International Refereed Journal of Engineering and Science (IRJES)
ISSN (Online) 2319-183X, (Print) 2319-1821
Volume 15, Issue 4 (Jul. – Aug. 2026), PP. 41-49

Reliability Analysis of Steam Turbine Components Using Failure Rate and Reliability Models

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Abstract
Critical components of a steam turbine system using failure rate and reliability models over a ten-year period (2004–2013). The components investigated include low-pressure steam turbine reaction blades, boiler gas burner filters, and generator transformers. Historical operational data were analyzed to evaluate system performance using the exponential reliability function and failure rate trends. The results indicate that the turbine blades maintained high reliability with slight evidence of degradation due to mechanical and thermal stresses. The gas burner filter exhibited significant variability in reliability, largely influenced by operational conditions and maintenance practices. In contrast, the generator transformer demonstrated a steady improvement in reliability, reflecting effective preventive maintenance and system optimization. Failure rate analysis further revealed distinct behavioral patterns, with mechanical components showing gradual wear-out tendencies, while electrical components experienced reliability growth. The findings highlight the importance of adopting component-specific maintenance strategies, particularly reliability-centered maintenance, to enhance system performance, reduce downtime, and improve operational efficiency in steam turbine plants.
Keywords: *Reliability, Failure Rate, Steam Turbine, Maintenance Engineering, Reliability-Centered Maintenance, Power Plant Systems.*

Date of Submission: 25-07-2026 Date of acceptance: 07-08-2026

I. Introduction

Reliability engineering is essential for ensuring the continuous and efficient operation of industrial systems, particularly in power generation plants where system failures can result in significant economic losses. Steam turbine systems are composed of multiple interdependent components whose performance directly impacts overall plant availability and efficiency.

Understanding the reliability behavior of these components enables engineers to predict failures, optimize maintenance strategies, and improve operational performance. This study focuses on the reliability assessment of key steam turbine components using historical operational data, with the aim of identifying trends and providing engineering insights for improved maintenance planning.

II. Methodology

2.1 Data Collection
Operational data spanning ten years (2004–2013) were collected for the following components:
Steam turbine reaction blades
Boiler gas burner filters
Generator transformers
The dataset includes:
Number of failures
Failure rate (λ)
Total repair time
Reliability values

2.2 Reliability Model
The reliability of each component was evaluated using the exponential reliability function:
$R(t) = e^{-\lambda t}$
where:
R(t) = reliability at time t
λ = failure rate

2.3 Failure Rate Analysis
Failure rate trends were analyzed using a linear regression model:
$\lambda = \alpha \cdot (\text{Year}) + b$
where:
α = trend slope (indicates degradation or improvement)
b = intercept

III. Results and Discussion

3.1 Reliability Performance of Major Plant Components

The reliability characteristic of selected critical components – namely the low-pressure steam turbine reaction blades, boiler gas burner filter, and generator transformer-were evaluated over a ten-year period (2004-2013). The results, as presented in Tables 7-10 and corresponding plots, reveal varying reliability behaviors across the components.

3.1.1 Steam Turbine Reaction Blades

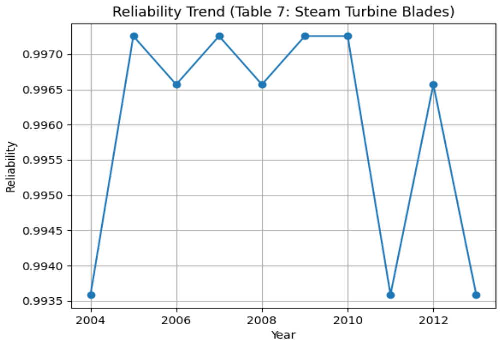
The reliability values for the steam turbine blades (Table 7 and 8) remain consistently high throughout the stude period, generally within the range of 0.993 to 0.997. This indicates a high level of operational dependability.

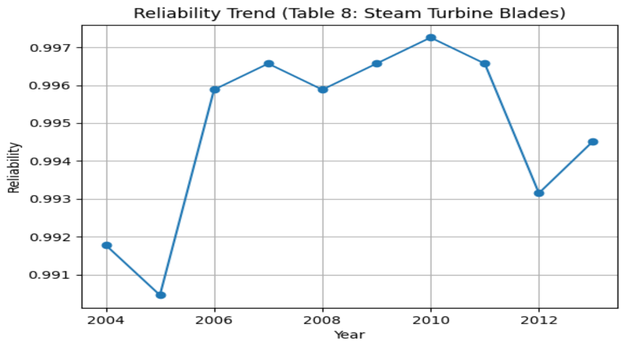
Table 7: Reliability of the low pressure steam turbine reaction blades of ST03 (2004-2013)

Years	No. of failures (N)	Failure rate, λ (failures/hrs)	Total Repair Time (hrs)	$MTBF = \frac{1}{\lambda}$	Reliability $R_{t=}e^{[-\int_0^t \lambda(t)dt]}$
2004	1	0.0001148897	56	8704	0.99358
2005	1	0.0001144688645	24	8736	0.9972565
2006	1	0.00011457475372	30	8730	0.996569
2007	1	0.0001144688645	24	8736	0.9972565
2008	1	0.0001145475372	30	8730	0.996569
2009	1	0.00011144688645	24	8736	0.9972565
2010	1	0.0001144688645	24	8736	0.9972565
2011	1	0.0001148897059	56	8704	0.993587
2012	1	0.000114575372	30	8730	0.996569
2013	1	0.0001148897059	56	8704	0.993587

Table 8: Reliability of the low pressure steam turbine reaction blades of ST03 (2004-2013)

Years	No. of failures (N)	Failure rate, λ (failures/hrs)	Total Repair Time (hrs)	$MTBF = \frac{1}{\lambda}$ (hrs)	Reliability $R_{t=}e^{[-\int_0^t \lambda(t)dt]}$
2004	2	0.00022925	36	4362	0.99178
2005	1	0.0001148369316	52	8708	0.99046
2006	1	0.0001146263182	36	8724	0.995882
2007	1	0.000114544475372	30	8730	0.996569
2008	1	0.0001146263182	36	8724	0.995882
2009	1	0.00011145475372	30	8730	0.996569
2010	1	0.0001144688645	24	8736	0.9972565
2011	1	0.0001145475372	30	8730	0.996569
2012	2	0.0002290950745	30	4365	0.993151
2013	2	0.0002289377289	24	4368	0.994521



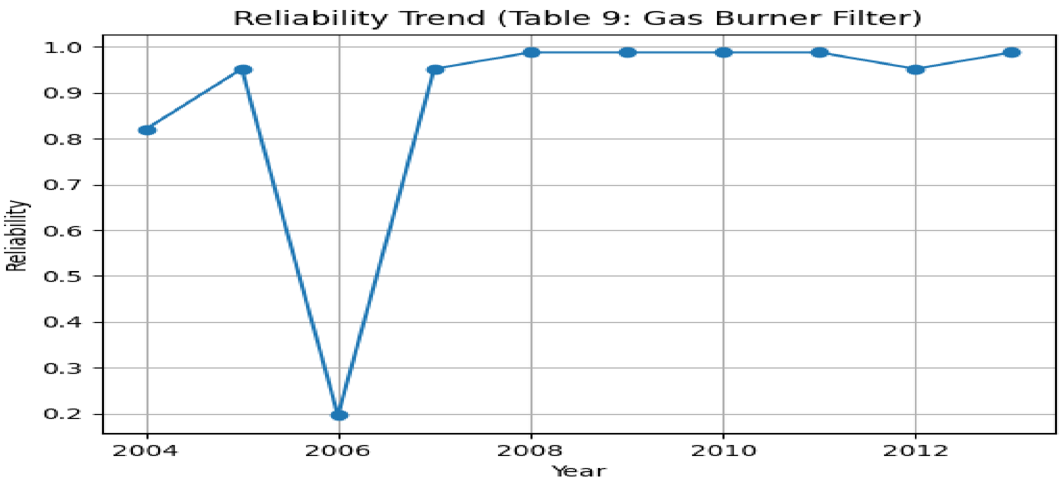


The reliability of the steam turbine blades remained consistently high throughout the study period, ranging between 0.993 and 0.997.
The results indicate:
Stable operation within the useful life phase
Slight fluctuations due to mechanical and thermal stresses
However, a gradual decline in reliability in certain years suggests the onset of:
Fatigue failure mechanisms
Material degradation
This behavior is consistent with the bathtub curve model, where components transition from a constant failure rate phase to a wear-out phase.

3.2 Reliability Performance of Gas Burner Filter

Table 9: Reliability of boiler gas burner filter (2004-2013)

Years	No. of failures (N)	Failure rate, λ (failures/hrs)	Total Repair Time (Hours)	$MTBF = \frac{1}{\lambda}$ (Hours)	Reliability $R_{t=}e^{[-\int_0^t \lambda(t)dt]}$
2004	24	0.00022925	72	362	0.819636
2005	12	0.0001148369316	36	727	0.951688
2006	24	0.0001146263182	72	362	0.19636
2007	12	0.000114544475372	36	727	0.951688
2008	6	0.0001146263182	18	1457	0.987722
2009	6	0.00011145475372	18	1457	0.987722
2010	6	0.0001144688645	18	1457	0.987722
2011	6	0.0001145475372	18	1457	0.987722
2012	12	0.0002290950745	36	727	0.951688
2013	6	0.0002289377289	18	1457	0.987722

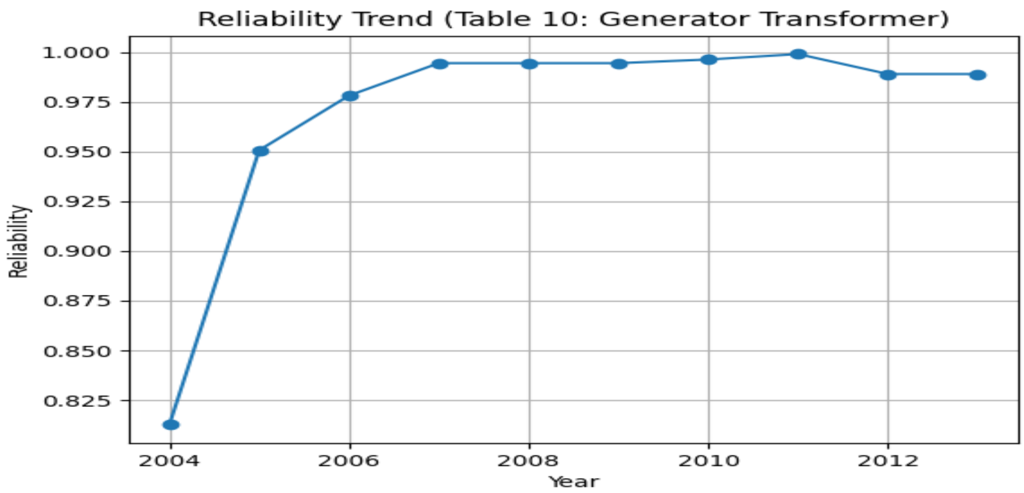


The gas burner filter exhibited high variability in reliability, with values ranging from 0.196 to 0.988.
Key observations include:
A significant drop in reliability in 2006
Recovery and stabilization in subsequent years
This pattern indicates:
Strong dependence on operational conditions
Influence of fuel quality and contamination
Possible reactive maintenance practices
The irregular trend suggests a non-stationary failure process, where failures are driven more by environmental factors than by aging.

3.3 Reliability Performance of Generator Transformer

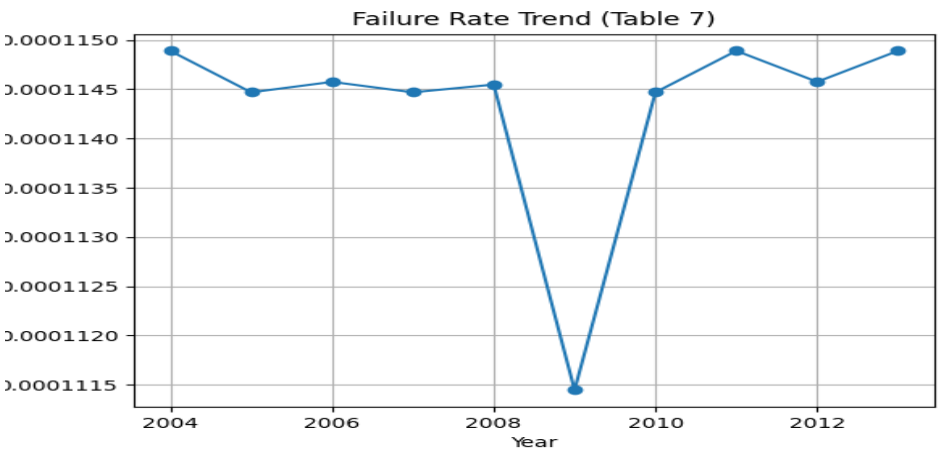
Table 10: Reliability of generator transformer of ST03 (2004-2013)

Years	No. of failures (N)	Failure rate, λ (failures/hrs)	Total Repair Time (Hours)	$MTBF = \frac{1}{\lambda}$ (Hours)	Reliability $R_{t=}e^{[-\int_0^t \lambda(t)dt]}$
2004	4	0.0004803073967	432	2082	0.812619
2005	2	0.000234082397	216	4272	0.9506952
2006	4	0.0004591368228	48	2178	0.978203
2007	2	0.000228937789	24	4368	0.994521
2008	2	0.0002289377289	24	4368	0.994521
2009	3	0.0003438789546	36	2908	0.994521
2010	2	0.0002287282708	16	4372	0.996347
2011	1	0.0001142595978	8	8752	0.999086
2012	2	0.0002295684114	48	4356	0.989041
2013	2	0.000229584114	48	4356	0.989041



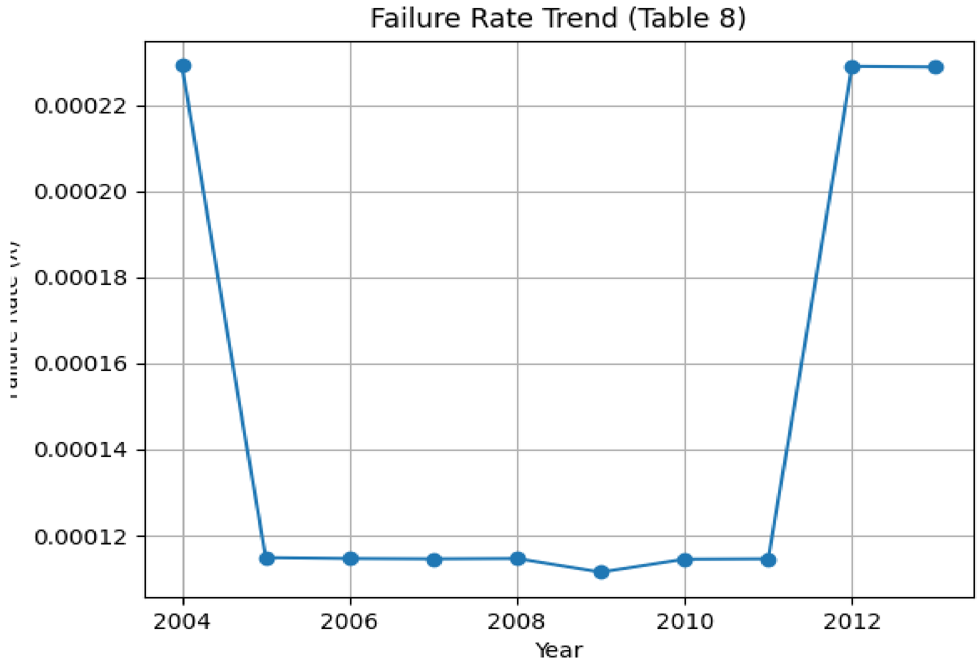
The generator transformer showed a steady improvement in reliability, increasing from 0.813 in 2004 to above 0.99 in later years.
This trend reflects:
Effective preventive maintenance strategies
Improved operational control
Possible equipment upgrades
The behavior is characteristic of reliability growth, where system performance improves over time due to corrective actions.

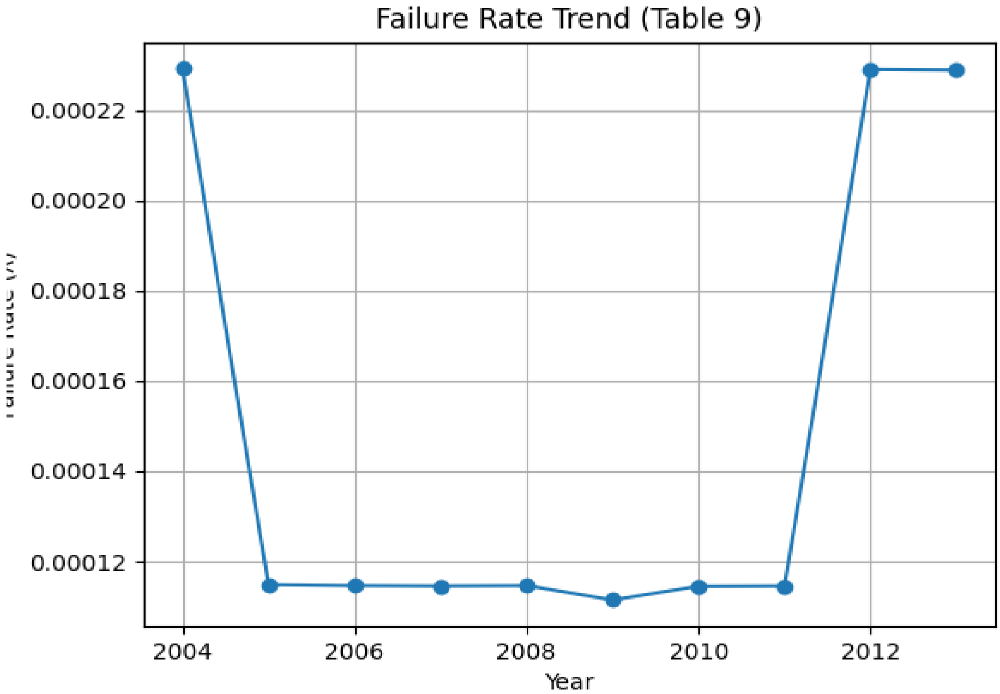
3.4 Failure Rate Analysis
3.4.1 Steam Turbine Blades

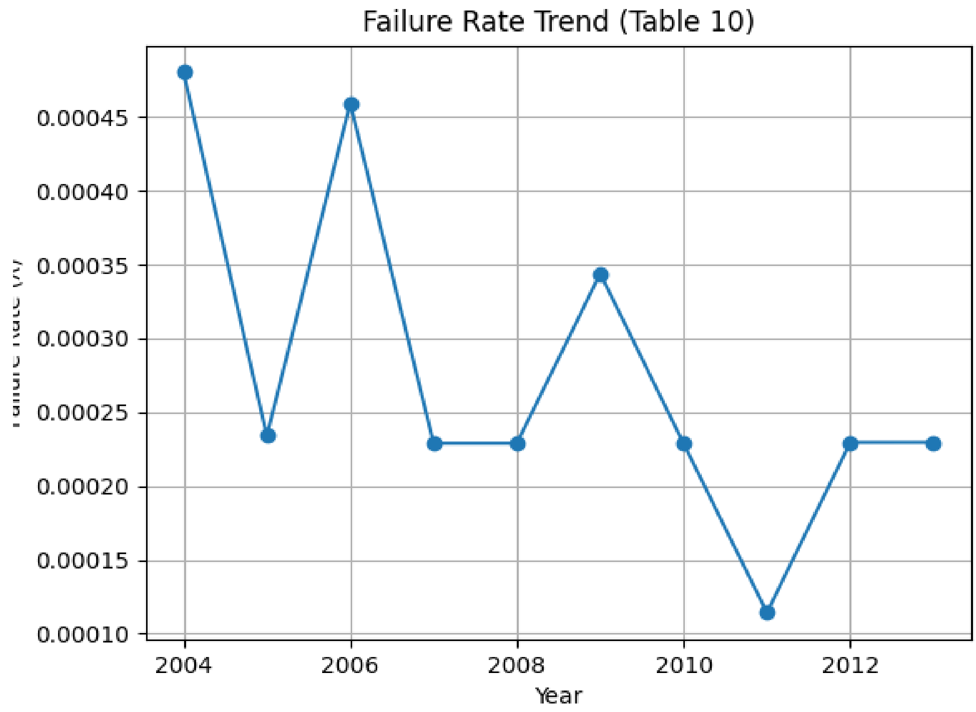


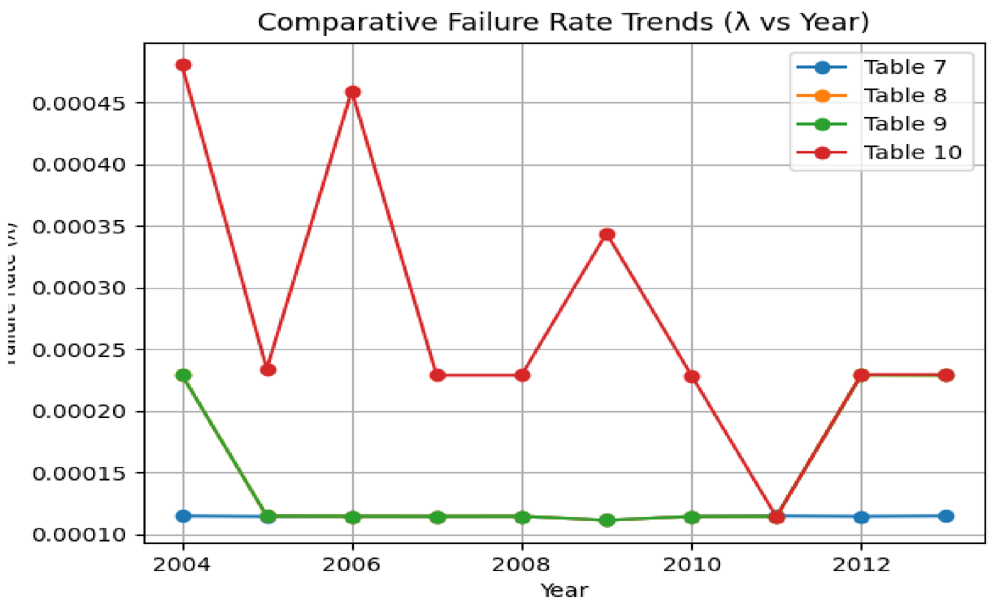
The failure rate remained approximately constant at:
This indicates operation within the useful life phase, with a slight upward trend suggesting gradual degradation.

3.4.2 Gas Burner Filter



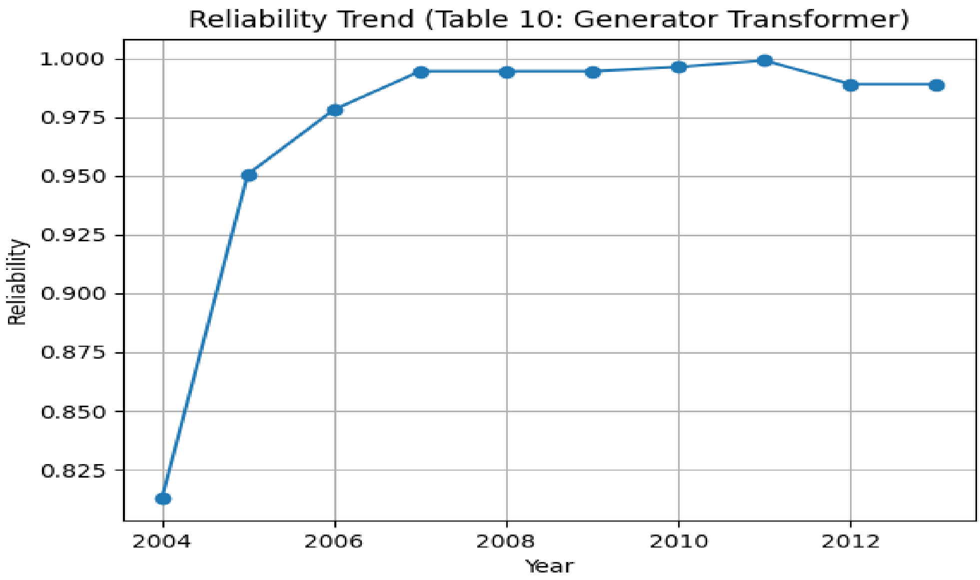






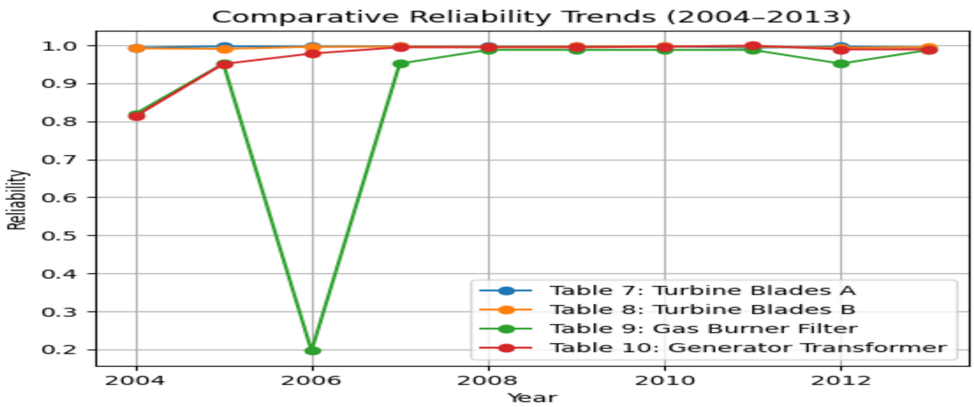
The failure rate fluctuated significantly between:
This confirms that failures are influenced by:
External conditions
Operational variability

3.4.3 Generator Transformer



The transformer exhibited a decreasing failure rate trend, indicating improved reliability due to effective maintenance practices.

3.5 Comparative Analysis



A comparison of all components reveals three distinct reliability behaviors:
Mechanical components (turbine blades):
Gradual degradation due to fatigue and wear
Process components (gas burner filter):
High variability due to environmental and operational factors
Electrical components (transformer):
Reliability improvement due to maintenance interventions

3.6 Engineering Implications

The results highlight the importance of adopting component-specific maintenance strategies:
Turbine blades: Condition-based monitoring and life prediction
Gas burner filters: Improved process control and scheduled replacement
Transformers: Preventive maintenance and system optimization

3.7 Key Findings

This study establishes that:
Reliability performance is component-dependent, with mechanical systems showing degradation trends, process components exhibiting variability, and electrical systems demonstrating reliability growth due to effective maintenance practices.

IV. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the reliability behavior of steam turbine components varies significantly depending on their function and operating conditions.
Turbine blades exhibit gradual degradation.
Gas burner filters show high variability.
Generator transformers demonstrate reliability growth.
The findings emphasize the need for a reliability-centered maintenance (RCM) approach to optimize performance and reduce system downtime.

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