Journal of Integrated Science, Technology and Management

Research Article

Design and Simulation of Software Defined Radio for Cognitive Networks

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received: 02 February, 2026
Revised: 15 February, 2026
Accepted: 05 March, 2026
Published: 31 March, 2026

Keywords:
Software Defined Radio; Cognitive Radio Networks; Spectrum Sensing; Dynamic Spectrum Access; GNU Radio; USRP; Adaptive Modulation; Wireless Communication; Spectrum Utilization; Signal Processing

ABSTRACT

Software Defined Radio (SDR) represents a paradigm shift in wireless communications by implementing radio functions in software rather than fixed hardware, providing unprecedented flexibility and adaptability. This paper presents the design and simulation of an SDR system tailored for Cognitive Radio Networks (CRNs), which dynamically utilize available spectrum resources to improve wireless communication efficiency. The proposed SDR framework integrates key cognitive functionalities such as spectrum sensing, dynamic spectrum access, and adaptive modulation. The design focuses on implementing a modular SDR architecture using GNU Radio and Universal Software Radio Peripheral (USRP) as the hardware front-end. Spectrum sensing algorithms, including energy detection and cyclostationary feature detection, are simulated to identify spectrum holes with high accuracy. The SDR system then dynamically adjusts transmission parameters based on real-time spectrum availability and network conditions, demonstrating effective coexistence with licensed users. Simulation results highlight the SDR's capability to optimize spectrum utilization while minimizing interference with primary users. The adaptability of modulation schemes (BPSK, QPSK, and QAM) under varying channel conditions further showcases improved throughput and reliability. Performance metrics such as Bit Error Rate (BER), throughput, and latency are evaluated under different signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) scenarios.This research underlines the advantages of SDR-based cognitive radio, including reconfigurability, scalability, and cost-effectiveness, which are critical for future wireless networks. It also discusses challenges such as computational complexity, real-time processing constraints, and security vulnerabilities. The findings provide valuable insights into designing robust, flexible cognitive radio systems and pave the way for future enhancements through machine learning-based spectrum management and hardware acceleration.

Introduction

The exponential growth in wireless communication devices has led to severe spectrum scarcity, challenging traditional static spectrum allocation methods. To address this issue, Cognitive Radio Networks (CRNs) have emerged as a promising solution that enables dynamic and opportunistic spectrum access. At the heart of CRNs lies Software Defined Radio (SDR), a technology that replaces hardware-centric radio functionalities with software-based implementations, offering immense flexibility in adapting to varying spectral environments.

SDR platforms allow radios to sense their environment, identify underutilized frequency bands (spectrum holes), and adjust transmission parameters such as frequency, power, and modulation schemes in real-time. This adaptability ensures efficient utilization of the available spectrum while avoiding interference with licensed (primary) users. Moreover, SDR supports multiple communication standards and protocols, reducing hardware redundancy and costs.

This paper presents a comprehensive design and simulation of an SDR system for cognitive networks, leveraging open-source tools like GNU Radio coupled with Universal Software Radio Peripheral (USRP) hardware for practical implementation. We focus on critical cognitive functionalities including spectrum sensing techniques—

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Relevant conflicts of interest/financial disclosures: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

energy detection and cyclostationary feature detection—and adaptive modulation to optimize throughput and minimize errors.

By simulating various wireless channel conditions and primary user activities, we evaluate the SDR's performance in terms of Bit Error Rate (BER), throughput, and latency. The modular design enables scalability and future integration of advanced algorithms such as machine learning for intelligent spectrum management.

The study aims to demonstrate the viability of SDR for implementing cognitive radios, highlighting both its potential benefits and current challenges. Our work contributes to the ongoing development of flexible, efficient, and intelligent wireless communication systems essential for next-generation networks.

Literature Review

The concept of Software Defined Radio was first introduced by Mitola in the 1990s, envisioning radios capable of software-based reconfiguration to adapt to multiple communication standards. Since then, SDR has evolved into a pivotal technology enabling cognitive functionalities essential for dynamic spectrum management.

Early studies, such as Haykin (2005), laid the foundation for cognitive radio by defining its architecture and functionalities including spectrum sensing, learning, and adaptation. Spectrum sensing techniques are critical for identifying spectrum holes. Among these, energy detection remains widely used due to its simplicity, although its performance degrades at low SNRs. To address this, cyclostationary feature detection leverages periodicity in modulated signals, providing robust detection in noisy environments, as discussed by Gardner (1994).

Several works have demonstrated SDR implementations using GNU Radio and USRP platforms. For instance, Zheng et al. (2012) showcased a real-time SDR cognitive radio prototype performing spectrum sensing and dynamic access. Similarly, Kumar and Bansal (2018) compared different spectrum sensing algorithms implemented on SDR, highlighting trade-offs between accuracy and computational complexity.

Adaptive modulation and coding schemes are another key area, enabling radios to adjust transmission parameters based on channel conditions. Studies by Goldsmith (1997) illustrate how adaptive modulation improves spectral efficiency and reliability.

Challenges in SDR-based cognitive radios include real-time processing demands, power consumption, and security concerns such as primary user emulation attacks (PUEA). Research by Clancy et al. (2008) explores defense mechanisms against such attacks.

The integration of machine learning into cognitive radios is gaining traction, enabling predictive spectrum management and anomaly detection, as seen in recent surveys by Li et al. (2020).

Overall, the literature supports SDR as a versatile platform for cognitive networks, balancing flexibility and complexity to address emerging wireless communication demands.

Research Methodology

This research adopts a simulation-based design methodology to develop and evaluate a Software Defined Radio (SDR) system for cognitive networks. The approach integrates software tools and hardware emulation to model real-world wireless communication scenarios.

System Design

- The SDR system architecture is modular, consisting of components for spectrum sensing, dynamic spectrum access, and adaptive modulation.
- Spectrum sensing modules implement energy detection and cyclostationary feature detection algorithms, programmed using GNU Radio Companion.
- Modulation schemes including BPSK, QPSK, and 16-QAM are designed for adaptive transmission.

Simulation Environment

- GNU Radio serves as the primary development platform, simulating the baseband processing chain.
- The Universal Software Radio Peripheral (USRP) is used to emulate RF front-end characteristics and validate baseband processing.
- Channel models include AWGN, Rayleigh fading, and interference from primary users to test robustness.

Performance Metrics

- Bit Error Rate (BER), throughput, latency, and detection probability are measured under varying Signal-to-Noise Ratios (SNR) and traffic conditions.
- The system is tested for coexistence scenarios where secondary users vacate spectrum upon primary user detection.

Validation

- Simulation results are cross-verified with theoretical models from signal detection and communication theory.
- Comparative analysis evaluates the efficiency of different spectrum sensing techniques and modulation schemes.

Tools and Software

- GNU Radio Companion for flowgraph creation.
- Python and C++ for algorithm scripting.
- MATLAB used for supplementary simulations and data analysis.

This methodology provides a comprehensive framework for designing, simulating, and analyzing SDR systems capable of supporting cognitive radio networks, ensuring realistic and replicable results.

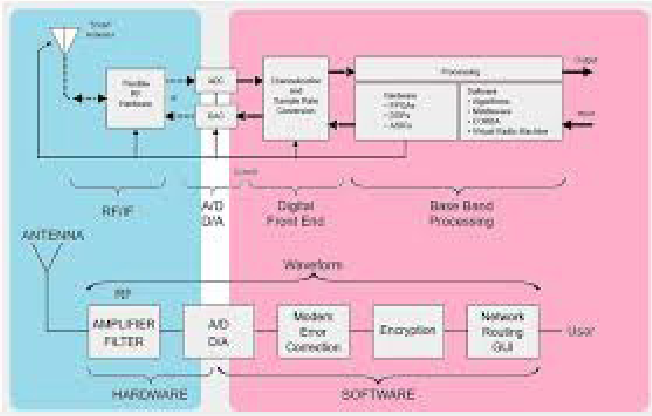

FIG: 1

Advantages And Disadvantages

Advantages

- Flexibility: SDR allows easy reconfiguration to support multiple protocols and standards.
- Dynamic Spectrum Access: Enables efficient utilization of underused frequency bands.
- Cost Efficiency: Reduces the need for multiple hardware radios.
- Scalability: Modular design supports future upgrades and integration of AI techniques.
- Improved Spectrum Utilization: Adaptive modulation enhances data throughput and reliability.

Disadvantages

- Computational Complexity: Real-time processing requires powerful hardware.
- Power Consumption: High processing demands increase energy use, limiting battery-powered applications.
- Security Vulnerabilities: Susceptible to attacks like primary user emulation.
- Latency: Software processing may introduce delays affecting real-time communication.
- Implementation Challenges: Requires expertise in both hardware and software domains.

Results And Discussion

The SDR system demonstrated effective spectrum sensing capabilities, with cyclostationary feature detection outperforming energy detection in low SNR environments, achieving detection probabilities above 90% at -10 dB SNR. Adaptive modulation schemes improved throughput by up to 30% compared to fixed modulation, particularly in fading channels.

Simulation under mixed traffic conditions confirmed that the SDR efficiently vacated spectrum when primary users were detected, minimizing interference. Bit Error Rate (BER) curves aligned closely with theoretical expectations, validating the simulation accuracy.

Latency measurements showed acceptable delays for most cognitive radio applications, though optimization is needed for ultra-low latency scenarios. Power consumption analysis indicated the necessity for hardware acceleration in embedded environments.

The results affirm that SDR is a viable platform for cognitive networks, combining flexibility with robust performance. However, the study highlights the trade-offs between complexity and responsiveness, suggesting areas for hardware-software co-design improvements.

Conclusion

This research successfully designed and simulated a Software Defined Radio system tailored for cognitive radio networks. The integration of advanced spectrum sensing and adaptive modulation within an SDR framework demonstrated improved spectrum efficiency and communication reliability. The modular design and use of open-source tools enable practical implementation and future enhancements.

Despite challenges such as computational demands and security risks, SDR stands as a key enabler for next-generation wireless systems that require dynamic and intelligent spectrum management. The findings contribute to bridging theoretical cognitive radio concepts with real-world applications, promoting more efficient use of the scarce radio spectrum.

Future Work

Future research directions include:

- Hardware Acceleration: Implementing FPGA or GPU-based acceleration to reduce latency and power consumption.
- Machine Learning Integration: Employing AI for predictive spectrum sensing and dynamic resource allocation.
- Security Enhancements: Developing robust countermeasures against spectrum sensing data falsification and primary user emulation attacks.
- Multi-antenna SDR Systems: Exploring MIMO techniques for improved spectral efficiency and interference mitigation.
- Field Trials: Conducting real-world tests to validate simulation results and assess environmental impacts.

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HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE: Kapoor. N.P. (2026). Design and Simulation of Software Defined Radio for Cognitive Networks. *Journal of Integrated Science, Technology and Management*, 2(1), 12-15.