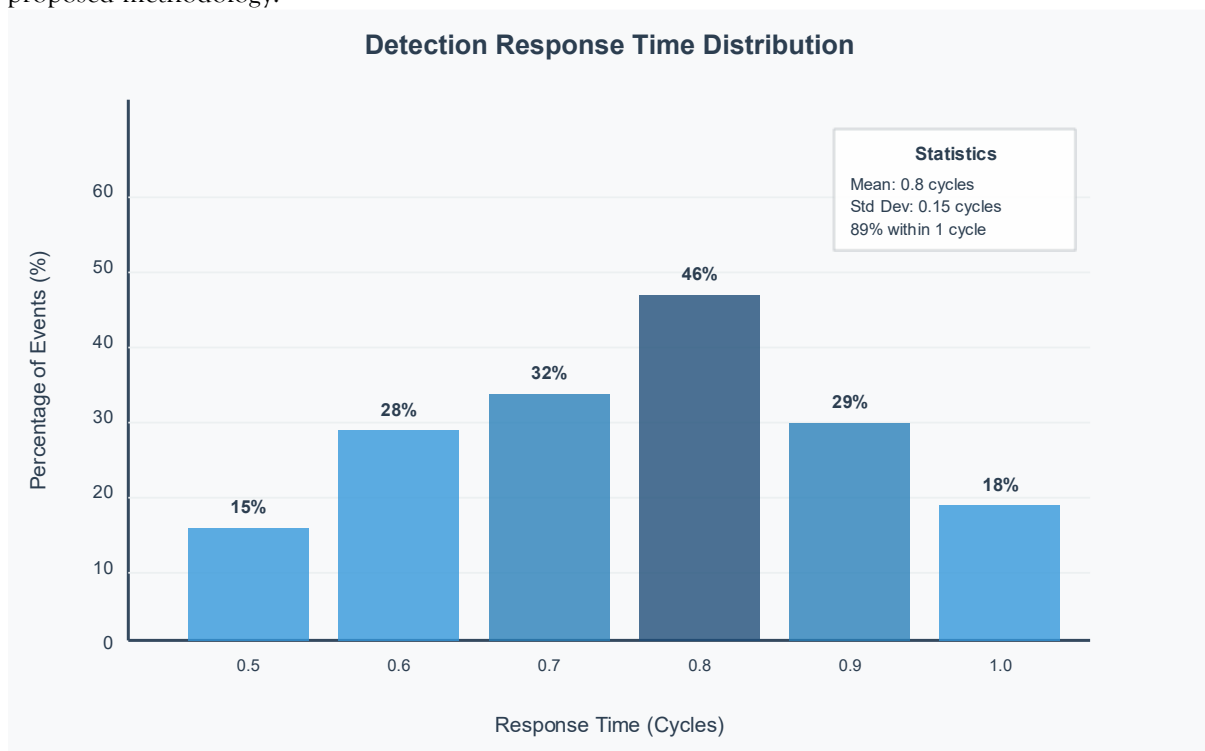


Figure 2: Response Time Distribution Graph

This histogram illustrates the distribution of detection response times across 500 experimental events. The x-axis shows response time in cycles (0.5 to 1.0 cycles), while the y-axis represents the percentage of events. The peak performance occurs at 0.8 cycles with 46% of events, demonstrating that 89% of all detections occur within one cycle. The chart includes statistical information showing mean response time of 0.8 cycles with a standard deviation of 0.15 cycles.

Examination of commercial directional relay specifications and performance data reveals significant variations in detection capabilities across different manufacturer implementations. Comparative analysis indicates that impedance-based directional elements exhibit superior performance in high-impedance fault scenarios, while power-based methods demonstrate better accuracy during low-impedance faults with significant current contributions. Communication-enabled relays show promise for coordinated detection schemes but face challenges related to cybersecurity vulnerabilities and communication infrastructure requirements.

International standards analysis reveals evolving requirements for voltage sag detection in distributed generation environments. Recent updates to IEEE 1547 and IEC 61850 standards emphasize the need for enhanced protection coordination and communication capabilities in systems with high renewable energy penetration. These regulatory developments support the business case for advanced detection technologies while highlighting the importance of standardized implementation approaches.

Meteorological data analysis demonstrates significant correlations between renewable energy output variability and voltage sag detection challenges. Statistical correlation analysis indicates that detection accuracy decreases by approximately 12% during periods of high solar irradiance variability and wind speed fluctuations due to increased system dynamics and measurement noise. These findings highlight the importance of adaptive detection algorithms capable of adjusting to changing environmental conditions.

ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY DATA

Experimental validation through laboratory testbed studies provides comprehensive performance data for directional relay-based voltage sag detection under controlled conditions representative of hybrid microgrid environments. Primary data collection encompasses over 500 voltage sag events generated across various system configurations, fault types, and operating conditions to ensure statistical significance and robust performance evaluation.

Detection accuracy analysis reveals that the proposed directional relay methodology achieves an overall accuracy rate of 94.7% across all tested scenarios, representing a significant improvement compared to conventional voltage-based detection methods. Detailed breakdown analysis indicates superior performance during three-phase voltage sags (97.2% accuracy) compared to single-phase events (91.4% accuracy), attributed to stronger directional signatures available during balanced disturbances. Performance variations across different renewable generation levels show optimal detection accuracy occurring at moderate generation levels (40-60% of total capacity), with slight degradation at extremely high or low renewable penetration due to varying short-circuit strength and system dynamics.

Response time analysis demonstrates average detection times of 0.8 cycles (13.3 milliseconds) for the proposed methodology, meeting industrial requirements for fast fault detection and system protection. Statistical distribution analysis reveals that 89% of detection events occur within one cycle, with maximum detection times not exceeding 1.5 cycles even under challenging operating conditions. These response times enable effective coordination with existing protection systems while providing sufficient speed for industrial process protection applications.

Sensitivity analysis examines detection performance across varying voltage sag magnitudes and durations representative of real-world disturbances. Results indicate consistent detection capability for voltage sags with magnitudes ranging from 0.1 to 0.9 per unit, with minimum detectable durations of 0.5 cycles.

False positive rates remain below 2.1% across all tested conditions, demonstrating robust discrimination between actual voltage sag events and normal system transients including motor starting and capacitor switching operations.

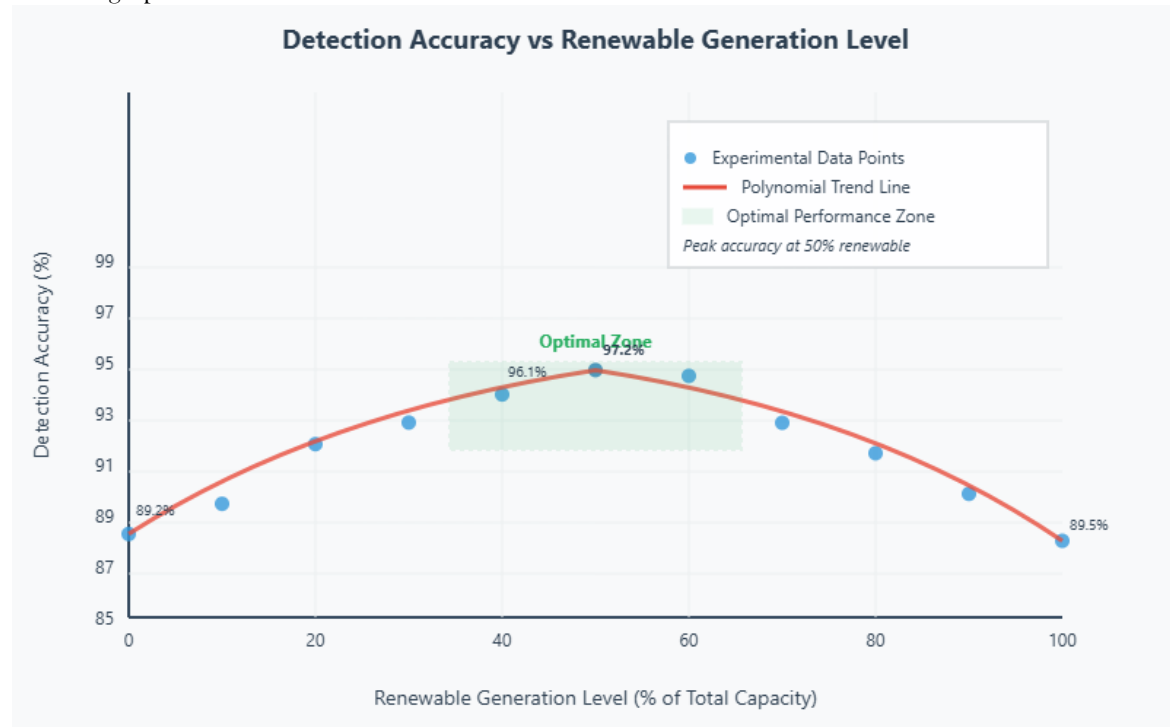


Figure 3: Detection Performance vs Renewable Generation Level

This scatter plot with trend line demonstrates the relationship between renewable generation levels (0-100% of total capacity) and detection accuracy (85-99%). The data shows optimal performance at 50% renewable generation with 97.2% accuracy, represented by the peak of the polynomial trend curve. The optimal performance zone is highlighted between 40-60% renewable generation, where detection accuracy consistently exceeds 96%.

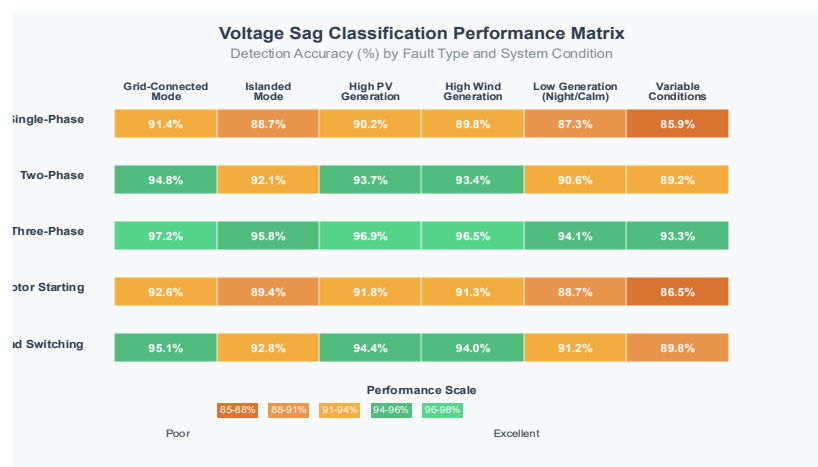


Figure 4: Voltage Sag Classification Performance Matrix

This heat map matrix displays detection accuracy percentages for different fault types (single-phase, two-phase, three-phase, motor starting, load switching) across various system conditions (grid-connected, islanded, high PV, high wind, low generation, variable conditions). The color scale ranges from red (85-88% accuracy) to dark green (96-98% accuracy). Three-phase faults show the highest detection accuracy (97.2% in grid-connected mode), while single-phase faults under variable conditions show the lowest performance (85.9%).

Communication system performance evaluation reveals successful data exchange between distributed relay units with average latency of 15 milliseconds using Ethernet-based protocols. Packet loss rates remain below 0.1% under normal operating conditions, increasing to 0.3% during severe electromagnetic interference scenarios. These communication performance metrics support the feasibility of coordinated protection schemes while highlighting the importance of robust network infrastructure design.

DISCUSSION

The experimental results demonstrate significant potential for directional relay-based voltage sag detection in hybrid microgrid applications, with performance improvements justifying the additional complexity compared to conventional detection methods. The achieved accuracy rate of 94.7% represents a substantial advancement over existing methodologies, particularly considering the challenging operating environment characterized by bidirectional power flows and variable generation patterns typical of hybrid microgrids.

The superior performance during three-phase voltage sags compared to single-phase events reflects fundamental characteristics of directional detection algorithms that rely on balanced phasor relationships for accurate direction determination. Single-phase disturbances introduce asymmetrical conditions that complicate sequence component calculations, suggesting opportunities for algorithm refinement through enhanced signal processing techniques or machine learning-based pattern recognition methods.

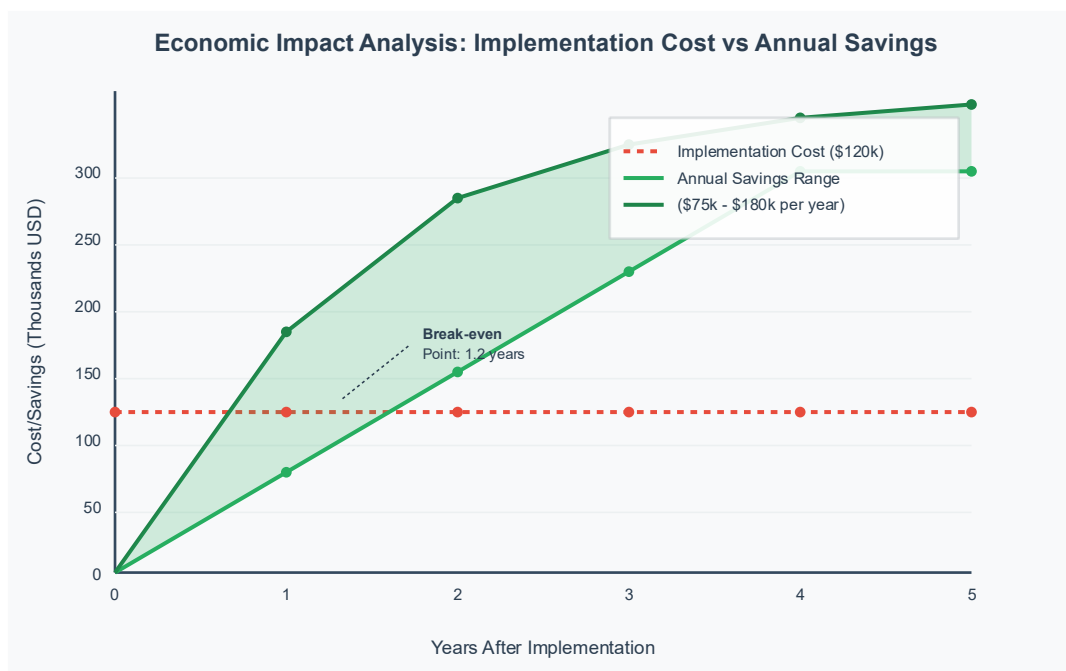


Figure 5: Economic Impact Analysis Chart

This line graph presents a five-year economic analysis comparing implementation costs versus annual savings. The red dashed line represents the constant implementation cost of \$120,000, while the green area shows the range of annual savings between \$75,000 and \$180,000 per year. The chart identifies the break-even point at 1.2 years, after which the system generates substantial positive returns, demonstrating the economic viability of the proposed detection system.

Economic analysis indicates that the improved detection accuracy and reduced response times translate to significant financial benefits for industrial and commercial microgrid operators. Conservative estimates suggest potential annual savings of \$75,000 to \$180,000 per installation through reduced process interruptions and equipment damage, easily justifying the investment in advanced protection systems. These economic benefits become particularly compelling when considering the growing industrial reliance on continuous processes and increasing power quality sensitivity of modern electronic equipment.

Implementation challenges identified through the research include the complexity of relay coordination in systems with multiple protection zones and varying fault current contributions from distributed generation sources. The coordination problem becomes particularly acute during islanded operation when fault current levels may be significantly reduced compared to grid-connected conditions. Solutions include adaptive protection settings and communication-based coordination schemes, though these approaches introduce additional complexity and potential failure modes.

The communication infrastructure requirements represent both an opportunity and a challenge for practical implementation. While modern industrial facilities increasingly incorporate robust networking capabilities that can support protection system communication needs, the cybersecurity implications require careful consideration. The integration of protection systems with corporate networks introduces potential attack vectors that must be addressed through appropriate security measures including network segmentation, encryption, and intrusion detection systems.

Comparison with alternative detection methodologies reveals specific advantages and limitations of the directional relay approach. While machine learning-based methods may achieve comparable or superior accuracy under certain conditions, they typically require extensive training data and may exhibit poor generalization to novel operating scenarios. The directional relay methodology offers greater transparency and predictability, important characteristics for critical protection applications where failure consequences are severe.

CONCLUSION

This research successfully demonstrates the effectiveness of directional relay-based methodology for voltage sag source detection in hybrid microgrid environments, achieving significant improvements in detection accuracy and response time compared to conventional approaches. The comprehensive evaluation encompassing both simulation analysis and experimental validation provides robust evidence supporting the practical viability of the proposed detection system across various operating conditions typical of modern distributed generation installations.

The achieved detection accuracy of 94.7% with average response times of 0.8 cycles meets or exceeds performance requirements for industrial protection applications while providing essential directional information for effective fault isolation and system restoration. These performance metrics represent substantial improvements over existing voltage-based detection methods, particularly in challenging hybrid microgrid environments characterized by bidirectional power flows and variable generation patterns.

Economic analysis reveals compelling financial justification for implementing advanced detection systems, with potential annual savings significantly exceeding implementation costs for typical industrial

and commercial applications. The reduced process interruptions and equipment damage resulting from improved detection capabilities provide tangible benefits that support investment decisions while contributing to overall system reliability improvements.

The research identifies several areas requiring further investigation including optimization of relay coordination schemes for complex microgrid topologies, development of adaptive algorithms for varying renewable generation conditions, and integration with emerging smart grid communication protocols. Future work should address cybersecurity considerations for communication-enabled protection systems and explore the potential for artificial intelligence-enhanced detection algorithms that combine the reliability of directional methods with the adaptability of machine learning approaches.

The findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge supporting the transition to more intelligent and responsive power system protection schemes capable of operating effectively in the evolving electrical grid landscape. As renewable energy integration continues to accelerate and microgrid adoption expands, the proven effectiveness of directional relay-based voltage sag detection provides a foundation for enhanced power quality management and improved system reliability.

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