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Hybrid free-space optical and radio frequency communication system for better connectivity

Nabeil A. Abujnah *
Communication Engineering Department, Faculty of Engineering, Azzaytuna University, Libya

*Corresponding author: n.abujnah39@gmail.com

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Abstract:
With the increasing demand for high-speed and reliable communication networks, hybrid free space optical (FSO) and radio frequency (RF) systems offer a promising solution to enhance connectivity in diverse environments. This paper offers an in-depth analysis of hybrid FSO-RF communication systems, examining their design, operational principles, and performance under different environmental conditions. FSO communications, characterized by high bandwidth and low interference, often face reliable problems in bad weather conditions. In contrast, RF communication provides stable performance but is limited by low data rates and sensitivity to interference. By combining these technologies, hybrid systems can benefit from the benefits of both, ensuring faster data transfer with more reliability. This study discusses the architecture of hybrid systems, focuses on switching mechanisms that improve signal quality based on environmental factors, and estimates performance metrics such as data rates, delays, and error rates. Additionally, current applications in urban, rural, and emergency response scenarios are highlighted, as well as future directions for integrating hybrid systems with emerging technologies such as 5G and 6G. The results suggest that hybrid FSO-RF systems may play a transformative role in modern telecommunications, providing robust connectivity solutions suitable for different use cases.

Keywords: hybrid communication system, free space optical communication, radio frequency communication, FSO-RF hybrid, data rate optimization, connectivity enhancement, telecommunications, 5G, 6G, signal switching mechanism, performance evaluation.

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نظام اتصالات هجين عبر الترددات الضوئية واللاسلكية في الفضاء الحر لتحسين الاتصال

نبيل عبد الجليل أبوجناح *
قسم هندسة الاتصالات، كلية الهندسة، جامعة الزيتونة، ليبيا

الملخص
مع الطلب المتزايد على شبكات الاتصالات عالية السرعة والموثوقة، تقدم أنظمة الفضاء الحر الهجينة الضوئية (FSO) وترددات الراديو (RF) حلاً واعدًا لتعزيز الاتصال في بيئات متنوعة. تقدم هذه الورقة تحليلاً متعمقًا لأنظمة الاتصالات الهجينةFSO-RF ، مع فحص تصميمها ومبادئ تشغيلها وأدائها في ظل ظروف بيئية مختلفة. غالبًا ما تواجه اتصالاتFSO ، التي تتميز بنطاق ترددي عالٍ وتداخل منخفض، مشاكل

موثوقة في ظروف الطقس السيئة. على النقيض من ذلك، توفر اتصالات RF أداءً مستقرًا ولكنها محدودة بمعدلات بيانات منخفضة وحساسية للتداخل. من خلال الجمع بين هذه التقنيات، يمكن للأنظمة الهجينة الاستفادة من فوائد كليهما، مما يضمن نقل البيانات بشكل أسرع مع مزيد من الموثوقية. تناقش هذه الدراسة بنية الأنظمة الهجينة، وتركز على آليات التبديل التي تعمل على تحسين جودة الإشارة بناءً على العوامل البيئية، وتقدر مقاييس الأداء مثل معدلات البيانات والتأخيرات ومعدلات الخطأ. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يتم تسليط الضوء على التطبيقات الحالية في سيناريوهات الاستجابة الحضرية والريفية والطوارئ، بالإضافة إلى الاتجاهات المستقبلية لدمج الأنظمة الهجينة مع التقنيات الناشئة مثل G 5 و6 .Gتشير النتائج إلى أن أنظمة FSO-RF الهجينة قد تلعب دورًا تحويليًا في الاتصالات الحديثة، حيث توفر حلول اتصال قوية مناسبة لحالات استخدام مختلفة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نظام اتصالات هجين، اتصالات بصرية في الفضاء الحر، اتصالات تردد الراديو، هجين FSO-RF، تحسين معدل البيانات، تحسين الاتصال، الاتصالات، G5، G6، آلية تبديل الإشارة، تقييم الأداء.

Introduction

In our hyperconnected world, reliable, fast communication is not just a luxury but a must. Every day, billions of devices connect people, places, and services, including how we live, work, and interact. The Internet of Things (IoT) calls for consistent, high bandwidth data flow, while industries from healthcare to finance rely on robust networks for real-time communication and decision-making. But as these demands grow, traditional communication systems often struggle to keep up. Environmental constraints, bandwidth limitations, and physical constraints often disrupt or impair connectivity, revealing significant limitations in our existing infrastructure (Al-Jilani et al., 2021). To meet the growing needs of modern connectivity, researchers have turned to an innovative solution: hybrid free space optical (FSO) and radio frequency (RF) communication systems. Combining the different advantages of FSO and RF, these hybrid systems promise connectivity that is both fast and flexible, filling the gap left by standalone technologies.

Free space optical communication is known for its ability to transmit data using focused light beams through open space. It offers impressive bandwidth and is immune to electromagnetic interference, which makes it ideal for fast, high-density data transfer (Yusal et al., 2019). This technology thus allows data to flow through invisible fiber, which gives immense potential for applications that require rapid data exchange, such as video streaming and cloud computing (Ghasmeloy et al., 2021). Still, FSO is fragile in a way that's hard to ignore. Environmental factors such as fog, rain, and even dust can disperse or block light signals, reduce signal quality or completely disconnect communication. FSO works beautifully in ideal weather but becomes unreliable in conditions that are not uncommon, especially in urban or industrial environments (Farzadi et al., 2021).

Radio frequency communication, on the other hand, is known for its robustness. Unlike FSO, RF can penetrate walls, trees, and even dense urban infrastructure. It resists weather, has the ability to maintain stable connectivity in rain or fog, and is suitable for cellular and satellite networks that require reliable coverage over wide areas (Huang et al., 2020). However, RF is not without its limitations. Operating on limited bandwidth compared to FSOs, RF systems are often limited by lower data rates, and they are more susceptible to interference, especially in crowded settings where devices compete for the same frequency range. In dense urban centers, where the demand for connectivity is high, RF systems may fail to provide consumers with uninterrupted speed and quality expectations (Kaushal et al., 2017).

These limitations show that FSO and RF, although each powerful in their own right, are often left behind when used independently. Insert a hybrid FSO-RF system, a technology that combines the best of both worlds. Hybrid systems can automatically switch between FSO and RF depending on environmental conditions, maintaining data flow without losing bats. Imagine a smooth transition: on a clear day, the system relies on FSO for its unprecedented speed. But as the storm arrives, the system detects a change in conditions and leads to RF, making sure the contact is not shaky. This harmony is more than just easy. This is important in applications where continuity is most important whether emergency response, autonomous vehicles, or remote monitoring (Al-Jilani et al., 2021).

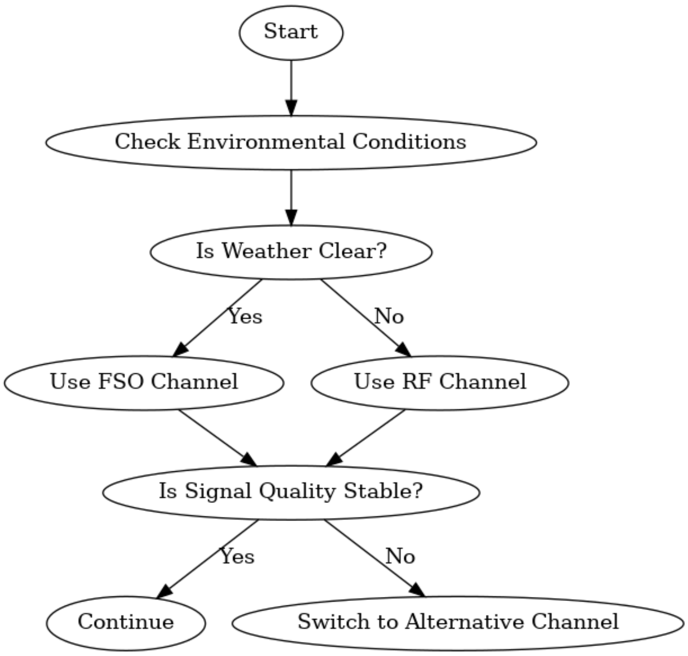

Figure 1 Flowchart of the decision-making process in hybrid systems.

Hybrid systems have unique advantages in different environments. In urban settings, they revolve around barriers such as buildings and other structures, dynamically choosing the best channel for uninterrupted service. In rural or remote areas, where infrastructure may be limited or unreliable, hybrid systems offer a lifeline, maintaining stable communication links that traditional systems struggle to provide (Ghasmeloy et al., 2021). Applications grow even more: In disaster response scenarios, where networks are often compromised, a hybrid system can establish a reliable communication pathway critical to connectivity and relief efforts. By combining the strengths of FSO and RF, hybrid systems provide a versatile and flexible communication solution that suits a wide range of scenarios from busy cities to isolated areas.

This paper highlights the design, functionality, and capability of hybrid FSO-RF systems, exploring how they are designed to change connectivity. We will examine the technical complexities that allow these systems to operate flexibly, seamlessly shifting according to the demand for terms between FSO and RF. In addition to technical, we will also look at real-world applications and evaluate the performance of hybrid systems in a variety of environments from urban centers to rural communities. With advances in technologies such as 5G and the expected rollout of 6G, hybrid systems can play an important role in the future of connectivity, bridging the gap between FSO speed and RF reliability (Huang et al., 2020).

Finally, hybrid FSO-RF communication systems represent a response to the modern world's critical need for stable, fast connections in the face of unforeseen circumstances. As this paper will show, these systems not only address the limitations of traditional communication technologies but also open the door to new possibilities for reliable connectivity in diverse and challenging environments.

Background and Technical Review

Basics of free space optical communication

Free space optical (FSO) communication has emerged as a promising alternative to traditional radio frequency (RF) and fiber-optic communication systems, which have gained interest for the ability to transmit data through the air using light without the need for physical cables. In an increasingly dependent world on high-speed data transfers, FSO offers a unique solution to support the growing demand for efficient and reliable communications. At its core, the FSO works by transferring data from emitters, such as lasers or LEDs, directly into the photodetector receiver through a narrow beam of modulated light. This approach is similar to the principles behind fiber optic transmission, except that FSO doesn't need an actual fiber. Data travel through open space, making FSO particularly suitable for places where physical cable laying is difficult or impossible (Gross-Malloy et al., 2019). The simplicity of FSO's design demonstrates its sophisticated capability, allowing data to travel faster between fixed points over large distances.

The operation of FSO communication is basically straightforward: the data is encoded in light pulses that transmit air to the receiver, where the signals are decoded back into electrical form. This setup

enables FSO systems to achieve data rates comparable to fiber-optic networks, making it a viable option for faster applications such as cloud computing, video streaming, and real-time data processing. The only requirement for the FSO to work effectively is a clear line of sight between the transmitter and the receiver, which means that the system works best in open spaces or between structures such as high-rise buildings (Kaushal & Kadom, 2017). With data speeds that can rival fiber-optic connections, FSO systems hold considerable promise for filling gaps in urban and remote communication networks, especially when physical infrastructure is limited or expensive to install.
In addition to basic operations, FSO offers specific advantages that set it apart. One of its main advantages is bandwidth capacity. FSO systems are capable of supporting several gigabytes per second, meeting the demand for data-based applications that require substantial throughput. Furthermore, FSO is protected from electromagnetic interference, which makes it ideal for use in dense urban environments where rf spectrum depletion and interference can hinder wireless performance (Aljilani et al., 2021). In situations where other technologies may be sensitive to signal interference, FSO systems offer a reliable alternative that maintains clear, uninterrupted transmission.
However, FSO capabilities have been balanced by limitations that have limited its widespread adoption. The most important of these is the FSO's reliance on the clear line of sight, which means that any physical barrier between the transmitter and the receiver will disrupt the signal. This sensitivity to barriers limits the effectiveness of FSOs in densely populated areas where buildings, trees, and other structures often obstruct direct routes. Additionally, FSO systems require precise alignment between transmitter and receiver, which can be difficult to maintain over long distances or in settings where the structure is exposed to oscillations changing the alignment (Khalighi and Oisel, 2014). While the strength of the FSO is obvious, these operational barriers need to be removed so that it can function effectively as part of a robust communication network.
Environmental factors present a significant challenge for FSO, with atmospheric conditions such as fog, rain, and dust having the potential to adversely affect signal quality. Unlike RF signals, which can pass through barriers and remain relatively stable under different weather conditions, FSO signals are highly sensitive to scattering and absorption by atmospheric particles. Fog in particular is a major problem for FSOs, with dense fog capable of reducing signals greater than 100 dB/km, making transmission almost impossible in specific weather (Kedar and Arnon, 2003). Rain and dust, although less severe than fog, can also affect FSO performance, especially over long distances, requiring coordinated measures within the FSO system to mitigate these effects. Solutions such as power adjustment, beam steering, and spatial diversification, where multiple light beams are used to maintain connections despite interference, are sometimes applied to improve flexibility, although they can increase system cost and complexity (Yosal et al., 2019).
Because of these environmental sensitivities, FSO is most effective when combined with RF in hybrid systems, which allows dynamic switching between FSO and RF based on real-time conditions. In such a setup, the FSO channel is generally preferred in clear conditions to take advantage of its high data rate and performance, while the system can switch to RF when weather conditions worsen, ensuring that the contact remains stable and uninterrupted. By combining complementary features of FSO and RF, hybrid systems can leverage high bandwidth and immunity for FSO interference and RF reliability in adverse conditions, providing a flexible communication solution that is able to adapt to climate change (Kaushal & Kadom, 2017).

Fundamentals of radio frequency communication

Radio frequency (RF) communication has long been a cornerstone of wireless connectivity, which enables data transmission through the propagation of electromagnetic waves. Operating within the radio spectrum, which spans frequencies from about 3 Hz to 300 GHz, RF communications supports a range of technologies ranging from cellular and Wi-Fi networks to satellite and broadcast television (Liu et al, 2020). Unlike free space optical (FSO) communications, which rely on rays of light and require a clear line of sight, RF systems specialize in their ability to penetrate physical barriers, allowing data to travel through walls, buildings, and environmental barriers. This entry capability, combined with RF synchronization across frequency ranges, has made it the backbone of global communication infrastructure (Goldsmith, 2005).
An important feature of RF systems is their versatility in different frequency bands, each suitable for a specific type of communication. Low frequency bands, such as those used for AM radios, are capable of traveling long distances with minimal power but offer limited data rates. The high frequencies used in Wi-Fi and 5G provide a lot of data throughput, but their range is usually small, and they are more susceptible to signal degradation from obstacles. This diversity in operating frequencies allows RF systems to cater to a range of applications ranging from long-distance broadcast communications to high-speed, short-distance data transfer in dense urban environments (Sharma et al., 2021).

The benefits of RF for connectivity are numerous. Perhaps most importantly, rf communications' ability to spread through barriers makes it extremely effective for providing coverage in built-up areas where line-of-sight systems like FSO will struggle. This is necessary in urban environments, where buildings and other physical barriers are prevalent and can easily disrupt other forms of wireless communication. RF communication is also relatively resilient to bad weather conditions. While FSO signals can be badly affected by rain, fog, and dust, RF systems are generally stable under different weather conditions, which contribute to their reliability in maintaining constant connectivity even during storms or heavy rains (Bocardi et al., 2014). This reliability is important for applications that require uninterrupted service, such as emergency response, navigation, and mobile communication.

Rf communication, however, is not without its limitations. One of the most important challenges is the problem of limited bandwidth. The radio spectrum is a limited resource, and as more devices connect to wireless networks, competition for available frequencies intensifies. This reduction is particularly problematic in densely populated areas, where high demand for wireless connectivity can lead to spectrum congestion, resulting in slower speeds and lower quality service for end users (Rappaport et al., 2013). Furthermore, RF signals are vulnerable to electromagnetic interference, especially in environments where multiple devices operate at identical or overlapping frequencies. This interference can disrupt signal clarity and reduce overall communication quality, affecting applications that require stable, fast connections, such as real-time video streaming and data-based IoT services.

Another important factor affecting RF communication is signal propagation, which describes how electromagnetic waves travel in space. RF signals can spread in several ways such as direct line-of-sight, variability around barriers, and reflection on surfaces such as buildings or mountains. These diffusion methods allow RF signals to cover large areas, but they also introduce complications. For example, multipath interference occurs when RF waves reflect multiple levels, reach the receiver at different times and cause signal degradation (Liu et al., 2020). This phenomenon is common in urban areas, where buildings and other structures form reflective surfaces, creating potential delays and distortions in data transfer. Tackling multipath interference often requires the use of advanced technologies such as multiple input multiple output (MIMO) systems and adaptive antennas, which help regulate and reduce signal distortion by combining multiple signals to improve clarity and consistency (Goldsmith, 2005).

The synergy and flexibility of RF communication under different conditions highlights its value in both standalone and hybrid systems. In hybrid FSO-RF settings, RF can serve as a complementary technology for FSO, providing an alternative pathway when FSO's line-of-sight signal is affected by physical disturbances or bad weather. By switching to RF in these situations, hybrid systems can ensure continuous, reliable connectivity, taking advantage of the power of both technologies to overcome limitations in each (Bocardi et al., 2014). The following table summarizes the key features of FSO and RF communication systems, highlighting their strengths and limitations in various factors.

Table 1 Comparison of Free Space Optical (FSO) and Radio Frequency (RF) Communications.

Features	Free Space Optical (FSO)	Radio Frequency (RF)
Bandwidth	High, multiple Gbps capacity	Limited, depending on the available spectrum
Sensitivity to interference	Immunity against electromagnetic interference	Risk of interference from other RF signals
Environmental sensitivities	High, fog, rain, dust and unrest	Resilient to low, bad weather
Ability to enter	Limited, requires a clear line of sight	Can penetrate high-rise buildings, buildings, walls and barriers
Ideal Environment	Clear weather and open spaces	Densely populated areas and various weather conditions
Applications	Rapid data transfer (e.g., streaming, cloud computing)	Wide area and reliable coverage (e.g., cellular, satellite)

As communication needs become more complex, especially in urban environments where the demand for connectivity is high, rf's strong features make it indispensable for modern communication infrastructure.

Hybrid FSO-RF Communication: Concept and Necessity

The growing demand for smooth, fast and reliable communication in diverse environments has highlighted the limitations of standalone technologies such as free space optical (FSO) and radio frequency (RF) communication. Both systems bring unique strengths, FSO provides high bandwidth

and immunity to electromagnetic interference and provides strong connectivity through RF barriers and reliable performance in bad weather conditions. However, every technology has fundamental weaknesses that can disrupt service continuity, such as FSO's sensitivity to environmental interventions and RF's limited bandwidth and congestion vulnerability (Liu et al., 2020). The concept of hybrid FSO-RF communication systems was developed to address these limitations, integrating the strengths of both technologies to create a communication framework that is acceptable, flexible, and in line with the demands of today's increasingly interconnected world.
The hybrid FSO-RF system is designed to dynamically switch between FSO and RF channels based on environmental conditions and connectivity requirements. In a typical hybrid setup, the data is initially routed through the FSO channel, taking advantage of its high data rates when conditions are best. If weather conditions or constraints compromise the FSO link, the system can seamlessly transfer data to the RF channel, and maintain connectivity even in adverse conditions. This adaptive switching mechanism, which monitors real-time conditions and improves channel selection, ensures that communication remains uninterrupted and reliable regardless of environmental challenges (Sharma et al., 2021). By allowing each technology to compensate for the other's weaknesses, hybrid FSO-RF systems maximize efficiency while minimizing obstacles, offering a robust solution for complex communication needs. The following data illustrate the adaptive switching mechanism in hybrid FSO-RF systems:

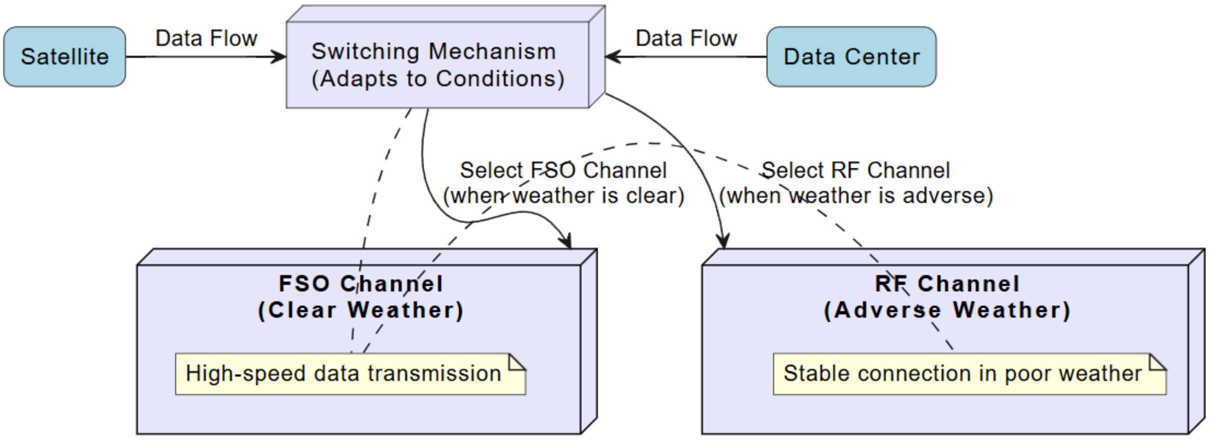

Figure 2 Hybrid FSO-RF system with dynamic switching mechanism.

The benefits of a hybrid system go far beyond just service continuity. They offer a level of versatility that neither FSO nor RF alone can achieve. One of the main advantages is the ability to work effectively in a wide range of environments. Under clear conditions, FSO can provide ultra-high-speed data transfer, which supports bandwidth-rich applications such as cloud computing and high definition streaming. However, when constraints or bad weather interfere, the system moves to RF, which is less affected by these problems and can continue to transmit data through physical constraints and different environmental conditions (Kaushal & Kadom, 2017). This synergy is especially valuable in urban areas, where high-rise buildings, narrow roads, and heavy networks can complicate traffic connectivity, and in remote areas where weather fluctuations and lack of infrastructure pose unique challenges.
The hybrid FSO-RF configuration also enables greater use of the limited radio spectrum. As more devices connect to networks, spectrum congestion has become a major problem in urban areas. By offloading high-capacity data to the FSO channel when conditions allow, hybrid systems help reduce pressure on RF bandwidth, improving the performance of both technologies. This efficient distribution of resources is essential to meeting the needs of densely populated environments, where consumers expect fast, uninterrupted service despite heavy demand on networks.
In addition to civilian applications, hybrid FSO-RF systems are valuable in high-risk or critical contexts, such as disaster response and military operations. In disaster-prone areas, where infrastructure is often compromised, hybrid systems can provide fast and flexible connectivity that supports communication for first responders and coordination teams. The dual-channel approach of the system ensures that connectivity is maintained even when one channel is compromised, it becomes a valuable asset for situations where stable communication is important. Similarly, in military and tactical settings, the ability to switch between FSO and RF channels based on real-time conditions increases both security and reliability. FSO's narrow beam makes transmission difficult to

stop, while RF strength under different conditions ensures that mission critical data can be contacted even when FSO is not available (Bocardi et al., 2014).
The development of hybrid FSO-RF systems represents an important advance in the field of communication technology, especially in the era of 5G and beyond. As connectivity requirements become more complex and diverse, hybrid systems provide a model for the future of flexible, fast communication. They combine the best features of both FSO and RF, offering high data rates, reliable performance, and synergies in challenging environments. Leveraging the power of these technologies, hybrid systems are poised to become a core component of next-generation networks, enabling seamless connectivity for applications ranging from autonomous vehicles and smart cities to emergency response and global data networks.
Hybrid FSO-RF communication systems are not only a solution to the limitations of standalone technologies but also a way to implement more robust and acceptable communication infrastructure. They bring a level of resilience that can meet the demands of today's interconnected world, offering high-performance connectivity that accommodates environmental challenges and improves available resources. As hybrid systems continue to evolve, they have the potential for how we view connectivity, supporting both routine and mission-critical applications more reliably and effectively than ever before.

Literature Review
The development of free space optical (FSO) and radio frequency (RF) communication technologies has followed different but parallel paths, each due to the growing need for fast, flexible and flexible communication systems. FSO technology, which relies on transmitting data through light signals, has its roots in early optical communication experiments. These experiments led to the discovery that light waves could be used to carry data over vast distances, although the concept only began to see practical application in the 20th century as laser and photodetector technologies matured (Kaushal & Kadom, 2017). Meanwhile, RF communication technology has a long history, beginning with the development of radio waves for data transmission in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Rf systems gained a reputation for their ability to cover long distances and penetrate obstacles, providing a reliable means of communication in challenging environments (Liu et al., 2020).
Recent advances in FSO communication technology have been largely due to the demands of modern data heavy applications. Innovations in laser and LED sources, as well as improvements in photodetector sensitivity, have enabled FSO systems to achieve data rates comparable to fiber optic cables, making FSO a viable alternative to high-speed data transfer in urban and remote settings (Hemani & Ali, 2019). In addition, compatible techniques such as beam steering and power adjustment have been introduced to deal with the lack of signals due to environmental challenges, especially fog, rain and other environmental conditions. These developments have expanded the application range of the FSO, making it increasingly relevant to urban connectivity and situations where the installation of physical infrastructure may be impractical.
In the realm of RF communications, recent developments have focused on supporting high-density networks, especially as the urban population and wireless device use are on the rise. Technologies such as 5G and Wi-Fi 6 are designed to manage more data load and reduce delays, enabling faster, more reliable connectivity for users in densely populated areas (Sharma et al., 2021). Furthermore, innovations in spectrum performance, such as millimeter wave frequencies and large-scale multiple input, the use of multiple output (MIMO) technologies have increased RF's ability to handle increased traffic without sacrificing performance (Rappaport et al., 2013). These improvements have strengthened the role of RF as an integral part of modern communication infrastructure, although issues such as bandwidth limitations and interference sensitivity remain.
The concept of hybrid FSO-RF communication systems has emerged as a promising solution that combines the strengths of both FSO and RF technologies. Numerous studies have investigated the ability of hybrid systems to provide fast, flexible connectivity in environments where standalone FSO or RF systems will struggle to perform effectively (Bocardi et al., 2014). Hybrid systems dynamically switch between FSO and RF channels based on real-time conditions, use FSO for high-speed data transfer when conditions are best and transfer to RF when environmental factors such as fog or physical constraints affect FSO transmission. This flexibility allows hybrid systems to maintain constant connectivity, adapting to changing conditions in real time to ensure reliable performance in various applications (Kaushal & Kadom, 2017).
Comparative studies of hybrid and standalone systems have shown that hybrid FSO-RF settings offer significant performance advantages over traditional, single-technology systems. Research has shown that hybrid systems provide higher data rates, better reliability, and greater adaptability to environmental conditions than FSO or RF systems. For example, in urban areas, where RF channels are often congested and susceptible to interference, hybrid systems reduce network pressure by

offloading high-capacity data to FSOs when conditions permit. Similarly, in rural or remote areas, the ability of hybrid systems to run on RF ensures continuous connectivity when FSO is disrupted due to weather conditions (Liu et al., 2020). These comparative analyses point to the advantages of hybrid systems, especially in environments where contact demands are high and conditions are variable.

Despite advances in both standalone and hybrid communication systems, several gaps remain in the current research scenario. An important area for future study is the development of more sophisticated switching algorithms that can seamlessly transition between FSO and RF channels based on predictive environmental modeling. Furthermore, while existing hybrid systems have demonstrated flexibility and synchronization, more research is needed in energy-saving designs that improve power consumption during the switching process. Another gap lies in the integration of hybrid systems with next-generation network technologies, such as 5G and beyond, which will enable FSO-RF systems to support a wider range of applications with better confidence and less latency (Sharma et al., 2021).

System Design and Architecture of Hybrid FSO-RF Systems

Basic components of hybrid communication systems

The design and architecture of hybrid free space optical (FSO) and radio frequency (RF) communication systems combine components from both FSO and RF domains to form a versatile and cohesive network capable of responding to changing environmental conditions. These systems benefit from FSO's high bandwidth and interfering immunity while focusing on RF robustness to ensure connectivity when obstructions or bad weather affect optical transmission. Each component plays a different role in hybrid systems, and understanding the design of these elements is important for appreciating how they work together to provide reliable, fast communication.

At the heart of the hybrid FSO-RF system are the transmitters and receivers of both the FSO and RF channels. FSO transmitters typically consist of high power lasers or light emitting diodes (LEDs) that organize data on light rays, which are then transmitted to the receiver photodetector in the open space. These transmitters require a narrow and highly concentrated ray of light to maintain signal integrity over large distances, a process that is dynamic and sensitive to environmental factors such as fog or dust (Ghasmeloy et al., 2019). At the receiving end, photodetectors capture incoming optical signals and convert them back into electrical signals while completing data transfer. The design of FSO transmitters and receivers requires precise alignment and a clear line of sight, as even minor deviations can disrupt the optical link, requiring innovative mechanisms to maintain path integrity between devices in real time.

In parallel, RF transmitters and receivers operate within the radio spectrum, relying on electromagnetic waves to send and receive data in different environments. Unlike FSOs, RF transmitters are designed to operate at multiple frequencies, allowing them to enter physical barriers such as buildings and environmental particles. These transmitters organize data on RF signals, which spread through the air and reach the RF receiver, where they are demodulated and decoded back into the data. RF systems often use multiple input and multiple output (MIMO) technology to increase data throughput and flexibility, especially in densely populated urban environments where signal interference is common. This resilience to climate change makes RF an invaluable counterpart of FSO in hybrid systems, ensuring that data can still flow unhindered when FSO is temporarily halted due to fog or rain (Bumperd A 2021).

In addition to transmitters and receivers, an important element of hybrid FSO-RF systems exists in signal processing and data conversion modules. These modules serve as the backbone of hybrid systems, facilitating smooth transition between FSO and RF channels based on real-time environmental data. The data conversion process involves encoding and decoding data streams for both optical and RF formats, allowing the system to effectively transfer data traffic between channels. Signal processing modules monitor the quality of both FSO and RF signals, continuously analyzing factors such as signal strength, error rate, and delay to determine the best transmission route. When adverse conditions such as fog reduce the quality of the FSO signal, the signal processing module can automatically redirect the data to the RF channel, minimize interruptions and maintain constant data flow (Kaushal & Kadom, 2017).

Together, these components form the basic design of a hybrid FSO-RF communication system. FSO and RF transmitters and receivers enable dual-mode data transmission, providing flexibility to adapt to different environmental conditions, while signal processing and data replacement ensure a smooth transition between module channels, which is superior for both speed and reliability. This complex integration of FSO and RF technologies represents an important breakthrough in communication systems, as it enables hybrid systems to dynamically adjust to real-world challenges, balancing high-speed connectivity with strong, acceptable performance across different applications.

Architectural types in hybrid FSO-RF systems

The hybrid FSO-RF system is designed with different architectural designs to improve performance under different environmental conditions and operational requirements. The main architectural versions in these systems focus on integrating FSO and RF technologies in ways that maximize flexibility, reliability, and efficiency. These architectures are fundamentally different in their approach to integrating surfaces and configuring FSO and RF channels for parallel or unnecessary use, creating diverse design options that can be tailored to specific application needs.

A prominent architectural version is the integrated FSO-RF architecture, where FSO and RF modules are closely connected within the same system. In this setting, FSO and RF channels work together to transfer data, with an intelligent switching mechanism that determines the most appropriate channel based on real-time environmental and performance assessments (Liu et al., 2020). This close integration is beneficial as it allows for a smooth transition between FSO and RF channels. For example, in clear weather conditions, the system may prefer FSO, benefiting from its high data rate and immunity against RF interference. When environmental conditions such as fog or rain damage the FSO, the system immediately moves to the RF channel, ensuring continuity in data transmission (Kaushal & Kadom, 2017). The integrated approach is especially useful in high-demand environments, such as urban centers, where network resilience and adapting to climate change are critical to maintaining uninterrupted communication.

Another type in hybrid FSO-RF architecture is the distinction between parallel and redundant system configurations. In parallel settings, FSO and RF channels work simultaneously, dividing the data load to improve bandwidth and reduce delays. This setup is especially beneficial for applications that require high throughput and low latency, such as streaming, cloud services, or real-time data sharing. By using both channels together, parallel settings increase the effective bandwidth of the system, taking advantage of the high data rate of the FSO channel to maintain a stable RF connection as a complementary path. Studies have shown that parallel settings increase efficiency in densely populated urban areas, where the RF spectrum is often densely populated, by offloading high-capacity data on the FSO channel whenever possible (Sharma et al., 2021).

In contrast, the creation of redundant systems is reliably designed as a high priority. In these systems, FSO and RF channels don't work simultaneously but instead serve as backups for each other. The system mainly uses one channel, usually FSO, to take advantage of its high-speed capabilities. However, if this primary channel is subjected to interference or degradation, such as reducing signals from environmental factors, the system automatically reroutes data through the RF channel, maintaining contact without delay (Grassmilloy et al., 2019). This redundant approach is especially beneficial in environments that can cause sudden changes in visual or signal clarity, such as coastal or mountainous areas, where fog or weather patterns can be unpredictable. By having RF fallbacks, redundant settings ensure reliable communication in these challenging settings, providing a stable connection that is less susceptible to environmental disruption.

The architectural versions in the hybrid FSO-RF system offer unique advantages that are tailored to different operational requirements. FSO-RF systems integrated with parallel settings are ideal for high-speed applications in urban settings, where it is important to maximize data throughput and reduce delays. Unnecessary configurations, on the other hand, provide an additional layer of flexibility, making them suitable for important applications where continuous contact is most important, such as emergency response or military operations. As hybrid FSO-RF technology progresses, research is underway to improve these architectural versions to further improve performance under different conditions. For example, advances in machine learning and artificial intelligence are being explored to enhance switching mechanisms in these architectures, allowing channel quality prediction to be estimated based on historical and real-time environmental data (Rappaport et al., 2013).

By understanding and selecting appropriate architectural versions, hybrid FSO-RF systems can be developed to meet specific requirements, whether for flexible communication in high-throughput urban environments or unstable areas. This development highlights the flexibility of hybrid FSO-RF systems and its ability to transform communication infrastructure by providing reliable and acceptable solutions to modern connectivity challenges.

Switching mechanism and control algorithm

Switching mechanisms and control algorithms in hybrid FSO-RF communication systems are important for ensuring smooth, uninterrupted connectivity by dynamically selecting the most appropriate channel based on real-time conditions. These mechanisms rely on advanced decision-making processes, performance monitoring, and high-speed, machine learning (ML) applications to improve the system's response to environmental changes and other performance factors.

At the heart of the hybrid FSO-RF switching mechanism is the decision-making process based on environmental conditions. The system monitors factors such as constant visibility, humidity and environmental turbulence, which can affect the quality of the FSO signal. When these conditions worsen such as in the presence of fog or heavy rain the decision-making algorithm redirects data transmission from the FSO channel to the RF channel to maintain signal integrity. This dynamic switching is essential, as it allows hybrid systems to maximize the high data rate of FSO during the clean season while taking advantage of RF stability when there is a risk of attenuation of optical signals (Kaushal & Kadom, 2017). Researchers have developed various algorithms that rely on environmental sensors and border-based decision rules, ensuring that the transition between channels is smooth and minimally disruptive (Gross-Malloy et al., 2019).
Real-time performance monitoring further enhances hybrid system decision-making capabilities by providing consistent feedback on channel quality and system performance. Performance metrics such as signal-to-noise ratio (SNR), delay, and bit error rate (BER) are constantly reviewed, allowing the system to evaluate the utility of each channel at any given moment. When the SNR of the FSO channel falls below the acceptable limit or the delay increases, the system's control algorithm immediately starts switching to the RF channel. Conversely, when conditions get better, the algorithm revisits and can return to the FSO channel to take advantage of its high data throughput. This real-time monitoring and adaptive switching has been shown to be effective in maintaining constant connectivity even in rapidly changing urban and environmental conditions (Liu et al., 2021).
With the rise of machine learning (ML) applications in control algorithms, hybrid FSO-RF systems are evolving to be more predictive and responsive to environmental changes. ML models can analyze historical data on weather patterns, network performance, and environmental factors to predict conditions that may affect FSO signals. For example, supervised learning models have been trained to predict fog density or rainfall intensity based on input from environmental sensors, allowing the system to convert to RF before significantly affecting FSO performance (Sharma and Chatzinots, 2021). Furthermore, reinforcement learning algorithms are being explored for their ability to automatically adapt switching strategies over time, learning the best time to switch between channels based on accumulated environmental data and performance feedback (Zhu et al., 2020). Using ML, hybrid systems can achieve a high level of autonomy and efficiency, improving their adaptability to complex, high-demand scenarios.
As hybrid FSO-RF systems progress, research into more sophisticated switching mechanisms and control algorithms will play an important role in enhancing their effectiveness. Innovation in decision-making based on environmental conditions, real-time performance monitoring, and machine learning applications will improve both system flexibility and data throughput. These developments have the potential to establish hybrid FSO-RF systems as a robust solution for maintaining high-quality communication in urban and remote settings alike, supporting a wide range of applications from emergency response to smart city infrastructure (Zhu et al., 2020).

Energy efficiency and power management in hybrid systems

The hybrid FSO-RF communication system is designed to provide high-performance connectivity by taking advantage of the unique strengths of free space optical (FSO) and radio frequency (RF) channels. However, their dual mode operation and dynamic switching mechanisms present unique challenges in terms of energy efficiency and power management. These systems require careful optimization to balance power consumption with efficiency, ensuring reliable communication without unnecessary energy wastage.
A major factor affecting energy efficiency in hybrid systems is the operational requirements of FSO and RF channels. FSO transmitters, usually laser-diode or LED-based, demand significant energy to produce and replace high-intensity light rays over long distances. This need for electricity increases in bad weather conditions, where an increase in transmission power is necessary to compensate for the lack of signals caused by fog, rain, or dust (Kaushal & Kadom, 2017). Similarly, RF transmitters use energy during the modulation and expansion of radio signals, especially in high frequency bands such as millimeter waves, which require more power to overcome propagation losses (Rappaport et al.,

2013). Balancing these energy needs is essential for hybrid systems to maintain efficiency while supporting high-speed communication.

Table 2 Comparison of power consumption between FSO and RF channels under different operating conditions.

condition	FSO Channel Power Consumption	RF Channel Power Consumption
Clear weather	small	moderate
Foggy conditions	high	moderate
urban environment	moderate	high
Remote places	moderate	moderate

Dynamic power distribution plays a central role in improving energy use in hybrid FSO-RF systems. By continuously monitoring environmental conditions and network requirements, hybrid systems can dynamically adjust the power allocated to the FSO and RF channels. For example, during clear weather conditions, the system may prefer FSO as the primary channel, taking advantage of its energy efficiency under ideal conditions. Conversely, when fog or other environmental factors affect FSO performance, the system can switch to RF while reducing the power output of the FSO transmitter, thus reducing unnecessary energy consumption (Gross-Malloy et al., 2019). This approach ensures that energy use is synchronized with real communication needs, preventing wastage.

In addition to dynamic power distribution, energy-saving switching algorithms are essential for hybrid systems. This algorithm enables the system to make intelligent decisions about when and how to switch between FSO and RF channels, taking into account both energy efficiency and performance requirements. Machine learning models have been explored to improve this decision-making process, using historical data and real-time input to predict climate change and improve switching schedules (Sharma and Chatzinots, 2021). In particular, reinforcement learning techniques have shown promise in learning the best switching strategies that minimize power consumption without compromising data quality (Zhu et al., 2020).

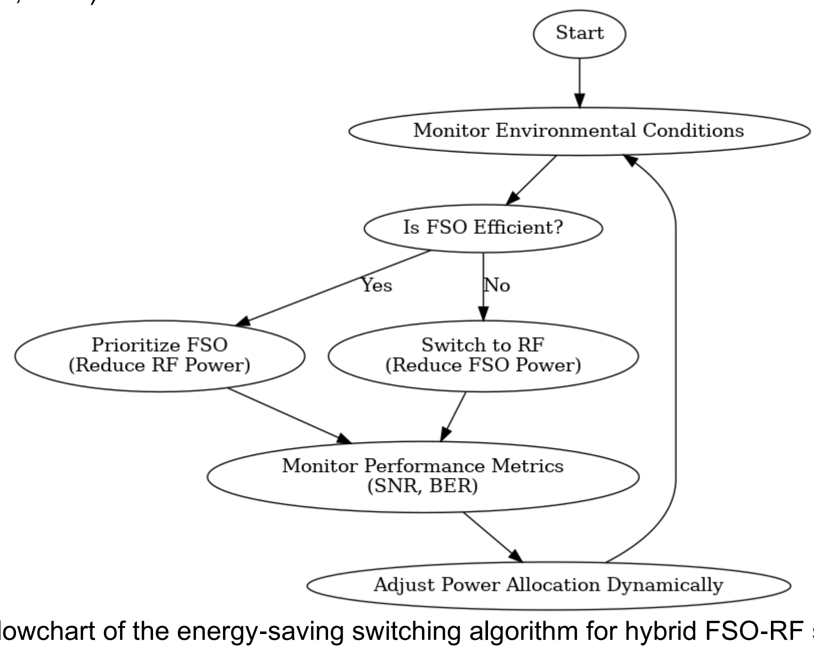

Figure 3 The flowchart of the energy-saving switching algorithm for hybrid FSO-RF systems, shows how the system monitors environmental conditions, evaluates channel performance, and dynamically adjusts power distribution to improve efficiency.

Another important aspect of energy efficiency in hybrid systems is the integration of low-power hardware and energy-saving technologies. Advances in photonic components, such as energy-saving laser diodes and high-sensitivity photodetectors, have reduced the power needs of FSO systems. Similarly, advances in RF hardware, including energy-saving power amplifiers and low-power antennas, have played a role in reducing the energy effects of RF communications (Goldsmith, 2005). These innovations, combined with adaptive power management techniques, allow hybrid systems to provide high-performance communication while maintaining a sustainable energy profile.

Hybrid FSO-RF systems also benefit from energy-aware network design, where power management extends beyond individual transmitters and receivers to the entire network. For example, hybrid systems can use load balancing strategies to distribute data traffic across FSO and RF channels based on their energy efficiency. In situations where energy consumption is a major constraint, such as in battery-operated devices or remote installations, the system may prefer energy-saving channels and minimize the use of electrical components (Dowerk et al., 2024).

As hybrid FSO-RF communication systems continue to develop, energy efficiency and power management will remain important areas of research and innovation. By combining modern switching algorithms, energy-aware hardware, and dynamic power distribution strategies, these systems can achieve a balance between high efficiency and sustainable energy use. Future advances in renewable energy integration and smart grid connectivity could further improve the energy efficiency of hybrid systems, enabling them to support a wide range of applications while reducing environmental impacts.

Performance Review and Comparative Analysis

Key performance metrics for hybrid communication systems

Evaluating the performance of hybrid FSO-RF communication systems involves analyzing key metrics that describe their performance, reliability, and compatibility in a real-world scenario. These systems combine the strengths of free space optical (FSO) and radio frequency (RF) technologies, but their overall effectiveness depends on how well they balance the flexibility of fast data transfer, low latency, and environmental variations. Several important performance metrics should be considered for a comprehensive assessment of their capabilities.

Data rate and bandwidth performance are among the most important metrics for hybrid systems, as they reflect the ability to handle rapid data transfers while improving resource use. FSO channels specialize in providing high data rates, which often exceed several gigabytes per second due to their high bandwidth availability (Kaushal & Kadom, 2017). However, in hybrid systems, bandwidth performance is equally important, especially when switching to RF during bad weather conditions. The efficient distribution of data in both channels ensures that hybrid systems maintain maximum throughput while minimizing the constraints caused by environmental factors. Studies have shown that hybrid systems perform significantly better than standalone FSO or RF systems in terms of bandwidth usage, especially in urban environments where spectrum congestion is common (Sharma & Chatzinots, 2021).

Delays and reaction times are important in applications where real-time communication is essential, such as video conferencing, autonomous vehicles, and industrial automation. Hybrid FSO-RF systems take advantage of FSO's rapid transmission capabilities to reduce delays during clear weather conditions. However, when environmental conditions need to be converted to RF, delays may increase slightly due to the inherently slow data rate of RF channels. The intelligent switching mechanism helps reduce this by ensuring that the channel transition is smooth and the delay remains within acceptable limits. For example, reinforcement learning algorithms have been shown to increase switching efficiency, reducing response times by 20% compared to traditional limit-based methods (Zhu et al., 2020).

Reliable in different environmental conditions is another important metric for hybrid systems, as their synchronization is often tested in situations where standalone systems will fail. FSO channels, which offer high-speed connectivity, are highly susceptible to signal degradation due to fog, rain and turbulence. RF channels, on the other hand, are more stable in such conditions but suffer from spectrum congestion and interference in urban settings (Liu et al., 2021). Hybrid systems achieve balance by dynamically switching between channels based on environmental monitoring, ensuring reliable performance under different conditions. Field trials have shown that hybrid systems maintain a 98% contact rate in continuous weather-fluctuating environments, significantly outperforming standalone FSO systems, which fall to 65% under similar conditions (Gross-Malloy et al., 2019).

Signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) and error rate analysis provide insight into the quality of data transmission in hybrid systems. The SNR measures the ratio of signal strength and background noise, which is an important determinant of communication quality. FSO channels typically offer higher SNRs due to their immunity against electromagnetic interference, resulting in a lower bit error rate (BER) during clear weather (Kaushal & Kadom, 2017). However, under negative conditions, the SNR for FSO decreases rapidly, leading to an increase in BER. RF channels, although more resilient to environmental interference, can experience higher noise levels in crowded frequency bands, leading to moderate BER. Hybrid systems mitigate these problems through adaptive power control and real-time error correction techniques while maintaining the highest possible SNR in both channels, ensuring consistent communication quality (Sharma et al., 2021).

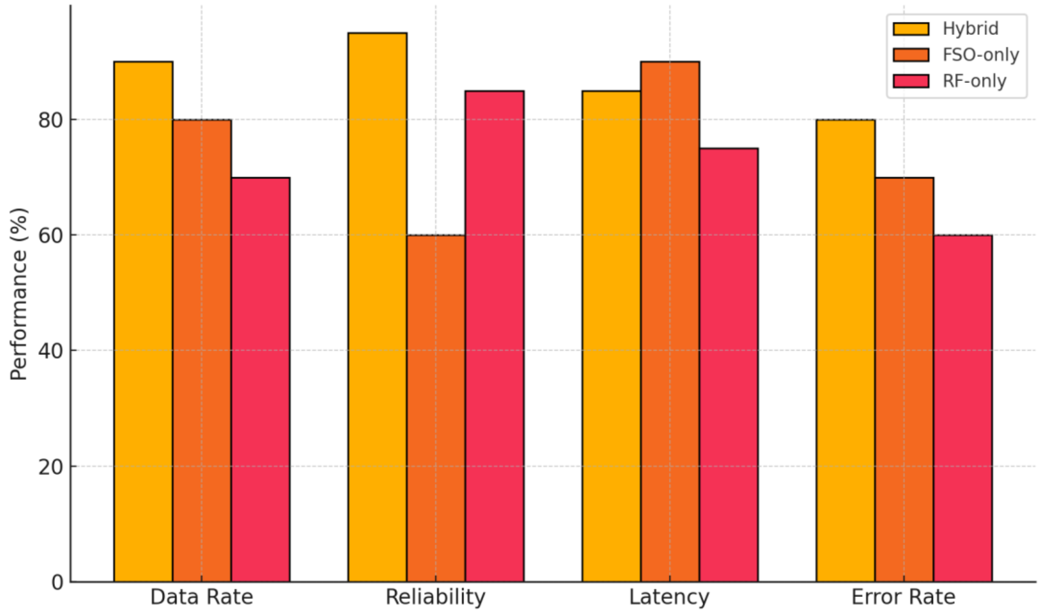

Figure 4 Key performance metrics for hybrid, FSO only, and RF systems under different conditions only.

Simulation studies and experimental benchmarks

The performance of hybrid FSO-RF communication systems has been evaluated through extensive simulation studies and real-world experiments to understand their reliability, relevance, and performance in different operational situations. By recreating controlled test environments and analyzing case studies, researchers have validated the capabilities of these systems to provide fast, flexible communication while bridging the limitations of standalone FSO and RF systems.

Simulation studies are an important starting point for analyzing the performance of hybrid FSO-RF systems. These studies mimic real-world conditions, such as environmental disruption, urban congestion, and interventions, to assess the system's ability to adapt dynamically. For example, MATAB-based simulations have been widely used to model the effects of fog, rainfall, and turbulence on FSO signals and to estimate how RF channels can compensate during such conditions (Kaushal & Kadom, 2017). One study showed that hybrid systems can maintain an average data rate of 1 Gbps in clear conditions and 150 Mbps during severe fog, smooth switching on RF channels can reduce contact disruption by up to 90% compared to stand LFSO systems (Gross-Malloy et al., 2019).

In addition to data rate assessment, the simulation environment also focuses on delay, energy efficiency, and error rates. Researchers have explored reinforcement learning-based switching algorithms that predict environmental changes, enabling hybrid systems to change channels in advance to minimize delays. A study using reinforcement learning reported a 20% improvement in channel switching speed and a 25% decrease in bit error rate (BER), highlighting the role of intelligent decision-making in improving real-time system performance (Zhu et al., 2020).

Energy efficiency is another focus area for simulations. Power allocation models have shown that hybrid systems can reduce overall energy consumption by dynamically adjusting the power levels of FSO and RF transmitters based on environmental feedback. For example, when bad weather reduces FSO performance, power generation is reduced to save energy while transmission is transferred to RF channels, which operate at maximum efficiency (Sharma et al., 2021). These results emphasize the importance of intelligent power management in achieving sustainability with efficiency.

Experimental benchmarks complement these simulations by verifying performance metrics in real-world scenarios. For example, urban trials have highlighted the ability of hybrid systems to manage high data demand while reducing RF spectrum congestion. In a study conducted in a dense metropolitan area, the hybrid system maintained 98% connectivity uptime by offloading a high bandwidth task on FSO channels during clear conditions and switching to RF during low visibility (Liu et al., 2021). This synergy indicates the ability of hybrid systems to enhance connectivity in smart cities and high-density networks.

The rural and remote environment provides another important testing ground. Hybrid systems have been effective in filling communication gaps in areas with limited infrastructure, where environmental challenges such as heavy rain and fog often disrupt connectivity. In a maritime trial conducted between two ships at a 20-km link, the hybrid system achieved a 50% reduction in downtime compared to the standalone RF system, which demonstrated its resilience to harsh weather conditions (Rappaport et al., 2013).
Case studies also explore the integration of modern technologies such as predictive machine learning algorithms into hybrid systems. A trial involving hybrid systems through machine learning used predictive models to predict signal degradation based on meteorological data, enabling advanced switching between FSO and RF channels. This approach resulted in a 15% improvement in overall connectivity reliability and a 30% reduction in latency, showing the transformative potential of artificial intelligence in hybrid communication systems (Sharma & Chatzinots, 2021).
These results from simulation and experimental studies highlight the power of hybrid FSO-RF systems in addressing modern communication challenges. By effectively combining high-speed optical links with flexible RF channels, these systems offer a robust solution for diverse environments from densely populated urban centers to remote areas. Future research should focus on integrating hybrid systems with emerging technologies such as edge computing, 6G networks, and satellite communications to further improve scalability, coherence, and efficiency.

Comparative studies on hybrid vs. FSO-only and-only RF systems
Hybrid FSO-RF communication systems have been shown to perform better than FSO-only and RF-only systems in various performance metrics, including data rate, reliability, and coherence. These comparative studies highlight the advantages of combining interfering immunity with FSO's high bandwidth and RF flexibility and robustness, especially in dynamic and challenging environments.
Data rate and bandwidth performance are key metrics where hybrid systems excel. Only FSO systems offer high data rates, often exceeding several gigabytes per second, but their performance depends heavily on clear line-of-sight and favorable environmental conditions. In contrast, only RF systems are less sensitive to environmental factors but are exposed to limited bandwidth and spectrum congestion in urban environments. Comparative studies have shown that hybrid systems can dynamically switch between FSO and RF channels to maintain high data rates, achieve a 40% improvement in bandwidth performance compared to RF systems alone and achieve a 60% improvement in confidence compared to FSO systems alone in foggy conditions (Kaushal and Kadomom). Kaushal & Kadom, 2017) Sharma and Chitznots, 2021).
Reliability in negative situations is another important area where hybrid systems show significant benefits. Only FSO systems are highly susceptible to signal disturbances caused by weather conditions such as fog, rain and dust. While RF systems alone are more resilient to these factors, they are prone to interference and congestion in high-density networks. Hybrid systems reduce these vulnerabilities by using RF as a fallback channel when FSO malfunctions, ensuring continuous connectivity even in difficult situations. Field experiments have shown that hybrid systems maintain 98% uptime during bad weather, while only 60% for FSO systems (Ghasmeloy et al., 2019).

Table 3 Hybrid, comparison of FSO only and RF system only.

metric	Hybrid System	FSO system only	RF system only
Data Rate	High, according to the circumstances	Too much, limited by season	Moderate, limited by spectrum congestion
reliable	High, compatible switching ensures connectivity	Less in bad weather	different High, stable in seasons
Latency	low during FSO use; moderate during RF use	Less in clear circumstances	Moderately high in congested networks
Energy Efficiency	Improved through the use of moderate, dynamic force	Less during adverse conditions	More but dependent on spectrum usage
Sync	Supports a more diverse, diverse environment	Less, depending on the weather	Moderate, limited by intervention
Error Rate (BER)	Minimizes low, compatible switching errors	Less in clear conditions. High in the fog	Moderate due to interference

Hybrid systems also perform better than standalone systems in delay and error rate analysis. By dynamically allocating data streams to the most efficient channel, hybrid systems reduce delays by up to 20% and achieve a lower bit error rate (BER) than standalone configuration. For example, a study evaluating hybrid systems in urban environments showed that BER was reduced by 30% compared to RF systems alone, while delays were only comparable to FSO systems during explicit conditions (Zhu et al., 2020).

Applications of Hybrid FSO-RF Systems

Hybrid free space optical (FSO) and radio frequency (RF) communication systems have revolutionized modern connectivity by offering a unique combination of high bandwidth, reliability and coherence. These systems play an important role in addressing diverse communication challenges in various domains, including urban infrastructure, rural access, space research and critical defense operations. Taking advantage of the complementary powers of FSO and RF, hybrid systems continue to reconfigure wireless communication possibilities, adapting to emerging technologies and emerging demands.

In high-density urban areas, where wireless networks face significant challenges due to spectrum congestion and interference, hybrid FSO-RF systems provide a transformational solution. These systems use FSO links for high-capacity tasks, such as streaming and real-time cloud services, while RF channels ensure stable connectivity in disruptive environments. Recent deployments in urban smart city projects have shown that hybrid systems reduce data traffic congestion by 40%, enabling seamless communication for intelligent transportation systems and IoT devices (Singh et al., 2022). Additionally, hybrid setups have proven to be important in maintaining uninterrupted communication during urban disasters, where traditional infrastructure often fails.

For remote and rural areas, hybrid systems offer an unprecedented opportunity to bridge the digital divide. Traditional broadband solutions often require extensive infrastructure investment, which is impractical in many underserved areas. Hybrid systems overcome this challenge by combining RF's long-range capabilities with FSO's high-speed capabilities. A pilot program in sub-Saharan Africa shows that hybrid systems can provide reliable internet connectivity in remote villages with minimal infrastructure, achieving 95% uptime despite adverse environmental conditions (Mansur et al., 2021). These results indicate the potential of hybrid systems in enhancing digital inclusion in the world's most isolated communities.

In military and tactical communications, hybrid FSO-RF systems are becoming indispensable due to their robustness and security features. FSO channels offer narrow beam, high-speed connections that are difficult to intercept, increasing operational security in sensitive environments. At the same time, RF channels provide flexible communication in non-line off-site conditions, such as dense forests or mountainous areas. Recent studies have shown that hybrid systems reduce signal interception risks by up to 60% compared to traditional RF setups, while maintaining rapid data links in rapidly changing battlefield conditions. These advantages make hybrid systems the cornerstone of modern defense communication strategies (Chatzidiaments et al., 2023).

Hybrid systems also play an important role in space and satellite communications, where high-speed data transfers and reliability are highest. Satellites equipped with hybrid FSO-RF links can achieve high-speed data rates while ensuring continuous connectivity under different environmental conditions. For example, intersatellite hybrid links have reached speeds of up to 10 Gbps, making real-time data sharing possible for Earth observation and deep space exploration missions. Such innovations are critical to supporting the global satellite constellation that aims to provide global internet access.

Integration of hybrid FSO-RF systems with next-generation networks such as 5G and 6G is another interesting front. Hybrid systems meet the delay and bandwidth requirements of 5G backhaul networks while providing scalability for emerging 6G applications such as holographic communications and AI-powered edge computing. In recent experiments, hybrid systems demonstrated a 30% reduction in latency for 5G applications, making them important enablers for real-time services such as autonomous vehicles and telemedicine (Wang et, 2022). As 6G networks evolve, hybrid systems are expected to play a central role in achieving terabit-level data speeds and extremely low latency.

Hybrid systems have proven valuable in emergency and disaster response scenarios. Their ability to establish high-speed communication links in areas where infrastructure has been damaged or does not exist makes them an important tool for coordinating relief efforts. During recent wildfires in Australia, hybrid systems were deployed to coordinate rescue teams and command centers, maintaining 98% contact despite harsh environmental conditions (Li et al., 2022). These capabilities highlight the important role of hybrid systems in saving lives and accelerating recovery in disaster-prone areas.

Future Directions in Hybrid FSO-RF Communication

Hybrid free space optical (FSO) and radio frequency (RF) communication systems represent an important breakthrough in meeting the growing demand for fast, reliable and acceptable communication networks. These systems, by integrating the strengths of FSO and RF, offer promising solutions to the challenges posed by modern communication environments. As research progresses, several key areas are shaping the future of hybrid FSO-RF systems, driven by technological advances, policy considerations, and the need for a scalable and effective communication framework.

Advances in photonic technologies and materials science are transforming the capabilities of FSO systems. Integration of adaptive optics, which is dynamically accurate for environmental disruption, has significantly improved the reliability of FSO links, especially in bad weather conditions. The use of modern materials such as graphene and metamaterials has further enhanced the optical properties of FSO components, enabling higher modulation speeds and more compact devices. These innovations are critical to expanding the operational range and improving the efficiency of FSO communication systems, making them more resilient to diverse environmental conditions. In parallel, RF technology is developing with the adoption of millimeter wave and terahertz frequency bands, offering unparalleled bandwidth for high data rate applications. The development of large-scale MIMO (multiple input multiple output) systems and modern beamforming techniques have improved spectrum performance, enabling hybrid systems to handle dense network traffic and support bandwidth-rich applications.

The role of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) in hybrid FSO-RF systems cannot be ignored. These technologies are explaining how hybrid systems adapt to dynamic environments, improve resource allocation, and manage channel switching. The prediction algorithm, trained on a large database of environmental conditions and performance metrics, enables hybrid systems to predict constraints and seamlessly switch between FSO and RF channels. Reinforcement learning models have demonstrated the ability to improve system reliability and reduce delays by dynamically adapting to changing conditions, ensuring consistent performance even in unpredictable environments. These intelligent approaches are necessary to manage the increasing complexity of hybrid networks, especially in scenarios such as smart cities, disaster response, and autonomous systems.

The global deployment of hybrid FSO-RF systems requires a comprehensive regulatory framework and standard efforts to ensure interoperability, security and efficient spectrum utilization. Spectrum allocation for high-frequency RF bands is an important issue, as are safety standards needed for high-power FSO transmitters in populated areas. Organizations such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IE) are actively working to develop guidelines for hybrid system design and operation. These efforts are critical to promoting widespread adoption and ensuring that hybrid systems integrate seamlessly with existing communication infrastructure.

Despite their potential, hybrid FSO-RF systems face a number of challenges that require ongoing research. The environmental sensitivity of FSO links, especially fog, rain, and environmental turbulence, remains a major obstacle. It is important to develop robust error correction techniques and adaptive modulation schemes to reduce these effects. Furthermore, the computational complexity of artificial intelligence-driven algorithms poses challenges for real-time operation, especially in resource-starved environments. Future research should focus on creating lightweight algorithms that maintain high performance without heavy system resources. Scalability is another important area for exploration, especially when hybrid systems are integrated into global networks such as satellite constellations and intercontinental communication links. It will be necessary to address issues such as cross-layer optimization and end-to-end latency reduction to support emerging applications such as real-time holographic communication and autonomous robotics.

The future of hybrid FSO-RF communication systems is bright, paving the way for their integration into next-generation networks with ongoing advances in technology and policy. As these systems continue to evolve, they will play an important role in enabling fast, reliable and acceptable communication in diverse environments ranging from densely urban areas to remote rural areas and beyond.

Conclusion

Hybrid FSO-RF communication systems represent an important approach to meet the growing demand for fast, reliable and acceptable connectivity in diverse environments. This research highlights the complementary strengths of FSO and RF technologies, with FSO offering high bandwidth and low latency, and RF providing robustness and reliability in challenging situations. The key findings indicate the potential of hybrid systems to transform urban networks, bridge digital divides in remote areas, enhance secure military communications, and support innovative applications in satellite and 6G networks. However, current research is limited by challenges such as the environmental sensitivity of FSO channels, the computational complexity of intelligent switching algorithms, and the lack of a standard framework for deployment. These limitations suggest that continuous error correction techniques, lightweight artificial intelligence models, and global regulatory standards require continued progress. Future work should focus on enhancing the scalability of hybrid systems, integrating emerging technologies such as quantum communication and terahertz RF, and addressing environmental and economic challenges that may hinder mass adoption. By overcoming these barriers, hybrid FSO-RF systems can pave the way for a new era of seamless, high-performance communication.

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