



# **Conventional and Improved Inclusion-Exclusion Derivations of Symbolic Expressions for the Reliability of a Multi-State Network**

**Ali Muhammad Ali Rushdi<sup>1\*</sup> and Motaz Hussain Amashah<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, King Abdulaziz University, P.O.Box 80200, Jeddah, 21589, Saudi Arabia.*

## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration between the two authors. Author AMAR wrote the entire draft of the manuscript, conducted the mathematical and conceptual analyses and managed the basic literature survey. Author MHA participated in the literature search, performed the computational work, and constructed the table of results. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

## **Article Information**

DOI: 10.9734/AJRCOS/2021/v8i130191

### Editor(s):

(1) Dr. Jong-Wuu Wu, National Chiayi University, Taiwan.

### Reviewers:

(1) M. Shyamala Devi, Dr. Sagunthala R&D Institute of Science and Technology Avadi, India.

(2) Ramjeet Singh Yadav, Ashoka Institute of Technology and Management, India.

Complete Peer review History: <http://www.sdiarticle4.com/review-history/67438>

**Received 16 February 2021**

**Accepted 22 April 2021**

**Published 27 April 2021**

**Original Research Article**

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper deals with an emergent variant of the classical problem of computing the probability of the union of  $n$  events, or equivalently the expectation of the disjunction (ORing) of  $n$  indicator variables for these events, i.e., the probability of this disjunction being equal to one. The variant considered herein deals with multi-valued variables, in which the required probability stands for the reliability of a multi-state delivery network (MSDN), whose binary system success is a two-valued function expressed in terms of multi-valued component successes. The paper discusses a simple method for handling the afore-mentioned problem in terms of a standard example MSDN, whose success is known in minimal form as the disjunction of prime implicants or minimal paths of the pertinent network. This method utilizes the multi-state inclusion-exclusion (MS-IE) principle associated with a multi-state generalization of the idempotency property of the ANDing operation. The method discussed is illustrated with a detailed symbolic example of a real-case study, and it produces a more precise version of the same numerical value that was obtained earlier. The example demonstrates the notorious shortcomings and the extreme inefficiency that the MS-IE

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: [arushdi@kau.edu.sa](mailto:arushdi@kau.edu.sa), [arushdi@jeee.org](mailto:arushdi@jeee.org), [alirushdi@gmail.com](mailto:alirushdi@gmail.com).

method suffers, but, on the positive side, it reveals the way to alternative methods, in which such a shortcoming is (partially) mitigated. A prominent and well known example of these methods is the construction of a multi-state probability-ready expression (MS-PRE). Another candidate method would be to apply the MS-IE principle to the union of fewer (factored or composite) paths that is converted (at minimal cost) to PRE form. A third candidate method, employed herein, is a novel method for combining the MS-PRE and MS-IE concepts together. It confines the use of MS-PRE to 'shellable' disjointing of ORed terms, and then applies MS-IE to the resulting partially orthogonalized disjunctive form. This new method makes the most of both MS-PRE and MS-IE, and bypasses the troubles caused by either of them. The method is illustrated successfully in terms of the same real-case problem used with the conventional MS-IE.

*Keywords: Network reliability; inclusion-exclusion; probability-ready expression; multi-state system; symbolic expression; multi-state delivery network.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Inclusion-Exclusion Principle is a very useful principle of enumeration in combinatorics and discrete probability [1-20]. This principle computes the cardinality of the union of  $n$  sets, through a finite repetition of alternation between a usually over-generous inclusion and a usually over-compensating exclusion. This principle remains valid when set cardinalities are replaced by probabilities. In the probability context, the IE Principle is used for computing the probability of the union of  $n$  events. The IE principle proceeds to achieve this computation by first including (adding) the probabilities of the  $n$  events (corresponding to a number of terms that equals  $n$  choose  $1 = n$ ). This is followed by excluding (subtracting) the probabilities of the ( $n$  choose 2) pairwise intersections of these events. Next, the probabilities of the ( $n$  choose 3) triple-wise intersections of the  $n$  events are included (added), the probabilities of the ( $n$  choose 4) quadruple-wise intersections of the  $n$  events are excluded (subtracted), the probabilities of the ( $n$  choose 5) quintuple-wise intersections of the  $n$  events are included (added). This alternation of addition (inclusion) and subtraction (exclusion) is continued until the sole intersection of all the  $n$  events (corresponding to  $n$  choose  $n = 1$ ) is included (added) (if  $n$  is odd) or excluded (subtracted) (if  $n$  is even).

This paper deals with a fundamental application of the IE principle to the computation of multi-state reliability, specifically the computation of the expectation of the logical expression of a multi-state disjunctive normal form (DNF). Currently, the most computationally efficient method for handling this problem is an automated implementation of the method of the recursive sum of disjoint products (RSDP) [21,22]. We present a tutorial discussion and

exposition of the conventional IE method and an improved IE approach for solving this problem. This paper is a part of an on-going activity [23-31] that strives to provide a pedagogical treatment and exposition of multi-state reliability problems. We aspire to establish a clear and insightful interrelationship between the two-state modeling and the multi-state one by stressing that multi-valued concepts are natural and simple extensions of two-valued ones. Moreover, we hope to mitigate the notorious shortcomings of the conventional MS-IE procedure by combining it with a 'shellable' version of the concept of the sum of disjoint products (SDP), or the more encompassing concept of a probability-ready expression (PRE) in the multi-state domain.

The organization of the remainder of this paper is as follows. Section 2 introduces the running example used herein of a multi-state delivery network (MSDN) with multiple suppliers, borrowed from Lin et al. [22]. Section 3 introduces the multi-state inclusion-exclusion (MS-IE) principle, and hints at its special cases and improved variants. Section 4 symbolically applies MS-IE, in its standard or conventional form, to the running example. Section 5 introduces a 'shellable' version of the concept of a multi-state probability-ready expression (MS-PRE), uses it in conjunction with the MS-IE principle, and demonstrates its applicability in terms of the running example. Section 6 reports and discusses numerical results for the two solutions given in Sections 4 and 5. Section 7 concludes the paper. Appendix A presents the python listing of a program that obtains the conventional IE solution of the running example.

### 1.1 Specifications for a Running Example

Lin et al. [22] studied a specific multi-state delivery network (MSDN) with multiple suppliers,

one market, multiple transfer centers and eight branches. They derived an expression of system success for specific data of delivery costs, probability distributions of all branches, available capacities, suppliers' production capacities, deterioration rate vector for the minimal paths obtained, demand, and budget. They presented the final multi-state success in their Table 2, which is expressed in our following formula with an appropriate translation of notation.

$$\begin{aligned}
 S &= X_3\{\geq 3\} X_5\{\geq 3\} X_8\{\geq 3\} \\
 &\vee X_3\{\geq 3\} X_7\{\geq 3\} \\
 &\vee X_2\{\geq 3\} X_5\{\geq 3\} X_8\{\geq 3\} \\
 &\vee X_2\{\geq 2\} X_3\{\geq 2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 3\} X_8\{\geq 2\} \\
 &\vee X_2\{\geq 3\} X_7\{\geq 3\} \\
 &\vee X_1\{\geq 2\} X_3\{\geq 2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 2\} X_8\{\geq 2\} \\
 &\vee X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{\geq 2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 2\} X_8\{\geq 2\} \\
 &\vee X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{\geq 2\} X_3\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 3\}. \quad (1)
 \end{aligned}$$

Note that the expression of system success  $S$  in (1) reveals clearly that it pertains to a coherent system that enjoys causality, monotonicity and component relevancy [23-29]. The expression comprises eight distinct prime implicants, none of which subsumes (can be absorbed) in another. Each prime implicant is a product of solely upper values  $X_k\{\geq j\}$  of various variables. The numerical values for the expectations of various variable instances, computed from the data given in Lin et al.[22] and used in [30,31] are listed in Table 1.

## 1.2 Inclusion-Exclusion Principle for Multi-State Probabilities

We note that computing the probability of the union of  $n$  events is equivalent to calculating the expectation of the disjunction (ORing) of the  $n$  indicator variables of such events. Usually these indicator variables are products of instances of the underlying variables. These products usually stand for the minimal paths of the system, which are the prime implicants  $P_i$  of system success, or for the minimal cutsets of the system, which are the prime implicants  $C_i$  of system failure. Note that the expectations of system success and failure are the reliability and unreliability of the system. With this interpretation, an application of the IE principle results in the following expression of reliability [32-36].

$$R = E\{\bigvee_{i=1}^{n_p} P_i\} = \sum_{i=1}^{n_p} E\{P_i\} - \sum_{1 \leq i < j \leq n_p} E\{P_i \wedge P_j\} + \sum_{1 \leq i < j < k \leq n_p} E\{P_i \wedge P_j \wedge P_k\} - \dots + (-1)^{n_p-1} E\{\bigwedge_{i=1}^{n_p} P_i\}. \quad (2)$$

A formal proof of the IE formula is available in Hall [37], Feller [38] and Trivedi [39]. Cerasoli and Fedullo [9] discuss and compare the various available proofs for the IE principle. The number of terms in (2) is given by

$$\binom{n_p}{1} + \binom{n_p}{2} + \binom{n_p}{3} + \dots + \binom{n_p}{n_p} = 2^{n_p} - 1, \quad (3)$$

i.e., it is exponential in the number of minimal paths. To apply the IE principle to (1), which has  $n_p = 8$ , we need 255 terms as we will see in the sequel.

**Table 1. Numerical values for the expectations of various variable instances, computed from data given in [22], and used in [30,31]**

$X_1\{\geq 2\}$	0.897	$X_3\{\geq 3\}$	0.905
$X_2\{\geq 3\}$	0.892	$X_3\{\geq 2\}$	0.953
$X_2\{< 3\}$	0.108	$X_3\{2\}$	0.048
$X_2\{\geq 2\}$	0.965	$X_3\{< 3\}$	0.095
$X_2\{2\}$	0.073	$X_4\{\geq 2\}$	0.863
$X_4\{< 2\}$	0.137	$X_5\{\geq 3\}$	0.903
$X_5\{< 3\}$	0.097	$X_6\{\geq 2\}$	0.943
$X_7\{\geq 2\}$	0.945	$X_7\{\geq 3\}$	0.884
$X_7\{2\}$	0.061	$X_7\{< 3\}$	0.116
$X_8\{\geq 3\}$	0.906	$X_8\{\geq 2\}$	0.965
$X_8\{2\}$	0.059	$X_8\{< 3\}$	0.094

The IE principle is valid and applicable whether the implicants  $P_i$  and their constituting variables are two-valued or multi-valued. However, the implementation of the IE formula (2) in the multi-state case needs to be aided by simplification rules for various products of the underlying variables. The IE simplicity is manifested in the fact that the simplification rules it requires (when handling coherent success) is just a single rule, namely, the following domination rule (which generalizes the idempotency rule of AND for an uncomplemented literal ( $X_k \wedge X_k = X_k$ ) in the two-valued case).

$$X_k(\geq j_1) X_k(\geq j_2) = X_k(\geq j_2) \quad \text{for } j_2 \geq j_1, \quad (4a)$$

A similar simplification required by IE (when handling coherent failure) is the following domination rule (which is another generalization of the idempotency rule of AND for a complemented literal ( $\bar{X}_k \wedge \bar{X}_k = \bar{X}_k$ ) in the two-valued case).

$$X_k(\leq j_1) X_k(\leq j_2) = X_k(\leq j_2) \quad \text{for } j_2 \leq j_1, \quad (4b)$$

Despite the great importance of the IE principle in combinatorics and probability theory, and despite its genuine unrivalled conceptual simplicity, it does not seem to be the method of choice for evaluation of system reliability. It produces an exponential number of terms that have to be reduced subsequently via addition and cancellation. Moreover, it involves so many subtractions that make it highly sensitive to round-off errors in the ultra-reliable regime [36,40-42]. For the problem of the running example, the symbolic computations are tedious, indeed.

In passing, we note that if the paths  $P_i$  in equation (2) are mutually disjoint ( $P_i \wedge P_j = 0$  for  $1 \leq i < j \leq n_p$ ), then the complexity of this equation reduces from exponential to linear, viz.

$$R = E\{\bigvee_{i=1}^{n_p} P_i\} = \sum_{i=1}^{n_p} E\{P_i\}. \quad (5)$$

When many of the products  $P_i$  are mutually disjoint, then many of the pair-wise and k-tuple-wise intersections in (2) vanish, and the number of non-zero terms in (2) might decrease dramatically, thereby allowing one of the most effective IE improvements.

On the other hand, if the paths  $P_i$  in equation (2) are statistically independent, then (2) reduces to

$$R = E\{\bigvee_{i=1}^{n_p} P_i\} = \sum_{i=1}^{n_p} E\{P_i\} - \sum_{1 \leq i < j \leq n_p} E\{P_i\}E\{P_j\} + \sum_{1 \leq i < j < k \leq n_p} E\{P_i\}E\{P_j\}E\{P_k\} - \dots + (-1)^{n_p-1} \prod_{i=1}^{n_p} E\{P_i\} = 1 - \prod_{i=1}^{n_p} (1 - E\{P_i\}), \quad (6)$$

which might be obtained through an application of De Morgan law to the complement of the union of products  $P_i$  so as to obtain the intersection of complemented products  $\bar{P}_i$ , which is a probability-ready-expression since the complemented products  $\bar{P}_i$  are statistically independent. Kessler [10] points out that when the products  $P_i$  are, in some sense, close to being independent, then there are many useful results bounding  $E\{\bigvee_{i=1}^{n_p} P_i\}$ , so that one might hope to obtain good estimates for it.

In short, we note that the IE complexity decreases dramatically for the two extreme cases of the products  $P_i$  being either statistically independent or mutually exclusive. There is also some appreciable improvements if these products  $P_i$  are, in some sense, close to either being statistically independent or mutually exclusive. To understand why these two cases are opposite extremes, and how to effectively utilize one of them, the interested reader might consult some of the References [43-47].

### 1.3 Application of the Conventional Inclusion-Exclusion Principle to the Running Example

Equation (1) might be rewritten as a disjunction of eight paths, namely

$$S = P_1 \vee P_2 \vee P_3 \vee P_4 \vee P_5 \vee P_6 \vee P_7 \vee P_8, \quad (7)$$

where

$$P_1 = X_3\{\geq 3\} X_5\{\geq 3\} X_8\{\geq 3\}$$

$$P_2 = X_3\{\geq 3\} X_7\{\geq 3\}$$

$$P_3 = X_2\{\geq 3\} X_5\{\geq 3\} X_8\{\geq 3\}$$

$$P_4 = X_2\{\geq 2\} X_3\{\geq 2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 3\} X_8\{\geq 2\}$$

$$P_5 = X_2\{\geq 3\} X_7\{\geq 3\}$$

$$P_6 = X_1\{\geq 2\} X_3\{\geq 2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 2\} X_8\{\geq 2\}$$

$$P_7 = X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{\geq 2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 2\} X_8\{\geq 2\}$$

$$P_8 = X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{\geq 2\} X_3\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 3\}$$

The symbolic application of the IE formula (2) to the disjunction in (7) is very tedious, indeed. Hopefully, the reader would bear with this cumbersome computation, in which the derivation of 255 terms is involved, and through which repeated use is made of the domination rule (4a).



































#### 1.4 Improving IE with a ‘Shellable’ Version of a PRE

In this section, we deal with the introduction of orthogonality in a given sum-of-products formula (disjunctive normal form). If neither of the two terms  $A$  and  $B$  in the sum  $(A \vee B)$  subsumes the other ( $A \vee B \neq A$  and  $A \vee B \neq B$ ) and the two terms are not already disjoint ( $A \wedge B \neq 0$ ), then  $B$  can be disjointed with  $A$  by using the formula [24,36,43,48-57]

$$A \vee B = A \vee (\bar{Y}_1 \vee Y_1 \bar{Y}_2 \vee Y_1 Y_2 \bar{Y}_3 \vee \dots \vee Y_1 Y_2 \dots Y_{e-1} \bar{Y}_e) B, \quad (8)$$

Where the first term  $A$  still remains intact, while the second term  $B$  is replaced by  $e$  terms which are each disjoint with  $A$  and are also disjoint among themselves. Note that each  $Y_k$  ( $1 \leq k \leq e$ ) is a literal that appears in the product  $A$  and does not appear in the product  $B$ . It stands for a disjunction of certain instances of some variable  $X_{i(k)}$ . We are interested herein in the particular case for which  $e = 1$ , i.e., when the two products  $A$  and  $B$  are such that there is a single literal that appears in the product  $A$  and does not appear in the product  $B$ . For this case, the disjointing formula (8) simplifies to the Reflection law [36].

$$A \vee B = A \vee \bar{Y}_1 B, \quad (9)$$

Which is conveniently referred to as a case of ‘shellable’ disjointing. We coin the name of ‘shellable disjointing’ to mimic the well-known term of a ‘shellable disjunctive normal form (DNF)’ that designates a DNF for which orthogonalization can be (most) efficiently performed, without any increase in the number of terms [58-61]. In the sequel, we will not strive to achieve complete orthogonality in a given sum-of-products formula (disjunctive normal form). Instead, we will apply shellable disjointing as much as we can. In comparison with schemes for producing a probability-ready expression, this scheme enjoys the advantages of simplicity and avoidance of increase in the number of terms, at the expense of still requiring the further use of the inclusion-exclusion (IE) principle. However, the IE use might simplify dramatically. Therefore, the net complexity of this scheme, which borrows ideas partially from the PRE and IE procedures, seems to be much faster and less error-prone, than a scheme based on the IE scheme alone or another using the PRE scheme solely.

To demonstrate the proposed scheme, we rearrange the 8 prime implicants in (1) as shown in (10), and further introduce as much

orthogonality as possible through shellable disjointing (9), as shown by the bold literals in (10). For example, the first prime implicant in (1) has two literals  $X_2 \{\geq 3\}$  and  $X_7 \{\geq 3\}$ , and none of the succeeding implicants share both these literals (for otherwise, the succeeding implicant would subsume the first implicant and get absorbed by it, contradicting the fact that it is prime). Three out of these succeeding implicants (the fourth, the seventh, and the eighth) do not share any of the afore-mentioned literals with the first implicant, and we deliberately abstain from disjointing any of them with the first implicant, since such an action would be complicated and would split each of the disjointed terms into several (here two) terms. The third implicant (alone) shares  $X_2 \{\geq 3\}$  with the first implicant, so that only the literal  $X_7 \{\geq 3\}$  appears in the first implicant but not in the third one. Therefore, we achieve shellable disjointing of the third implicant with the first by multiplying the third implicant with the complement of  $X_7 \{\geq 3\}$ , which is  $X_7 \{< 3\}$  (shown in bold). Likewise, we attain shellable disjointing of the second, fifth, and sixth prime implicants with the first by multiplying each of them with the complement of  $X_2 \{\geq 3\}$ , which is  $X_2 \{< 3\}$  (again, highlighted in bold). Shellable disjointing is also possible for the fourth implicant with the third by multiplying the fourth implicant with  $X_2 \{< 3\}$  (shown in bold). As a result, the fourth implicant immediately becomes disjoint with the first, and turns capable of shellable disjointing with the second implicant through further multiplication with  $X_7 \{< 3\}$  (again shown in bold). Each of the fifth and sixth implicants is capable of shellable disjointing with the second implicant through multiplication with  $X_3 \{< 3\}$  (again, shown in bold). The eighth implicant is capable of shellable disjointing with the seventh implicant through multiplication with  $X_2 \{< 2\}$  (shown in bold). As an offshoot, the eighth implicant becomes orthogonal with four other implicants (the first, the third, the fifth, and the sixth).

$$\begin{aligned} S = & X_2 \{\geq 3\} X_7 \{\geq 3\} \vee X_2 \{< 3\} X_3 \{\geq 3\} X_7 \{\geq 3\} \\ & \vee X_2 \{\geq 3\} X_5 \{\geq 3\} X_7 \{< 3\} X_8 \{\geq 3\} \\ & \vee X_2 \{< 3\} X_3 \{\geq 3\} X_5 \{\geq 3\} X_7 \{< 3\} X_8 \{\geq 3\} \\ & \vee X_2 \{\geq 2\} X_2 \{< 3\} X_3 \{\geq 2\} X_3 \{< 3\} X_4 \{\geq 2\} X_7 \{\geq 3\} X_8 \{\geq 2\} \\ & \vee X_1 \{\geq 2\} X_2 \{\geq 2\} X_2 \{< 3\} X_3 \{\geq 2\} X_3 \{< 3\} X_6 \{\geq 2\} X_7 \{\geq 3\} \\ & \vee X_1 \{\geq 2\} X_2 \{\geq 2\} X_4 \{\geq 2\} X_6 \{\geq 2\} X_7 \{\geq 2\} X_8 \{\geq 2\} \\ & \vee X_1 \{\geq 2\} X_2 \{< 2\} X_3 \{\geq 2\} X_4 \{\geq 2\} X_6 \{\geq 2\} X_7 \{\geq 2\} X_8 \{\geq 2\}. \end{aligned} \quad (10)$$

Employing the relation  $(X_i\{\geq 2\} X_i\{< 3\} = X_i\{2\})$ , we simplify Equation (10) to

$$\begin{aligned}
 S &= X_2\{\geq 3\} X_7\{\geq 3\} \vee X_2\{< 3\} X_3\{\geq 3\} X_7\{\geq 3\} \\
 &\vee X_2\{\geq 3\} X_5\{\geq 3\} X_7\{< 3\} X_8\{\geq 3\} \\
 &\vee X_2\{< 3\} X_3\{\geq 3\} X_5\{\geq 3\} X_7\{< 3\} X_8\{\geq 3\} \\
 &\vee X_2\{2\} X_3\{2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 3\} X_8\{\geq 2\} \\
 &\vee X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{2\} X_3\{2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 3\} \\
 &\vee X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{\geq 2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 2\} X_8\{\geq 2\} \\
 &\vee X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{< 2\} X_3\{\geq 2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 2\} X_8\{\geq 2\}.
 \end{aligned}$$

(11a)

$$= \mathfrak{R}_1 \vee \mathfrak{R}_2 \vee \mathfrak{R}_3 \vee \mathfrak{R}_4 \vee \mathfrak{R}_5 \vee \mathfrak{R}_6 \vee \mathfrak{R}_7 \vee \mathfrak{R}_8. \quad (11b)$$

where

$$\begin{aligned}
 E\{S\} &= E\{\mathfrak{R}_1\} + E\{\mathfrak{R}_2\} + E\{\mathfrak{R}_3\} + E\{\mathfrak{R}_4\} + E\{\mathfrak{R}_5\} + E\{\mathfrak{R}_6\} + E\{\mathfrak{R}_7\} + E\{\mathfrak{R}_8\} - E\{\mathfrak{R}_1\mathfrak{R}_7\} - E\{\mathfrak{R}_2\mathfrak{R}_7\} - \\
 &E\{\mathfrak{R}_2\mathfrak{R}_8\} - E\{\mathfrak{R}_3\mathfrak{R}_7\} - E\{\mathfrak{R}_4\mathfrak{R}_7\} - E\{\mathfrak{R}_4\mathfrak{R}_8\} - E\{\mathfrak{R}_5\mathfrak{R}_6\} - E\{\mathfrak{R}_5\mathfrak{R}_7\} - E\{\mathfrak{R}_6\mathfrak{R}_7\} + E\{\mathfrak{R}_5\mathfrak{R}_6\mathfrak{R}_7\}, \quad (12)
 \end{aligned}$$

where the various intersections in (12) are

$$\mathfrak{R}_1\mathfrak{R}_7 = (X_2\{\geq 3\} X_7\{\geq 3\})(X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{\geq 2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 2\} X_8\{\geq 2\}) = X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{\geq 3\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 3\} X_8\{\geq 2\}$$

$$\mathfrak{R}_2\mathfrak{R}_7 = (X_2\{< 3\} X_3\{\geq 3\} X_7\{\geq 3\})(X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{\geq 2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 2\} X_8\{\geq 2\}) = X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{2\} X_3\{\geq 3\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 3\} X_8\{\geq 2\}$$

$$\mathfrak{R}_2\mathfrak{R}_8 = (X_2\{< 3\} X_3\{\geq 3\} X_7\{\geq 3\})(X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{< 2\} X_3\{\geq 2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 2\} X_8\{\geq 2\}) = X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{< 2\} X_3\{\geq 3\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 3\} X_8\{\geq 2\}$$

$$\mathfrak{R}_3\mathfrak{R}_7 = (X_2\{\geq 3\} X_5\{\geq 3\} X_7\{< 3\} X_8\{\geq 3\})(X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{\geq 2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 2\} X_8\{\geq 2\}) = X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{\geq 3\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_5\{\geq 3\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{2\} X_8\{\geq 3\}$$

$$\mathfrak{R}_4\mathfrak{R}_7 = (X_2\{< 3\} X_3\{\geq 3\} X_5\{\geq 3\} X_7\{< 3\} X_8\{\geq 3\})(X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{\geq 2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 2\} X_8\{\geq 2\}) = X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{< 2\} X_3\{\geq 3\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_5\{\geq 3\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{2\} X_8\{\geq 3\}$$

$$\mathfrak{R}_4\mathfrak{R}_8 = (X_2\{< 3\} X_3\{\geq 3\} X_5\{\geq 3\} X_7\{< 3\} X_8\{\geq 3\})(X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{< 2\} X_3\{\geq 2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 2\} X_8\{\geq 2\}) = X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{< 2\} X_3\{\geq 3\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_5\{\geq 3\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{2\} X_8\{\geq 3\}$$

$$\mathfrak{R}_5\mathfrak{R}_6 = (X_2\{2\} X_3\{2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 3\} X_8\{\geq 2\})(X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{2\} X_3\{2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 3\}) = X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{2\} X_3\{2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 3\} X_8\{\geq 2\}$$

$$\mathfrak{R}_5\mathfrak{R}_7 = (X_2\{2\} X_3\{2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 3\} X_8\{\geq 2\})(X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{\geq 2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 2\} X_8\{\geq 2\}) = X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{2\} X_3\{2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 3\} X_8\{\geq 2\}$$

$$\mathfrak{R}_6\mathfrak{R}_7 = (X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{2\} X_3\{2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 3\})(X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{\geq 2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 2\} X_8\{\geq 2\}) = X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{2\} X_3\{2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 3\} X_8\{\geq 2\}$$

$$\mathfrak{R}_5\mathfrak{R}_6\mathfrak{R}_7 = (X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{2\} X_3\{2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 3\} X_8\{\geq 2\})(X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{\geq 2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 2\} X_8\{\geq 2\}) = X_1\{\geq 2\} X_2\{2\} X_3\{2\} X_4\{\geq 2\} X_6\{\geq 2\} X_7\{\geq 3\} X_8\{\geq 2\}$$

## 2. REPORT AND DISCUSSION OF NUMERICAL RESULTS

We presented two IE methods, the conventional one and an improved one, for solving the problem of our running example. Our two

methods agreed on a value of 0.9819022224313, which is in agreement with the solution of Rushdi and Amashah [30,31], and also in agreement (albeit more precise) with the numerical value (0.981902) that was obtained earlier by Lin et al. [22]. Table 2 details the

computations performed by the two IE methods. The table indicates clearly the improvements brought about by the second method, both in decreasing the number of operations and in diminishing the effect of round-off errors. We note that the round-off error in the first method would have been more pronounced, had we implemented the IE formula as is. Actually, we decreased the round-off significantly by performing an actual subtraction only once, as we summed all positive terms, summed all negative terms, and only then took the difference. We have to admit that we could not fix our symbolic computations via the conventional IE formula from the outset. The manual computation of 255 terms were too tedious and error-prone to be completed correctly in one trial. We evaluated the IE formula correctly via the

python program in Appendix A, and then used the results of this program to fix bugs in the symbolic computations.

In passing, we note that the present work inspired us to apply the MS-IE Principle to the union of fewer (factored or composite) paths that is subsequently converted (at minimal cost) to PRE form [62]. We augmented the resulting procedure with another that uses the multi-state Boole-Shannon expansion [23,24,27,30,42,48,54,63-68]. Consequently, we were in a position to point out a liaison among inclusion-exclusion, probability-ready expressions and Boole-Shannon expansion for multi-state reliability [62].

**Table 2. A comparison of computations by conventional IE and by IE improved with a ‘shellable’ PRE**

Item	Conventional IE	IE improved with PRE
Sum of 8 expectations of single indicators	+ 5.7002040911313365	+ 1.638655916679425
– Sum of 28 expectations of pairwise ANDing of indicators	– 16.183321233651064	– 0.6589357136472941
+ Sum of 56 expectations of triple-wise ANDing of indicators	+ 28.38786762461678	+ 0.0021820193991679074
– Sum of 70 expectations of quadruple-wise ANDing of indicators	– 32.66489098333673	0
+ Sum of 56 expectations of quintuple-wise ANDing of indicators	+ 24.82589302827858	0
– Sum of 28 expectations of sextuple-wise ANDing of indicators	– 12.067134436416122	0
+ Sum of 8 expectations of septuple-wise ANDing of indicators	+ 3.4094675792097604	0
– expectation of octuple-wise ANDing of indicators	– 0.42618344740122005	0
Sum of all positive terms	62.3234323232364569	1.6408379360785929074
– Sum of all negative terms	– 61.34153010080513605	– 0.6589357136472941
Net required value	0.98190222243132085	0.9819022224312988074

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

This paper is a continuation of our ongoing efforts to extend concepts of reliability computations in the binary domain to the multi-state domain. The paper serves as an exposition of the inter-relationships between the multi-state concepts MS-IE and MS-PRE. This exposition was obtained by using the standard MS-IE approach and an improved MS-IE approach preceded by an efficient shellable PRE pre-processing. The two approaches were applied to the same problem of multi-state network reliability. Each of the two approaches recovered

the same result obtained by the conventional RSDP method. Hopefully, the present work can guide more useful applications of the Inclusion-Exclusion Principle and its improved variants to other real-life problems.

### COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

### REFERENCES

1. Rota GC. On the foundations of combinatorial theory I. Theory of Möbius

- functions. *Zeitschrift für Wahrscheinlichkeitstheorie und Verwandte Gebiete*. 1964;2(4):340-368.
2. Rushdi AM, Al-Khateeb DL. A review of methods for system reliability analysis: A Karnaugh-map perspective, *Proceedings of the First Saudi Engineering Conference, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia*. 1983;1:57-95.
  3. O'Connor L. The inclusion-exclusion principle and its applications to cryptography. *Cryptologia*. 1993;17(1):63-79.
  4. Kahn J, Linial N, Samorodnitsky A. Inclusion-exclusion: Exact and approximate. *Combinatorica*. 1996;16(4):465-477.
  5. Dohmen K. Inclusion-exclusion and network reliability. *the Electronic Journal of Combinatorics*. 1998;Research paper#36,5(1):1-8.
  6. Dohmen K. An improvement of the inclusion-exclusion principle. *Archiv der Mathematik*. 1999;72(4):298-303.
  7. Dohmen KL. Inclusion-exclusion: Which terms cancel?. *Archiv der Mathematik*. 2000;74(4):314-316.
  8. Dohmen K. Improved inclusion-exclusion identities and Bonferroni inequalities with reliability applications. *SIAM Journal on Discrete Mathematics*. 2002;16(1):156-171.
  9. Cerasoli M, Fedullo A. The inclusion-exclusion principle. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Mathematics*. 2002;5(2):127-141.
  10. Kessler D, Schiff J. Inclusion-exclusion redux. *Electronic Communications in Probability*. 2002;7:85-96.
  11. Calders T, Goethals B. Quick inclusion-exclusion. In *International Workshop on Knowledge Discovery in Inductive Databases*. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg. 2005;86-103.
  12. Yeh WC. A greedy branch-and-bound inclusion-exclusion algorithm for calculating the exact multi-state network reliability. *IEEE Transactions on Reliability*. 2008;57(1):88-93.
  13. Rota GC. On the foundations of combinatorial theory. In *Classic Papers in Combinatorics*. Birkhäuser Boston. 2009;332-360.
  14. Benaddy M, Wakrim M. Cutset enumerating and network reliability computing by a new recursive algorithm and inclusion exclusion principle. *International Journal of Computer Applications*. 2012;45(16):22-25.
  15. Chen SG. Reduced recursive inclusion-exclusion principle for the probability of union events. In *2014 IEEE international conference on industrial engineering and engineering management*. 2014;11-13.
  16. Boros E, Scozzari A, Tardella F, Veneziani P. Polynomially computable bounds for the probability of the union of events. *Mathematics of Operations Research*. 2014;39(4):1311-1329.
  17. Rushdi AM, Al-Qwasmi MA. Exposition and comparison of two kinds of a posteriori analysis of fault trees. *Journal of King Abdulaziz University: Computing and Information Technology Sciences*. 2016;5(1-2):55-74.
  18. Yoda K, Prékopa A. Improved bounds on the probability of the union of events some of whose intersections are empty. *Operations Research Letters*. 2016;44(1):39-43.
  19. Schäfer L, Garcia S, Srithammavanh V. Simplification of inclusion-exclusion on intersections of unions with application to network systems reliability. *Reliability Engineering & System Safety*. 2018;173:23-33.
  20. Hao Z, Yeh WC, Wang J, Wang GG, Sun B. A quick inclusion-exclusion technique. *Information Sciences*. 2019;486:20-30.
  21. Zuo MJ, Tian Z, Huang HZ. An efficient method for reliability evaluation of multistate networks given all minimal path vectors. *IIE transactions*. 2007;39(8):811-817.
  22. Lin YK, Huang CF, Yeh CT. Network reliability with deteriorating product and production capacity through a multi-state delivery network, *International Journal of Production Research*. 2014;52(22):6681-6694.
  23. Rushdi AMA, Al-Amoudi MA. Switching-algebraic analysis of multi-state system reliability, *Journal of Engineering Research and Reports*. 2018;3(3):1-22.
  24. Rushdi AMA. Utilization of symmetric switching functions in the symbolic reliability analysis of multi-state k-out-of-n systems, *International Journal of Mathematical, Engineering and Management Science*. 2019;4(2):306-326.
  25. Rushdi AMA, Al-Amoudi MA. Reliability analysis of a multi-state system using multi-valued logic, *IOSR Journal of*

- Electronics and Communication Engineering, 2019;14(1):1-10.
26. Rushdi AMA, Alsayegh AB. Reliability analysis of a commodity-supply multi-state system using the map method, *Journal of Advances in Mathematics and Computer Science*. 2019;31(2):1-17.
  27. Rushdi AM, Ghaleb FA. Boolean-based symbolic analysis for the reliability of coherent multi-state systems of heterogeneous components. *Journal of King Abdulaziz University: Computing and Information Technology Sciences*. 2020;9(2):1-25.
  28. Rushdi AM, AlHuthali SA, AlZahrani NA, Alsayegh AB. Reliability analysis of binary-imaged generalized multi-state k-out-of-n systems. *International Journal of Computer Science and Network Security (IJCSNS)*. 2020;20(9):251-264.
  29. Rushdi AMA, Ghaleb FAM. Reliability characterization of binary-imaged multi-state coherent threshold systems. *International Journal of Mathematical, Engineering and Management Sciences*. 2021;6(1):309-321.
  30. Rushdi AMA, Amashah MH. Symbolic derivation of a probability-ready expression for the reliability analysis of a multi-state delivery network. *Journal of Advances in Mathematics and Computer Science*. 2021;36(2):37-56.
  31. Rushdi AMA, Amashah MH. Symbolic reliability analysis of a multi-state network. *Proceedings of the IEEE Fourth National Computing Colleges Conference (4th NCCC)*, Taif, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. 2021;1-6.
  32. Heidtmann KD. Improved method of inclusion-exclusion applied to k-out-of-n systems. *IEEE Transactions on Reliability*. 1982;31(1):36-40.
  33. Rushdi AM. Reliability of k-out-of-n systems. chapter 5 in KB. Misra, *new trends in system reliability evaluation, fundamental studies in engineering*, Elsevier science publishers, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. 1993;16:185-227.
  34. Sun YR, Zhou WY. An inclusion-exclusion algorithm for network reliability with minimal cut sets. *American Journal of Computational Mathematics*. 2012;2(4):316-320.
  35. Goaoc X, Matoušek J, Paták P, Safernová Z, Tancer M. Simplifying inclusion-exclusion formulas. *Combinatorics, Probability and Computing*. 2015;24(2):438-456.
  36. Rushdi AM, Hassan AK. An exposition of system reliability analysis with an ecological perspective. *Ecological Indicators*. 2016;63:282-295.
  37. Hall M. *Combinatorial theory*. Blaisdell publishing company, Waltham, MA, USA; 1967.
  38. Feller W. *An introduction to probability theory and its applications*. Third Edition, Wiley; 1968;1.
  39. Trivedi KS. *Probability and statistics with reliability, queuing, and computer science applications*. Englewood cliffs: NJ: Prentice-Hall; 1982.
  40. Rushdi AM. Utilization of symmetric switching functions in the computation of k-out-of-n system reliability. *Microelectronics and Reliability*. 1986;26(5):973-987.
  41. Rushdi AM, Alsulami AE. Cost elasticities of reliability and MTTF for k-out-of-n systems, *Journal of Mathematics and Statistics*. 2007;3(3):122-128.
  42. Rushdi AM. Partially-redundant systems: Examples, reliability, and life expectancy, *Int. Mag. Adv. Comput. Sci. Telecommun*. 2010;1(1):1-13.
  43. Rushdi AM, Rushdi MA. Switching-algebraic analysis of system reliability, Chapter 6 in M. Ram and P. Davim (Editors), *Advances in Reliability and System Engineering*. Springer International Publishing, Cham, Switzerland. 2017;139-161.
  44. Rushdi RA, Rushdi AM. Karnaugh-map utility in medical studies: The case of Fetal Malnutrition. *International Journal of Mathematical, Engineering and Management Sciences*. 2018;3(3):220-244.
  45. Rushdi, RA, Rushdi AM. Common fallacies of probability in medical context: A simple mathematical exposition. *Journal of Advances in Medicine and Medical Research*. 2018;26(1):1-21.
  46. Rushdi RAM, Rushdi AMA. Mathematics and examples for avoiding common probability fallacies in medical disciplines. Chapter 11 in *Current Trends in Medicine and Medical Research*, Book Publishers International, Hooghly, West Bengal, India, 2019;1:106-132.
  47. Rushdi AM, Serag HA. Solutions of ternary problems of conditional probability with applications to mathematical epidemiology and the COVID-19 pandemic. *International*

- Journal of Mathematical, Engineering and Management Sciences. 2020;5(5):787-811.
48. Rushdi AM, Goda AS. Symbolic reliability analysis via Shannon's expansion and statistical independence, *Microelectronics and Reliability*. 1985;25(6):1041-1053.
  49. Rushdi AM, Abdul Ghani AA. A comparison between reliability analyses based primarily on disjointness or statistical independence: The case of the generalized INDRA network, *Microelectronics and Reliability*. 1993;33(7):965-978.
  50. Rushdi AM, Ba-Rukab OM. Fault-tree modelling of computer system security. *International Journal of Computer Mathematics*. 2005;82(7):805-819.
  51. Rushdi AM, Hassan AK. Reliability of migration between habitat patches with heterogeneous ecological corridors. *Ecological Modelling*. 2015;304:1-10.
  52. Bamasak SM, Rushdi AM. Uncertainty analysis of fault-tree models for power system protection. *Journal of Qassim University: Engineering and Computer Sciences*. 2016;8(1):65-80.
  53. Rushdi MAM, Ba-Rukab OM, Rushdi AM. Multi-dimensional recursion relations and mathematical induction techniques: The case of failure frequency of k-out-of-n systems J. King Abdulaziz University: *Engineering Sciences*. 2016;27(2):15-31.
  54. Rushdi AM, Alturki AM. Novel representations for a coherent threshold reliability system: A tale of eight signal flow graphs. *Turkish Journal of Electrical Engineering & Computer Sciences*. 2018;26(1):257-269.
  55. Rushdi AM, Alturki AM. Unification of mathematical concepts and algorithms of k-out-of-n system reliability: A perspective of improved disjoint products. *Journal of Engineering Research*. 2018;6(4):1-31.
  56. Rushdi AMA, Hassan AK, Moinuddin M. System reliability analysis of small-cell deployment in heterogeneous cellular networks, *Telecommunication Systems*. 2019;73:371-381.
  57. Rushdi AM, Hassan AK. On the interplay between ecology and reliability. In Misra, KB (Editor), *Handbook of Advanced Performability Engineering*, Springer, Cham, Switzerland. 2021;785-809).
  58. Ball MO, Provan JS. Disjoint products and efficient computation of reliability. *Operations Research*. 1988;36(5):703-15.
  59. Boros E, Crama Y, Ekin O, Hammer PL, Ibaraki T, Kogan A. Boolean normal forms, shellability, and reliability computations. *SIAM Journal on Discrete Mathematics*. 2000;13(2):212-226.
  60. Bruni R. On the orthogonalization of arbitrary Boolean formulae. *Journal of Applied Mathematics and Decision Sciences*. 2005;2005(2):61-74.
  61. Rushdi AM, Alturki AM. Reliability of coherent threshold systems. *Journal of Applied Sciences*. 2015;15(3):431-443.
  62. Rushdi AMA, Amashah MH. A liaison among inclusion-exclusion, probability-ready expressions and Boole-Shannon expansion for multi-state reliability. *Journal of King Abdulaziz University: Computing and Information Technology Sciences*. 2021;10(2).
  63. Rushdi AM. Map derivation of the minimal sum of a switching function from that of its complement. *Microelectronics and Reliability*. 1985;25(6):1055-1065.
  64. Liu HH, Yang WT, Liu CC. An improved minimizing algorithm for the summation of disjoint products by Shannon's expansion. *Microelectronics and Reliability*. 1993;33(4):599-613.
  65. Chang YR, Amari SV, Kuo SY. Reliability evaluation of multi-state systems subject to imperfect coverage using OBDD. In 2002 Pacific Rim International Symposium on Dependable Computing, 2002. *Proceedings*. 2002;193-200. IEEE.
  66. Ghosh S, Bhunia S, Roy K. Shannon expansion based supply-gated logic for improved power and testability. In 14th Asian Test Symposium (ATS'05). 2005;404-409. IEEE.
  67. Shrestha A, Xing L, Dai Y. Decision diagram based methods and complexity analysis for multi-state systems. *IEEE Transactions on Reliability*. 2009;59(1):145-161.
  68. Amari SV, Xing L, Shrestha A, Akers J, Trivedi KS. Performability analysis of multistate computing systems using multivalued decision diagrams. *IEEE Transactions on Computers*. 2010;59(10):1419-1433.



## APPENDIX A

### Listing in Python of a Program Computing the IE Solution for the Running Example

```

From itertools import combinations
from functools import reduce
# the lists below are from Lin et al. [21, Table 2, p.6689]
P1= [0,0,3,0,3,0,0,3]
P2= [0,0,3,0,0,0,3,0]
P3= [0,3,0,0,3,0,0,3]
P4= [0,2,2,2,0,0,3,2]
p5= [0,3,0,0,0,0,3,0]
p6= [2,0,2,2,0,2,2,2]
p7= [2,2,0,2,0,2,2,2]
p8= [2,2,2,0,0,2,3,0]
total=0
temp=[] # temporary list to store digits
multi=1 # multiplier counter
Full_List = [P1, P2, P3, P4, p5, p6, p7, p8]

for r in range(1,9,1): # r number of tuples to be compared starting from 1
Combinations = combinations(Full_List, r)
print("Finding maximum for a combination size of %d"%r)
for eachCombination in Combinations:
# print("Finding combination for tuples ", *eachCombination)
temp=list(map(max,zip(*eachCombination)))
print(temp)
if (temp[0]==2):multi=multi*0.897 # Enter the data from Table 1 p-6688
if (temp[1]==2):multi=multi*0.965 # 0 for X_1, 1 for X_2 ...etc
if (temp[1]==3):multi=multi*0.892
if (temp[2]==2):multi=multi*0.953
if (temp[2]==3):multi=multi*0.905
if (temp[3]==2):multi=multi*0.863
if (temp[4]==3):multi=multi*0.903
if (temp[5]==2):multi=multi*0.943
if (temp[6]==2):multi=multi*0.945
if (temp[6]==3):multi=multi*0.884
if (temp[7]==2):multi=multi*0.965
if (temp[7]==3):multi=multi*0.906
print(multi)
if(r%2==1):total=total+multi # if r odd we add it otherwise subtract from total
else :total=total-multi
multi=1 # reset the counter
print('the total=',total)

```

© 2021 Rushdi and Amashah; This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

*Peer-review history:*  
 The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:  
<http://www.sdiarticle4.com/review-history/67438>