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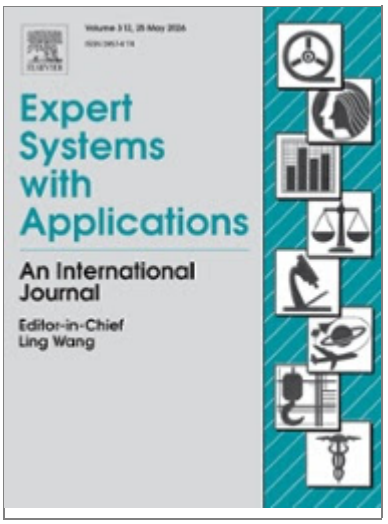

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Reply-To: Huifang Ma <mahuifang_nwnu@163.com>
To: Joko Siswantoro <joko_siswantoro@staff.ubaya.ac.id>

Fri, Mar 27, 2026 at 4:08 PM

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Reviewer #6: The authors have adequately addressed the major concerns, and the current version of the paper meets the high standards expected for publication.

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Reviewers' comments:

Reviewer #5: This article demonstrates significant innovation and meets the submission requirements of the journal.

Reviewer #6: The paper addresses a relevant problem—feature selection via metaheuristic optimization—and presents a reasonably broad set of experiments. However, there are significant concerns regarding the depth of novelty justification, rigor of experimental design, and comprehensiveness of comparisons with state-of-the-art methods. These issues must be substantially addressed before the manuscript can be considered for publication in ESWA.

1 The paper claims two contributions: (1) the reverse-V-shaped transfer function, and (2) the BGWWO hybrid framework.

However, both require stronger justification.
For instance, the continuous GWO-WOA hybrid was proposed by Obadina et al. (2021). The present work essentially applies a transfer function to binarize this existing algorithm. This is a relatively straightforward adaptation—virtually any continuous metaheuristic can be binarized via transfer functions. The authors should clearly explain: why is binarizing the pre-hybridized GWO-WOA theoretically superior to hybridizing individually binarized GWO and WOA?

2 The reverse-V-shaped function is simply `1 - f(x)` applied to V-shaped functions. While empirically effective in most datasets, the paper lacks theoretical analysis explaining why this inversion works. The paper only states it provides "high FS intensity near 0," but does not rigorously explain how this behavior benefits the search dynamics of feature selection.

3 The entire study uses only KNN (k=5) as the wrapper classifier. This is a significant limitation because:

- Feature selection results are highly classifier-dependent. Feature subsets selected by KNN may not be equally effective for SVM, Random Forest, or neural networks.
- For a journal at ESWA's level, testing with at least 2-3 classifiers is typically expected to demonstrate the eneralizabilit of selected features.
- The choice of k=5 lacks a sensitivity analysis. Different k values could significantly affect the results.

4 The primary comparison targets are basic binary versions of PSO (2017), GWO (2016), SSA (2021), and WOA (2019)—these are early baseline algorithms. While R2 added comparisons with bHI-WOA and bWFOA, this remains insufficient.

5 Reviewer #5 previously requested comparisons with OLCM-GWO and CDLA-GWO. The authors declined, citing lack of publicly available code. However, as the proposers of a new method, **the responsibility to reproduce comparison methods lies with the authors**. The referenced papers are published in reputable journals with sufficient algorithmic detail for reproduction.

6 Figure 8 presents convergence curves, but the analysis remains descriptive. For instance, on the Digits dataset, BGWWO's convergence curve does not appear to outperform VBPSO and bGWO, but this is not adequately discussed.
The paper claims BGWWO "converges slowly initially but catches up" on high-dimensional datasets. However, on Toxicity, the convergence curve of bWOA (green line) appears to reach a similar final value as BGWWO, which seems inconsistent with Table 12 where BGWWO (0.2642) clearly outperforms bWOA (0.2818).

7 Typographical error in equations. Equations (6)-(8) all show X_1 on the left-hand side, but they should be X_1, X_2, and X_3 respectively.

8 The manuscript is quite long (~45 pages of main text). The dataset-by-dataset discussion for each experiment could be condensed, presenting key findings in summary tables and discussing only noteworthy cases in prose.

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Reviewers' comments:

Reviewer #2: 1. The ablation study should be presented earlier in the Results section, preferably before Section 4.2 (Comparison of BGWWO with Other Algorithms). This will allow readers to understand the contribution of each component before viewing the full comparative performance.
2. Sections 4.2 and 4.5 are closely related in content and should either be combined or placed consecutively. This restructuring will improve the logical flow and enhance the readability of the manuscript.
3. The conclusion section should be strengthened by incorporating a clearer discussion of the key findings, particularly the comparative performance results between BGWWO and the hybrid MA approach. Highlighting how BGWWO performs relative to hybrid MA—whether in terms of accuracy, feature-reduction efficiency, computational cost, or stability—will provide readers with a more comprehensive understanding of the algorithm's advantages and limitations. This added comparison will help reinforce the

significance of your proposed method and better justify its contributions to the field.

Reviewer #5: The review of hybrid meta-heuristic algorithms in this section is generally thorough. However, the discussion of improved variants of the Grey Wolf Optimizer (GWO) and their applications to feature selection could be expanded. Specifically, recent strategies that address well-known limitations of GWO—such as premature convergence and slow convergence speed—are not adequately covered. Notable methods include the Orthogonal Learning Covariance Matrix (OLCM) and the Chaotic Diffusion-Limited Aggregation (CDLA) mechanisms, both of which have demonstrated superior performance in medical feature selection tasks. To enhance the depth and timeliness of this section, The authors may consider citing the following literature:"Orthogonal learning covariance matrix for defects of grey wolf optimizer: Insights, balance, diversity, and feature selection" and "Chaotic diffusion-limited aggregation enhanced grey wolf optimizer: Insights, analysis, binarization, and feature selection."
Additionally, while the authors evaluate their method on 10 UCI datasets, the medical relevance and applicability of these datasets could be emphasized more clearly. Many studies in this field validate their approaches on widely recognized medical datasets (e.g., dermatology, heart disease, cancer classification). Drawing explicit connections to such datasets—particularly those used in the aforementioned references—would strengthen the persuasiveness and clinical relevance of the proposed feature selection framework.
Furthermore, the current experimental comparisons focus primarily on standard binary variants (bGWO, bWOA, bPSO, etc.) and a limited set of hybrid algorithms (HI-WOA, WFOA). However, to more comprehensively position BGWWO against the state-of-the-art, it would be valuable to also include comparisons with recent high-performing GWO variants, such as those enhanced with OLCM or CDLA. This would provide a clearer picture of whether the proposed hybridization offers advantages beyond what can be achieved through advanced modifications of a single algorithm.
Regarding the ablation study, while the authors examine the contributions of the transfer function and hybrid components, the current analysis could be more systematic. Including additional baselines such as "pure GWO" and "pure WOA" (without hybridization) would help isolate the effect of the hybrid mechanism itself. Moreover, providing visual analyses—such as convergence curves showing fitness over iterations, or plots tracking the number of selected features during the search process—could offer deeper insights into how the hybrid strategy balances exploration and exploitation compared to its standalone counterparts. This would strengthen the claims regarding the design rationale of BGWWO.
Finally, in the Conclusion and Future Work section, the authors could more explicitly highlight the potential of BGWWO for medical feature selection tasks and propose concrete future directions. For instance, integrating BGWWO with deep learning models (e.g., CNNs or Transformers) for high-dimensional medical image or genomic data classification represents a promising research avenue that aligns with current trends in computational medicine and could further extend the impact of this work.

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Expert Systems with Applications <em@editorialmanager.com> Mon, Sep 15, 2025 at 9:20 AM
Reply-To: Expert Systems with Applications <support@elsevier.com>
To: Joko Siswantoro <joko_siswantoro@staff.ubaya.ac.id>

Ms. Ref. No.: **ESWA-D-25-17105**
Title: A Hybrid Binary Grey Wolf and Whale Optimization Method for Feature Selection in Classification Tasks
Expert Systems With Applications

Dear Dr. Joko Siswantoro,

Reviewers have now commented on your paper. You will see that they are advising that you revise your manuscript. If you are prepared to undertake the work required, I would be pleased to reconsider my decision.

For your guidance, reviewers' comments are appended below.

If you decide to revise the work, please submit a list of changes or a rebuttal against each point raised by the reviewers. You can upload this as the 'Detailed Response to Reviewers' when you submit the revised manuscript.

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Yours sincerely,

Huifang Ma
Editor
Expert Systems With Applications

Reviewers' comments:

Reviewer #1: Dear Author,
Thank you for your submission. I appreciate the effort you have dedicated to this work. The topic is of scientific relevance, and your contribution is recognized. Please consider the following suggestions to improve the clarity and overall quality of the manuscript:

It is recommended to summarize the literature review studies in a structured table. Suggested columns could include the year, methods used, key results, and identified limitations. This would improve the readability and synthesis of existing work.

In Figure 3, the equation numbering appears to be inconsistent and incorrect. For example, the sequence 2.5, 2.11, 2.19 is not logically ordered. Please revise the numbering to maintain consistency and accuracy.

The conclusion section should be revised to better summarize the main findings, emphasize the contributions of the work, and provide insights into possible future research directions.

Reviewer #2: The manuscript titled "A Hybrid Binary Grey Wolf and Whale Optimization Method for Feature Selection in Classification Tasks" presents a hybrid binary metaheuristic (BGWWO) that combines the Grey Wolf Optimizer (GWO) and Whale Optimization Algorithm (WOA) with a custom reverse-V-shaped transfer function. The problem is relevant, and the method shows promising results across multiple benchmark datasets.

However, the following improvements are necessary before the manuscript can be considered for publication:

1. Literature Review
The current review lacks discussion on recent hybrid swarm-based or ensemble feature selection methods. Please expand the related work to include studies that combine exploration and exploitation strategies in binary optimization, especially those published in recent SCIE-indexed journals.

2. Ablation Study
An ablation analysis is needed to isolate the impact of:

The hybridization (GWO + WOA)

The proposed reverse-V-shaped transfer function

Suggested variants for comparison:

BGWWO without the transfer function

GWO + reverse-V

WOA + reverse-V

This would help justify each component's contribution to the final performance.

3. Comparison with Other Hybrid Swarm Algorithms
The current comparison only involves standard binary algorithms (bGWO, bWOA, bPSO, etc.). For a fair evaluation, include at least two recent hybrid metaheuristic algorithms (e.g., HGWO-DE, WOA-FPA, or hybrid ensemble-based FS methods). This will better position BGWWO against the current state-of-the-art.

4. Code Availability
To improve transparency and reproducibility, consider releasing the source code or pseudocode through a public repository (e.g., GitHub).

5. Minor Issues
Avoid repeating full names of algorithms after the first mention.

Refine grammar and phrasing for clarity and conciseness.

Revise the conclusion to better highlight insights, limitations, and future work.

Include interactive data visualizations in your publication and let your readers interact and engage more closely with your research. Follow the instructions here: https://www.elsevier.com/researcher/author/tools-and-resources/data-visualization. to find out about available data visualization options and how to include them with your article.

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Joko Siswantoro _ <joko_siswantoro@staff.ubaya.ac.id> Mon, Sep 15, 2025 at 9:32 AM
To: jabesh.nehemiah@gmail.com

mas tolong disiapkan revisinya ya. kalau ada waktu bisa diskusi besok jam 10
[Quoted text hidden]

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Editor handles ESWA-D-25-17105

1 message

Expert Systems with Applications <em@editorialmanager.com> Tue, Jul 8, 2025 at 11:42 PM
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Title: A Hybrid Binary Grey Wolf and Whale Optimization Method for Feature Selection in Classification Tasks
Expert Systems With Applications

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1 message

Expert Systems with Applications <em@editorialmanager.com> Thu, Jul 3, 2025 at 8:55 PM
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