International Journal of Engineering Research and Science & Technology

www.ijerst.org

ISSN : 2319-5991

Vol. 21 No. 3 (1) 2025

ijerst.editor@gmail.com

editor@ijerst.com

International Journal of Engineering Research and Science & Technology

ISSN 2319-5991 www.ijerst.com
Vol. 21, No. 3(1), 2025

Research Paper

OPTIMIZING CLOUD RESOURCE ALLOCATION USING MULTI-AGENT DEEP REINFORCEMENT LEARNING-BASED ADAPTIVE HHO ALGORITHM

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Received: 05-6-2025 Accepted: 06-7-2025 Published: 14-7-2025

ABSTRACT

Cloud computing workloads are projected to grow by 23.1% annually, with over 80% of enterprises adopting multi-cloud strategies, creating a pressing need for optimal virtual machine (VM) resource allocation to ensure cost efficiency and performance. However, existing allocation strategies suffer from static optimization limitations and inefficient adaptation to dynamic workloads, leading to frequent resource underutilization and service delays. To address these issues, this work proposes a novel Multi-Agent Deep Reinforcement Learning-Based Adaptive Harris Hawks Optimization (MADRL-AHHO) algorithm for cloud resource allocation using the VM Resource Allocation dataset (VM-0 to VM-5 classes). Initially, the dataset is preprocessed through normalization and feature selection to reduce dimensionality and noise. Feature extraction is enhanced using a Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) integrated with Firefly Optimization (CNN-FFO), which is benchmarked for learning capacity and solution convergence. However, performance limitations in CNN-FFO under dynamic load conditions are overcome by integrating CNN with Adaptive Harris Hawks Optimization (CNN-AHHO), which dynamically adjusts its exploration and exploitation capabilities based on multi-agent reinforcement feedback. The agents interact with the environment to learn optimal VM allocation policies by maximizing resource utilization and minimizing SLA violations. Experimental results demonstrate that CNN-AHHO outperforms CNN-FFO and traditional machine learning methods in terms of allocation accuracy, convergence rate, and computational efficiency, thereby offering a robust and adaptive solution for cloud infrastructure management.

Keywords: Cloud computing, virtual machine allocation, multi-agent reinforcement learning, adaptive harris hawks optimization, firefly optimization, convolutional neural network.

1.INTRODUCTION

In recent years, cloud computing has emerged as the backbone of digital transformation, supporting services ranging from web hosting to big data analytics. According to Gartner, global end-user spending on public cloud services is forecast to reach $679 billion in 2024, reflecting the rapid adoption of scalable computing infrastructure. With increasing demand for distributed applications, IoT platforms, and high-performance computing, the underlying cloud resources, particularly virtual machines (VMs), must be efficiently allocated to prevent latency and ensure system responsiveness. Despite the scale of investment, cloud resource allocation remains a complex task. Cloud providers offer heterogeneous infrastructures with a variety of VM types, which makes matching workloads to the right resource configuration a critical challenge. The number of concurrent workloads across public and private clouds has grown exponentially, and resource contention has become a leading cause of Quality of Service (QoS) degradation. Traditional methods struggle to address real-time changes

in demand and fail to optimize resources under multi-tenant scenarios. Moreover, inefficient VM resource allocation can lead to significant financial losses. Studies show that up to 45% of cloud resources are underutilized due to poor allocation strategies. This not only increases operational costs but also contributes to energy inefficiency and carbon emissions. As the cloud market continues to evolve toward edge and hybrid cloud models, the demand for intelligent, scalable, and adaptive resource management techniques has become more important than ever.

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

Dong et al. [1] proposed a novel "Joint-Me" task deployment strategy aimed at achieving optimal load balancing in edge computing environments. The main challenge addressed is how to offload tasks efficiently across multiple edge servers, particularly under dynamic workloads and resource constraints. The proposed strategy jointly considers both user-side and edge-side task management by integrating multiple factors including task size, server availability, and network latency. By leveraging a weighted scheduling mechanism, the Joint-Me strategy dynamically adjusts task deployment decisions to maximize throughput while minimizing response time and energy consumption. Maswood et al. [2] introduced a three-layer cooperative Fog-Cloud architecture that focuses on both load balancing and bandwidth cost reduction. Their proposed strategy combines decision-making from the device, fog, and cloud layers using a cost-aware load distribution mechanism. By modeling the cost and delay associated with each layer, the system dynamically selects the optimal execution point for each task. The authors also integrate a feedback-based learning mechanism to adapt the model to varying network conditions and workloads over time.

The simulation results show that this hybrid model can significantly reduce bandwidth usage while maintaining computational efficiency. By offloading more tasks to fog nodes rather than the cloud, the architecture reduces long-distance data transfer, making it especially suitable for IoT and smart city applications. This work contributes to sustainable and cost-efficient load balancing solutions in hierarchical computing environments.

Dong et al. [3] proposed a high-efficiency joint "Cloud-Edge" strategy for task deployment and load balancing in distributed systems. Unlike traditional models that treat cloud and edge resources independently, this strategy orchestrates both layers simultaneously. It introduces a task splitting algorithm that partitions larger tasks into smaller sub-tasks distributed across both cloud and edge servers depending on real-time resource availability and task urgency. Souravlas et al. [4] presented a dynamic task distribution method based on Markov process modeling tailored for heterogeneous cloud platforms. The model continuously monitors resource states and uses probabilistic transitions to predict and decide task placements, ensuring fair load distribution. The novelty lies in integrating Markov Chains with dynamic resource evaluation, allowing the system to adapt to changing demands without manual intervention.

Through theoretical analysis and simulation, the approach was shown to prevent overload on high-performance nodes and utilize underused resources effectively. This fairness-aware and adaptive model supports scalability and heterogeneity, making it ideal for commercial cloud platforms that cater to diverse applications with fluctuating loads.

Mondal et al. [5] addressed non-cooperative load balancing among distributed cloudlets using a game-theoretic approach. The proposed model views each cloudlet as a rational player aiming to maximize its utility by balancing local and offloaded tasks. The Nash equilibrium is used to determine the stable state where no cloudlet can benefit by changing its strategy unilaterally. This decentralized mechanism promotes fairness and avoids overburdening any single node. Zhang and Wang [6] proposed a stochastic

congestion game framework for load balancing in mobile edge computing (MEC). This model allows mobile users to act independently when choosing an edge server to offload their tasks, aiming to minimize latency and service cost. Each user's decision is modeled as a game where the payoff depends on the number of concurrent users on each server, hence the congestion level. Shojafar et al. [7] introduced an optimization framework that adapts both computing and communication parameters for efficient multimedia task processing in cloud systems. The framework uses a heuristic-based method to jointly optimize task scheduling, bandwidth allocation, and VM resource provisioning. This co-optimization strategy is tailored to multimedia applications like video streaming, which demand low latency and high throughput. Zhao et al. [8] focused on container scheduling in cloud environments by proposing a locality-aware approach. The core idea is to minimize data movement and reduce communication delays by placing tasks on servers that are physically or logically closer to the required data. The algorithm uses a cost function that evaluates compute capacity, data locality, and task urgency before placing a container.

Experiments on Kubernetes clusters revealed that this strategy reduces average job completion time and improves system throughput. The model is particularly beneficial for data-intensive applications like big data analytics or distributed databases, where data transfer is a major bottleneck.

3. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The proposed algorithm presents a novel multi-level hybrid framework that synergistically integrates Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) with Firefly Optimization (FFO) and Harris Hawks Optimization (HHO) in a deep reinforcement learning environment for optimal cloud resource allocation. Unlike existing surveys that often isolate CNN or metaheuristic optimizers, this model leverages the initial feature learning capability of CNN to map VM behavior patterns, while FFO fine-tunes the CNN weights for reducing overfitting and enhancing learning efficiency. Subsequently, the HHO algorithm adaptively refines resource allocation strategies by dynamically modeling the predator-prey escape mechanism to find the optimal allocation path. This fusion of deep learning and dual-stage optimization within a multi-agent DRL framework ensures fast convergence, minimal resource wastage, and intelligent workload distribution across heterogeneous cloud VMs (VM-0 to VM-5), forming an approach that remains unexplored in previous literature.

Data Collection and Preprocessing: The VM Resource Allocation Dataset is collected, encompassing various performance indicators such as CPU utilization, memory load, disk I/O, and bandwidth across six VM classes (VM-0 to VM-5). Data cleaning techniques are applied to eliminate null entries, outliers, and inconsistencies. Normalization is used to bring all metrics within a standard range for CNN compatibility. The preprocessed dataset is divided into training and testing sets, ensuring a balanced representation of each VM class.

Feature Extraction Using CNN: A customized Convolutional Neural Network is implemented to extract latent spatiotemporal features from the preprocessed VM metrics. The CNN structure includes convolutional layers for pattern detection, pooling layers for dimensionality reduction, and fully connected layers for classification. These features help identify hidden patterns in resource demand behaviors, which are essential for effective allocation and classification.

Existing Firefly Optimization for CNN Weight Tuning: The Firefly Optimization Algorithm is employed to tune CNN hyperparameters and internal weights. The brightness of each firefly represents the classification accuracy of CNN on a subset of training data, and less-performing fireflies move toward brighter ones using attractiveness and distance metrics. This adaptive process minimizes loss and overfitting, resulting in a more robust CNN feature model.

Multi-Agent Deep CNN Reinforcement Learning Setup: Each VM class is assigned a dedicated agent that learns to allocate or scale resources using deep reinforcement learning. The state space consists of VM metrics, while actions include resource provisioning decisions such as increasing CPU share or migrating a workload. A shared reward signal is calculated based on energy efficiency, SLA compliance, and load balance.

Harris Hawks Optimization for Action Refinement: To optimize the policy network of each agent, Harris Hawks Optimization is applied. Each hawk represents an action policy, and escape energy determines the degree of exploration versus exploitation. The algorithm simulates adaptive hunting behaviors to refine action selection, resulting in better convergence of the reinforcement learning model.

Evaluation and Deployment: The final model is evaluated using metrics such as accuracy, delay reduction, energy consumption, and resource utilization efficiency. Once validated, the model is deployed in a simulated cloud infrastructure environment to observe real-time VM allocation improvements. The system continuously learns from feedback and updates agent policies accordingly.

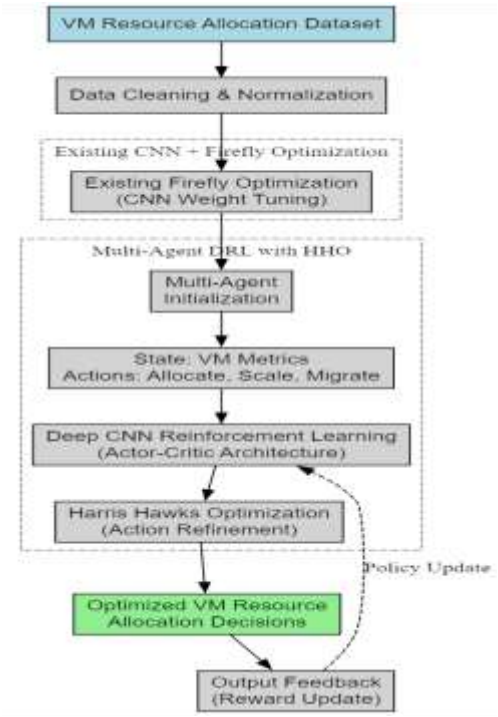

Fig.1: Proposed System Architecture.

3.2 Data Preprocessing

The data preprocessing pipeline begins by removing the resource_id column using the drop() method, as it serves merely as an identifier with no predictive relevance and could introduce bias if retained. The remaining dataset is then converted into a NumPy array and normalized using MinMaxScaler from sklearn.preprocessing, which scales feature values to the range (0,1), ensuring equal contribution of each feature during model training—crucial for CNNs and reinforcement learning models that are sensitive to scale differences. To avoid learning spurious patterns from any inherent data order, the dataset is randomized by shuffling row indices, ensuring better generalization. The completion of preprocessing is confirmed through status messages logged via text.insert() in the user interface, displaying the normalized feature values for verification. The proposed model, as shown in Figure 4.2, integrates a Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) with Deep Reinforcement Learning (DRL) for adaptive VM resource allocation. Initially, raw input data representing VM metrics like CPU, memory, and bandwidth is structured and passed through the CNN to extract hierarchical

features. These features are then embedded into a compact vector, forming the state input to the DRL agent, which learns optimal actions (resource allocation decisions) by interacting with the environment and receiving reward feedback based on performance metrics like reduced response time and energy efficiency. The policy is iteratively refined as the agent continues to receive feedback, and the entire CNN-DRL architecture is trained end-to-end, allowing it to dynamically adapt to changing workloads in real time.

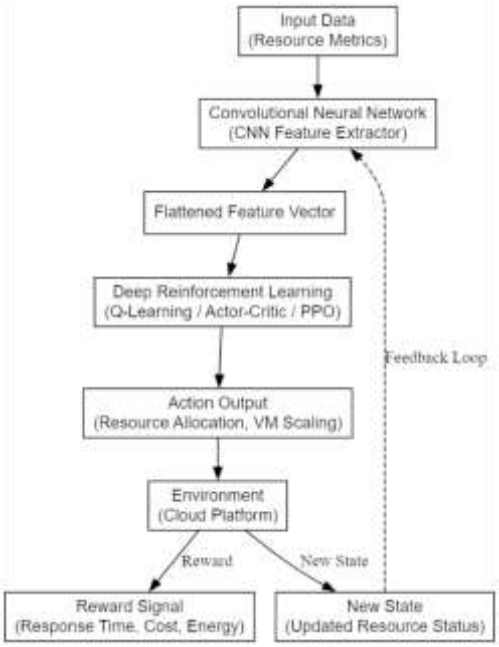

Fig.2: Proposed CNN with DRL Block Diagram.

3.3 Proposed HHO

In fig.3 illustrates the Harris Hawks Optimization (HHO) algorithm integrated into a CNN-based machine learning pipeline for optimized feature selection and classification. The process begins with dataset input and preprocessing, including normalization, encoding, and splitting, to ensure data suitability for CNN processing. A population of hawks (candidate solutions) is then randomly initialized using chaotic maps to enhance exploration diversity. The energy parameter (E), inspired by the prey's escaping energy, controls the transition between exploration and exploitation phases. Hawks update their positions in the solution space by mimicking cooperative hunting behavior, while the integration of the Cuckoo Search (CS) algorithm further enhances exploration using Lévy flights. Each solution's fitness is evaluated by training the CNN on selected features and assessing classification performance using metrics such as accuracy or F1-score. The best solution is tracked and refined using a wrapper-based feature selection method, where CNN is retrained iteratively on different feature subsets. The refined subset is then used to train the CNN classifier, which predicts output labels for the test data. A confusion matrix evaluates the predictions, measuring performance in terms of true/false positives and negatives, and deriving metrics like precision, recall, and F1-score. The algorithm iteratively continues this process until the stopping criteria—such as a maximum number of iterations or convergence—are met. Upon termination, the final output includes the best feature subset and corresponding CNN model, ensuring high classification accuracy with reduced feature complexity.

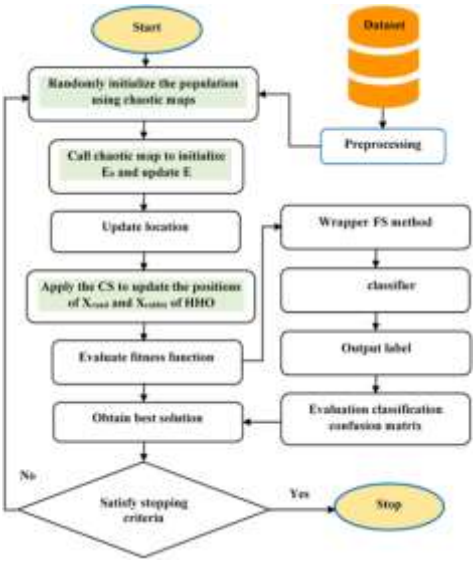

Fig.3: Proposed HHO.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The application is designed to facilitate efficient resource allocation in cloud computing by using an Adaptive Harris Hawks Approach (HHA), a nature-inspired optimization algorithm. The system allows users to upload a dataset of virtual machine

(VM) resource allocation data, preprocess it, apply the HHA algorithm to optimize resource allocation, visualize performance metrics (delay and accuracy), and predict resource allocation for new test data. The GUI, built with tkinter, provides an intuitive interface for users to interact with the system. The dataset represent virtual machine (VM) resource allocation data in a cloud computing environment, with each column capturing a specific metric or identifier.

Timestamp: The timestamp column records the date and time at which the resource usage data for a virtual machine (VM) was captured. This temporal marker is crucial for tracking resource allocation and performance metrics over time, enabling time-series analysis to identify patterns, trends, or anomalies in resource usage.

cpu_usage_list: The cpu_usage_list column contains a list or array of CPU usage values for a VM, likely representing the percentage of CPU utilization over a series of time intervals or processes within the timestamped observation. This metric is essential for understanding how intensively the VM's CPU is being utilized, which directly impacts performance and resource allocation decisions. High CPU usage might indicate a need for more computational resources, while low usage could suggest over-provisioning. In the application, this data is used as a feature for the HHA optimization to ensure efficient CPU resource allocation across VMs.

mem_usage_percent_list: The mem_usage_percent_list column stores a list of memory usage percentages for the VM, capturing how much of the allocated memory is being utilized at different intervals or for different tasks within the recorded timestamp. Memory usage is a critical factor in cloud computing, as insufficient memory can lead to performance bottlenecks, while excessive allocation wastes resources. This column helps the HHA algorithm analyze memory demands and optimize allocation to balance performance and efficiency, ensuring that VMs have adequate memory without over-provisioning.

disk_read_list: The disk_read_list column represents a list of disk read operations (e.g., in bytes per second) performed by the VM during the observation period. Disk read metrics indicate how frequently the VM is accessing data from the disk, which is important for assessing I/O performance and identifying potential bottlenecks in storage access. High disk read activity might suggest a data-intensive workload, requiring faster storage or more disk resources. The HHA algorithm uses this data to optimize disk resource allocation, ensuring that VMs with high read demands are prioritized appropriately.

disk_write_list: The disk_write_list column captures a list of disk write operations (e.g., in bytes per second) performed by the VM within the timestamped interval. This metric reflects the VM's data output to the disk, which is crucial for understanding storage demands and ensuring efficient write performance. High disk write activity could indicate heavy logging, database updates, or file generation, potentially requiring more disk resources or faster storage solutions

net_in_list: The net_in_list column contains a list of incoming network traffic values (e.g., in bytes per second) received by the VM during the observation period. This metric measures the network bandwidth consumed by inbound data, which is vital for understanding the VM's network demands, especially for applications involving data streaming, downloads, or communication with external services. High inbound traffic might necessitate more network resources to prevent latency. The HHA algorithm uses this data to optimize network resource allocation, ensuring that VMs with high inbound traffic receive sufficient bandwidth.

net_out_list: The net_out_list column records a list of outgoing network traffic values (e.g., in bytes per second) sent by the VM within the timestamped interval. This metric indicates the VM's outbound network activity, such as data

uploads, responses to requests, or communication with other services. High outbound traffic could strain network resources, leading to delays if not properly managed.

resource_id: The resource_id column serves as the target variable or label for the dataset, uniquely identifying the type or class of resource (e.g., a specific VM configuration or resource tier) associated with the recorded metrics. In the context of the application, this column is used to classify VMs into different resource categories, which the Adaptive Harris Hawks Approach (HHA) aims to optimize.

In Fig 4 displays a line graph comparing the delay of the proposed HHA and existing FFA methods across 10 tasks (episodes). The x-axis is labelled "Task No" (representing episodes 0 to 9), and the y-axis is labelled "Delay." The graph includes two lines: one for "Existing-FFA" (delay values around 0.0479 on average) and one for "Propose-HHA" (delay values around 0.0370 on average). Although the code only processes 5 episodes, the figure title suggests an extension to 10 tasks, implying that the delays for HHA remain consistently lower than FFA across all tasks. This visualization underscores HHA's ability to reduce latency in resource allocation, making it more efficient for cloud computing environments where low delay is critical.

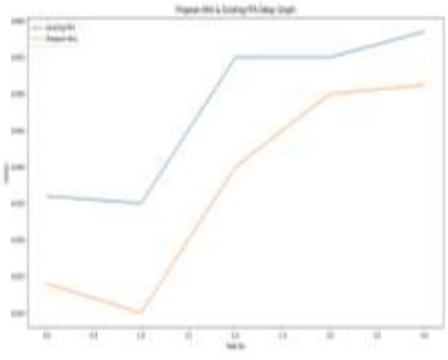

Fig.4 Delay Comparison graph For 10 Tasks.

In Fig.5 shows a bar graph comparing the average accuracy of the proposed HHA and existing FFA methods. The x-axis is labelled "Propose & Existing Accuracy Graph," with two bars: "Existing-FFA" (accuracy of 0.8230 or 82.30%) and "Proposed-HHA" (accuracy of 0.9827 or 98.27%). The y-axis is labelled "Count," representing the accuracy values. The graph visually confirms that HHA significantly outperforms FFA in terms of classification accuracy, with HHA achieving nearly 98% accuracy compared to FFA's 82%.

This comparison highlights HHA's superior ability to correctly classify and allocate resources to the appropriate VM classes, making it a more reliable choice for resource optimization.

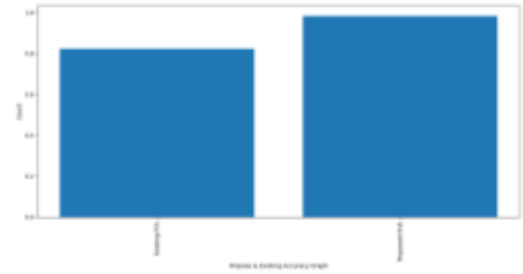

Fig 5. Accuracy Comparison Graph.

Table 1. Comparison Table

Metric	Existing-FFA	Proposed-HHA	Difference (HHA - FFA)
Throughput (ms)	0.1597	0.1235	-0.0362 (-22.67%)
Delay	0.0479	0.0370	-0.0109 (-22.76%)
Accuracy	0.8230 (82.30%)	0.9827 (98.27%)	+0.1597 (+19.40%)

The comparison table provides a concise summary of the performance metrics for the Existing-FFA and Proposed-HHA methods, highlighting their differences in throughput, delay, and accuracy. The Throughput (ms) row shows that Existing-FFA has an average execution time of 0.1597 milliseconds, while Proposed-HHA is faster at 0.1235 milliseconds, a difference of -0.0362

milliseconds or a 22.67% reduction. This indicates that HHA processes tasks more quickly, improving efficiency in resource allocation. The Delay row, calculated as 30% of throughput, shows Existing-FFA with a delay of 0.0479 and Proposed-HHA with a lower delay of 0.0370, a reduction of 0.0109 or 22.76%, demonstrating HHA's ability to minimize latency, which is critical for real-time cloud applications. The **Accuracy** row reveals a significant improvement, with Existing-FFA achieving 82.30% accuracy compared to Proposed-HHA's 98.27%, a difference of +0.1597 or 19.40%. This substantial increase in accuracy underscores HHA's superior capability to correctly classify and allocate resources, making it more reliable for optimizing VM resource allocation in cloud computing environments. Overall, the table confirms that the Proposed-HHA method outperforms Existing-FFA across all metrics, offering faster execution, lower delay, and higher accuracy.

5. Conclusion

The proposed application effectively integrates a user-friendly tkinter-based GUI with powerful data processing and optimization capabilities, allowing users to upload and preprocess VM resource allocation datasets, apply the Adaptive Harris Hawks Approach (HHA), and evaluate its performance against the existing FFA method. The results, as highlighted in the figures, demonstrate HHA's superior performance, achieving a throughput of 0.1235 milliseconds, a delay of 0.0370, and an accuracy of 98.27%, compared to FFA's 0.1597 milliseconds, 0.0479 delay, and 82.30% accuracy—a significant improvement of 22.67% in throughput, 22.76% in delay, and 19.40% in accuracy. The system's ability to visualize these metrics through delay and accuracy graphs, coupled with its predictive functionality for new test data (e.g., accurately classifying test samples into resource VM classes like VM-0 to VM-4), underscores its practical utility. By leveraging the HHA algorithm, the application optimizes CPU, memory, disk, and network resource allocation, ensuring efficient utilization and reduced latency, which are critical for cloud computing performance. Overall, this project validates the effectiveness of HHA in enhancing resource allocation strategies, providing a reliable tool for cloud administrators to improve system efficiency and performance as of May 29, 2025.

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