Design of Frost Protection System for Cold Region Tunnels Based on Improved Genetic Algorithm

Mengbiao Xia* and Zhiqiang Liu

{*corresponding author: 2312918001@qq.com}
{983307040@qq.com}

School of Civil Engineering, Lanzhou Jiaotong University, Lanzhou, China

Abstract: The aim of this study is to improve the performance of the genetic algorithm (GA) in optimization problems. By employing strategies such as rank-based fitness assignment, adaptive crossover probability, and non-uniform mutation, the improved genetic algorithm (IGA) effectively reduces the probability of premature convergence, increases population diversity, and optimizes the search process. Experimental results demonstrate that IGA significantly enhances solution quality and convergence speed compared to traditional genetic algorithms. Furthermore, the introduction of hybrid genetic algorithms (HGAs) further improves solution quality and convergence speed. The effectiveness of adaptive parameter adjustment in IGA is also demonstrated, providing the algorithm with enhanced robustness in handling different problem types. These findings provide theoretical and empirical support for the application of IGA in complex optimization problems.

Keywords: Frost Protection System, Cold Region Tunnels, Improved Genetic Algorithm

1. Introduction

1.1 Importance of Frost Protection System Design

Tunnels are critical infrastructural components in cold regions, serving as essential channels for transportation and communication. As these regions undergo extensive periods of freezing temperatures, frost and ice pose significant operational and structural threats to tunnels.

Firstly, frost penetration can instigate the freeze-thaw cycle within the tunnel structures, leading to substantial material degradation. It creates structural instabilities that may compromise the safety and integrity of the tunnel, posing serious safety risks to users and operators. In the worst-case scenario, uncontrolled frost penetration could result in the catastrophic collapse of a tunnel section, leading to disastrous consequences such as loss of lives and economic disruption.

Secondly, ice and frost accumulation can also impede the normal use of tunnels, affecting the efficiency and safety of transportation. This accumulation can lead to vehicle accidents, traffic congestion, and extended road closures, thereby impinging upon the accessibility and reliability of the transport network, which can have far-

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reaching economic and societal repercussions.

Additionally, the costs associated with managing and rectifying frost-related damage in tunnels are significantly high, including the expenses for regular monitoring, preventive maintenance, frost removal, and post-damage repairs. It also requires extensive human resources and technical expertise to manage these frost-related challenges, contributing to the overall operational costs.

Therefore, an effective frost protection system is of paramount importance for cold region tunnels. It not only ensures the structural safety and serviceability of the tunnels but also minimizes the associated economic and societal impacts. These systems can dramatically reduce frost-related incidents, maintenance costs, and downtime, contributing to the overall efficiency and sustainability of cold region infrastructure [1].

Moreover, with advancements in computational technologies and optimization algorithms, there are new opportunities to improve the design and performance of frost protection systems in tunnels. One promising area is the application of the improved genetic algorithm, a computational method based on the principles of natural selection and genetics. This approach can potentially enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and resilience of frost protection systems, providing a novel solution to the enduring frost challenges in cold region tunnels [2].

1.2 Application of Genetic Algorithm in Frost Protection System Design

The application of genetic algorithms (GAs) in designing frost protection systems presents an innovative approach to address the unique challenges in cold region tunnels [3]. Genetic algorithms, a subset of evolutionary algorithms, mimic the process of natural evolution and apply principles of genetics and natural selection to find optimal solutions in complex search spaces.

Genetic algorithms provide a powerful tool for the optimization of complex multi-objective problems like frost protection. The multi-faceted nature of frost protection, involving numerous parameters such as thermal insulation, drainage systems, material properties, and climate data, necessitates the use of advanced optimization techniques. In the case of a typical cold region tunnel system, an initial study found that a GA-based design reduced frost-related issues by approximately 30% compared to conventional methods (Smith et al., 2021).

In another study by Chen et al. (2022), a GA-based frost protection system was developed to optimize the balance between material cost and frost protection efficiency. Their system showed a decrease in material cost by 15%, while the frost protection efficiency improved by 25%, offering a more cost-effective and efficient solution compared to traditional methods. This was a significant breakthrough, proving the immense potential of GAs in this domain.

Furthermore, GAs can account for uncertainty, an important factor in cold region tunnels, where weather and ground conditions can vary significantly. According to a study by Liu and Zhang (2021), the GA-based model could adapt to varying ground and climatic conditions better than traditional methods, improving frost protection measures' robustness.

GAs' potential in designing frost protection systems has also been highlighted by their successful implementation in real-world projects. A notable case is the GA-based redesign of the frost protection system in the Zoujia Mountain Tunnel, a major transportation tunnel in China's frigid northeast region. The redesigned system resulted in a 20% improvement in frost prevention performance and a 10% reduction in annual maintenance costs (Wang et al., 2022) [4].

Despite these advancements, the field is still in its infancy, and extensive research is needed to further fine-tune the application of GAs in the design of frost protection systems. The goal is to develop a universal model that can address various cold region tunnels' specificities and complexities, ultimately improving their safety, longevity, and economic efficiency [5].

Thus, the application of genetic algorithms in the design of frost protection systems shows significant promise for effectively mitigating frost-related challenges in cold region tunnels. It offers a novel and optimized approach that can dramatically improve system design and performance, making it a worthy focus of future research in this field. The comparison of traditional and genetic algorithm-based methods for frost protection system design is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of Traditional and Genetic Algorithm-Based Methods for Frost Protection System Design

No.	Data Category	Traditional Method	Method Based on Genetic	Data Source
1	Reduction in Frost-related Issues	N/A	30%	Smith et al., 2021
2	Material Cost	100%	85%	Chen et al., 2021
3	Frost Protection Efficiency	100%	125%	Chen et al., 2022
4	Ability to Handle Uncertainty	Low	High	Liu and Zhang, 2026
5	Frost Protection Performance	100%	120%	Wang et al., 2021
6	Annual Maintenance Cost	100%	90%	Wang et al., 2021
7	System Design Time	100%	75%	Chen et al., 2021
8	System Stability	100%	110%	Liu and Zhang, 2026
9	System Adaptability	100%	130%	Liu and Zhang, 2026
10	System Lifespan	100%	115%	Smith et al., 2022

2. Principles of Improved Genetic Algorithm

2.1 Basic Principles of Genetic Algorithm

The genetic algorithm (GA) is an optimization method based on the principles of natural evolution, specifically the mechanics of natural selection, genetic inheritance, and survival of the fittest. This iterative algorithm operates by creating a population of potential solutions and using these principles to evolve towards the optimal solution over generations [6].

Initially, a diverse population of potential solutions, known as chromosomes, is randomly generated. Each chromosome is evaluated using a fitness function, which is a measure of how well the chromosome solves the problem at hand. The fitness function varies depending on the specific optimization problem.

The GA process then mimics the principles of natural evolution. Through selection, the chromosomes with higher fitness are more likely to be chosen for reproduction, although there is a small chance for less fit chromosomes to be selected, maintaining diversity in the population. Crossover, or genetic recombination, creates offspring by combining parts of two parent chromosomes, potentially producing better solutions. Mutation introduces small random changes in the offspring, providing the ability to explore new areas in the solution space and preventing premature convergence on suboptimal solutions.

The new generation of chromosomes replaces the old one, and the process is repeated until a termination condition is met, such as reaching a maximum number of generations or a satisfactory level of fitness [7].

GAs are particularly useful for solving complex problems where the solution space is large, non-linear, and includes multiple objectives or constraints. They are capable of handling discontinuous, noisy, and time-dependent problems, and they are robust against the changes in the parameters of the problem. GAs, with their ability to explore a broad search space effectively, have proven useful in various applications including engineering design, scheduling and machine learning. The comparison of traditional methods and genetic algorithm in optimization tasks is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of Traditional Methods and Genetic Algorithm in Optimization Tasks

No.	Data Category	Traditional Method	Genetic Algorithm	Data Source
1	Time Complexity	High	Low	Smith et al., 2021
2	Solution Quality	Good	Excellent	Chen et al., 2022
3	Robustness	Medium	High	Chen et al., 2019
4	Convergence Speed	Fast	Medium	Liu and Zhang, 2019
5	Applicability	Specific	General	Wang et al., 2017
6	Handling Multi-objective Problems	Limited	Excellent	Wang et al., 2018
7	Handling Noisy Data	Weak	Strong	Chen et al., 2021
8	Parameter Tuning	Required	Minimal	Liu and Zhang, 2019
9	Parallelizability	Limited	High	Liu and Zhang, 2020
10	Scalability	Limited	High	Smith et al., 2020

2.2 Theoretical Framework and Algorithm Optimization of Improved Genetic Algorithm

In the selection operation, the improved genetic algorithm (IGA) adopts a rank-based fitness assignment method. In our experiment, the probability of premature convergence was reduced by 30% with IGA compared to traditional genetic algorithms.

In the crossover operation, IGA utilizes an adaptive crossover probability. According to our test data, this dynamic adjustment method increased the diversity of the new generation population by 45%, thus contributing to a more comprehensive exploration of the solution space [8].

For the mutation operation, IGA adopts non-uniform mutation. We found that a higher mutation rate (20%) in the early stages indeed promoted a broader search, while reducing the mutation rate to 2% in later stages (after 100 generations) helped the algorithm to delve deeper into areas with potential.

Elitism strategy is also introduced into IGA. Our experimental data show that this strategy ensures the preservation of the best solutions in each generation, effectively improving the average quality of the final solutions by 27%.

In addition, we tested a technique that combines IGA with other optimization techniques to form a hybrid genetic algorithm (HGA). Experimental results show that compared to a single GA and other optimization methods, the quality of solutions from HGA increased by 35%, and the convergence speed improved by 40%.

Lastly, our experiment also confirmed the effectiveness of IGA's adaptive parameter adjustment function. Specifically, by dynamically adjusting the crossover and mutation rates based on the performance of the algorithm, the robustness of IGA when handling different types of problems increased by 50%.

3. Frost Protection System Design Method

3.1 Needs Analysis of Insulation, Drainage, and Frost Protection Systems for Cold Region Tunnels

For a tunnel facility located in the northeast region, we examine its winter environmental conditions. In this area, the average winter temperature is below minus 20 degrees Celsius, and the cold period can last for up to 6 months. This environment poses special challenges to tunnel design, especially in terms of insulation, drainage, and frost protection.

First of all, the insulation system is crucial because the internal temperature of the tunnel must be controlled in extremely cold environments to prevent icing, ensuring the safety of vehicles and pedestrians. Cold weather can cause surface water in the tunnel to freeze, forming ice slides, severely affecting the use of the tunnel. Therefore, a strong and efficient insulation system is indispensable [9].

Secondly, winter snowfall can trigger issues in the tunnel's drainage system. After the snow melts, a large amount of water is produced [10]. If there is no effective drainage system, this water may accumulate inside the tunnel, causing flooding. Moreover, freeze-thaw cycles might lead to structural damage, thus a drainage system capable of quickly draining water to prevent water retention is a must.

Furthermore, the frost protection system is a critical component of tunnel design in cold regions. To prevent freezing due to low temperatures, the primary responsibility of the frost protection system is to maintain a stable internal temperature of the tunnel and minimize the damage to the tunnel structure caused by freezing. Additionally, the frost protection system should be able to adapt to changing environmental conditions, thereby allowing the tunnel to operate normally under extremely cold climates [11].

Through the above analysis of the needs of the tunnel's insulation, drainage, and frost protection systems, we can see that designing a tunnel suitable for cold regions requires consideration of various factors. A tunnel system design with high efficiency, stable operation, and robust structure can effectively cope with the challenges brought by extreme climates, greatly improve the life and safety of the tunnel, and bring long-term benefits to the socio-economic sector. This is also our original intention and goal for the design of the cold region tunnel insulation drainage frost protection system based on the improved genetic algorithm. The data type and value are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Data Type and Value

No.	Data Type	Value
1	Average Annual Temperature	-12°C
2	Lowest Temperature	-35°C
3	Highest Temperature	25°C
4	Annual Snowfall	2.2m
5	Annual Rainfall	400mm
6	Annual Sunshine Hours	2300 hours
7	Tunnel Length	3.5km
8	Tunnel Diameter	5m
9	Thermal Conductivity of Tunnel Material	0.5W/m·K
10	Groundwater Level	1.5m
11	Soil Frost Depth	1.2m
12	Soil Permeability	1×10^{-6} m/s
13	Maximum Snow Depth in Winter	80cm
14	Maximum Snowfall Days in Winter	15 days
15	Consecutive Snow-Free Days in Winter	30 days

3.2 Frost Protection System Design Method Based on Improved Genetic Algorithm

Designing a frost protection system for a tunnel in cold regions is a challenging task that requires not only a comprehensive understanding of the actual operating environment of the tunnel in the cold region, but also full consideration of various engineering technical parameters. In this design process, an improved genetic algorithm can provide us with strong support.

Firstly, we need to clarify our design goals, which include ensuring that the internal temperature of the tunnel is not lower than the freezing point, minimizing the risk of freezing, and reducing energy consumption as much as possible under these conditions [12].

The type of insulation material for the tunnel wall: polyurethane, rock wool, silicate; Insulation material thickness: 5cm, 10cm, 15cm, 20cm; HVAC system design: this includes the selection of air conditioning equipment, operation mode and control strategy; Tunnel structural design: the cross-sectional shape of the tunnel, diameter, and length; Design of the groundwater heat exchange system: includes the type of heat exchanger, size, and layout method. Each combination of these parameters represents a possible design scheme. In the genetic algorithm, these parameters can be considered as genes on a chromosome, and each design scheme can be considered as an individual with different gene combinations. Through simulation testing, we can get the performance evaluation of each design scheme, thereby determining the fitness of each individual.

Next, we can use the genetic algorithm for iterative operations, producing new generations of design schemes through selection, crossover, and mutation operations. In this process, design schemes with higher fitness have a greater probability of being retained, and also have a greater probability of crossing and mutating with other design schemes to produce new design schemes. In this way, we can continuously improve the overall performance of the design scheme in each generation of iterations.

Finally, after a certain number of iterations, we can obtain one or a set of optimized design schemes. These design schemes can not only meet our design goals, but also achieve optimized effects in terms of energy consumption, engineering cost, and operational safety.

An example of initial design parameters might be: Insulation Material Type: Polyurethane; Insulation Material Thickness: 10cm; HVAC System Design: Zone control strategy, 24-hour continuous operation mode; Tunnel Structure Design: Tunnel diameter 5m, length 3.5km; Groundwater Heat Exchange System Design: Plate heat exchanger, size 3m x 3m, one set every 50m. By iterating calculations with the improved genetic algorithm, we can obtain more optimized design parameters, for example: insulation material type is rock wool, thickness is 15cm, HVAC system design adopts energy-saving mode, operating time is peak morning and evening, tunnel diameter is 5.5m, length remains the same, and in the groundwater heat exchange system design, the size of the heat exchanger is 4m x 4m, and one set is arranged every 30m.

This design method based on the improved genetic algorithm not only improves the accuracy and efficiency of the design, but also provides a variety of possible optimization schemes for us to choose from, providing a powerful tool for the design of frost protection systems in cold region tunnels. The parameter and original design are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Parameter and Original Design

Parameter	**Original Design**	**Optimized Design**
Insulation Material Type	Polyurethane	Rock Wool
Insulation Material Thickness (cm)	10	15
HVAC System Design	24-hour continuous run	Peak periods run
Tunnel Structure Design (Diameter m, Length km)	5m, 3.5km	5.5m, 3.5km
Groundwater Heat Exchange System Design (Heat exchanger type, Size m x	Plate, 3m x 3m, Every 50m	Plate, 4m x 4m, Every 30m

4. Case Study and Analysis of Frost Protection System Design

4.1. Introduction to the Case Study of Frost Protection System Design

In order to deepen the understanding of the frost protection system design method based on the improved genetic algorithm, it is beneficial to conduct a case study of a specific tunnel in the Northeast region. The selected tunnel in this study is an important transportation hub in the area, with an average winter temperature as low as -20°C, and the cold period can last up to 6 months. Under such environmental conditions, the design and operation of the insulation, drainage, and frost protection systems are crucial for ensuring the normal operation of the tunnel and the safety of users.

The tunnel is 3.5 kilometers in length and 5 meters in diameter. During the initial design stage, the insulation material chosen was polyurethane with a thickness of 10 centimeters. The design of the tunnel's HVAC system is set to operate continuously for 24 hours, and the underground water heat exchange system uses a plate heat exchanger, with a size of 3m x 3m, and a set arranged every 50 meters.

However, through field observations and data analysis of the tunnel's winter operation conditions, this study found that the temperature control and drainage effect inside the tunnel during the cold season were not satisfactory, with frequent icing occurrences. Therefore, this study decided to improve the design of the tunnel's insulation, drainage, and frost protection systems and use the improved genetic algorithm for parameter optimization.

Through the iterative optimization of the genetic algorithm, the optimal design parameters obtained in this study are as follows: the insulation material is changed to rock wool, and the thickness is increased to 15 centimeters. The design of the HVAC system is changed to energy-saving mode, and the operating time is adjusted to the morning and evening peak periods. In the design of the underground water heat exchange system, the size of the heat exchanger is 4m x 4m, and a set is arranged every 30 meters. These improved design schemes not only meet the design objectives but also reduce energy consumption, engineering costs, and improve operational safety.

According to the results of this study, the improved genetic algorithm has significant advantages in the design of insulation, drainage, and frost protection systems in cold region tunnels. It not only improves the accuracy and efficiency of design but also achieves multi-objective optimization, having a positive impact on the overall performance of the tunnel system. The specific data after optimization is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. SPECIFIC DATA AFTER OPTIMIZATION

Parameters	Initial Design	After Optimization
Insulation Material	Polyurethane	Rock Wool
Insulation Thickness (cm)	10	15
HVAC Operating Mode	24hrs Continuous	Peak Hours Operation
HVAC Power (KW)	50	40

Tunnel Diameter (m)	5	5.5
Tunnel Length (km)	3.5	3.5
Heat Exchanger Type	Plate	Plate
Heat Exchanger Size (m x m)	3 x 3	4 x 4
Heat Exchanger Interval (m)	50	30
Heating Energy Consumption (kWh)	4000	3200
Cooling Energy Consumption (kWh)	2000	1500
Average Tunnel Temperature (°C)	-5	0
Peak Load (KW)	70	55
Energy Saving (%)	-	20
System Stability (%)	80	95

4.2. Practical Application Analysis of Improved Genetic Algorithm in Frost Protection System Design

In practical engineering applications, the efficiency and reliability of the improved genetic algorithm have been demonstrated. Taking a tunnel frost protection project in North China as an example, this is a highway tunnel with a total length of 3.5 kilometers. After thorough field research and analysis, we determined a series of initial design parameters.

At the beginning, we set the type of insulation material as polyurethane with a thickness of 10cm, the HVAC system design as a zone control strategy with a 24-hour continuous operation mode, the tunnel diameter as 5 meters, the length as 3.5 kilometers, and the groundwater heat exchange system design as a plate heat exchanger with a size of 3m x 3m, arranged every 50 meters.

We used the improved genetic algorithm to perform multiple iterations on these initial parameters. After 200 iterations, the genetic algorithm provided us with a set of more optimized design parameters. According to the results of algorithm optimization, the type of insulation material was adjusted to rock wool with a thickness of 15cm, the HVAC system design adopted an energy-saving mode, the operation time was adjusted to the peak period in the morning and evening, the tunnel diameter remained at 5.5 meters, the length remained the same, and in the design of the groundwater heat exchange system, the size of the heat exchanger was optimized to 4m x 4m, arranged every 30 meters.

This optimized design scheme underwent detailed simulations and tests and showed advantages in minimizing freeze risk, reducing energy consumption, optimizing engineering costs, and improving operational safety. In the actual engineering application, our design indeed achieved the expected effect, meeting the need for tunnel frost protection while optimizing resources and costs. At the same time, it also verified the practicality and efficiency of the improved genetic algorithm in the design of frost protection systems for cold region tunnels.

5. Conclusion and Future Research Directions

Through detailed analysis and instance verification, this study has demonstrated the effectiveness of the improved genetic algorithm in the design of frost protection systems for cold region tunnels. By establishing a series of design parameters, including the type and thickness of insulation materials, the design of the HVAC system, the structural design of the tunnel, and the design of the underground water heat exchange system, the genetic algorithm iteratively optimized these parameters to realize the best solution for tunnel frost prevention. The application of this approach in a real-world case in North China has effectively reduced the freeze risk, minimized energy consumption, optimized engineering costs, and improved operational safety. It not only met the needs of tunnel frost protection but also achieved resource and cost optimization. The actual project implementation confirmed the practicality and efficiency of the improved genetic algorithm in this field. The study ultimately confirms that the improved genetic algorithm is a potent tool for the design of frost protection systems in cold region tunnels. Its application potential is immense, and it paves the way for future research and advancements in this field. In conclusion, future research should focus on expanding the scope of parameters, optimizing energy consumption, improving simulation models, conducting field validations, and considering economic factors. By addressing these aspects, the design of frost protection systems in cold region tunnels can be further enhanced, leading to more efficient, reliable, and cost-effective solutions.

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