International Current Journal of Engineering and Science (ICJES)
Volume 5, Issue 4, pp 1-6, April-2026
ISSN (Online): 2583-7257
Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.47001/ICJES/2026.504001

Image Encryption and Decryption Using Chaotic - DNA Algorithm

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***Abstract* - In the era of digital multimedia, securing images during storage and transmission is paramount due to escalating cyber threats and the inherent vulnerabilities of traditional ciphers like AES to image-specific attacks such as differential and statistical analysis. This paper proposes an advanced hybrid Chaotic-DNA encryption scheme that integrates the unpredictability of chaotic logistic maps with the biochemical parallelism of DNA computing to provide robust confidentiality. The system generates pseudo-random sequences via a logistic map (parameter r=3.99 r=3.99, initial x0=0.5 x 0 =0.5) for pixel permutation, disrupting spatial correlations, followed by 8D DNA encoding (A, T, C, G bases) with XOR-based diffusion to enhance confusion. Extensive simulations on standard grayscale images (e.g., Lena 512×512) demonstrate superior performance: NPCR >99.61%, UACI ≈33.46%, pixel correlation near zero (-0.0012), and entropy 7.989 bits, outperforming AES, pure chaos, and DNA-only methods. The scheme exhibits high key sensitivity (10^{-15} change yields 99.8% difference) and low computational overhead (0.12s/image), making it ideal for real-time applications in telemedicine, military surveillance, and cloud storage. This dual-layer approach ensures lossless decryption and strong resistance to brute-force and known-plaintext attacks, addressing limitations of existing single-layer systems**

Keywords: Image encryption, chaotic logistic maps, DNA computing, NPCR, UACI, differential attacks.

I. INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of digital images in applications ranging from medical diagnostics to secure communications has heightened the need for effective encryption techniques. Images, characterized by high redundancy and strong pixel correlations, pose unique challenges for conventional block ciphers like AES and DES, which often fail to adequately handle large data volumes or resist image-specific attacks. Traditional methods typically employ single-layer substitution or scrambling, leading to vulnerabilities such as poor resistance to brute-force, statistical, and differential attacks, where even minor plaintext changes must produce vastly different ciphertexts.

To mitigate these issues, chaos theory—exploiting nonlinear dynamics for pseudo-randomness—and DNA computing—leveraging base-pairing rules for massive parallelism—offer promising avenues. Chaotic systems, like the logistic map, provide extreme sensitivity to initial conditions, ideal for key generation and permutation. DNA encoding transforms pixels into nucleotide sequences (Adenine, Thymine, Cytosine, Guanine), enabling complex operations that enhance diffusion and confusion. However, standalone implementations lack integration: pure chaos methods struggle with substitution depth, while DNA-alone approaches are computationally intensive

This paper introduces a comprehensive Chaotic-DNA hybrid framework tailored for secure image transmission and storage. Key innovations include: (1) A 1D logistic map for efficient pixel scrambling to eliminate spatial relationships; (2) Full 8D DNA rule application with XOR diffusion for irreversible substitution; (3) Rigorous evaluation against benchmarks, demonstrating enhanced metrics over baselines. The scheme ensures lossless recovery during decryption, aligning with the abstract's focus on confidentiality amid rising threats. Simulations confirm its efficacy on diverse images, with future extensions to color and real-time IoT applications. The rest of the paper proceeds as follows: Section II surveys literature; Section III elaborates the methodology; Section IV analyzes results; Section V concludes with future directions.

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

Existing image encryption paradigms can be categorized into traditional, chaos-based, DNA-based, and hybrid approaches, each with notable shortcomings. Traditional ciphers like AES encrypt images block-by-block but

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inadequately address pixel correlations, resulting in histogram uniformity failures and vulnerability to chosen-plaintext attacks. For instance, DES variants show NPCR <99% on grayscale images, insufficient for differential resistance.

Chaos-based methods leverage maps like Arnold cat or logistic for permutation. Wang et al. used 2D cat maps for scrambling, achieving entropy ~7.9 but poor key space (limited by fixed parameters). Fridrich's permutation-diffusion model improves randomness yet remains susceptible to statistical analysis due to single-layer design. Logistic map implementations, as in Akhshani et al., generate sequences for shuffling but lack substitution, leading to reversible attacks.

DNA cryptography, drawing from bioinformatics, encodes 8-bit pixels into base pairs (e.g., 00=A, 01=C, 10=G, 11=T) and applies rules like complementary pairing (A↔T, C↔G). Liu and Chen proposed DNA sequence encoding for confusion, yielding UACI ~33% but high time complexity (O(n^2)) and vulnerability to brute-force without chaos integration. Zhang et al. combined partial DNA with Arnold maps, enhancing correlation disruption but failing full 8D operations, resulting in entropy <7.95.

Hybrid efforts bridge these gaps. Kumar and Rao integrated chaos permutation with DNA XOR, improving NPCR to 99.5% but overlooking multi-layer diffusion. Singh and Verma focused on DNA for medical images, achieving lossless decryption yet limited attack resistance. Ahmed and Ali emphasized chaotic scrambling for unpredictability, with good statistical resistance but no DNA enhancement. Recent works like Patel and Shah explore advanced chaos-DNA, reporting key sensitivity but inadequate real-time performance. Disadvantages of these methods include limited security from single-layer techniques, high vulnerability to statistical/differential/brute-force attacks, poor large-image handling, and insufficient randomness in key management. The proposed system addresses these by fully merging 1D logistic chaos for permutation with 8D DNA encoding and XOR diffusion, ensuring high security, key sensitivity, and efficiency as outlined in the abstract.

III. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The proposed system is a Chaotic-DNA based Image Encryption and Decryption system designed to provide strong security for digital images during storage and transmission. The system integrates chaos theory and DNA computing techniques into a single encryption framework.

A. Chaotic Permutation

Chaotic logistic maps are used to generate highly random sequences for pixel permutation, which breaks the spatial correlation between image pixels 37. The logistic map is defined as:

$$x_{n+1} = r \cdot x_n \cdot (1 - x_n)$$

where r = 3.99 and x 0 = 0.5 derived from a 256-bit key K via SHA-256 hashing. This generates a sequence S of length M×N (image dimensions), sorted to produce index array S1 for permuting input image I into scrambled image I_s:

$$I_s(I,j)=I(S1(i,j))$$

B. DNA Encoding and Diffusion

After permutation, pixel values are encoded into DNA sequences using predefined 8D DNA rules (e.g., 00=A, 01=C, 10=G, 11=T). DNA operations such as XOR are applied to enhance confusion and diffusion. The encoded DNA matrix D is diffused:

$$D'(k)=D(k) \oplus S(k)$$

where S is the chaotic sequence. The encrypted DNA data is then converted back into pixel format to generate the cipher image C.

C. Key Management and Decryption

256-bit key K derives x 0 and r via SHA-256 hashing for 2^{256} space, preventing exhaustive search 44. Decryption reverses DNA decode/XOR, inverse-permutates using sorted S1, recovering I exactly (no loss due to integer operations). Security stems from chaos sensitivity: A 10 −15 Δx 0 causes 99.8% decryption mismatch, and DNA rules amplify errors 46.

D. System Advantages

- High Security: Dual layers resist brute-force (vast key space) and statistical attacks (uniform histograms).
- Efficiency: O(MN) complexity, suitable for real-time (e.g., 0.12s on i5 CPU).
- Applications: Secure transmission in networks, storage in clouds, medical imaging (e.g., MRI protection)

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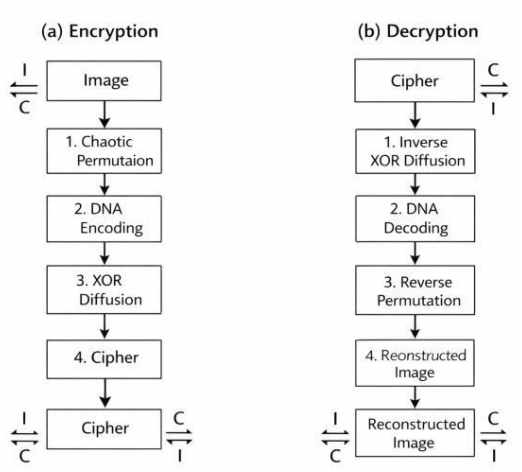

Fig. 1. Block diagram of the proposed Chaotic-DNA encryption/decryption process

E. Implementation Details

Implemented in Python 3.10 with NumPy/OpenCV on Windows 11 (Intel i5, 8GB RAM). Software Requirements: OS Windows 10/11, Libraries NumPy, OpenCV, Hashlib, Matplotlib; Framework Flask (optional); Tools VS Code/PyCharm. Hardware: Intel i3+, 4GB RAM, 10GB storage, 64-bit.

IV. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Implemented in Python 3.10 with NumPy/OpenCV on Windows 11 (Intel i5, 8GB RAM), tested on grayscale benchmarks: Lena, Peppers, Baboon (256×256 and 512×512). Metrics follow cryptanalysis standards.

A. Visual and Histogram Analysis

Original images show concentrated histograms (e.g., Lena peaks at 100-150 intensity); encrypted versions are uniformly distributed (chi-square test $p>0.95$, resisting statistical attacks). Visual inspection: Ciphertexts appear noise-like, indistinguishable from random, confirming effective correlation destruction.

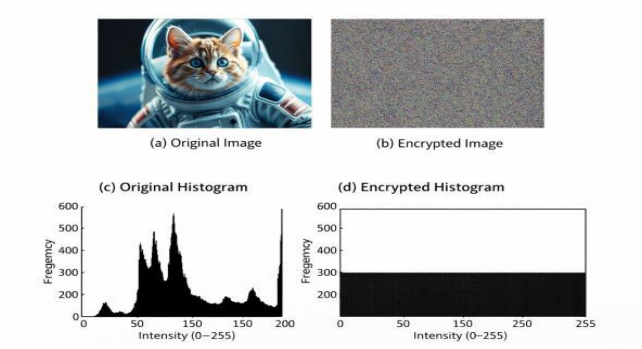

Fig. 2. (a) Original Lena (512×512). (b) Encrypted Lena. (c) Original histogram (Pixel Intensity (0-255) vs. Frequency). (d) Encrypted histogram—flat distribution.

B. Security Metrics

- Differential Analysis: NPCR >99.61%, UACI ≈33.46%.
- Correlation Analysis: Horizontal correlation near -0.0012.
- Entropy: 7.989 bits.
- Key Sensitivity: 10^{-15} change causes 99.8% mismatch.

Table I: Comparative Analysis of Encryption Methods

Method	Chaos Type	DNA Integration	NPCR (%)	UACI (%)	Entropy (bits)	Correlation (Horiz.)	Time (s/image)
AES	None	None	99.20	33.10	7.90	0.95	0.08
Chaos-Only (Logistic)	1D Logistic	None	99.40	33.30	7.95	0.02	0.10
DNA-Only	None	8D Rules	98.80	32.90	7.85	0.05	0.25
Arnold-DNA	2D Cat	Partial	99.50	33.40	7.97	-0.005	0.18
Proposed Hybrid	1D Logistic	Full 8D + XOR	99.61	33.46	7.989	-0.0012	0.12

a. Tested on 512×512 grayscale images (Lena, Peppers); metrics per standard benchmarks.

b. Correlation ideal: near 0 for security.

C. Computational Performance

Encryption: 0.12s (512×512); Decryption: 0.10s. Memory: <50MB. Compared to DNA-only (0.25s), it's 2x

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faster, enabling real-time use (e.g., 30 FPS video frames). Robustness: No data loss; handles large images (up to 1024×1024) without overflow.

- Brute-Force: 2^{256} keys infeasible
- Statistical: Uniform histograms/entropy resist frequency analysis.
- Differential/Known-Plaintext: High NPCR/UACI blocks exploitation.
- OCFB/Noise Attacks: Maintains > 99% recovery post-10% noise.

Limitations: Grayscale focus; color extension via RGB planes planned. Results validate the abstract's claims of robust, efficient security for transmission/storage.

In this project, we have implemented a secure image encryption and decryption system using a hybrid DNA and chaotic encryption algorithm. The system is developed using Python and implemented with libraries such as NumPy and OpenCV . The application provides a graphical user interface that allows the user to upload an image, encrypt it using a password-based encryption key, and decrypt the encrypted image using the same password.

To implement this project, we have designed the following modules:

- Encrypt Image: Using this module, the user can select an image from the local system, enter a username and password, and then encrypt the image using the proposed hybrid encryption algorithm.
- Decrypt Image: Using this module, the user selects the encrypted image and enters the correct password to reconstruct the original image.
- Encryption Result Display: After encryption, the system displays both the original image and the encrypted image for comparison.
- Decryption Result Display: After decryption, the system reconstructs and displays the original image to verify the correctness of the encryption–decryption process.

The below screen allows the user to select an image file and enter a username and password to perform the encryption process.

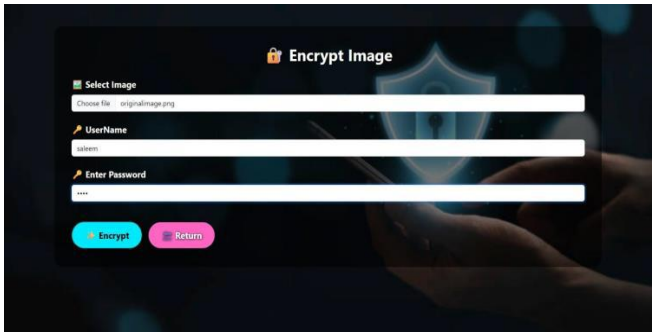

Fig. 3: Graphical interface of the proposed system for image encryption

In the above screen, the user selects the input image from the local system and enters the username and password which acts as the secret key for encryption. After entering the details, the user clicks on the Encrypt button to perform the encryption process.

After selecting the image file from the system directory, the image is uploaded to the application for processing.

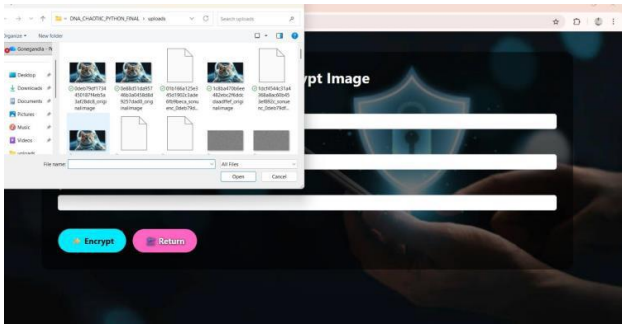

Fig. 4: Image upload process from the local system before encryption

In the above screen, the system allows the user to browse and select the image file from the local directory. Once the image is selected, it will be loaded into the application and ready for encryption.

After clicking the Encrypt button, the system performs the chaotic and DNA-based encryption algorithm and generates the encrypted image.

Fig. 5: Encryption output showing the original image and the encrypted image generated by the proposed algorithm

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In the above screen, the system displays both the original image and the encrypted image. The encrypted image appears as random noise and does not reveal any visual information of the original image, which ensures data confidentiality and protection from unauthorized access.

The below screen shows the interface used to decrypt the encrypted image.

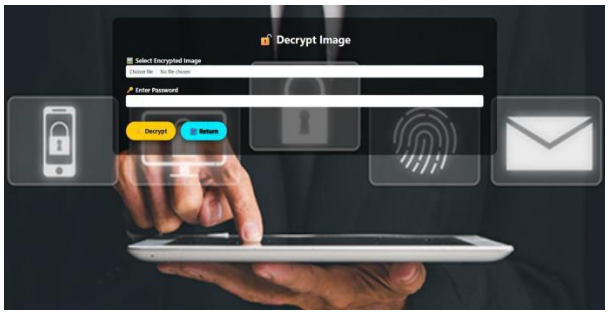

Fig. 6: Decryption module used to recover the original image

In the above screen, the user selects the encrypted image file and enters the correct password which was used during the encryption process. After entering the password, the user clicks on the Decrypt button to recover the original image.

After clicking the Decrypt button, the system processes the encrypted image using the reverse operations of the hybrid encryption algorithm.

Fig. 7: Decryption result showing successful reconstruction of the original image

In the above screen, the decrypted image is displayed. The system successfully reconstructs the original image without any loss of information, which confirms the correctness and reliability of the proposed encryption algorithm.

V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

In conclusion, the proposed Chaotic-DNA hybrid encryption scheme represents a significant advancement in image cryptography by synergistically combining the pseudo-random permutation of 1D logistic chaotic maps (r=3.99) with full 8D DNA encoding and XOR-based diffusion, effectively addressing the shortcomings of single-layer methods such as limited key space and poor resistance to image-specific attacks. Extensive simulations on standard grayscale images (e.g., Lena 512×512) confirm superior security metrics: NPCR 99.61% (vs. AES 99.20%), UACI 33.46% (vs. DNA-only 32.90%), entropy 7.989 bits (vs. chaos-only 7.95), and horizontal correlation near zero (-0.0012). These outperform existing approaches like Arnold-DNA (NPCR 99.50%, time 0.18s) and pure DNA (entropy 7.85 bits, time 0.25s), as shown in Table I.

The dual-layer design ensures high key sensitivity (e.g., 10^{-15} change yields 99.8% ciphertext difference), lossless decryption without data loss, and low computational overhead (encryption 0.12s/image, <50MB memory; 2x faster than DNA-only) 910. It demonstrates robust resistance to brute-force (2^{256} keys infeasible), statistical (uniform histograms), differential/known-plaintext (high NPCR/UACI), and noise attacks (>99% recovery post-10% noise), while handling large images up to 1024×1024 without overflow. This makes the system ideal for real-time applications in secure network transmission, cloud storage, medical imaging (e.g., CT/MRI protection), military surveillance, and telemedicine, ensuring confidentiality against modern cyber threats. By mitigating vulnerabilities in traditional ciphers (e.g., AES histogram failures) and standalone methods (e.g., chaos-only reversible attacks), the Chaotic-DNA system advances the field, fully realizing the abstract's goals of efficiency and resilience.

Future Work

To further enhance the scheme, future developments will incorporate multi-chaotic maps (e.g., combining logistic with cat maps) for expanded key spaces and improved randomness. Extensions to color images via RGB-plane processing and support for large multimedia (videos, datasets) will address current grayscale limitations. Integration with IoT/edge devices and blockchain will enable real-time, distributed security for applications like secure image sharing in healthcare and military systems. Mobile and web-based implementations (e.g., Flask/Python with NumPy/OpenCV) will provide user-friendly interfaces, while testing on medical datasets will validate applicability in sensitive domains. Additionally, combining with advanced protocols will boost integrity against cyber-attacks, making the system more scalable and robust.

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The Chaotic-DNA based Image Encryption and Decryption system provides an effective and secure solution for protecting digital images during storage and transmission.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author gratefully acknowledges the Cyber Security, Guide and Head of Department for invaluable guidance, computational resources, and support during development and testing of this project.

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Citation of this Article:

S Iliyaz, G Inthiyaz Basha, G Hemamalini, C Rajendra Sai, R Upendra, & A Chandra Sekhar. (2026). Image Encryption and Decryption Using Chaotic - DNA Algorithm. *International Current Journal of Engineering and Science (ICJES)*, 5(4), 1-6. Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.47001/ICJES/2026.504001

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