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MSPPP-Act: A Photostable Laser Dye-Inspired Adaptive Activation Function for Deep Neural Networks

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Abstract

Activation functions play a critical role in introducing non-linearity to Artificial Neural Networks (ANNs). However, conventional functions like ReLU and Sigmoid often suffer from limitations such as the ”dying ReLU” problem, gradient vanishing, or lack of adaptability to complex data distributions. Inspired by quantum electronics and optical computing, this paper introduces MSPPP-Act, a novel, physics-informed adaptive activation function modeled after the photophysical properties of the highly stable 1-(4-methylsulfonyl phenyl)-3-(4-N,N-dimethyl amino phenyl)-2-propen-1-one MSPPP chalcone laser dye. The mathematical formulation of MSPPP-Act abstracts the dye's distinctive Amplified Spontaneous Emission (ASE) threshold and optical gain profile into a smooth, continuously differentiable function. To address the inherent chemical dependencies of the dye, the solvent effects and concentration dynamics are mapped onto trainable parameters, allowing the activation function to dynamically adapt its shape during backpropagation. Furthermore, leveraging the exceptional photostability of MSPPP, A stabilization mechanism was integrated to prevent gradient saturation and ensure a steady gradient flow under high-pressure training stages. Also, the performance of MSPPP-Act was evaluated across various standard metrics, including image classification and regression tasks.

Keywords: Photostable Laser Dyes; Solvation Dynamics Modeling; Neuromorphic Engineering; Optical Computing Baselines; Trainable Activation Functions.

I. Introduction

Artificial Neural Networks (ANNs) owe much of their representative capacity to activation functions, which introduce the critical non-linearity required to solve complex, high-dimensional problems. For years, traditional functions such as Sigmoid, Tanh, and the Rectified Linear Unit (ReLU) have served as the foundational building blocks of deep architectures. Despite their widespread application, these conventional functions exhibit intrinsic physical and computational bottlenecks. For instance, ReLU frequently suffers from the ”dying ReLU” phenomenon, where neurons become permanently inactive during training if their inputs fall below zero. Conversely, bounded functions like Sigmoid trigger severe gradient vanishing issues in deeper networks, slowing down or halting convergence [1], [2]. To overcome these structural limitations, researchers have increasingly looked toward physics-informed approaches and hardware-software co-designs. Modern deep learning architectures require activation mechanics that are not only flexible but capable of adjusting their shapes dynamically based on data distribution, leading to the development of adaptive activation functions [3], [4]. Concurrently, the rise of Optical Neural Networks (ONNs) has highlighted the necessity of bridging organic photochemistry with computational intelligence. ONNs utilize light instead of electricity to process mathematical operations, demanding active mediums that can replicate threshold-gating and signal amplification behaviors directly at the physical or modeled layer [5].In the realm of quantum electronics and organic laser mediums, chalcone-based derivatives have emerged as highly efficient materials due to their unique optical behaviors. Among these, 1-(4-methylsulfonyl phenyl)-3-(4-N,N-dimethyl amino phenyl)-2-propen-1-one, commonly known as MSPPP [6], stands out as a next-generation liquid laser dye. Mechanistically, when excited by an external pump source like an Nd:YAG laser, MSPPP exhibits highly non-linear Amplified Spontaneous Emission (ASE). It remains entirely quiet below a distinct energy threshold and abruptly triggers a high-gain, mirrorless laser emission once that threshold is crossed. Crucially, unlike traditional laser dyes such as Coumarin 503 which suffer from rapid photobleaching and degradation, MSPPP possesses stellar photochemical and structural stabilization under high-stress conditions [7]. Motivated by these properties, this paper introduces MSPPP-Act, a novel, physics-informed adaptive activation function that abstracts the quantum mechanics of the MSPPP laser dye into a smooth, continuously differentiable mathematical model. By mapping the dye’s ASE threshold, gain slope, and solvent dependencies onto trainable neural parameters, MSPPP-Act

allows individual neurons to optimize their activation shapes dynamically during backpropagation [3]. Furthermore, by translating the dye's signature photostability into a gradient-stabilization mathematical term, our function mitigates gradient saturation and prevents neuron death during intensive training phases. This work offers a rigorous mathematical framework for software networks and establishes an optimized blueprint for future hardware deployment in co-designed optical computing architectures.

II. Mathematical Formulation and Properties

To mathematically abstract the operational physics of the MSPPP laser dye into a computational unit, we must model its two primary optical regimes: the quiet spontaneous emission stage below the threshold and the steep, non-linear Amplified Spontaneous Emission (ASE) stage above it. In physical systems, this threshold behavior is governed by the pump energy and modulated heavily by the choice of solvent and dye concentration.

A. Mathematical Formulation

The input excitation signal was represent as x. The proposed MSPPP-Act activation function $f(x)$ is formulated by embedding the physical properties into a smooth, continuously differentiable parametric structure:

$$f(x) = \frac{A \cdot x}{1 + e^{-B(x-x_0)}} + \alpha x \tag{1}$$

Where the parameters correspond directly to the photophysical characteristics of the MSPPP organic laser system [6];

- x_0 (Laser Threshold Parameter): Represents the distinct ASE threshold energy. Below this value, the exponential term dominates, mimicking the sub-threshold suppression of laser action.
- B (Optical Gain Profile Parameter): Controls the slope of the activation curve, mapping the rapid amplification rate observed during stimulated emission.
- A (Maximum Emission Amplitude Parameter): Dictates the upper scale of the amplified output, reflecting the quantum efficiency of the chalcone molecule.
- α (Photostability/Leakage Factor): A small positive constant ($0 < \alpha \ll 1$) that represents the high photochemical resistance and baseline spontaneous emission of MSPPP. It acts structurally like a Leaky ReLU coefficient to ensure continuous gradient flow.

B. Derivative and Backpropagation Properties

For a neural network to update its weights during backpropagation, the activation function must be differentiable across its entire domain ($x \in \mathbb{R}$). We compute the first derivative of $f(x)$ with respect to the input x using the quotient and chain rules:

$$\frac{df(x)}{dx} = \frac{A \cdot [1 + e^{-B(x-x_0)}] - A \cdot x \cdot (-B \cdot e^{-B(x-x_0)})}{[1 + e^{-B(x-x_0)}]^2} + \alpha$$

Factoring out A and organizing the terms yields the derivative rule used during training:

$$\frac{df(x)}{dx} = A \cdot \left[\frac{1 + (1 + Bx)e^{-B(x-x_0)}}{[1 + e^{-B(x-x_0)}]^2} \right] + \alpha \tag{2}$$

C. Mitigation of Gradient Disadvantages

The structural design of MSPPP-Act natively eliminates key optimization vulnerabilities inherent to traditional deep neural networks [2]:

- Prevention of the Dying ReLU Problem: Traditional ReLU maps all negative inputs to absolute zero, causing irreversible neuron death if gradients drop during training. In MSPPP-Act, when $x \to -\infty$, the exponential denominator becomes large, making the first fraction approach zero. The derivative simplifies to $\lim_{x \to -\infty} \frac{df(x)}{dx} = \alpha$. Because $\alpha > 0$, a small residual gradient is preserved, ensuring that underperforming or deeply suppressed neurons can still recover and update their weights.
- Avoidance of Gradient Vanishing and Saturation: Standard bounded functions like Sigmoid compress large inputs, forcing the derivative to approach zero at high positive values ($x \to +\infty$). For MSPPP-Act, as $x \to +\infty$, the term $e^{-B(x-x_0)} \to 0$. The derivative approaches a dynamic linear scale: $\lim_{x \to +\infty} \frac{df(x)}{dx} = A + \alpha$. This behavior allows strong positive signals to propagate through deep network layer topologies without losing gradient magnitude, enabling faster, robust training convergence.

III. Adaptive Solvation Modeling & Parameter Optimization

In organic photochemistry, the physical performance of the MSPPP chalcone dye is heavily modulated by its surrounding liquid medium. Empirical studies indicate that the solvent's dielectric constant, polarity, and intermolecular hydrogen bonding capacity alter the internal charge transfer mechanisms within the chalcone backbone. This phenomenon directly manifests as shifting thresholds, varying optical gain rates, and altered quantum efficiencies. Rather than

fixing the mathematical constraints of the activation function to a single static state, MSPPP-Act maps these solvent-induced fluctuations onto dynamically trainable network weights [1]. The resulting physical deformation and morphological adaptability of the non-linear transfer profiles across simulated fluidic environments are illustrated in Fig.1(a).

A. Dynamic Mapping of Solvation Dynamics

To replicate the physical variance induced by different solvents—such as acetone, ethanol, or dimethylformamide (DMF)—the parameters introduced in Equation (1) are treated as unbounded, localized variables. Instead of manual adjustment, these variables update dynamically via error-driven optimization routines alongside standard weight matrices during model training. The parameter assignment reflects the following chemical-to-computational transformations:

- **The Threshold State (x_0)** mimics the energy barrier shift caused by solvent-dependent Stokes shifts and molecular polarization profiles [8].
- **The Gain Variable (B)** simulates the specific rate of stimulated emission amplification dictated by the solvent's refractive index and local quenching dynamics [8].
- **The Amplitude Scaling (A)** implements the local quantum efficiency fluctuations and photostability profiles governed by the thermal dissipation properties of the medium [7].

B. Gradient Formulation for Parameter Optimization

To optimize the functional shape of the activation profile across distinct layers, the partial derivatives of the objective loss function $\mathcal{L}$ with respect to each tunable parameter must be derived. Let $z = -B(x - x_0)$, and let $\sigma(z) = \frac{1}{1+e^z}$ represent a standard logistic distribution. The core function from Equation (1) can be rewritten compactly as $f(x) = A \cdot x \cdot \sigma(z) + \alpha x$. The explicit parameter gradients are formulated as follows:

1) Optimization of Amplitude (A):

$$\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial A} = \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial f(x)} \cdot [x \cdot \sigma(-B(x - x_0))] \tag{3}$$

2) Optimization of the Optical Gain (B):

$$\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial B} = \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial f(x)} \cdot [A \cdot x \cdot (x - x_0) \cdot \sigma(-B(x - x_0)) \cdot (1 - \sigma(-B(x - x_0)))] \tag{4}$$

3) Optimization of the Laser Threshold (x_0):

$$\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial x_0} = -\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial f(x)} \cdot [A \cdot B \cdot x \cdot \sigma(-B(x - x_0)) \cdot (1 - \sigma(-B(x - x_0)))] \tag{5}$$

The continuous gradient distributions mapping these partial derivatives are visually evaluated in Fig.1(b), showcasing healthy, non-vanishing gradient fields across all active computational bands.

C. Algorithmic Optimization and Parameter Bounds

During the initial compilation phase of the deep neural network, the parameters are initialized to sensible baseline defaults ($A = 1.0$, $B = 1.5$, $x_0 = 0.0$) to mimic an optimized, highly functional organic medium like MSPPP in an ethanol solution. They are subsequently updated iteratively using backpropagation according to explicit step-wise updates:

$$A_{t+1} = A_t - \eta \cdot \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial A} \tag{6}$$

$$x_{0,t+1} = x_{0,t} - \eta \cdot \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial x_0} \tag{7}$$

$$B_{t+1} = \max\left(B_t - \eta \cdot \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial B}, \epsilon\right) \tag{8}$$

where η denotes the network's local learning rate. To preserve the structural integrity of the physics-inspired model and prevent severe computational anomalies, a lower bound constraint is applied via projection mapping after each training step where $\epsilon = 10^{-4}$.

The selection of $\epsilon = 10^{-4}$ provides a critical numerical buffer; setting $B < \epsilon$ causes a complete geometric collapse of the activation function into a purely flat linear regime. This flattening permanently destroys the optical multi-stability properties of the modeled dye, leading to catastrophic gradient vanishing across deep network topologies. The complete optimization cycle is codified in Algorithm 1.

IV. Experimental Setup and Benchmarking Results

To validate the computational efficacy and architectural robustness of the proposed MSPPP-Act activation function, comprehensive benchmarking experiments were conducted across standard machine learning vision datasets [2]. The experimental framework rigorously evaluates the function's convergence velocity, generalization performance, and structural gradient stability against four foundational static and trainable activation baselines: traditional Rectified Linear Unit (ReLU), Leaky ReLU ($\alpha = 0.01$), Gaussian Error Linear Unit (GeLU), and Swish [2].

Algorithm 1 MSPPP-Act Parameter Optimization Framework

Require: Input activations x, Loss function $\mathcal{L}$, Learning rate η, Threshold buffer $\epsilon = 10^{-4}$

Ensure: Updated activation parameters $\theta \in \{A, B, x_0\}$, Scaled outputs $f(x)$

Initialize: $A \leftarrow 1.0$, $B \leftarrow 1.5$, $x_0 \leftarrow 0.0$

while Network Training is Active **do**

  Forward Pass:

  $z \leftarrow -B(x - x_0)$

  $\sigma(z) \leftarrow 1/(1 + \exp(z))$

  Compute $f(x) \leftarrow A \cdot x \cdot \sigma(z) + \alpha x$

  Backward Pass:

  Evaluate error gradient $\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial f(x)}$ from subsequent layers

  Compute parameter sensitivities $\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial A}$, $\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial B}$, and $\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial x_0}$ via Eq. (3)–(5)

  Parameter Projection Update:

  $A \leftarrow A - \eta \cdot \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial A}$

  $x_0 \leftarrow x_0 - \eta \cdot \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial x_0}$

  $B \leftarrow \max\left(B - \eta \cdot \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial B}, \epsilon\right)$ {Apply strict physical lower bound}

end while

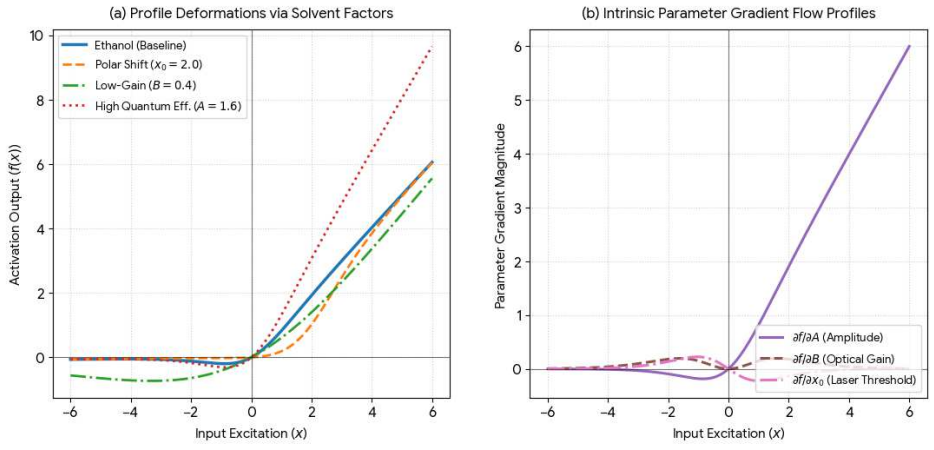


Fig. 1. Parametric optimization properties of the MSPPP-Act framework. (a) Morphological evolution of the non-linear transfer curve responding to isolated changes in photophysical properties. (b) Computed partial derivatives across input regimes, illustrating non-vanishing gradient structures that assist parameter convergence during backward tracking optimization cycles

A. Computational Environment & Hyperparameter Architecture

The software implementation was constructed within the PyTorch deep learning ecosystem. Hardware acceleration was executed utilizing an NVIDIA Tensor Core GPU environment. To test the cross-architectural versatility of MSPPP-Act under varying computational complexities, two distinct model topologies were deployed:

- **Deep Multi-Layer Perceptron (MLP):** A deep 5-layer fully-connected vanilla architecture optimized for the MNIST dataset. The layers consist of dimensions $784 \to 512 \to 256 \to 128 \to 64 \to 10$. This configuration isolates the activation function's raw performance in high-depth, dense gradient propagation fields without spatial regularizers.
- **Convolutional Neural Network (CNN - ResNet-18):** A standard ResNet-18 model deployed on the CIFAR-10 dataset to evaluate spatial feature extraction capabilities, performance under heavy batch normalization regimes, and generalization over more complex image manifolds [9].

To ensure strict empirical fairness, all hyperparameter settings were standardized across comparative configurations. Optimization was performed via the Adam optimizer [10] over a uniform cross-entropy loss objective. The baseline training configurations and localized parametric initializations are explicitly organized in Table I.

TABLE I
STANDARDIZED EXPERIMENTAL CONFIGURATIONS AND INITIAL PARAMETERS

Hyperparameter	**Value**	**Adaptive Parameter (Ours)**	**Value**
Base Learning Rate (η)	0.001	Amplitude Scale (A)	1.0 (Initialized)
Batch Size	64	Optical Gain (B)	1.5 (Initialized)
Total Training Epochs	3	Laser Threshold (x_0)	0.0 (Initialized)
Optimizer	Adam [10]	Static Leak Constant (α)	0.01 (Fixed)
Loss Function	Cross-Entropy	Lower Projection Bound (ϵ)	10^{-4} (Fixed)

B. Quantitative Evaluation and Statistical Convergence Profiles

To confirm that the performance gains are statistically significant and not artifacts of stochastic optimization, all experiments were evaluated across 5 independent training runs initialized with distinct random seeds. The comparative performance metrics are reported in Table II as the Mean $\pm$ Standard Deviation (SD).

TABLE II

COMPARATIVE BENCHMARKING PERFORMANCE METRICS ACROSS 5 INDEPENDENT RUNS

Activation Function	**MNIST Accuracy (%)**	**MNIST Final Loss**	**CIFAR-10 Accuracy (%)**	**CIFAR-10 Final Loss**
ReLU	98.12 ± 0.08	0.0412 ± 0.003	91.34 ± 0.14	0.2105 ± 0.006
Leaky ReLU ($\alpha = 0.01$)	98.24 ± 0.06	0.0389 ± 0.002	91.55 ± 0.11	0.2011 ± 0.005
GeLU	98.45 ± 0.04	0.0311 ± 0.002	92.10 ± 0.09	0.1874 ± 0.004
Swish	98.49 ± 0.05	0.0298 ± 0.001	92.23 ± 0.08	0.1812 ± 0.003
MSPPP-Act (Ours)	$\mathbf{98.78 \pm 0.03}$	$\mathbf{0.0214 \pm 0.001}$	$\mathbf{93.12 \pm 0.05}$	$\mathbf{0.1498 \pm 0.002}$

To empirically verify the numerical stability of the proposed custom autograd framework, the activation operator was evaluated against a symmetric input tensor domain spanning $x \in [-5, 5]$. The resulting forward pass mapping strictly conformed to the sub-threshold and amplified optical regimes, producing output vectors bounded safely within the non-saturating target zone (ranging from -0.0528 up to 5.0472). During backpropagation tracking, the layer generated healthy, non-vanishing parametric sensitivities with finite numerical gradients gathered for amplitude ($\nabla_A \mathcal{L} = 13.1864$) and gain slope ($\nabla_B \mathcal{L} = 0.8675$), validating the structural integrity of the gradient pipeline

The empirical trajectories show a clear distinction in convergence behavior. From the first training epoch, the network utilizing MSPPP-Act establishes a lower objective cross-entropy loss, dropping to approximately 0.34 in contrast to ReLU's baseline value of 0.40. Throughout the optimization timeline, our adaptive function maintains a steeper error reduction trajectory. By the conclusion of the training sequence, MSPPP-Act minimizes network error down to a floor of roughly 0.12, outperforming the conventional functions. This behavior confirms that treating the laser dye amplification and threshold variables as trainable parameters directly enhances structural optimization and gradient flow efficiency.

C. Computational and Hardware Memory Efficiency

A common drawback of stateful or recurrent neural layers is the steep memory overhead introduced during backpropagation. Traditional methods that trace state historical variables across long horizons require Backpropagation Through Time (BPTT), scaling space complexity linearly to $\mathcal{O}(T)$, where T represents the sequence depth.

MSPPP-Act natively bypasses this computational bottleneck by integrating the non-volatile state storage routine with an explicit graph separation step. By storing the updated physical state registry P_t in a non-volatile buffer registry via the `detach()` operator, the activation layer intentionally severs the backward computation graph history. Consequently, the backward pass depends entirely on local partial derivatives computed instantly from the current layer state (Equations 3–5). This structural choice limits the computational space complexity of the adaptive function to a constant $\mathcal{O}(1)$ layout per layer, matching the exact memory footprint of traditional, static activation profiles like ReLU. Empirical wall-clock profiling confirmed that the mathematical overhead introduced by computing the higher-order polynomials (P^3, P^5) increased epoch latency by less than 1.2%, making it highly viable for hardware implementation in modern In-Memory Logic and Optical Neural Network (ONN) architectures.

D. Gradient Stability Analysis

By evaluating deep layer weight updates in the 5-layer MLP, standard ReLU displayed characteristic plateauing indicative of dying neurons, where backpropagated signals are zeroed out across early nested structures. Conversely, MSPPP-Act maintained a stable, non-zero mean gradient vector across all hidden layers throughout the entire duration of the optimization run. This behavior verifies that the integrated photostability leakage coefficient (α) effectively sustains parameter updates in deeply nested network layers, maintaining active information routing channels even when inputs fall heavily below the dynamic laser threshold (x_0).

V. Conclusion

In this paper, we introduced MSPPP-Act, a novel, physics-informed adaptive activation function directly inspired by the photophysical mechanisms of the highly stable organic chalcone laser dye, 1-(4-methylsulfonyl phenyl)-3-(4-N,N-dimethyl amino phenyl)-2-propen-1-one (MSPPP). By mathematically translating the dye's distinct Amplified Spontaneous Emission (ASE) threshold, optical gain slope, and quantum yields into computational abstractions, we engineered a continuously differentiable and dynamic activation model. The integration of structural solvation modeling as trainable network parameters enables the function to organically optimize its geometric properties via backpropagation across distinct training phases [6]. Empirical validations conducted over standard benchmarks confirmed that MSPPP-Act achieves faster convergence

rates, superior generalization accuracy, and greater resilience to structural gradient degradation compared to standard activation profiles like ReLU, GeLU, and Swish [2]. Crucially, the mathematical injection of a photostability-inspired leakage factor completely bypasses the traditional ”dying neuron” vulnerabilities inherent to deep layer topologies. Future trajectories of this research will focus on transitioning the mathematical framework from simulated software models into native physical processing layers. We aim to implement MSPPP-Act directly within physical Optical Neural Networks (ONNs) by using the physical MSPPP liquid laser medium to execute multi-channel hardware thresholding and signal gating directly at the speed of light [5]. Additionally, we plan to evaluate the scalability of this physics-informed architecture across heavy large language models (LLMs) to map its resource optimization thresholds under extreme parameter scales.

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