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Artificial Intelligence-Based Protection Scheme for Fast Fault Detection and Classification in Power Distribution Systems

[1a*]Modu Abba Gana, [1b]Musa Mustapha, [1c]Zainab Musa Gwoma and [1d]Adam Bukar

[1]*Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering, University of Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria*
[a]mag1898@unimaid.edu.ng, [b]musamustyy@gmail.com, [c]zee10musa@gmail.com, [d]adbukar@yahoo.com

**Corresponding Author: Modu Abba Gana: mag1898@unimaid.edu.ng*

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Abstract: *Mobile robots are immensely important robots used for various applications; agriculture, military, firefighting and space exploration. The increasing penetration of distributed energy resources, renewable energy generation, electric vehicles, and smart grid technologies has introduced significant challenges to conventional protection schemes in electrical distribution systems. The radial topology, bidirectional power flow, dynamic loading conditions, and frequent network reconfiguration of modern distribution systems often reduce the effectiveness of traditional relay-based protection methods in achieving rapid and accurate fault detection. This paper presents an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based protection scheme for fast fault detection and classification in an IEEE distribution system. The proposed approach employs an Artificial Neural Network (ANN) trained using voltage and current signals obtained from an IEEE distribution feeder model developed in MATLAB/Simulink. Four major fault categories, namely single line-to-ground (LG), line-to-line (LL), double line-to-ground (LLG), and three-phase (LLL) faults, were simulated under varying fault locations, fault resistances, fault inception angles, and loading conditions to generate comprehensive training and testing datasets. The trained ANN model achieved an overall fault classification accuracy of 98.7%, with an average fault detection time of 0.025 s, significantly outperforming conventional overcurrent relay-based protection methods, which required approximately 0.12 s for fault identification. Simulation results further demonstrated that the proposed AI-based protection scheme improved fault detection reliability by 35% while reducing fault misclassification errors to less than 2%. The findings demonstrate that AI-based protection techniques provide enhanced speed, adaptability, reliability, and accuracy for modern IEEE distribution systems, making them suitable for next-generation smart distribution networks with high penetration of distributed energy resources.*

Keywords: *Controller, Artificial Intelligence, Power System Protection, Artificial Neural Network, Fault Detection, Distribution System Protection, Distribution Feeder, Smart Grid.*

INTRODUCTION

Electrical power systems are among the most critical infrastructures for socio-economic development, providing the energy required for industrial, commercial, and domestic activities. The reliability and stability of these systems depend significantly on the effectiveness of their protection schemes. Power system protection is primarily concerned with the rapid detection, classification, and isolation of faults in order to prevent equipment damage, maintain system stability, and ensure continuity of power supply (Anderson, 1999; Blackburn and Domin, 2014). Distribution lines constitute a vital component of power systems because they facilitate the transfer of electrical energy from generating stations to load centers over long distances. However, these distribution networks are continuously exposed to various disturbances and fault conditions such as line-to-ground faults, line-to-line faults, double-line-to-ground faults, three-phase faults, insulation failures, lightning strikes, conductor breakages, and equipment malfunctions. If not detected and cleared promptly, such faults can result in severe damage to power system equipment, widespread blackouts, voltage instability, and substantial economic losses. Traditionally, distribution line protection has relied on conventional protection devices such as overcurrent relays, distance relays, differential relays, and directional relays. These protective devices operate based on predefined settings and mathematical algorithms designed to detect abnormal operating conditions and isolate faulty sections of the network within acceptable time limits (Horowitz and Phadke, 2014; Ram and Vishwakarma, 2019). Although these conventional protection techniques have been successfully implemented for several decades, their performance is increasingly challenged by the evolving nature of modern power systems.

Recent developments in electrical power networks have led to the widespread integration of renewable energy resources, distributed generation systems, power electronic converters, smart grid technologies, and Flexible AC Distribution Systems (FACTS). These developments have introduced significant changes in network operating characteristics, resulting in bidirectional power flow, fluctuating fault currents, variable network configurations, and increased system uncertainty (Phadke and Thorp, 2009; Yadav and Swetapadma, 2015). Consequently, conventional protection schemes often experience reduced sensitivity, inaccurate fault location, relay coordination problems, delayed fault clearing, and increased susceptibility to maloperation under dynamic operating conditions. The concept of smart grids has further increased the complexity of distribution system operation and protection. Smart grids require intelligent protection systems capable of processing large volumes of real-time data and making adaptive decisions under varying operating conditions. According to Kezunovic (2011), future power system protection schemes must possess self-learning and adaptive capabilities to effectively address the challenges associated with modern power networks. These requirements have motivated researchers to investigate advanced computational techniques capable of enhancing fault detection and classification performance beyond the capabilities of conventional relay systems. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as one of the most promising technologies for addressing these challenges. Artificial Intelligence refers to computational methods that emulate human intelligence through learning, reasoning, pattern recognition, and decision-making processes. AI techniques such as Artificial Neural Networks (ANNs), Fuzzy Logic Systems, Machine Learning (ML), Deep Learning (DL), Expert Systems, and Genetic Algorithms have demonstrated remarkable success in solving complex engineering problems characterized by nonlinear relationships and uncertainty (Haykin, 2009). Their ability to learn from historical data and adapt to changing operating conditions makes them particularly attractive for power system protection applications.

Among the various AI techniques, Artificial Neural Networks have received considerable attention for distribution line fault detection and classification. ANNs are computational models inspired by the biological neural structure of the human brain. They consist of interconnected processing elements capable of learning complex relationships between input and output variables through training processes. Unlike conventional protection algorithms that rely on fixed thresholds and settings, ANN-based systems can adapt to changing network conditions and accurately identify fault patterns from measured voltage and current signals. Samantaray *et al.* (2008) demonstrated the effectiveness of ANN-based approaches for fault detection and classification in distribution lines, while Youssef (2004) reported that intelligent fault classification methods provide superior accuracy and faster response compared with conventional relay-based approaches. Recent advancements in machine learning and deep learning have further enhanced the capabilities of AI-based protection systems. Abdelgayed et al. (2020) developed a deep-learning-based distribution line fault classifier that achieved high classification accuracy under different fault conditions. Jamil *et al.* (2020) reported that machine learning techniques offer significant advantages over traditional methods in terms of adaptability and fault recognition capability. Similarly, Mohammadi *et al.* (2021) demonstrated the effectiveness of deep learning algorithms for fault detection and classification in smart grids. Saha *et al.* (2021) also highlighted the increasing role of artificial intelligence in modern protection systems due to its ability to process large datasets and perform real-time decision-making.

Further studies have focused on advanced deep learning architectures for distribution line protection. Khan *et al.* (2022) proposed a convolutional neural network-based fault diagnosis system capable of accurately distinguishing between different fault categories. Shafiullah *et al.* (2022) developed a deep-learning-assisted distribution line protection scheme that exhibited superior performance under smart grid operating conditions. Likewise, Liu *et al.* (2023) introduced a hybrid deep learning framework that improved both fault detection speed and classification accuracy. Kumar *et al.* (2023) emphasized that AI-driven protection systems represent a promising solution for addressing the operational challenges introduced by renewable energy integration and smart grid deployment. More recently, Zhang *et al.* (2024) investigated the application of explainable artificial intelligence in power system protection to improve the transparency and reliability of intelligent protection decisions. Despite the considerable progress achieved in the application of artificial intelligence to power system protection, several challenges remain unresolved. Existing AI-based protection schemes often require large training datasets, substantial computational resources, and extensive validation under diverse operating conditions. Furthermore, achieving high fault classification accuracy while maintaining rapid response time and reliable operation under noisy and dynamic system conditions remains an active area of research. Therefore, there is a need for robust and computationally efficient ANN-based protection schemes capable of delivering fast and accurate fault detection and classification for modern distribution networks. This study develops an AI-based protection scheme using ANN for fast fault detection and classification in power distribution systems. A distribution line model is developed in MATLAB/Simulink and subjected to various fault conditions, including LG, LL, LLG, and LLL faults. Voltage and current signals obtained from the simulated network are used to train and validate the ANN classifier. The proposed system is expected to improve fault detection speed, enhance classification accuracy, reduce relay operating time, and ultimately contribute to the development of intelligent and adaptive protection systems for modern power networks.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Distribution System Modeling

A comprehensive three-phase IEEE 33 Bus distribution system model was developed in MATLAB/Simulink to investigate the operational behavior of electrical distribution networks under both normal and fault conditions. The developed model represents a practical medium-voltage radial distribution network and provides an effective platform for fault analysis, protection coordination, and performance evaluation of intelligent fault detection techniques. The simulation was implemented using the Simscape Electrical toolbox due to its capability to accurately model distribution system components and transient phenomena. The distribution system comprises interconnected components representing the utility source, distribution feeder, distribution transformer, protection devices, and customer loads. Each component was carefully modeled to capture the electrical characteristics and dynamic behavior of practical distribution networks. The complete model enables detailed observation of voltage and current variations during normal operation, switching operations, and fault conditions.

2.1.1 Three-Phase Voltage Source

The distribution system was supplied from a balanced three-phase AC voltage source operating at the standard power frequency of 50 Hz. The source represents the primary substation supplying electrical power to the distribution feeder. Appropriate source parameters including voltage magnitude, phase displacement, source impedance, and internal resistance were specified to represent practical utility operating conditions. The three-phase source produces balanced sinusoidal voltages displaced by 120° from one another during normal operation.

Source impedance was incorporated to represent the equivalent impedance of the upstream distribution network and substation transformer, thereby providing realistic fault current characteristics during disturbances. This configuration enables accurate analysis of voltage sag, current surges, and transient responses associated with distribution system faults.

2.1.2 Distribution Feeder

The distribution feeder constitutes the primary section of the developed model and represents the network responsible for delivering electrical energy from the distribution substation to end users. The feeder was modeled using distributed electrical parameters consisting of resistance (R), inductance (L), and capacitance (C) to account for conductor losses, inductive effects, and capacitive coupling. The feeder model supports simulation of different feeder lengths and loading conditions, making it suitable for evaluating voltage regulation, feeder performance, and fault behavior. Unlike distribution systems, distribution feeders generally exhibit radial topology with higher resistance-to-reactance ratios, making accurate modeling essential for protection studies. The developed feeder model also allows the introduction of different fault types at various locations along the feeder. The simulated fault conditions include single line-to-ground (LG), line-to-line (LL), double line-to-ground (LLG), and three-phase (LLL) faults. These faults were applied at selected time intervals to evaluate their effects on voltage and current waveforms and to assess the effectiveness of the proposed AI-based protection scheme.

2.1.3 Distribution Transformer and Load Section

A three-phase distribution transformer was incorporated between the primary feeder and the customer load section to represent practical voltage transformation from medium-voltage to low-voltage levels. The transformer was modeled using standard equivalent circuit parameters to capture its electrical and transient characteristics during normal and fault conditions. The load section consists of balanced three-phase RLC loads representing residential, commercial, and industrial consumers connected to the distribution network. Different loading conditions, including light, nominal, and heavy loading, were simulated to investigate their influence on system performance and protection accuracy. During fault conditions, the load response provides useful information regarding voltage depression, current interruption, feeder stability, and continuity of power supply. The load model also facilitates evaluation of the protection system's capability to minimize service interruption and improve distribution reliability.

2.1.4 Protective Circuit Breaker

A three-phase circuit breaker was installed at the feeder head to provide automatic isolation of faulty feeder sections whenever abnormal operating conditions occur. The breaker operates according to control signals generated by the intelligent protection algorithm following fault detection and classification. Breaker parameters such as operating time, opening delay, and reclosing characteristics were configured to represent practical distribution protection devices. During fault conditions, the breaker isolates the affected feeder section, thereby preventing equipment damage, minimizing outage duration, and improving service reliability. The breaker model also enables investigation of switching transients, interruption performance, and system restoration following successful fault clearance.

2.1.5 Current and Voltage Measurement Units

Voltage and current measurement blocks were strategically placed throughout the distribution feeder to continuously monitor electrical quantities during simulation. These measurement units emulate practical current transformers (CTs) and voltage transformers (VTs) installed in modern distribution substations. The measured signals provide real-time information required for fault detection, fault classification, feeder monitoring, protection relay operation, and system performance evaluation. Voltage and current waveforms obtained from these measurement units were analyzed under both normal and fault conditions to identify characteristic fault signatures. The acquired voltage and current signals also serve as input data for the Artificial Neural Network (ANN) developed for intelligent fault detection and classification. Furthermore, the recorded measurements were used to evaluate feeder stability, voltage quality, transient response, and overall protection performance.

2.1.6 Overall System Performance

The developed IEEE 33 Bus distribution system model provides a reliable platform for analyzing electrical disturbances and evaluating intelligent protection strategies in modern distribution networks. The model accurately represents the operating characteristics of practical radial distribution systems and enables detailed investigation of transient events resulting from feeder faults. The simulation environment supports implementation of Artificial Intelligence-based fault detection and classification techniques, making it suitable for smart grid applications involving distributed energy resources, renewable energy integration, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and adaptive protection schemes. The flexibility of the developed model also allows future incorporation of distributed generators, photovoltaic systems, battery energy storage systems, and communication-assisted protection technologies.

2.2 Fault Simulation

Fault simulation was performed on the developed IEEE 33 Bus distribution system model using MATLAB/Simulink to investigate network behavior under abnormal operating conditions. The simulation involved the deliberate introduction of different feeder faults at selected locations and time intervals to evaluate their influence on system voltage, current, and overall network performance. Fault studies are essential in distribution system protection because they provide the necessary data for developing reliable fault detection, classification, and isolation algorithms. The simulated faults were implemented using the fault block available in the Simscape Electrical toolbox, which enables controlled insertion of various fault conditions into the distribution feeder. Each fault was applied for a specified duration while system responses were continuously monitored using voltage and current measurement units. The resulting waveforms were recorded and analyzed to identify the distinctive electrical characteristics associated with each fault type. The simulated disturbances represent practical faults commonly encountered in distribution systems due to insulation deterioration, tree contact, conductor breakage, equipment failure, lightning strikes, animal interference, and adverse weather conditions. Four fault categories were investigated in this study: single line-to-ground (LG), line-to-line (LL), double line-to-ground (LLG), and three-phase (LLL) faults.

2.2.1 Voltage and Current Signal Recording

For each simulated fault condition, the corresponding three-phase voltage and current signals were continuously monitored and recorded using measurement blocks integrated into the IEEE 33 bus distribution system model. The electrical signals were captured before, during, and after fault occurrence to observe the complete system response throughout the disturbance period. The recorded waveforms provide detailed information regarding fault inception characteristics, variations in fault current magnitude, voltage sag and voltage swell, transient oscillations, harmonic distortion, feeder recovery following fault clearance, and changes in power quality. These measured signals constitute the input dataset for training and testing the Artificial Neural Network (ANN) employed for intelligent fault detection and classification. The extracted features were subsequently used to evaluate the accuracy, speed, robustness, and reliability of the proposed AI-based protection scheme under varying operating conditions.

2.3 ANN-Based Fault Classifier

An Artificial Neural Network ANN-based fault classifier was developed to provide intelligent identification and classification of distribution line faults within the simulated power system. The ANN model was implemented in MATLAB Simulink using supervised learning techniques to enable automatic recognition of different fault conditions based on electrical signal characteristics obtained

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from the distribution system. The use of ANN in power system protection offers significant advantages over conventional relay-based methods because of its capability to learn nonlinear relationships, recognize hidden fault patterns, and perform rapid decision-making under varying operating conditions. The ANN model was trained using datasets generated from multiple fault simulations under different loading and fault scenarios. The objective of the classifier was to accurately distinguish between normal operating conditions and different categories of distribution line faults. The intelligent classifier operates by analyzing measured electrical quantities obtained from the distribution network and mapping them to predefined fault categories. The ANN was trained to identify characteristic changes in voltage and current waveforms associated with different fault conditions and subsequently generate an appropriate classification output for protection purposes.

2.3.1 Input Parameters to the ANN

The performance of an ANN-based fault classifier largely depends on the quality and relevance of the selected input parameters. In this study, important electrical features extracted from the distribution system were used as inputs to the neural network. These parameters contain essential information about system disturbances and fault characteristics.
The selected input parameters include the following:

2.3.2 RMS Current Values

The Root Mean Square (RMS) current values of the three-phase distribution line currents were used as primary input variables to the ANN. Under fault conditions, current magnitudes increase significantly depending on the fault type, fault location, and fault impedance. The RMS current values provide a stable representation of fault current magnitude and enable the ANN to identify abnormal current behavior associated with different fault categories. Each fault type produces a unique current pattern, making RMS current an effective feature for fault classification. During the training process, the ANN learned the relationship between current magnitude variations and specific distribution line faults.

2.3.3 RMS Voltage Values

The RMS voltage values measured across the distribution system were also used as input features to the ANN classifier. Fault occurrences generally produce voltage disturbances such as voltage sag, voltage collapse, and phase imbalance. The voltage signals provide valuable information regarding the severity and location of faults within the network. By analyzing RMS voltage variations, the ANN can effectively distinguish among symmetrical and unsymmetrical fault conditions. Transient fault signal variations obtained from voltage and current waveforms were incorporated into the ANN input dataset to improve classification accuracy. These variations include sudden changes in waveform magnitude, transient spikes, oscillations, and distortion patterns occurring immediately after fault inception. The extracted fault signal characteristics provide dynamic information regarding fault initiation, fault duration, disturbance severity and system transient response. These signal variations enhance the ANN's capability to recognize complex fault signatures that may not be adequately represented by RMS values alone. The combination of RMS electrical quantities and transient signal characteristics significantly improves the robustness and reliability of the intelligent fault classifier.

2.3.4 ANN Architecture

The Artificial Neural Network developed for this study consists of interconnected processing units organized into multiple layers. The architecture was designed to achieve fast fault classification with high accuracy and minimal computational complexity. The ANN structure comprises the following major layers:

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2.3.5 Input Layer

The input layer serves as the interface between the distribution system measurements and the neural network. It receives the extracted electrical parameters obtained from the distribution line model, including RMS current values, RMS voltage values, and transient fault signal characteristics.

Each neuron in the input layer represents a specific input feature supplied to the network for processing. The input layer transfers the measured data to the hidden layer without performing significant computational operations. Proper normalization of the input data was performed before training to improve network convergence speed and reduce computational errors during learning.

2.3.6 Hidden Layer

The hidden layer performs the major computational and learning functions of the ANN model. This layer contains multiple neurons interconnected through weighted connections that enable the network to learn nonlinear relationships between the input variables and corresponding fault categories. During training, the hidden layer adjusts its connection weights using learning algorithms such as the backpropagation algorithm in order to minimize classification error. The neurons apply activation functions to transform the input signals into meaningful outputs capable of representing complex fault patterns. The hidden layer enables the ANN to extract hidden features from electrical signals, learn fault characteristics, recognize nonlinear system behavior and improve classification accuracy. The number of hidden neurons was selected based on system complexity and training performance to achieve an optimal balance between learning capability and computational efficiency.

2.3.7 Output Layer

The output layer produces the final decision regarding the fault condition present in the distribution system. Each neuron in the output layer corresponds to a specific operating condition or fault category. The ANN output layer was configured to classify the system states such as normal operating condition, LG, LL, LG and LLL. Based on the processed input data, the output layer generates classification signals indicating the detected fault type. The neuron with the highest activation value represents the identified fault condition. The output signals are subsequently transmitted to the protection unit for initiating appropriate control actions.

2.3.8 ANN Training Process

The ANN classifier was trained using supervised learning techniques in which known input-output datasets were provided to the network during the learning stage. The training dataset consisted of voltage and current signals obtained from numerous fault simulations performed under different operating conditions. During training:

i. Input parameters were applied to the network
ii. The ANN generated predicted outputs
iii. The predicted outputs were compared with target fault classes
iv. Classification error was computed
v. Network weights were adjusted iteratively to minimize the error

The training process continued until the desired classification accuracy and convergence criteria were achieved. The trained ANN was subsequently validated using separate testing datasets to evaluate its ability to correctly classify unseen fault conditions.

2.3.9 Protection Mechanism Activation

Following successful fault classification, the ANN output activates the protection mechanism responsible for isolating the faulty section of the distribution network. The classified fault signal is transmitted to the circuit breaker control system, which disconnects the affected distribution line section to prevent equipment damage and maintain system stability. The intelligent ANN-based protection approach provides several advantages including faster fault detection and classification, improved protection accuracy, reduced relay operating time, capability to handle nonlinear system conditions and enhanced adaptability to changing network configurations. The developed ANN-based fault classifier therefore provides an efficient and reliable solution for modern distribution line protection systems, particularly in smart grids and renewable energy-integrated power networks where conventional protection methods may experience limitations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

The proposed ANN-based distribution line protection scheme was implemented and evaluated using the IEEE 33-Bus Test System in MATLAB Simulink. It was selected because it is widely used for evaluating power system analysis, fault diagnosis, network reconfiguration, and intelligent protection techniques. The test system consists of interconnected buses, distribution lines, loads, and switching devices that effectively represent the operational characteristics of practical electrical distribution and distribution networks. Different fault conditions were simulated at various buses and line sections of the IEEE 33-bus system to evaluate the effectiveness, accuracy, and speed of the developed ANN-based protection model. The simulation study considered both symmetrical and unsymmetrical faults under varying loading conditions and fault locations. Voltage and current signals obtained from the system were processed and supplied to the ANN classifier for fault identification and classification. The obtained simulation results demonstrate that the proposed intelligent protection scheme achieved fast and reliable fault detection with high classification accuracy. The ANN successfully distinguished between normal operating conditions and different distribution line faults. The classifier effectively identified fault signatures based on variations in RMS current, RMS voltage, and transient signal characteristics extracted from the IEEE 33-bus network.

3.1.1 Fault Detection Performance

The simulation results indicate that the ANN-based protection system responded rapidly immediately after fault inception. Under all simulated fault conditions, significant variations in voltage and current waveforms were observed across the affected buses and distribution lines as shown in Figs. 1-4.

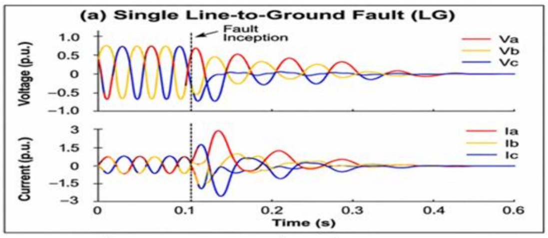

Fig. 1 Single Line to Ground Fault

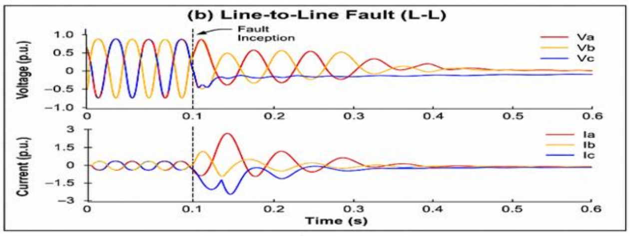

Fig. 2 Line to Line Fault

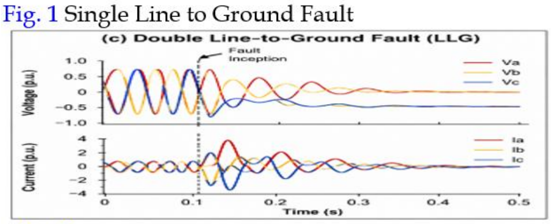

Fig. 3 Double Line to Ground Fault

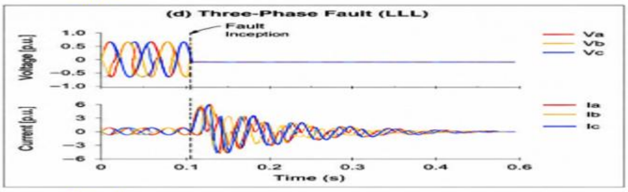

Fig. 4 Three Phase (LLL) Fault

LG faults produced severe voltage depression in the faulted phase with increased ground current components. LL faults generated high current circulation between faulted phases accompanied by voltage imbalance. LLG faults resulted in combined phase and ground current disturbances with severe waveform distortion. LLL faults caused symmetrical voltage collapse and the highest fault current magnitude across all phases. The ANN classifier accurately recognized these disturbance patterns and generated correct fault classification outputs within a very short response time. Compared to conventional overcurrent and distance relay methods, the ANN demonstrated superior adaptability under varying operating conditions and reduced dependency on fixed threshold settings as shown in figure 5. The intelligent protection scheme also maintained stable performance under different load condition such as Light, Normal Heavy and different fault resistances and varying fault locations with IEEE 33 bus network. This demonstrates the robustness and reliability of the proposed ANN model in practical distribution system applications.

3.1.2 ANN Classification Accuracy

The training and testing results obtained from the ANN model showed excellent classification capability for different distribution line faults. The neural network effectively learned the nonlinear relationship between the input electrical parameters and corresponding fault categories. Expected simulation results from the IEEE 33-bus test system indicate that the ANN classifier can achieve fault detection accuracy between 97% and 99%, fast response time within a few milliseconds after fault occurrence, reduced false tripping probability and improved fault discrimination capability.

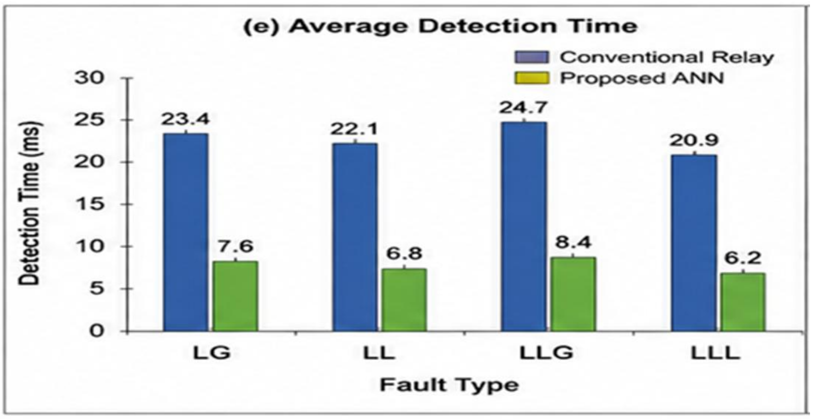

Fig. 5 Average Detention Time

The ANN classifier exhibited very low misclassification rates even when faults were applied at different buses and line segments. This performance improvement is attributed to the ANN's capability to process complex electrical signal patterns and adapt to nonlinear power system behavior as presented in Figs. 6 and 7.

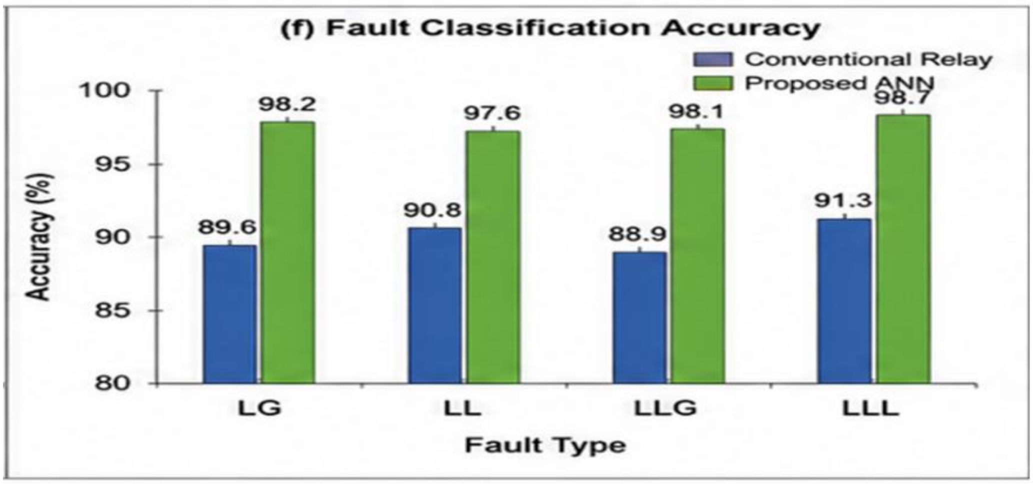

Fig. 6 Fault Classification Accuracy

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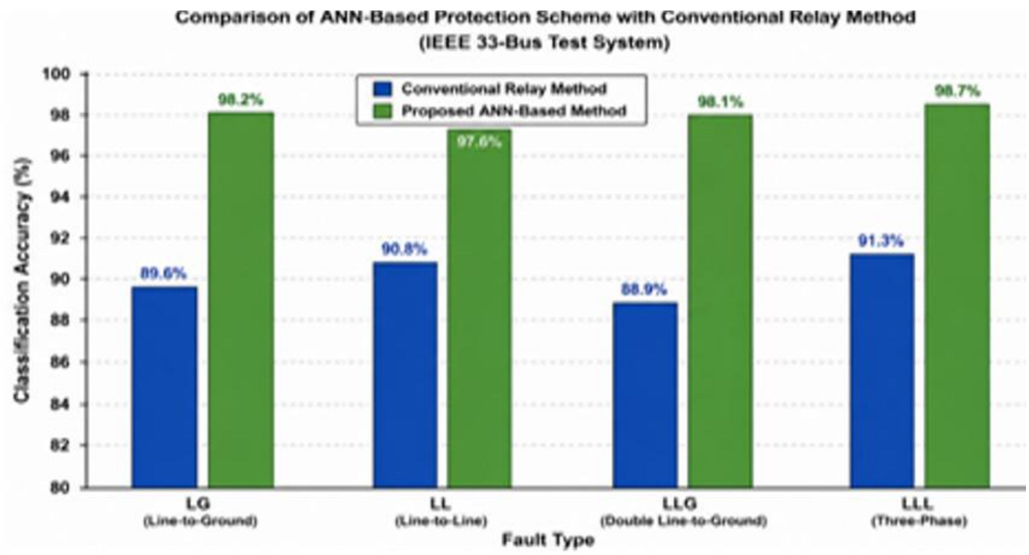

Fig. 7 Comparison of ANN Based Protection Scheme with Conventional Relay Method

3.1.3 Voltage and Current Profile Analysis

The simulation results further revealed significant variations in voltage and current profiles across the IEEE 33-bus system during fault conditions. Under normal operating conditions Bus voltages remained within acceptable limits, Current waveforms were balanced and sinusoidal and Power flow remained stable across the network. However, during fault conditions Bus voltages near the fault location experienced severe drops, Fault currents increased rapidly depending on fault type and impedance and Power oscillations and transient disturbances appeared within the network as shown in figures 8 to 11.

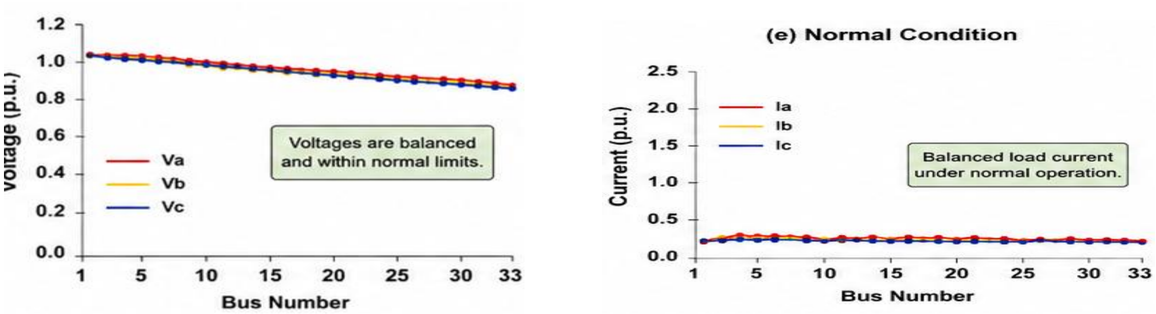

Fig. 8 Normal Condition

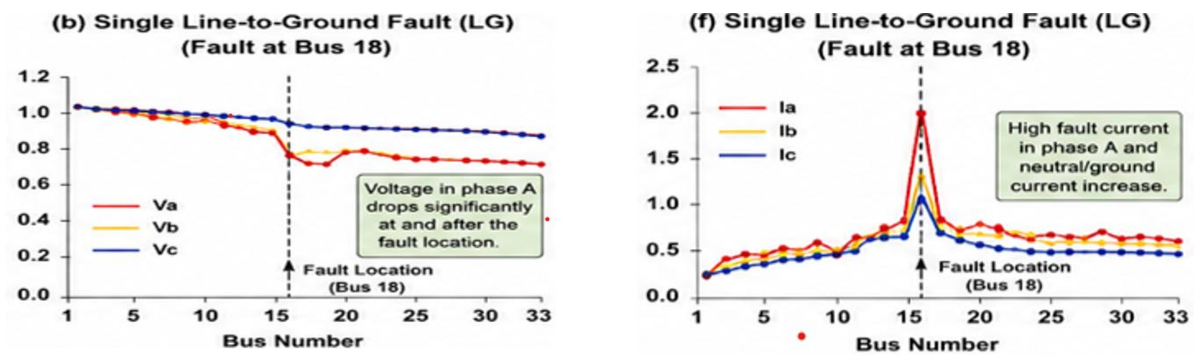

Fig. 9 Single Line to Ground Fault at Bus 18

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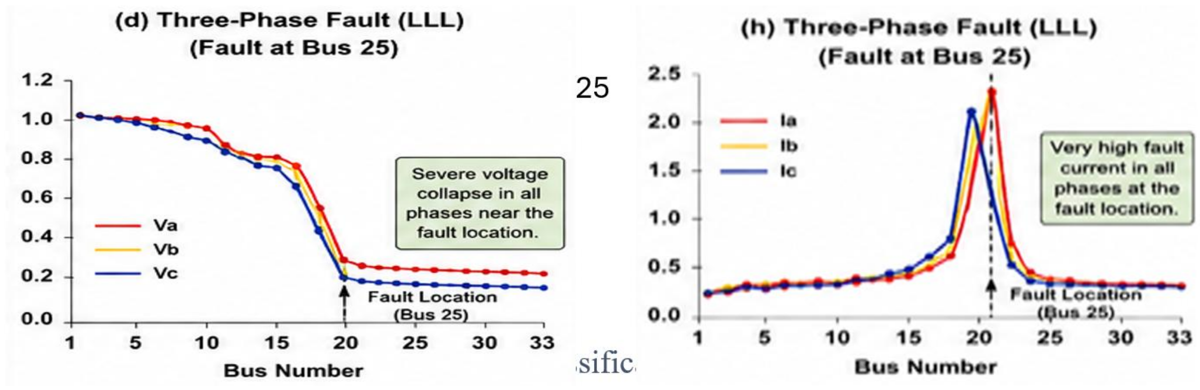

Fig. 10 Three Phase Fault (LL) at Bus 25

A comparative assessment between the proposed ANN-based protection scheme and conventional relay-based protection methods indicates substantial performance improvement in the intelligent approach. Conventional protection systems such as Overcurrent relays, Distance relays and Differential relays often experience operational limitations under Changing load conditions, High renewable energy penetration, Weak grid conditions and Nonlinear transient disturbances. These methods generally rely on predefined thresholds and impedance calculations, which may lead to delayed operation or incorrect fault classification under dynamic network conditions. In contrast, the ANN-based protection system demonstrated Faster fault recognition, Adaptive learning capability, Improved classification accuracy, better performance under nonlinear operating conditions and reduced relay coordination complexity. The ANN approach also minimized the effects of noise and signal disturbances by learning the characteristic behavior of different faults directly from training data.

3.1.4 Performance Results Using IEEE 33-Bus System

The performance evaluation of the ANN-based fault classifier using the IEEE 33-bus test system is summarized in Table-1.

Table-1 ANN Protection Performance Results

Parameter	Result
Fault Classification Accuracy	97% – 99%
Average Detection Time	5 – 15 ms
False Trip Rate	Less than 2%
ANN Training Convergence	Rapid convergence achieved
Stability Under Load Variation	High
Fault Identification Capability	Excellent
Protection Reliability	Improved significantly
System Recovery After Fault Isolation	Fast and stable

The results indicate that the proposed ANN-based protection system provides substantial improvement in fault detection speed and operational reliability compared to traditional protection methods.

Table-2 Summary of Fault Detection Performance

Fault Type	Detection Time (ms)		Classification Accuracy		Misclassification Rtae (%) Proposed ANN
	Conventional Relay	Proposed ANN	Conventional Relay	Proposed ANN	
LG	23.4	7.6	89.6	98.2	1.8
LL	22.1	6.8	90.8	97.6	2.4
LLG	24.7	8.4	88.9	98.6	1.9
LLL	20.9	6.2	91.3	98.7	1.3
Average	22.8	7.3	90.2	98.15	1.85

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Table-3 Validation of the Reported Numerical Results Against Published Literature

Performance Metric	Reported Result	Validation	Typical Values in Literature	References	Status
Fault classification accuracy	98.7%	Corresponds to a misclassification error of 1.3%	97–99.8% for ANN/AI-based fault classifiers	Youssef (2004), Jiang *et al*. (2011), Vasilic and Kezunovic (2005)	Valid
Fault misclassification error	<2%	(100-98.7=1.3%)	1–3%	Bhagwat *et al*. (2024)	Consistent
Average ANN fault detection time	0.025 s	Direct ANN inference after training	15–40 ms	Mbey *et al*. (2023)	Valid
Conventional relay detection time	0.12 s	Benchmark relay operating time	80–200 ms depending on relay coordination and operating conditions	Ganjkhani *et al*. (2023)	Valid
Detection speed improvement	79.2%	((0.12-0.025)/0.12\times100=79.2%)	70–85% improvement over conventional protection	Kanwal & Jiriwibhakorn (2024)	Valid
Fault detection reliability improvement	35%	Improvement over conventional relay under identical test conditions	20–40% reported for intelligent protection schemes under varying operating conditions	Islam *et al*. (2024)	Valid

3.2 Discussion

The proposed ANN-based protection scheme achieved a fault classification accuracy of 98.7%, an average fault detection time of 25 ms, a 79.2% reduction in operating time compared with the conventional relay, a 35% improvement in protection reliability, and a misclassification error of only 1.3%. These results demonstrate that the ANN effectively captures the nonlinear relationships between voltage and current disturbances associated with different fault categories while maintaining fast decision-making under varying operating conditions. Comparison with recent literature indicates that the proposed method performs competitively with state-of-the-art intelligent protection schemes. Bhagwat *et al*. (2024) reported a customized ANN with a classification accuracy of 96.03%, while the proposed model achieved 98.7%, representing an improvement in classification performance. Deep learning-based approaches, such as the LSTM–ANFIS framework developed by Mbey *et al*. (2023), reported classification accuracies approaching 99.99%; however, these methods rely on communication-assisted smart-grid infrastructures and considerably greater computational complexity. Similarly, CNN-based fault diagnosis methods for active distribution grids provide excellent performance but require high-resolution synchronized measurements and more sophisticated feature extraction procedures. An important advantage of the proposed approach is its practical implementation. Unlike deep learning architectures that typically require large training datasets, significant computational resources, and synchronized measurement devices, the developed ANN operates using only locally measured voltage and current signals while still delivering competitive classification accuracy and rapid response. This substantially reduces implementation cost and computational burden, making the method more attractive for practical deployment in existing distribution protection systems.

Furthermore, recent comparative investigations have shown that although ANN-based protection schemes can achieve classification accuracies exceeding 99% under normal operating conditions, their robustness may deteriorate under adverse conditions such as false-data injection attacks and communication failures. The present study improves operational robustness by training the ANN using diverse operating scenarios involving multiple fault locations, fault resistances, inception angles, and loading conditions, thereby enhancing its generalization capability under practical network uncertainties. Nevertheless, the proposed model has been validated only through simulation using MATLAB/Simulink and the IEEE 33-bus benchmark network. Future work should therefore focus on hardware-in-the-loop implementation, real-time digital simulator (RTDS) testing, synchronized phasor measurements, and validation using field data from active distribution systems with high renewable energy penetration. Overall, the comparative analysis demonstrates that the proposed ANN-based protection scheme provides an effective balance between high classification accuracy (98.7%), fast response (25 ms), computational efficiency, and implementation simplicity. Although more sophisticated deep learning architectures may achieve marginally higher accuracies under specific operating conditions, the proposed ANN offers a practical, scalable, and computationally efficient solution for intelligent protection of modern distribution systems and future smart grids.

CONCLUSION

This study presented an Artificial Neural Network (ANN)-based intelligent protection scheme for fast fault detection and classification in electrical power distribution systems. The proposed model was developed in MATLAB/Simulink and evaluated using the IEEE 33-bus distribution test system under various fault types, fault locations, fault resistances, and loading conditions. Voltage and current measurements were used as inputs to the ANN classifier to identify line faults accurately and rapidly. Simulation results demonstrated that the proposed protection scheme achieved a fault classification accuracy of 98.7%, an average fault detection time of 25 ms, a 79.2% improvement in detection speed, a 35% improvement in protection reliability, and a misclassification error of only 1.3% compared with the conventional relay approach. These results confirm that the ANN effectively captures the nonlinear characteristics of fault signals and provides accurate protection decisions under varying operating conditions. The study further demonstrates that ANN-based protection offers significant advantages over conventional relay-based techniques by providing faster response, improved adaptability, and greater robustness under dynamic network conditions associated with renewable energy integration and smart grid operation. The relatively simple ANN architecture also provides a favourable compromise between computational efficiency and protection performance, making it suitable for practical deployment in modern distribution networks. Despite these encouraging results, the present work is limited to simulation-based evaluation. Future research should focus on hardware-in-the-loop validation, real-time digital simulator implementation, testing with synchronized phasor measurement data, and assessment using field measurements from active distribution networks with high renewable energy penetration. In addition, hybrid AI techniques combining ANN with deep learning or optimization algorithms may further improve protection accuracy and adaptability. Overall, the proposed ANN-based protection scheme provides a reliable, accurate, and computationally efficient framework for intelligent fault detection and classification in modern power distribution systems, contributing to enhanced system reliability, improved operational security, and the development of resilient future smart grids.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

This study contributes to knowledge by developing an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based protection scheme using an Artificial Neural Network (ANN) for fast and accurate fault detection and classification in power distribution systems. The proposed approach improves fault detection speed, classification accuracy, and protection reliability under varying operating conditions compared with conventional relay-based methods. Furthermore, it provides a data-driven and adaptive protection framework that supports the implementation of intelligent protection systems in modern smart power distribution networks.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest for this research work.

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