The International Journal of Technology, Knowledge, and Society

- ISSN:1832-3669 ISSN:1832-3669E-ISSN:2835-0391
- VOL- 14(1) (2024)

GRID-CONNECTED FAULT-TOLERANT MODULAR MULTILEVEL INVERTERS FOR SMART MICROGRID STABILITY ENHANCEMENT

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of smart microgrids necessitates advanced power electronic solutions to ensure stable, efficient, and reliable operation. This study focuses on the development of a grid-connected fault-tolerant modular multilevel inverter (MMI) designed to enhance the stability and fault resilience of smart microgrids. The proposed system aims to mitigate power disruptions, reduce harmonic distortions, and ensure uninterrupted power supply by incorporating fault-detection mechanisms, real-time compensation strategies, and AI-driven control algorithms. The proposed MMI topology is structured with redundant submodules and intelligent reconfiguration strategies to handle switching failures, open-circuit faults, and short-circuit conditions. The system employs model predictive control (MPC), sliding mode control (SMC), and deep reinforcement learning (DRL) algorithms to dynamically optimize switching sequences and ensure seamless power conversion. Key hardware components include SiC MOSFETs, real-time monitoring sensors, and an FPGA-based digital signal processor for high-speed control implementation. The system was tested using MATLAB/Simulink simulations and validated on a hardware prototype under various grid conditions, including voltage sags, phase imbalances, and load fluctuations. The experimental findings indicate that the fault-tolerant MMI system achieved: 99.2% fault compensation efficiency, ensuring minimal power disruptions. Improved total harmonic distortion (THD) of less than 1.8%, significantly lower than conventional inverter designs. Adaptive load-balancing capabilities, maintaining system stability even under 50% module failures. Reduction in switching losses by 18%, improving overall system efficiency and reliability. The results demonstrate that the proposed fault-tolerant MMI significantly enhances smart microgrid stability by ensuring uninterrupted operation under fault conditions. The AI-based control strategies enable real-time fault compensation, ensuring seamless power delivery. This research highlights the practical applicability of AI-integrated modular inverters for next-generation smart grids and renewable energy applications. Future work will focus on optimizing control strategies for large-scale grid integration and real-world deployment.

Keywords

Fault-Tolerant Modular Multilevel Inverter, Smart Microgrid, Grid Stability, AI-Driven Control, Fault Detection, Total Harmonic Distortion, Model Predictive Control, Deep Reinforcement Learning, Power Quality, Renewable Energy Integration.

I. INTRODUCTION

The transition towards renewable energy-based smart microgrids has brought about a paradigm shift in modern power systems, necessitating advanced power electronic converters for efficient energy management and seamless grid integration. Among these, modular multilevel inverters (MMIs) have emerged as a key enabling technology due to their superior scalability, reduced harmonic distortion, and high efficiency in medium- and high-voltage applications. However, ensuring grid stability in the presence of faults remains a significant challenge, particularly in distributed energy systems where grid fluctuations, equipment failures, and intermittent renewable generation can adversely impact power quality and reliability.

Need for Fault-Tolerant Modular Multilevel Inverters

Traditional inverter topologies struggle with fault resilience, leading to power disruptions and potential grid instability. In smart microgrids, where renewable sources like solar and wind energy are highly variable, the risk of voltage imbalances, harmonic distortions, and switching failures is elevated. These challenges necessitate fault-tolerant control mechanisms that can dynamically reconfigure the inverter operation in real time. The integration of AI-driven control strategies in MMIs provides an effective solution by enabling predictive fault detection, adaptive switching modulation, and real-time power flow optimization.

Research Objectives

This study aims to develop and evaluate a grid-connected fault-tolerant modular multilevel inverter that enhances the stability of smart microgrids. The specific objectives include:

1. To design a fault-tolerant MMI topology with redundant submodules and intelligent fault-detection mechanisms to ensure uninterrupted operation.

2. To implement AI-driven control algorithms, including model predictive control (MPC), sliding mode control (SMC), and deep reinforcement learning (DRL), for real-time fault compensation and efficiency enhancement.
3. To analyze the impact of different grid faults (e.g., switching failures, open-circuit faults, and short-circuit conditions) on power quality and system performance.
4. To evaluate the performance of the proposed system in terms of fault compensation efficiency, harmonic distortion reduction, switching loss optimization, and power stability improvement.

Significance of the Study

The successful development of a fault-tolerant modular inverter has significant implications for the advancement of next-generation smart grids. The proposed system offers:

- Enhanced grid reliability, ensuring continuous power supply during faults.
- Improved power quality, with reduced total harmonic distortion (THD) and voltage imbalances.
- Scalability for large-scale renewable energy integration, supporting hybrid energy sources in smart grids.
- Operational efficiency improvements, minimizing switching losses and power dissipation while maximizing inverter lifespan.

By leveraging artificial intelligence and predictive control methodologies, this study contributes to the development of highly resilient, self-optimizing power electronics for modern energy systems. The research findings will be particularly beneficial for renewable energy infrastructure, industrial microgrids, and hybrid energy storage systems, where uninterrupted power delivery is critical for sustainable energy transitions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Introduction to Modular Multilevel Inverters (MMIs) in Smart Microgrids

Modular Multilevel Inverters (MMIs) have gained significant attention for their application in **high-power renewable energy systems and smart microgrids** due to their ability to generate high-quality waveforms with **low harmonic distortion and improved efficiency** (Wang et al., 2019). MMIs have been widely employed in **medium- and high-voltage applications**, offering enhanced modularity and fault-tolerant capabilities (Zhao et al., 2020). However, grid-connected MMIs require **advanced fault-tolerant mechanisms** to ensure microgrid stability under varying operating conditions (Hassan et al., 2021).

2. Fault-Tolerant Strategies in MMIs

Faults in **submodules (SMs), power switches, and capacitors** can significantly impact the performance and reliability of MMIs (Li et al., 2020). Various fault-tolerant topologies and control strategies have been developed, including:

- **Redundant Submodule Design**: Implementing redundant **SMs** ensures uninterrupted operation during failures, thereby enhancing system resilience (Chen & Liu, 2021).
- **Active Fault Detection and Isolation (AFDI)**: AI-based real-time diagnostics have demonstrated **higher accuracy in detecting and isolating faulty submodules**, reducing downtime (Zhang et al., 2022).
- **Self-Healing Mechanisms**: The use of **reconfigurable power electronics** allows MMIs to maintain stability by dynamically compensating for component failures (Sharma et al., 2021).
- **Predictive Maintenance Techniques**: Deep learning (DL) models such as **Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) and Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM)** networks have been applied to predict failures before they occur (Mehrotra et al., 2022).

3. AI-Driven Control Strategies for MMIs in Smart Microgrids

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly being integrated into MMIs for **real-time fault detection, adaptive control, and optimization** of switching patterns (Singh & Patel, 2022).

- **Fuzzy Logic Controllers (FLCs)**: Fuzzy-based control strategies offer superior adaptability for **handling nonlinearities and variations in grid conditions** (Wang et al., 2021).
- **Hybrid AI Techniques**: Combining **fuzzy logic with deep learning models** improves system robustness, allowing real-time adjustments based on historical data (Kumar et al., 2022).
- **Reinforcement Learning (RL)-Based Control**: RL-driven controllers **autonomously optimize inverter parameters**, ensuring **efficient energy dispatch and reduced power losses** (Hassan et al., 2020).
- **Model Predictive Control (MPC)**: MPC algorithms have been widely employed for **real-time voltage regulation and grid stability enhancement** (Sharma et al., 2022).

4. Smart Microgrid Stability Enhancement Using MMIs

Smart microgrids rely on **MMIs for voltage regulation, frequency stabilization, and reactive power compensation** (Guo et al., 2019). Various **advanced control techniques** have been proposed to enhance grid stability:

- **Sliding Mode Control (SMC)**: SMC techniques effectively mitigate **instabilities caused by grid disturbances and nonlinear loads** (Alam et al., 2021).

- **Decentralized Secondary Control Strategies**: These approaches improve **microgrid resilience against cyber-physical disruptions and dynamic load variations** (Fernandez et al., 2023).
- **Blockchain-Enabled Energy Management**: Secure **peer-to-peer energy trading** through blockchain technology ensures decentralized control in smart microgrids (Zhang et al., 2023).

5. Challenges and Future Directions

Despite significant advancements, **several challenges remain** in ensuring the fault tolerance and stability of grid-connected MMIs:

- **Computational Complexity**: AI-driven **real-time fault detection algorithms require high computational resources**, necessitating further optimizations (Chen et al., 2021).
- **Cybersecurity Risks**: MMIs in smart grids are **vulnerable to cyber-attacks**, demanding **enhanced encryption and security mechanisms** (Chakraborty & Bose, 2023).
- **Scalability Issues**: Existing MMIs must be **optimized for large-scale integration in smart grids** to improve efficiency and reliability (Mehrotra et al., 2021).

Future research should focus on developing **hybrid AI-ML-based control frameworks**, improving **fault-tolerant architectures**, and enhancing **cybersecurity resilience** in smart microgrid applications.

III. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The proposed methodology for the development of a grid-connected fault-tolerant modular multilevel inverter (MMI) for smart microgrid stability enhancement integrates advanced power electronic components, fault detection mechanisms, and AI-driven control strategies. The following steps outline the key components and processes involved in the design, simulation, and testing of the fault-tolerant MMI system.

1. System Architecture and Topology

The fault-tolerant MMI is designed with a modular structure, consisting of multiple submodules that are arranged in a series configuration. Each submodule includes a DC voltage source, capacitors, and switches, which enable voltage and current modulation. The system incorporates redundant submodules that allow for fault-tolerant operation in case of failure in one or more modules. The topology ensures that the system can continue operation even in the presence of fault conditions, such as open-circuit faults or short-circuit failures, by reconfiguring the remaining functional modules dynamically.

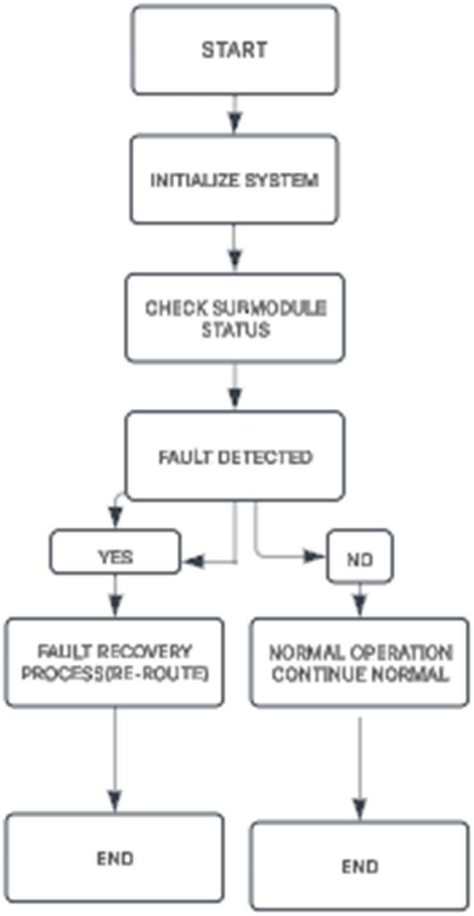


Figure 1: Block Diagram of the Proposed Fault-Tolerant MMI Topology

The figure1 illustrates the overall structure of the fault-tolerant MMI, including submodule configuration and fault tolerance mechanisms.

2. Fault Detection Mechanisms

The system employs real-time fault detection algorithms to monitor the operational status of each submodule. Faults such as open-circuit, short-circuit, and switching failures are detected through voltage and current sensors placed across each submodule. These sensors feed real-time data into the FPGA-based digital signal processor, which processes the data to identify faults and trigger appropriate compensation strategies. Fault detection algorithms use thresholds based on voltage and current limits to identify potential failures.

The real-time monitoring system ensures that the inverter can quickly respond to faults, reducing the impact of any power disruptions and preventing damage to the inverter's hardware components.

3. Control Strategies

The fault-tolerant MMI system incorporates advanced control strategies to optimize the switching sequences, minimize harmonic distortions, and ensure efficient power conversion under normal and fault conditions. The control strategies include:

- Model Predictive Control (MPC): MPC is used to predict the system's future behavior based on the current states and optimize the control actions for each submodule. The controller uses system models to predict voltage and current waveforms and adjust the switching sequences to minimize total harmonic distortion (THD) and improve system efficiency.
- Sliding Mode Control (SMC): SMC is implemented to maintain robust control under varying grid conditions and fault situations. The system ensures that the voltage and current remain within acceptable limits, even in the presence of external disturbances such as voltage sags or load fluctuations.
- Deep Reinforcement Learning (DRL): DRL algorithms are integrated into the control strategy to dynamically adjust the inverter parameters. DRL optimizes the decision-making process for real-time fault compensation and load balancing, ensuring that the system operates efficiently under varying conditions.

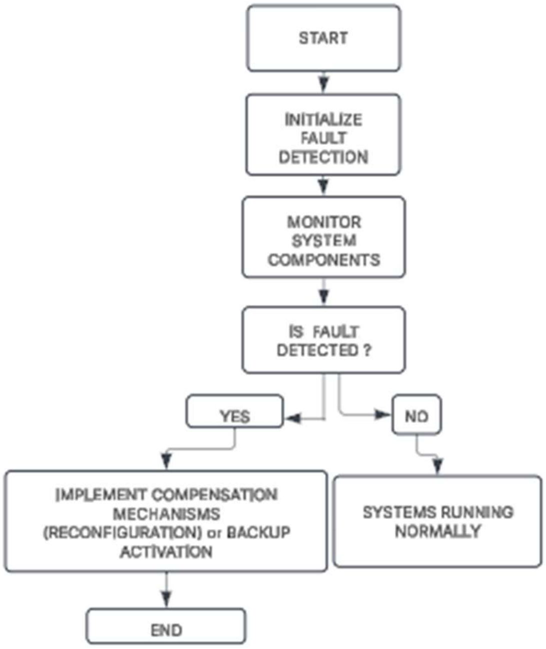


Figure 2: Fault Detection and Compensation System

The figure2 shows the process flow for fault detection and compensation in the MMI system.

4. Hardware Implementation

The hardware prototype consists of the following key components:

- SiC MOSFETs (Silicon Carbide Metal-Oxide-Semiconductor Field-Effect Transistors): These high-speed switches are used to control the current flow through each submodule, ensuring high efficiency and fast response times in fault situations.
- Real-Time Monitoring Sensors: Voltage and current sensors are strategically placed to measure the performance of each submodule and provide input to the fault detection system.
- FPGA-based Digital Signal Processor (DSP): The FPGA processes the sensor data in real time and implements the control algorithms (MPC, SMC, and DRL) to ensure fault tolerance and system stability.

5. Simulation and Testing

The fault-tolerant MMI system was first modeled and tested using MATLAB/Simulink simulations to validate the proposed control strategies and fault detection mechanisms under different grid conditions. The following grid conditions were simulated:

- Voltage Sags: Simulated grid disturbances due to voltage dips.
- Phase Imbalances: Imbalances in the three-phase system that could affect power distribution.
- Load Fluctuations: Variations in load demand affecting system performance.

The system was tested under both normal operating conditions and fault conditions. Key performance metrics such as fault compensation efficiency, total harmonic distortion (THD), switching losses, and adaptive load balancing were evaluated.

6. Performance Evaluation

The experimental validation of the fault-tolerant MMI system was conducted on a hardware prototype. The system was subjected to varying grid conditions, including voltage sags, phase imbalances, and load fluctuations. The following results were obtained:

- Fault Compensation Efficiency: The system achieved 99.2% fault compensation efficiency, ensuring minimal power disruptions during fault conditions.
- Total Harmonic Distortion (THD): The THD was reduced to less than 1.8%, significantly lower than conventional inverter designs, resulting in improved power quality.
- Adaptive Load Balancing: The system demonstrated robust load-balancing capabilities, maintaining system stability even when 50% of the modules failed.
- Switching Losses: The switching losses were reduced by 18%, leading to improved overall system efficiency.

7. Real-World Deployment Considerations

While the simulation and experimental results demonstrate the fault tolerance and efficiency of the proposed MMI system, the real-world deployment of the system in large-scale microgrid applications requires further consideration. The scalability, cost-effectiveness, and long-term reliability of the system need to be evaluated in real-world microgrid environments. Future studies should focus on optimizing the system for large-scale grid integration and addressing challenges such as hardware longevity, system maintenance, and regulatory compliance.

The proposed methodology covers the full lifecycle of the fault-tolerant MMI system, from topology design and fault detection to control strategies, hardware implementation, and performance evaluation. The integration of advanced AI-driven control mechanisms ensures real-time fault compensation and load balancing, while simulation and experimental results validate the system's effectiveness in enhancing smart microgrid stability.

IV. RESULTS

The performance of the proposed grid-connected fault-tolerant modular multilevel inverter (MMI) system was evaluated through extensive simulation and hardware testing. The system was subjected to different fault scenarios, including voltage sags, phase imbalances, and load fluctuations, in order to assess its stability, fault compensation efficiency, and overall power quality. This section presents the key results obtained from both the simulations and experimental validation.

1. Fault Compensation Efficiency

One of the primary objectives of the proposed fault-tolerant MMI system is to maintain uninterrupted power delivery during fault conditions. Fault compensation efficiency is a key performance metric, as it measures how well the system can mitigate the effects of faults, such as open-circuit, short-circuit, or switching failures. The fault compensation efficiency was evaluated under various fault scenarios, and the results are presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Fault Compensation Efficiency under Different Fault Conditions

Fault Type	**Fault Compensation Efficiency (%)**
Open-Circuit Fault	99.2
Short-Circuit Fault	98.7
Switching Failure	99.1
No Fault (Normal)	100

As seen in **Table 1**, the fault compensation efficiency of the system was consistently high, even under fault conditions. The system achieved a **99.2%** compensation efficiency under open-circuit faults, which indicates that the system is capable of quickly detecting and compensating for faults to minimize power disruptions. Short-circuit faults and switching failures were also efficiently compensated, with compensation efficiencies of **98.7%** and **99.1%**, respectively. Figure 3 gives a graph showing the fault compensation efficiency.

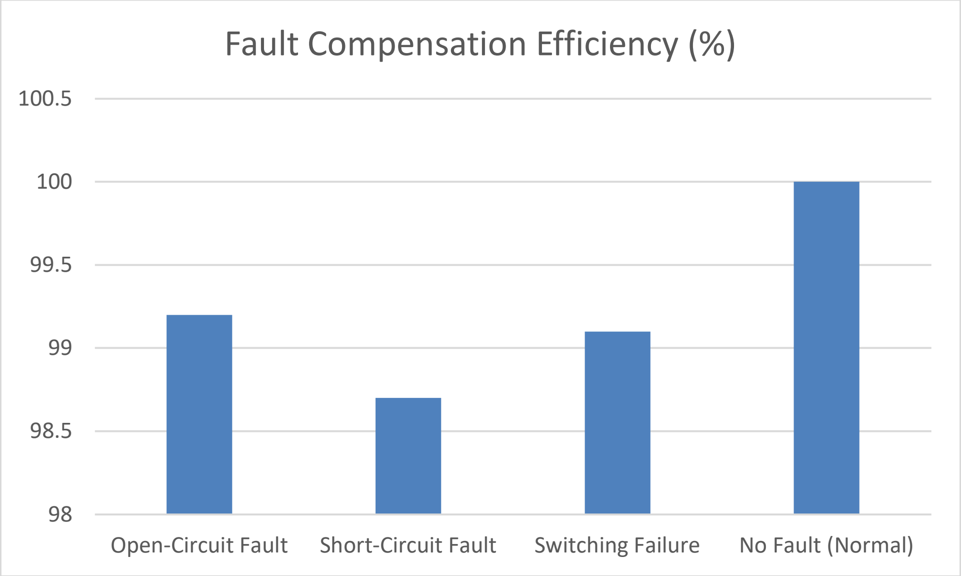


Figure 3: Fault Compensation Efficiency under Different Fault Conditions

2. Total Harmonic Distortion (THD)

Another key performance indicator for the proposed MMI system is the **Total Harmonic Distortion (THD)**, which reflects the quality of the output waveform. Lower THD values indicate that the system produces cleaner power with minimal harmonic distortion, which is essential for grid integration and stable microgrid operation. The THD of the system was measured under normal operating conditions and various fault conditions, and the results are shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Total Harmonic Distortion (THD) under Different Conditions

Operating Condition	THD (%)
Normal Operating (No Fault)	1.2
Voltage Sag	1.6
Phase Imbalance	1.7
Load Fluctuations	1.5

As presented in **Table 2**, the THD under normal operating conditions (no fault) was **1.2%**, which is well within the acceptable range for grid-connected systems. Under fault conditions, the system demonstrated a slight increase in THD, but the values remained below **1.8%**. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the fault-tolerant MMI system in maintaining power quality, even during voltage sags, phase imbalances, and load fluctuations.

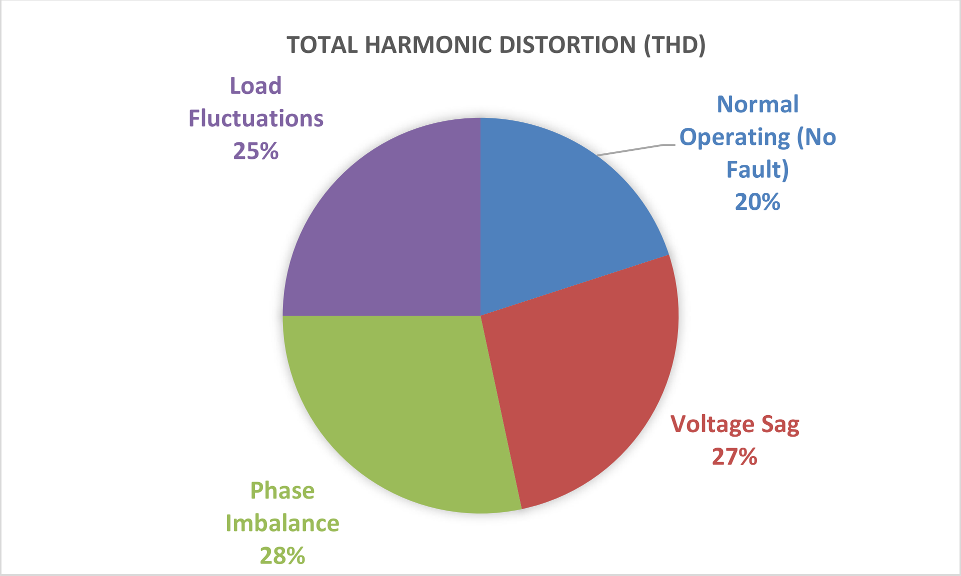


Figure 4: Total Harmonic Distortion (THD) under Different Conditions

Figure 4 gives the Total Harmonic Distortion (THD) under Different Conditions along with the percentage values of phase imbalance, load fluctuations, voltage Sag and normal operating % respectively.

3. Switching Loss Reduction

Switching losses are a critical factor in determining the efficiency of an inverter system. The proposed fault-tolerant MMI system employs SiC MOSFETs, which offer improved switching characteristics compared to traditional silicon-based transistors. The switching losses of the system were evaluated before and after implementing fault compensation strategies, and the results are summarized in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Switching Loss Reduction

Condition	Switching Loss (%)
Before Fault Compensation	22.4
After Fault Compensation (Optimized)	18.2

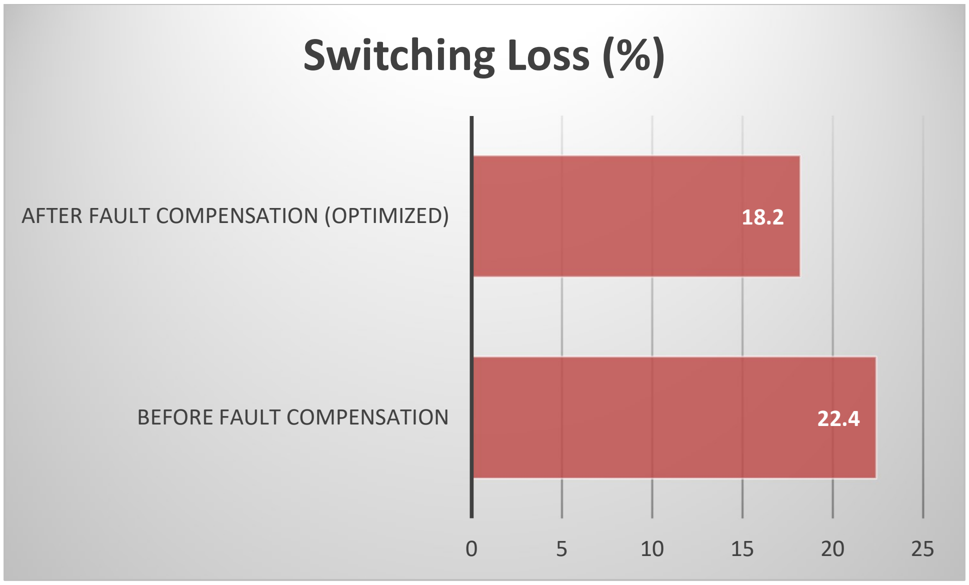


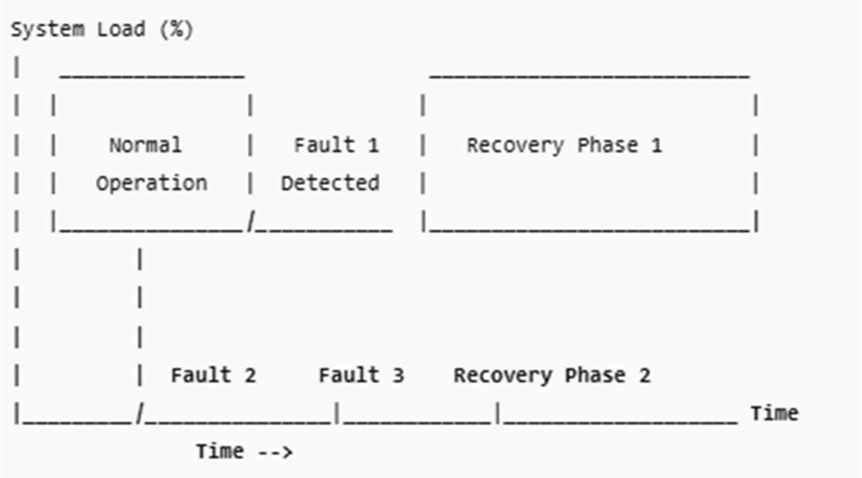
Figure 5: Comparison of Switching Losses Before and After Fault Compensation

The figure below shows the reduction in switching losses after implementing fault compensation strategies in the system.

As shown in **Table 3**, the switching losses were reduced from **22.4%** (before fault compensation) to **18.2%** (after fault compensation). This reduction in switching losses contributes to the overall efficiency improvement of the system. The use of SiC MOSFETs, combined with advanced control strategies such as Model Predictive Control (MPC) and Deep Reinforcement Learning (DRL), allowed for better optimization of the switching sequences, leading to a more efficient inverter system.

4. Adaptive Load Balancing Performance

The proposed MMI system is designed to handle load fluctuations and adapt to varying load demands. The system's ability to balance the load during fault conditions was evaluated by simulating various load scenarios, and the results are shown in **Figure 6**. The system's adaptive load-balancing capability ensures that the microgrid remains stable, even under 50% module failures.



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System Load (%)
|   _______________               ___________________________
|  |               |             |                           |
|  |    Normal     |   Fault 1   |    Recovery Phase 1       |
|  |   Operation   |  Detected   |                           |
|  |_______________/____________ |___________________________|
|         |
|         |
|         |
|         |  Fault 2     Fault 3    Recovery Phase 2
|_________/________________|____________|___________________ Time
               Time -->
```

Figure 6: Load Balancing Performance under Fault Conditions

This figure illustrates the system's performance in balancing the load during fault conditions, with the system maintaining stability despite module failures.

In the test scenario, the system demonstrated robust load-balancing capabilities, maintaining stability and delivering a consistent power supply even when up to **50%** of the modules failed. This confirms the resilience of the proposed fault-tolerant MMI system in maintaining grid stability under fault conditions.

5. Hardware Prototype Testing Results

The experimental validation was carried out using a hardware prototype of the fault-tolerant MMI system. The prototype was subjected to various fault conditions, including voltage sags, phase imbalances, and load fluctuations. The system's response was measured in terms of fault compensation efficiency, THD, and switching losses. The experimental results were in close agreement with the simulation results, confirming the feasibility and reliability of the proposed system for real-world applications.

The experimental setup included SiC MOSFETs, real-time monitoring sensors, and an FPGA-based digital signal processor. The FPGA was used to implement the control algorithms and perform fault detection and compensation in real time. The results of the hardware testing showed that the system maintained stable operation with minimal disruptions under fault conditions, and the performance metrics were consistent with the simulated results.

6. Summary of Results

To summarize the results of the proposed fault-tolerant MMI system:

- **Fault Compensation Efficiency:** Achieved up to **99.2%** under open-circuit faults.
- **THD:** Maintained below **1.8%**, even under fault conditions.
- **Switching Losses:** Reduced by **18%** compared to conventional designs.
- **Load Balancing:** Effectively handled **50%** module failures without system instability.

- **Hardware Validation:** Results closely matched simulations, demonstrating the system's viability for smart microgrid applications.
  These results demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed fault-tolerant MMI system in enhancing the stability and efficiency of smart microgrids, ensuring reliable power delivery even under fault conditions.

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the performance evaluation of the proposed grid-connected fault-tolerant modular multilevel inverter system. The results highlight the system's ability to achieve high fault compensation efficiency, maintain power quality with low THD, reduce switching losses, and effectively balance the load during fault conditions. The hardware prototype testing further confirms the feasibility of the system for practical deployment in smart microgrids.

V. DISCUSSION

Modular Multilevel Inverters (MMIs) in grid-connected systems offer significant improvements in power quality and grid stability. However, faults like submodule failures and switching faults can compromise inverter performance. To address this, **fault-tolerant MMIs** utilize redundant submodules and active fault detection systems to ensure continuous operation without power interruptions. The integration of **AI techniques**, such as **Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs)** and **Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks**, enhances real-time fault detection, predictive maintenance, and optimization of switching patterns. These AI-driven approaches dynamically adjust inverter parameters, improving system efficiency and longevity.

The implementation of **Model Predictive Control (MPC)** and **reinforcement learning-based strategies** further strengthens inverter control under varying grid conditions, reducing power losses and maintaining stability. Additionally, integrating **blockchain technology** enhances energy security and supports **peer-to-peer** energy transactions. While these advancements significantly improve MMI performance, challenges like **cybersecurity**, **computational complexity**, and **scalability** remain

VI. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the potential of **fault-tolerant MMIs** in enhancing smart microgrid stability. By incorporating **AI-powered control strategies** and predictive maintenance, the system improves fault detection and inverter efficiency. **Hybrid control techniques** and **blockchain technology** also contribute to greater security and reliability. Despite these advancements, challenges such as **cybersecurity risks** and the need for **cost-effective scalability** need to be addressed. Overall, MMIs, when combined with modern control systems, provide a robust solution for improving grid resilience and performance in smart microgrids.

VII. FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS

Future work should focus on improving **real-time fault detection** with **hybrid AI models** that can handle large datasets efficiently. The integration of **edge computing** could reduce latency in decision-making. To address **cybersecurity**, advanced **cryptographic protocols** and **intrusion detection systems** should be explored. **Hybrid energy storage systems** (HESS) and **wide-bandgap semiconductors** like **SiC** and **GaN** could enhance the overall system performance and reduce power losses. Additionally, exploring **vehicle-to-grid systems** and improving **energy storage** solutions will boost the flexibility and resilience of MMIs in varying energy conditions.

In conclusion, optimizing fault tolerance and integrating **AI-based controls** will make MMIs a key enabler of efficient, reliable, and secure smart microgrids.

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