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The Future of Cloud Computing: Opportunities, Challenges and Research Trends

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ABSTRACT: In a cloud computing environment, a data center comprises numerous servers, cooling systems, and power delivery infrastructure, all of which consume substantial amounts of energy to operate complex systems. As the demand for computational power continues to rise, data centers have become central to the significant increase in power consumption, heat generation, and temperature elevation of the servers. The energy consumption in cloud data centers has surged dramatically due to the growing computational needs of user workloads. As a result, optimizing energy usage has become a crucial issue to address. Various techniques have been proposed by researchers to reduce energy consumption in these settings.

KEYWORDS: Energy Efficiency, Consolidation, Energy Consumption, Cloud computing

I. INTRODUCTION

Cloud computing offers on-demand access to flexible resources, including infrastructure, platforms, and software, based on a pay-as-you-go model. This technology has significantly transformed the information and communication technology (ICT) sector due to its increasing popularity. As the adoption of cloud computing expands, it has led to the establishment of large-scale data centers, which house numerous complex servers. These data centers consume substantial amounts of electrical energy and release significant amounts of CO2 into the environment. Research highlights two key areas where energy efficiency can be improved: computing and cooling. In the computing aspect, optimizing the allocation of workloads and virtual machine management can help conserve energy.

A. The Next Generation of Cloud Computing

A significant portion of the costs in data centers arises from two primary areas: computing and cooling. Operating servers and maintaining optimal temperatures for them consumes vast amounts of power. The growing need to reduce energy expenses and minimize the carbon footprint has led to a strong focus on energy conservation. Consequently, finding ways to reduce energy consumption in cloud computing environments has consistently attracted the attention of researchers. As server power consumption continues to rise and server density increases, both the heat generated within data centers and the ambient temperature have also escalated. High temperatures can be detrimental to the operation of data centers for various reasons. They can lower server reliability, reduce the overall performance, and compromise system stability. This paper provides a brief overview of various energy-saving techniques that have been explored. It is worth noting that data center resource utilization is often only around 30%. Therefore, assigning workloads to the fewest possible hosts is crucial for energy savings

Related Surveys and Our Contributions

Earlier studies, including those by Aruzhan et al and G.B. Hima et al, have reviewed strategies for enhancing energy efficiency in data centers. These reviews primarily focus on various techniques and environmentally friendly approaches aimed at reducing energy consumption specifically within server operations. This paper, however, offers a comprehensive review that examines multiple facets of cloud computing.

B. Paper Organization

This paper outlines the key techniques employed to enhance energy efficiency, along with a review of related research that has utilized these methods. In Section 4, the classification of these techniques is discussed, focusing on how energy efficiency is achieved across different areas. Section 5 addresses the challenges that remain unresolved in the cloud computing environment, highlighting areas that require further exploration.

II. BACKGROUND

Energy efficiency strategies in data centers typically target several key areas, including i) Servers, ii) Storage, iii)

Memory, iv) Network, and v) Cooling. Servers, being the primary consumers of energy, have several energy-saving techniques, such as Dynamic Voltage and Frequency Scaling (DVFS), Server Consolidation, and Virtualization. Networking infrastructure also contributes significantly to energy consumption. Strategies to optimize energy use in networks include turning off certain system components or putting them in low-power states during idle periods, as well as directing virtual network traffic to a smaller number of physical devices when network load is low. Cooling systems are another critical factor in energy efficiency.

A. Current Status of Cloud Computing

The development of energy efficiency, as illustrated in Fig. 1, highlights the progression of existing strategies and the introduction of new techniques aimed at reducing energy consumption in cloud computing. This section reviews the evolution of energy-related research over time, examining it through the lens of parameters such as Quality of Service (QoS) and Focus of Study (FoS). Numerous energy-efficient algorithms (EEAs) have been proposed to enhance cloud environments, with a focus on improving utilization, responsiveness, performance, and other critical QoS parameters.

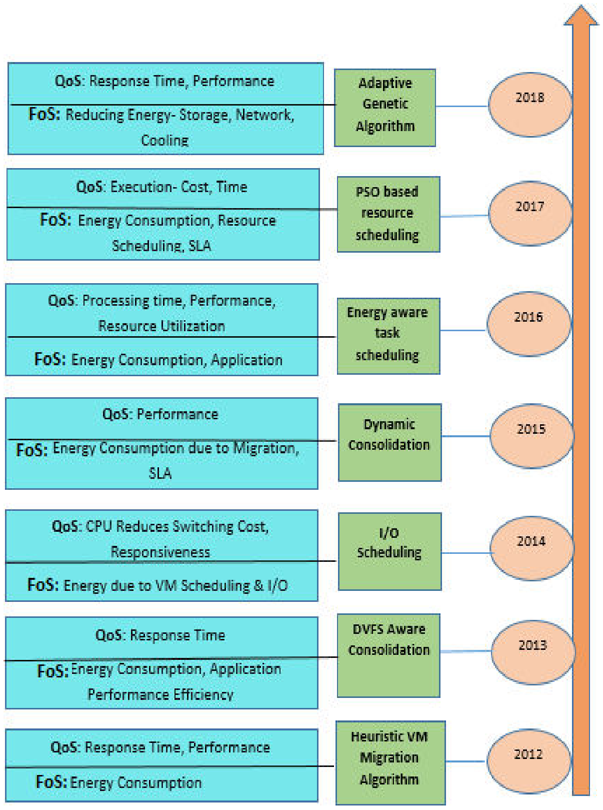

Fig. 1 Energy Efficiency Evolution

In 2018, Huda Ibrahim et al] developed an Integer Linear Programming (ILP) model designed to minimize energy consumption in cloud environments. The model focuses on dynamic workload scheduling techniques. Energy efficiency and near-optimal scheduling decisions are attained through the use of an adaptive genetic algorithm. This algorithm determines the schedule for the initial set of tasks provided. Before the new task arrangement is introduced, the algorithm reviews the list of received tasks and generates a sequence based on the requested and available resource capacities capable of executing each task.

In 2017, Singh et al. [9] introduced a resource provisioning and scheduling technique based on Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO), aimed at reducing energy consumption and optimizing resource utilization. The approach also considers other factors, such as execution cost, time, and Service Level Agreement (SLA) compliance. In 2016, Leila Ismail et al. [10] developed an energy-aware task scheduling strategy that focuses on the power consumption of the cloud.

In 2015, Subhadra Bose Shaw et al. [11] implemented a proactive and reactive hotspot detection technique to minimize virtual machine migrations, thereby reducing energy consumption in cloud data centers. The approach involves assessing whether migration is necessary in the case of hotspot detection before initiating the process. Once the decision is made, the virtual machine is migrated to a new host using an innovative method that predicts the future load on the respective host.

III. AREAS TO EXPLORE: OPPORTUNITIES

Energy conservation in cloud computing, particularly within data centers, remains a significant challenge for researchers. In this study, we aim to investigate various strategies for improving energy efficiency. In 2014, Peng Xiao et al. [12] examined a virtual machine (VM) scheduling policy called Share Reclaiming with Collective I/O (SRC-I/O), designed to address the energy losses caused by I/O virtualization.

In 2013, Yongqiang et al. [13] proposed a dynamic resource management scheme that utilized server consolidation and dynamic voltage frequency scaling (DVFS) to optimize energy usage. The energy-efficient framework manages incoming workloads by directing them to the corresponding application manager via a dispatcher module. These workloads are then allocated to virtual machines in a round-robin fashion. In 2012, R. Karthikeyan et a energy optimization in cloud data centre. There are number of ways by which energy consumption by data centers in cloud can be lowered some of the major techniques to save the energy consumption can be classified as shown in Fig. 2.

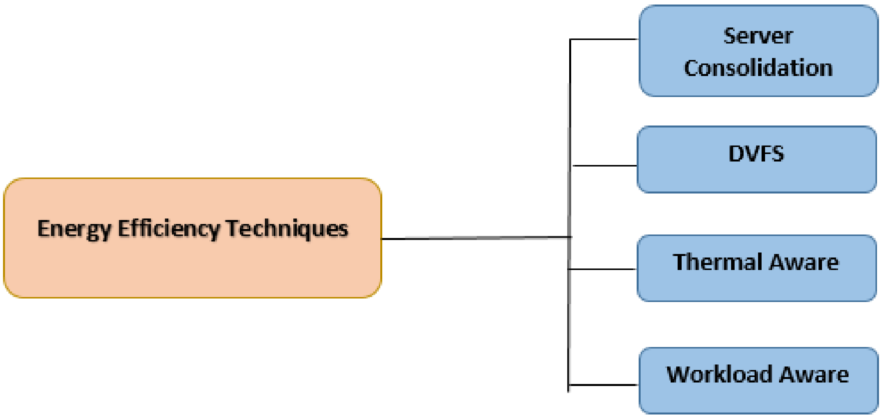

Fig. 2 Energy Efficiency Techniques

The techniques for energy efficiency in cloud computing can be further categorized based on various parameters. While many of the proposed scheduling algorithms focus on minimizing the average energy consumption in the data center, some scheduling mechanisms are specifically aimed at reducing the high temperatures of physical hosts.

A. Server Consolidation

One energy-efficient approach for achieving energy savings in cloud data centers involves aggregating the workload on fewer physical machines while powering down the idle servers. This method leverages virtualization or migration to optimize resource usage. In the past, consolidation was done statically, where lightly loaded virtual machines were manually migrated to a single physical server. However, dynamic consolidation enables the adjustment of the number of active physical servers based on the current workload. It facilitates the periodic reallocation of virtual machines to underloaded or appropriately balanced hosts. This process includes detecting both overloaded and underloaded hosts within the data center, determining which virtual machines need to be migrated, when the migration should occur, and where (which physical machine) the virtual machines should be moved [7].

In general, migration can be performed in two ways: regular migration and live migration. The regular migration method involves transferring a virtual machine from one host to another by temporarily halting the original server and resuming its operation on the target server while transferring its memory contents from the source host. In contrast, live migration achieves the same result without interrupting the server's operation [6]. Dongyan Deng et al. [14] introduced an energy-efficient framework based on a virtual machine system. They proposed a VM placement policy called MAUD, which takes a host list and a VM migration list as input. This algorithm addresses the load balancing problem by considering the difference between host utilization after receiving a VM and the average utilization across the data center, aiming to optimize energy consumption.

Workload Aware Scheduling

Modern data centers typically house a large number of servers, and decisions regarding the allocation of workloads to specific servers directly impact heat distribution and power consumption. Workload-aware scheduling refers to assigning incoming workloads based on the nature of the workload and the appropriate resources available. Improper workload allocation can lead to a significant increase in the temperature of the data center, which in turn raises the heat dissipation of physical machines and increases the demand for cooling. To address this, various workload-scheduling strategies have been proposed, aiming to place workloads on available servers in a way that optimizes energy consumption, reduces temperatures, and minimizes cooling requirements.

Ehsan Pakbaznia et al. [20] used a short-term workload forecasting technique to predict incoming workloads, enabling them to determine the number of active servers and their workload placements while also adjusting the temperature of the supplied cold air. This approach achieves energy savings through dynamic resource provisioning. In contrast, R.K. Jena's [21] research focuses on optimizing both energy consumption and time through workload management using a clonal selection algorithm. The clonal selection algorithm (CSA) is adaptive and operates based on clonal selection theory. As new resource requests arrive, the CSA is executed to adjust resource placements. The algorithm schedules user tasks optimally across data centers, randomly assigning each task to the processing elements of the respective data center.

Holistic Management Aspects: A Comparison

Based on the literature discussed above, Table 1 provides a comparison of various holistic management approaches, evaluating them across different criteria such as the year of publication, algorithm used, environment, scope, technology, and Service Level Agreement (SLA).

Table 1: The comparisons of different holistic management aspects

Year	Holistic Management Aspect	Algorithm	Environment	Scope	Technology	SLA Agreement
2018	Workload aware scheduling	Adaptive Genetic Algorithm	Dynamic	Server, Storage, Network, Cooling	Single cloud data centre	No
2017	Energy aware scheduling	Scheduler	Homogenous	Server	CloudSim	Yes
2016	Server Consolidation	Underload decision algorithm	Dynamic	Server	CloudSim	Yes
2016	Workload aware scheduling	Genetic Algorithm	Dynamic	Server, Storage	Single cloud data center	Yes
2015	DVFS aware scheduling	Dynamic consolidation algorithm	Dynamic	Severs	CloudSim	Yes
2014	Energy aware scheduling	Scheduler-RESCUE	Heterogeneous	Server	Private Cloud	Yes
2013	DVFS + Server Consolidation	Dynamic Resource Management	Heterogeneous	Server, Network	Own testbed	Yes
2012	Thermal aware scheduling	Task Scheduling algorithm	Heterogeneous	Server, Cooling	Real Data Centre Environment	Yes

IV. OPEN CHALLENGES

In the cloud computing environment, there are several complex challenges that, if properly addressed, could lead to significant advancements. There are various research issues that need to be resolved in cloud computing, and the following open challenges [1-7] are identified across different aspects of holistic management:

- **Server Consolidation**: The increased utilization of existing servers can lead to performance degradation, as the entire workload is concentrated on these servers. This can result in slower response times and higher transition costs.

- **DVFS**: One limitation of DVFS is that reducing the frequency also lowers the performance of the circuit, which in turn impacts overall system performance. Therefore, DVFS should be applied carefully to ensure that performance is not compromised.
- **Thermal Awareness**: Continuously monitoring the precise inlet and ambient temperatures of servers can be a challenging task. Therefore, thermal-aware scheduling requires effective mechanisms to accurately assess and manage temperature levels.
- **Workload Awareness**: Predicting the nature of workloads based on historical data can be a complex and challenging task.

V. SUMMARY AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In this study, we examined the energy-related challenges within the cloud computing environment. We analyzed various algorithms that utilize energy-efficient techniques in cloud data centers. Much of the research has predominantly focused on energy-saving strategies for servers. As power consumption increases, along with rising energy costs and carbon emissions, reducing power usage has become a critical issue for the sustainability of cloud computing. Researchers have implemented several mechanisms to achieve energy efficiency while minimizing SLA violations. This paper highlights key energy-efficient approaches in cloud computing and underscores the importance of implementing effective techniques to enhance data center energy efficiency. Looking ahead, these strategies may be integrated synergistically to achieve significant energy savings in a more holistic manner. The key challenge remains to develop a coordinated framework that allows for the seamless integration of various approaches.

The further future directions can be:

- **Data Security**: Service providers do not have access to the physical security measures of data centers and must depend on the infrastructure provider to ensure complete data security. In a virtual private cloud environment, service providers can configure security settings remotely but may not have full visibility into the specific security measures that have been implemented.
- **SLAs (Service Level Agreements)**: Monitoring the agreed-upon service levels is crucial, as defined in the contract between consumers and service providers. Managing Quality of Service (QoS) attributes, such as performance and response time, is a key aspect of ensuring that SLAs are met.
- **Fault Tolerance**: Fault tolerance is a technique that enables a system to continue functioning even when one of its components fails. It can be described as the ability of a system to quickly recover from an unexpected hardware or software malfunction.
- **Data Filtering**: The data collected from multiple geographically distributed data centers is often massive. Data filtering involves removing irrelevant or unnecessary information that does not add value to the reader or the system.
- **Peak Temperature among Servers**: Temperature is a crucial factor for both physical servers and virtualization solutions. Fluctuations in on-chip temperature and the formation of hotspots can degrade processor performance and increase energy consumption. Effective thermal management strategies are needed to ensure even distribution of temperature across servers.
- **Data Storage**: A major issue arising from storing large amounts of data is the challenge of data synchronization.
- **Total Processing Resource Wastage by the Physical Machine**: Resource utilization is directly related to energy consumption. Therefore, a metric is needed to assess the efficiency of resource utilization.
- **High Level of Power Consumption by Servers**: Inefficient or non-energy-aware scheduling techniques can result in increased power consumption by servers, which in turn reduces their performance and reliability.

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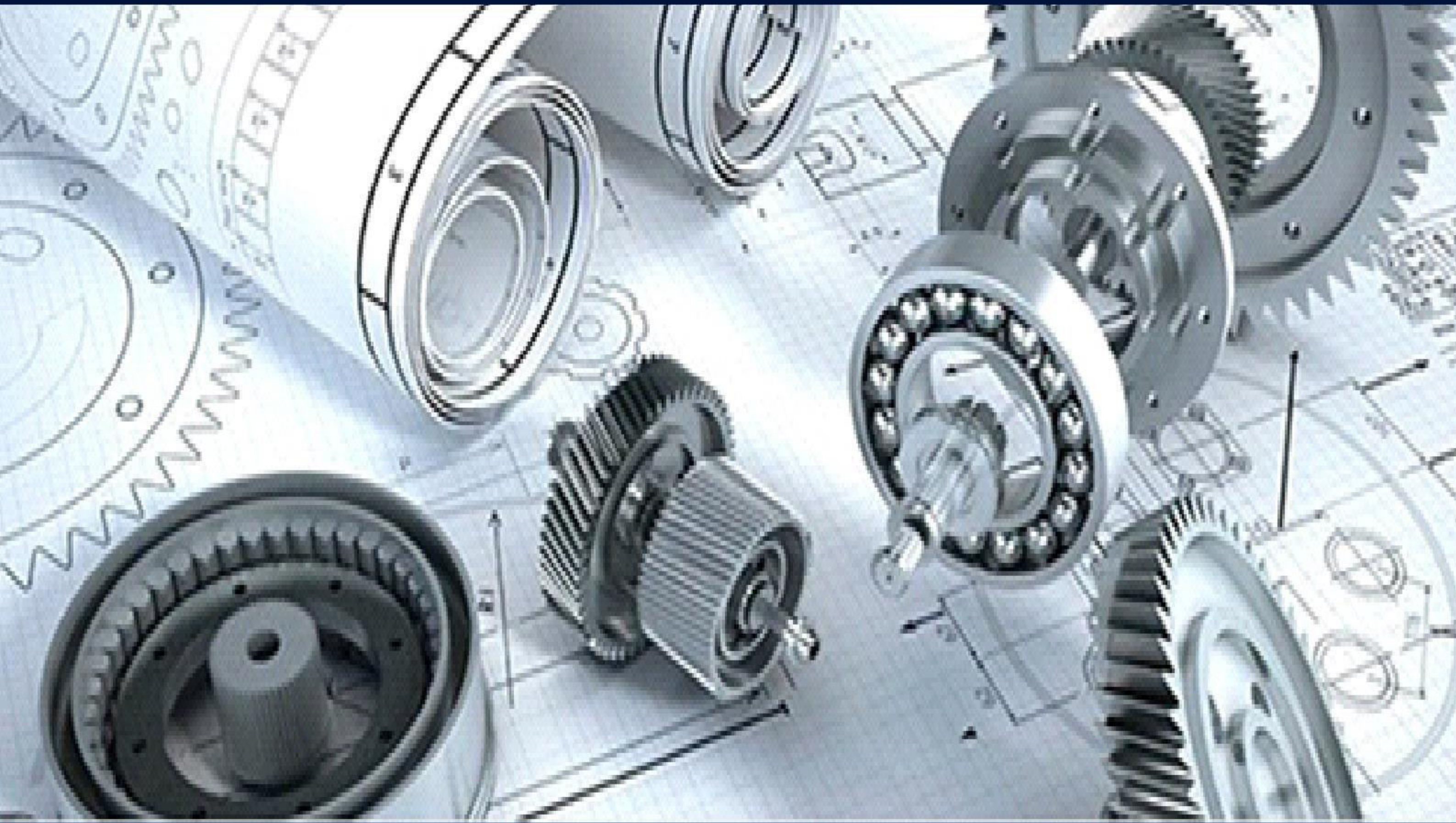

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