The validity of Tutte’s 3-flow conjecture for some Cayley graphs

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Abstract

Tutte’s 3-flow conjecture claims that every bridgeless graph with no 3-edge-cut admits a nowhere-zero 3-flow. In this paper we verify the validity of Tutte’s 3-flow conjecture on Cayley graphs of certain classes of finite groups. In particular, we show that every Cayley graph of valency at least 4 on a generalized dicyclic group has a nowhere-zero 3-flow. We also show that if $G$ is a solvable group with a cyclic Sylow 2-subgroup and the connection sequence $S$ with $|S| \geq 4$ contains a central generator element, then the corresponding Cayley graph $\text{Cay}(G, S)$ admits a nowhere-zero 3-flow.

Keywords: Nowhere-zero flow, Cayley graph, Tutte’s 3-flow conjecture, connection sequence, solvable group, nilpotent group.

Math. Subj. Class.: 05C25, 05C21, 20D10

1 Introduction

Let $D$ be an orientation of a graph $\Gamma$ and let $k$ be a positive integer. A $k$-flow on a graph $\Gamma$ is a pair $(D, f)$ where $f$ is an integer valued function

$$f : E(\Gamma) \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}$$

such that $|f(e)| < k$ for every $e \in E(\Gamma)$, and for every $v \in V(\Gamma)$,

$$\sum_{e \in E(v)^+} f(e) = \sum_{e \in E(v)^-} f(e),$$

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where $E(v)^+$ and $E(v)^-$ are the all edges with tails at $v$ and heads at $v$, respectively. A nowhere-zero $k$-flow (abbreviated a $k$-NZF) is a pair $(D, f)$ such that for every $e \in E(\Gamma)$, $f(e) \neq 0$.

The following conjecture is due to Tutte and is known as Tutte’s 3-flow conjecture:

**Conjecture 1.1** (Tutte’s 3-flow conjecture [8, 9]). *Every bridgeless graph with no 3-edge-cut has a 3-NZF.*

Although Tutte’s 3-flow conjecture has been studied by many authors, it is still widely open.

Let $G$ be a finite group with identity $1$ and $S = (s_1, s_2, \ldots, s_n)$ be a sequence of elements of $G \setminus \{1\}$ such that the mapping $s_i \rightarrow s_i^{-1}$ permutes the entries of $S$. We call $S$ a connection sequence (note that all entries of $S$ are distinct unless stated otherwise). A Cayley graph, denoted by $\text{Cay}(G, S)$, is a graph whose vertex set is $G$ with adjacency defined by

$$g \sim h \quad \text{if and only if} \quad g^{-1}h \in S,$$

for every $g, h \in G$. We see at once that if $S$ generates $G$, then $\text{Cay}(G, S)$ is connected.

Alspach et al. [1] conjectured that every Cayley graph of valency at least 3 has a nowhere-zero 4-flow. They also showed their conjecture to be true for solvable groups. Their result was significantly strengthened and extended by Nedela and Škoviera to a much wider class of groups [5].

By combining the fact that a $k$-valent Cayley graph is $k$-edge-connected graph with the fact that every 4-edge-connected graph has a 4-NZF [2], we deduce that every Cayley graph of valency at least 4 has a 4-NZF. Thus the question about the existence of a nowhere-zero 4-flow is interesting only for cubic Cayley graphs. Since 4-regular graphs admit a nowhere-zero 2-flow, the important question about flows on Cayley graphs of valency greater than 3 is whether every Cayley graph of valency at least 5 has a nowhere-zero 3-flow. In other words, it is interesting to verify whether Tutte’s 3-flow conjecture holds on such Cayley graphs.

In [6], it has been proved that every abelian Cayley graph of valency $k$, where $k \geq 4$, admits a 3-NZF. Nánásiová and Škoviera [4] improved the above result to Cayley graphs on a group $G$ whose Sylow 2-subgroup is the direct factor of $G$, and as a consequence, they showed that every Cayley graph of valency at least 4 on a nilpotent group has a 3-NZF. Recently, Yang and Li [11] showed the same fact for a Cayley graph on a dihedral group, and L. Li and X. Li [3] verified Tutte’s 3-flow conjecture for Cayley graphs on generalized dihedral groups and generalized quaternion groups.

In this paper, we investigate Tutte’s 3-flow conjecture for Cayley graphs on a solvable group with a suitable normal subgroup (Theorems 3.1 and 3.2 and Remark 3.5) and as a consequence of these theorems, we show that every Cayley graph of valency at least 4 on a generalized dicyclic group satisfies Tutte’s 3-flow conjecture. By using Theorem 3.6 we can obtain the results of [3] and [11] by a different method.

In [4], the authors showed that a Cayley graph of valency at least 4 with the connection sequence containing a central involution admits a 3-NZF. In Theorem 3.6, we extend this result to the case when Sylow 2-subgroups of $G$ are cyclic and the connection sequence of $G$ contains a central generator element. As a consequence of this theorem, we show that if a Cayley graph of valency at least 4 on a solvable group $G$, with a cyclic Sylow 2-subgroup, admits a 3-NZF, then every Cayley graph of valency at least 4 on the direct product of $G$ and a nilpotent group admits a 3-NZF.
2 Notation and preliminaries

The terminology and notation used in this paper are standard both in group theory and graph theory, see for instance [7, 10].

An element $g$ of $G$ is called an involution if $g$ has order 2. Let $Z(G)$ be the center of a group $G$. We say that an element $x$ of $G$ is central if $x \in Z(G)$. The group generated by a sequence $S$ is denoted by $\langle S \rangle$ and the element $x \in G$ is named a generator element of $G$ in $S$ if $\langle S \setminus \{x\} \rangle \neq \langle S \rangle$. For integers $m, n \geq 2$, a cycle of length $n$ and a path of length $m - 1$ are denoted by $C_n$ and $P_m$, respectively. For an integer $m \geq 3$ and for $n \in \mathbb{Z}_m$, the Cayley graph $\text{Cay}(\mathbb{Z}_m, \{-1, 1, -n, n\})$ will be denoted by $C(m, n)$. Let $N$ be a subgroup of $G$ and $x$ belongs to a left transversal set of $N$ in $G$. The image of $\text{Cay}(N, S)$ under left translation by $x$ is denoted by $x \text{Cay}(N, S)$. The Cartesian product $H_1 \square H_2$ of graphs $H_1$ and $H_2$ is a graph such that $V(H_1) \times V(H_2)$ is its vertex set and any two vertices $(u, u')$ and $(v, v')$ are adjacent in $H_1 \square H_2$ if and only if either $u = v$ and $u'v' \in E(H_2)$ or $u' = v'$ and $uv \in E(H_1)$. Set $L = P_n \square K_2$, where $V(P_n) = \{1, 2, \ldots, n\}$ and $V(K_2) = \{1, 2\}$. The Möbius ladder $ML_n$ is a graph obtained by adding the edges $(12)(n1)$ and $(11)(n2)$ to $L$. Also, by adding the edges $(11)(n1)$ and $(12)(n2)$ to $L$, we obtain a graph is called the circular ladder $CL_n$. In fact $CL_n \cong C_n \square K_2$. Any graph isomorphic to either $CL_n$ or $ML_n$ for some $n$ will be referred to as a closed ladder. It is easy to check that the circular ladder is bipartite if and only if $n$ is even while the Möbius ladder is bipartite if and only if $n$ is odd.

Lemma 2.1 ([4, Theorems 3.3 and 4.3]). Let $\text{Cay}(G, S)$ be a Cayley graph of valency $k$, where $k \geq 4$. If $S$ contains a central involution, then $\text{Cay}(G, S)$ has a 3-NZF. In particular, if $G$ is nilpotent, then $\text{Cay}(G, S)$ has a 3-NZF.

Lemma 2.2 ([4, Proposition 4.1]). Let $G$ be a group, $H$ be a normal subgroup of $G$ and let $S$ be a connection sequence with no intersection with $H$. If $\text{Cay}(G/H, S/H)$ has a 3-NZF, then so does $\text{Cay}(G, S)$.

Note that in Lemma 2.2, according to the paragraph before Proposition 4.1 in [4], for distinct elements $s, t \in S$, we regard $sH$ and $tH$ as distinct elements of $S/H$. So, $\text{Cay}(G/H, S/H)$ may have parallel edges even when $\text{Cay}(G, S)$ is simple and $|S/H| = |S|$.

Lemma 2.3 ([6, Theorem 1.1]). Every abelian Cayley graph of valency $k$, where $k \geq 4$, admits a 3-NZF.

Lemma 2.4 ([6, Proposition 2.5]). Let $m, n \geq 3$ be integers. Then the graph $C_n \square C_m \square K_2$ admits a 3-NZF.

Lemma 2.5 ([6, Proposition 2.6]). Let $m, n \geq 3$ be two integers such that $m > n \geq 1$ and $m \geq 3$. Then the graph $C(m, n) \square K_2$ admits a 3-NZF.

Lemma 2.6 ([6, Corollary 2.2]). A regular bipartite graph of valency at least 2 admits a 3-NZF.

Lemma 2.7 ([10, page 308]). A cubic graph has a 3-NZF if and only if it is bipartite.

Lemma 2.8. Let $G$ be a group and $N$ be a subgroup of $G$ of index 2. Then $\text{Cay}(G, S \setminus (S \cap N))$ is bipartite.
Remark 2.11. Let $\mathrm{Cay}(G, S)$ be a Cayley graph with a connection sequence $m, n \in N$. Without loss of generality, we can assume that there exists an element $d \in G \setminus N$ such that $G = N \cup dN$. So, we can consider the vertices of $\mathrm{Cay}(G, S)$ as two partitions $N$ and $dN$. Since for every $m, n \in N$, $m$ and $n$ are adjacent, and $dm$ and $dn$ are adjacent if and only if $m^{-1}n \in S \cap N$, we obtain that $\mathrm{Cay}(G, S \setminus S \cap N)$ is a bipartite graph with partite sets $N$ and $dN$. □

Lemma 2.9 ([10, page 308]). A graph has a 2-NZF if and only if it is an even graph.

Remark 2.10. According to the above lemma, for discussion about a nowhere-zero 3-flow in a Cayley graph with a connection sequence $S$, it is enough to investigate the case when $|S|$ is odd.

Remark 2.11. Let $G$ be a group and $N$ be a subgroup of $G$. Let $T = \{x_1, \ldots, x_t\}$, where $t \in \mathbb{N}$, be a left transversal set of $N$ in $G$. If $S$ is a connection sequence of $N$ such that $\mathrm{Cay}(N, S)$ is connected, then

$$\{x_i \mathrm{Cay}(N, S) : 1 \leq i \leq t\}$$

is the set of connected components of $\mathrm{Cay}(G, S)$. For every $x_i$ where $i \in \{1, \ldots, t\}$, $\mathrm{Cay}(N, S)$ and $x_i \mathrm{Cay}(N, S)$ are isomorphic, because for every $m, n \in N$,

$$x_i m \sim x_i n \quad \text{(in $x_i \mathrm{Cay}(N, S \cap N)$)}$$

if and only if

$$(x_i m)^{-1}(x_i n) \in S \cap N$$

if and only if

$$m^{-1}n \in S \cap N$$

if and only if

$$m \sim n \quad \text{(in $\mathrm{Cay}(N, S \cap N)$)}.$$

Thus if $\mathrm{Cay}(N, S)$ has a 3-NZF, then $\mathrm{Cay}(G, S)$ has a 3-NZF. Hence for finding a 3-NZF in $\mathrm{Cay}(G, S)$, we reduce to find a 3-NZF in $\mathrm{Cay}(N, S)$.

3 Main results

In this section we show the validity of Tutte’s 3-flow conjecture for a solvable group with a suitable normal subgroup. As examples, we show the same result for Cayley graphs on generalized dicyclic groups, generalized dihedral groups and quaternion groups. We also prove that every Cayley graph $\mathrm{Cay}(G, S)$ on a solvable group $G$ with a cyclic Sylow 2-subgroup such that the connection sequence $S$ contains a central generator element, admits a 3-NZF.

Theorem 3.1. Let $G$ be a solvable group, $N$ be a subgroup of $G$ of index 2 and let $S$ be a connection sequence of $G$ such that $|S| \geq 5$ is odd and $S \cap Z(N) \neq \emptyset$. If

1. $\mathrm{Cay}(N, S \cap N)$ admits a 3-NZF and
2. for every $d \in S \setminus N$, $d^{-1}(S \cap N)d = S \cap N$,

then $\mathrm{Cay}(G, S)$ has a 3-NZF.

Proof. Without loss of generality, we can assume that there exists an element $d \in S \setminus N$, because otherwise $S \subset N$ and by Condition (1), we could conclude that $\mathrm{Cay}(G, S)$ has a 3-NZF. Thus, there is $d \in S \setminus N$. Note that $|S|$ is odd.

We continue the proof in the following two cases:

Case 1. If $|S \cap N|$ is odd, then since $|S \setminus (S \cap N)| = |S| \setminus |S \cap N|$ is even, Lemma 2.9 shows that $\mathrm{Cay}(G, S \setminus (S \cap N))$ admits a 3-NZF. Also by Condition (1), $\mathrm{Cay}(N, S \cap N)$ admits a 3-NZF, and so does $\mathrm{Cay}(G, S) = \mathrm{Cay}(G, S \setminus (S \cap N)) \cup \mathrm{Cay}(G, S \cap N)$.
Case 2. If $|S \cap N|$ is even, then the proof will be divided into two subcases:

Subcase 1. Assume that $|S \setminus (S \cap N)| \geq 2$. By Lemma 2.8, $\text{Cay}(G, S \setminus (S \cap N))$ is bipartite. So Lemma 2.6 shows that $\text{Cay}(G, S \setminus (S \cap N))$ admits a 3-NZF. Since $\text{Cay}(G, S \cap N)$ admits a 3-NZF, we deduce that $\text{Cay}(G, S)$ has a 3-NZF.

Subcase 2. Assume that $|S \setminus (S \cap N)| = 1$. Thus $\{S \setminus (S \cap N)\} = \{d\}$, so $O(d) = 2$ and it is not hard to check that $G$ is the semidirect product of $N$ and $\langle d \rangle$. We want to show that $\text{Cay}(N, S \cap N) \sqcup \text{Cay}(\langle d \rangle, \{d\}) \cong \text{Cay}(G, S)$. For this purpose, we define $\phi: \text{Cay}(N, S \cap N) \sqcup \text{Cay}(\langle d \rangle, \{d\}) \to \text{Cay}(G, S)$ such that $\phi(m, x) = mx$ for every $m \in N$ and $x \in \langle d \rangle$. Since $G$ is the semidirect product of $N$ and $\langle d \rangle$, it is obvious that $\phi$ is a bijection function. Now we will show that $\phi$ is homomorphism. For every $m, n \in N$ and $x, y \in \langle d \rangle$, we have:

$$(m, x) \sim (n, y) \quad (\text{in } \text{Cay}(N, S \cap N) \sqcup \text{Cay}(\langle d \rangle, \{d\}))$$

if and only if $m = n$, $x \sim y$ or $n \sim m$, $x = y$.

We should check the following cases:

1. If $m = n$, $x = 1$ and $y = d$, then $(\phi(m, x))^{-1}\phi(n, y) = m^{-1}nd = d \in S$. Thus $\phi(m, x) \sim (n, y)$ in $\text{Cay}(G, S)$.

2. If $m = n$, $x = d$ and $y = 1$, then $(\phi(m, x))^{-1}\phi(n, y) = d^{-1}m^{-1}n = d \in S$. Thus $\phi(m, x) \sim (n, y)$ in $\text{Cay}(G, S)$.

3. If $m \sim n$ and $x = y = 1$, then $m^{-1}n \in S \cap N$. Thus $(\phi(m, x))^{-1}\phi(n, y) = (mx)^{-1}(ny) = m^{-1}n \in N \cap S$. So $\phi(m, x) \sim (n, y)$ in $\text{Cay}(G, S)$.

4. If $m \sim n$ and $x = y = d$, then $m^{-1}n \in S \cap N$. Thus $(\phi(m, x))^{-1}\phi(n, y) = d^{-1}(m^{-1}n)d = d^{-1}(S \cap N)d = N \cap S \subset S$. So $\phi(m, x) \sim (n, y)$ in $\text{Cay}(G, S)$.

Now, let $t_1 \sim t_2$ in $\text{Cay}(G, S)$. Since $G$ is the semidirect product of $N$ and $\langle d \rangle$, there exist $m, n \in N$ and $x, y \in \langle d \rangle$ such that $t_1 = mx$ and $t_2 = ny$. We continue the proof in the following cases:

(i) If $x = 1$ and $y = d$, then $m^{-1}nd = t_1^{-1}t_2 \in S \setminus (S \cap N) = \{d\}$. Therefore, $m^{-1}n = 1$ and so $m = n$. From this, we have $\phi^{-1}(t_1) = (m, x) \sim (n, y) = \phi^{-1}(t_2)$.

(ii) If $x = d$ and $y = 1$, the above reason shows that $\phi^{-1}(t_1) = (m, x) \sim (n, y) = \phi^{-1}(t_2)$.

(iii) If $x = y = 1$, then $m^{-1}n = t_1^{-1}t_2 \in S \cap N$. Therefore $m \sim n$ in $\text{Cay}(N, S \cap N)$ and hence $\phi^{-1}(t_1) = (m, x) \sim (n, y) = \phi^{-1}(t_2)$.

(iv) If $x = y = d$, then $d^{-1}m^{-1}nd = t_1^{-1}t_2 \in d(S \cap N)d^{-1} = S \cap N$. Therefore $m^{-1}n \in d(S \cap N)d^{-1} = S \cap N$ and hence, $\phi^{-1}(t_1) = (m, x) \sim (n, y) = \phi^{-1}(t_2)$.

These show that $\text{Cay}(N, S \cap N) \sqcup \text{Cay}(\langle d \rangle, \{d\}) \cong \text{Cay}(G, S)$. Now, suppose that the theorem is false, and let $G$ be the smallest group satisfying the hypothesis and $\text{Cay}(G, S)$ does not admit a 3-NZF. Note that $|S| \geq 5$. We examine the following possibilities:

Subcase 2.1. If there is $y \in S \cap Z(N)$ of order $n > 2$ such that $d^{-1}yd \not\in \{y, y^{-1}\}$, then since $Z(N)$ is normal in $G$, the assumption guarantees the existence of an element $z \in S \cap Z(N)$ such that $d^{-1}yd = z$. Since $O(d) = 2$, we see that $d^{-1}zd = y$. 

Thus \( \langle y, y^{-1}, z, z^{-1} \rangle \leq \langle y, y^{-1}, z, z^{-1}, d \rangle \). If \( G \neq \langle y, y^{-1}, z, z^{-1}, d \rangle \), then by our assumption on \( G \), \( \text{Cay}(\langle y, y^{-1}, z, z^{-1}, d \rangle, \{y, y^{-1}, z, z^{-1}, d \}) \) admits a 3-NZF. Thus since \( |S \setminus \{y, y^{-1}, z, z^{-1}, d\}| \) is even, we get that \( \text{Cay}(G, S) \) admits a 3-NZF. This is a contradiction. Therefore, we can assume that \( G = \langle y, y^{-1}, z, z^{-1}, d \rangle, N = \langle y, y^{-1}, z, z^{-1} \rangle, S = \{y, y^{-1}, z, z^{-1}, d \} \) and \( S \cap N = \{y, y^{-1}, z, z^{-1}\} \). Let \( K \) be a minimal normal subgroup of \( G \) such that \( K \leq Z(N) \). If \( K \cap S = \emptyset \), then \( N/K \leq G/K \) with \( [G/K : N/K] = 2 \) and \( Z(N/K) \cap S/K \neq \emptyset \). Note that \( |S/K| = 5 \) and \( |(S \cap N)/K| = 4 \). So \( \text{Cay}(N/K, (S \cap N)/K) \) admits a 3-NZF. Also \( |G/K| < |G| \). Thus our assumption on \( G \) leads us to see that \( \text{Cay}(G/K, S/K) \) admits a 3-NZF, and so does \( \text{Cay}(G, S) \) by Lemma 2.2. This is a contradiction. Thus \( K \cap S \neq \emptyset \). Without loss of generality, we can suppose that \( y \in K \), so \( d^{-1}yd = z \in K \). Therefore, \( K = N \). This forces \( N \) to be cyclic or elementary abelian. Thus either \( N = \langle y \rangle \) or \( N = \langle S \cap N \rangle = \langle y \rangle \times \langle z \rangle \) and hence, either \( z = y^i \) and

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Cay}(N, N \cap S) &= \text{Cay}(\langle y, \{y, y^{-1}, y^i, y^{-i}\} \rangle) \cong C(n, i) \quad \text{or} \\
\text{Cay}(N, N \cap S) &= \text{Cay}(\langle y, \{y, y^{-1}\} \rangle) \square \text{Cay}(\langle z, \{z, z^{-1}\} \rangle) \cong C_n \square C_n.
\end{align*}
\]

Note that \( \text{Cay}(G, S) = \text{Cay}(N, S \cap N) \square K_2 \). Thus \( \text{Cay}(G, S) \) is isomorphic to either \( C(n, i) \square K_2 \) or \( (C_n \square C_n) \square K_2 \). So Lemmas 2.5 and 2.4 guarantee that \( \text{Cay}(G, S) \) admits a 3-NZF. This is a contradiction.

**Subcase 2.2.** If \( S \cap Z(N) \) contains an involution \( y \) such that \( d^{-1}yd \neq y \), then there exists an element \( z \in S \cap Z(N) \) such that \( d^{-1}yd = z \). Therefore, \( \langle y, z \rangle \) is an elementary abelian 2-group of order 4. So \( \text{Cay}(\langle y, z, d \rangle, \{y, z, d \}) \) is the circular ladder \( CL_4 \) (see Figure 1) which is bipartite and hence, it admits a 3-NZF. Also, \( \text{Cay}(G, S \setminus \{y, z, d \}) \) admits a 3-NZF, and so does \( \text{Cay}(G, S) \). This is a contradiction.

![Figure 1: The circular ladder CL4.](image)

**Subcase 2.3.** Suppose that for every \( y \in Z(N) \cap S \), \( d^{-1}yd \in \{y, y^{-1}\} \). Applying the above argument shows that there exists an element \( y \in Z(N) \cap S \) such that \( \langle y \rangle \) is a minimal normal subgroup of \( G \). If the order of \( y \) is 2, then \( y \) is a central involution and hence, \( \text{Cay}(G, S) \) admits a 3-NZF. This is a contradiction. Thus the order of \( y \) is an odd prime number. Now if \( N \cap S \) contains an element \( z \) such that \( O(z) \geq 3 \) and \( d^{-1}zd \in \{z, z^{-1}\} \), then applying the same argument as that of used in Subcase 2.1 leads us to get a contradiction. Now suppose that there exists an element \( z \in (S \cap N) \setminus \{y, y^{-1}\} \) such that \( O(z) \geq 3 \) and \( d^{-1}zd \notin \{z, z^{-1}\} \). So our assumption on \( G \) allows us to assume that \( S = \{y, y^{-1}, z, z^{-1}, d^{-1}zd, d^{-1}z^{-1}d, d \} \). Let \( K \) be a normal subgroup of \( G \) containing \( y \) such that \( K \leq N \) and it is maximal with the property \( K \cap (S \setminus \{y, y^{-1}\}) = \emptyset \). If \( M/K \) is a minimal normal subgroup of \( G/K \) such that \( M/K \leq N/K \), then our assumption on \( K \) shows that \( M \cap (S \setminus \{y, y^{-1}\}) \neq \emptyset \). Without loss of generality, we can assume that \( z \in M \). Since \( M \) is normal in \( G \), we deduce that \( d^{-1}zd \in M \) and hence, \( S - \{d\} \subseteq M \). Thus \( M = N \). Set \( S_1 = \{z, z^{-1}, d^{-1}zd, d^{-1}z^{-1}d, d \} \). Moreover \( M/K = N/K \) is
Theorem 3.2. Let $G$ be a group, $N$ be an abelian subgroup of $G$ of index 2 and let $S$ be a connection sequence of $G$ such that $|S| \geq 4$. If there exists $d \in S \setminus (S \cap N)$ such that $d^{-1}(S \cap N)d = S \cap N$, then $\text{Cay}(G, S)$ admits a 3-NZF.

Proof. First, assume that $|S \cap N| \geq 4$. By Lemma 2.3, $\text{Cay}(N, S \cap N)$ has a 3-NZF. Since $|G/N| = 2$, we can assume that $G/N = \langle dN \rangle$, and hence for every $y \in S \setminus (S \cap N)$, $yN \in \langle dN \rangle$. Thus there exists $t \in N$ such that $y = td$ and

$$\text{for every } s \in S \cap N \text{ and } y \in S \setminus (S \cap N), \quad y^{-1}sN \in S \cap N. \quad (3.1)$$

So the Conditions (1) and (2) of Theorem 3.1 are fulfilled and hence $\text{Cay}(G, S)$ admits a 3-NZF. Now, we assume that $|S \cap N| \leq 3$. The proof falls naturally into several parts. If $|S \cap N| = 0$, then by Lemma 2.8, $\text{Cay}(G, S)$ is bipartite, and hence Lemma 2.6 shows that $\text{Cay}(G, S)$ admits a 3-NZF. Moreover, if $|S \cap N| = 2$, then Lemma 2.9 forces $\text{Cay}(N, S \cap N)$ to admit a 3-NZF. Also by (3.1), for every $s \in S \cap N$, $y^{-1}sN = d^{-1}sd \in S \cap N$. So Theorem 3.1 completes the proof. Therefore, $|S \cap N| \in \{1, 3\}$. We consider these possibilities in the following cases:

Case 1. Assume that $|S \cap N| = 1$. So $S \cap N = \{x\}$. Clearly, $O(x) = 2$ and $d^{-1}xd = x^{-1} = x$. Also, for every $y \in S \setminus (S \cap N)$, we have $yN \in \langle dN \rangle$ and hence, $y = md$ for some $m \in N$. Therefore, we can see $y^{-1}xy = x$. Thus $x \in Z(\langle S \rangle)$ is of order 2. Hence by Lemma 2.1, we have $\text{Cay}(\langle S \rangle, S)$ admits a 3-NZF, and so does $\text{Cay}(G, S)$.

Case 2. Assume that $|S \cap N| = 3$. We continue the proof in two subcases:

Subcase 1. Let $S \cap N = \{x, y, y^{-1}\}$, where $O(x) = 2$ and $O(y) \geq 3$. Since $d^{-1}xd \in S \cap N$ and $O(d^{-1}xd) = 2$, the same argument as that of used in Case 1 completes the proof.

Subcase 2. Let $S \cap N = \{x, y, z\}$, where $O(x) = O(y) = O(z) = 2$. First, assume that none of the elements in $S \cap N$ generates by the other ones. Since $x, y, z$ are of order 2 and $N$ is abelian, we have

$$\langle N \cap S \rangle = \{x^{i}y^{j}z^{k} | 1 \leq i, j, k \leq 2\} = \langle x \rangle \times \langle y \rangle \times \langle z \rangle \leq N.$$

It is easy to check that $\text{Cay}(\langle N \cap S \rangle, S \cap N)$ is bipartite (similar to Figure 1) and hence by Lemma 2.6, $\text{Cay}(N, S \cap N)$ admits a 3-NZF. The rest of the proof runs as the case when $|S \cap N| \geq 4$. 


Otherwise, without loss of generality, assume that \( S \cap N = \{x, y, xy\} \). Set \( S_1 = \{d, d^{-1}\} \). Note that \(|S|\) is odd. Thus \(|S \setminus ((S \cap N) \cup S_1)| = 0\) or \(2k\) where \(k \in \mathbb{N}\). Set \( S_2 = S \setminus ((S \cap N) \cup S_1) \) and \( H = \langle (S \cap N) \cup S_1 \rangle \). In fact,

\[
\text{Cay}(G, S_2) \cup \text{Cay}(G, (S \cap N) \cup S_1) = \text{Cay}(G, S)
\]

and \( \text{Cay}(G, S_2) \) admits a 3-NZF. So it is sufficient to find a 3-NZF in \( \text{Cay}(G, (S \cap N) \cup S_1) \).

We know that \( d^{-1}xd \in S \cap N \). If \( d^{-1}xd = x \), then since \( N \) is abelian, we have \( x \in Z(H) \) and its order is 2, so the proof is complete by Lemma 2.1. Now, assume that \( d^{-1}xd = y \). Since \( N \neq dN \in G/N \) and \(|G/N| = 2\), we have \( O(dN) = 2 \), and hence \( d^2 \in N \). It follows that \( x = d^2xd^{-2} = dyd^{-1} \). Therefore,

\[
d^{-1}xyd = d^{-1}xdd^{-1}yd = yx = xy.
\]

Thus \( xy \in Z(H) \) and \( O(xy) = 2 \). Lemma 2.1 shows that \( \text{Cay}(H, (S \cap N) \cup S_1) \) admits a 3-NZF, and so does \( \text{Cay}(G, (S \cap N) \cup S_1) \), as desired. The same reasoning can be applied to the case \( d^{-1}xd = xy \).

In the following we show that Theorem 3.2 guarantees the existence of a 3-NZF in a Cayley graph on a generalized dicyclic group.

**Example 3.3.** Let \( H \) be an abelian group, having a specific element \( y \in H \) of order 2. A group \( G \) is called a generalized dicyclic group, \( \text{Dic}(H, y) \), if it is generated by \( H \) and an additional element \( x \). Moreover, we have \(|G : H| = 2\), \( x^2 = y \) and \( x^{-1}ax = a^{-1} \) for every \( a \in H \). It is easy to see that every Cayley graph of valency at least 4 on \( \text{Dic}(H, y) \) has a 3-NZF by applying Theorem 3.2.

Note that in [3, 11], as the main theorems, it is showed that the graphs mentioned in Example 3.4 admit nowhere-zero 3-flows.

**Example 3.4.**

1. Let \( H \) be an abelian group. The generalized dihedral group \( D_H \) is a group of order \( 2|H| \) generated by \( H \) and an element \( p \) where \( p \not\in H \), \( p^2 = 1 \) and \( p^{-1}hp = h^{-1} \) for all \( h \in H \). We see at once that every Cayley graph of valency at least 4 on \( D_H \) satisfies the conditions of Theorem 3.2, and hence it admits a 3-NZF. In particular, \( G = \langle x, a | a^n = x^2 = 1, x^{-1}ax = a^{-1} \rangle \) is a special case of \( D_H \), where \( H = \langle a \rangle \), \( p = x \) and it is called a dihedral group and denoted by \( D_2n \).

2. Let \( G = \langle z, a | a^n = z^2, a^n = 1, z^{-1}az = a^{-1} \rangle \) which is called a generalized quaternion group, denoted by \( Q_{4n} \). Note that \( G \) is a special case of a generalized dicyclic group where \( \langle a \rangle \) and \( z \) play the roles of \( H \) and \( x \), respectively. Thus every Cayley graph of valency at least 4 on \( Q_{4n} \) admits a 3-NZF.

**Remark 3.5.** Let \( G \) be a group, \( N \) be a normal subgroup of \( G \) of an odd index at least 3 and \( S \) be a connection sequence of \( G \) such that \(|S| \geq 4\). Assume that \( T = \{x_1, \ldots, x_{2k+1}\} \) is a left transversal set of \( N \) in \( G \) and \( \text{Cay}(N, S \cap N) \) has a 3-NZF. Note that by Remark 2.11,

\[
\text{Cay}(G, S) = \left( \bigcup_{i=1}^{2k+1} x_i \text{Cay}(N, S \cap N) \right) \cup \text{Cay}(G, S \setminus (S \cap N)).
\]
By the assumption, for every $i \in \{1, \ldots, 2k + 1\}$, $x_i \text{Cay}(N, S \cap N)$ admits a 3-NZF.

For finding a 3-NZF in $\text{Cay}(G, S)$, it is enough to find a 3-NZF in $\text{Cay}(G, S \setminus (S \cap N))$. If $|S \setminus (S \cap N)|$ is odd, then there exists $y \in S \setminus (S \cap N)$ such that $O(y) = 2$ and hence $yN \in G/N$ and $O(yN) = 2$. So we have $2 \mid |G/N|$. This is impossible. Thus $|S \setminus (S \cap N)|$ is even and hence $\text{Cay}(G, S \setminus (S \cap N))$ admits a 3-NZF by Lemma 2.9. Therefore if $\text{Cay}(N, S \cap N)$ has a 3-NZF, then so does $\text{Cay}(G, S)$.

**Theorem 3.6.** Let $G$ be a solvable group with a cyclic Sylow 2-subgroup and let $S$ be a connection sequence of $G$ with $|S| \geq 4$. If there exists an element $x \in Z(G) \cap S$ such that $x$ is a generator element of $G$ in $S$, then $\text{Cay}(G, S)$ admits a 3-NZF.

**Proof.** Suppose that $G$ is the smallest counterexample satisfies the above conditions, but $\text{Cay}(G, S)$ does not admit a 3-NZF. Without loss of generality, we can assume that $|S| = 5$ and $x \in Z(G) \cap S$. Thus $O(x) \geq 3$ by Lemma 2.1. If there exists $u \in Z(G)$ such that $\langle u \rangle \cap S = \emptyset$, then $|S/\langle u \rangle| = |S|$, $x \langle u \rangle \in Z(G/\langle u \rangle) \cap S/\langle u \rangle$ and $|G/\langle u \rangle| < |G|$. If $x \langle u \rangle$ is a generator element of $G/\langle u \rangle$ in $S/\langle u \rangle$, then by our assumption, $\text{Cay}(G/\langle u \rangle, S/\langle u \rangle)$ admits a 3-NZF. Lemma 2.2 forces $\text{Cay}(G, S)$ to admit a 3-NZF, a contradiction. Thus $x \langle u \rangle$ is not a generator element. Therefore, there exist an element $t \in \langle S \setminus \{x, x^{-1}\} \rangle$ and $i \in \mathbb{N}$ such that $xu^i t = t$ and hence $t \in Z(G)$. If there exists $t_1 \in (t) \cap S$, then as stated above, we can see that $O(t_1) \geq 3$. Thus $Z(G) \cap S = \{x, x^{-1}, t_1, t_1^{-1}\}$. Therefore $|G/Z(G)| \in \{1, 2\}$ and hence, $G/Z(G)$ is cyclic. So $G$ is an abelian group. This forces $\text{Cay}(G, S)$ to admit a 3-NZF, a contradiction. Thus $t \cap S = \emptyset$. Moreover, we can see at once that $x \langle t \rangle$ is a generator element of $G/\langle t \rangle$ in $S/\langle t \rangle$, $|S/\langle t \rangle| = |S|$ and $|G/\langle t \rangle| < |G|$. Therefore, our assumption forces $\text{Cay}(G/\langle t \rangle, S/\langle t \rangle)$ to admit a 3-NZF, and so does $\text{Cay}(G, S)$ by Lemma 2.2. This is a contradiction. So for every $u \in Z(G)$, we have $\langle u \rangle \cap S \neq \emptyset$. We continue the proof in two cases:

**Case 1.** Suppose that $|Z(G)|$ is even. So there exists $w \in Z(G)$ of order 2. By our assumption, $\langle w \rangle \cap S \neq \emptyset$, and hence $S$ contains a central involution. Lemma 2.1 shows that $\text{Cay}(\langle S \rangle, S)$ admits a 3-NZF, and so does $\text{Cay}(G, S)$. This is a contradiction.

**Case 2.** Let $|Z(G)|$ be odd. Since $|S| = 5$, $S$ contains an involution $y$. We continue the proof in three subcases:

**Subcase 1.** Suppose that $|S \cap Z(G)|$ is odd, so $Z(G)$ contains an involution. This is a contradiction, because $|Z(G)|$ is odd.

**Subcase 2.** Suppose that $|Z(G) \cap S| = 2$. So we have $Z(G) \cap S = \{x, x^{-1}\}$, where $O(x)$ is an odd prime number $p$. Therefore, $\langle x \rangle$ is a cyclic subgroup of order $p$. By the assumption, $x \notin \langle S \setminus \{x, x^{-1}\} \rangle$ and hence, we deduce that $G = \langle x \rangle \times M$, where $M = \langle S \setminus \{x, x^{-1}\} \rangle$ is a maximal subgroup of $G$. Let $N$ be a minimal normal subgroup of $G$ such that $N \leq M$. So $N$ is an elementary abelian $q$-group, where $q$ is a prime number. If $N \cap S = \emptyset$, then $x\langle N \rangle \in Z(G/N) \cap S/N$ is a generator element of $G/N$ in $S/N$, $|G/N| < |G|$ and $|S/N| = 5$. Thus by our assumption on $G$, $\text{Cay}(G/N, S/N)$ admits a 3-NZF, and so does $\text{Cay}(G, S)$. This contradicts our assumption. If $N \cap S \neq \emptyset$, then the proof falls naturally into several parts:

(a) If $y \in N \cap S$ such that $O(y) = 2$, then $2 \mid |N|$. Since $N$ is elementary abelian, we get that $N$ is an elementary abelian 2-group. Thus $|N| = 2$ by the assumption. Therefore $y \in N \leq Z(G)$, and hence $|Z(G)|$ is even. This is a contradiction.
(b) If \( N \cap S = \{z, z^{-1}\} \), where \( O(z) \geq 3 \), then \( S \setminus \{x, x^{-1}\} = \{z, z^{-1}, y\} \). Since \( N \) is an elementary abelian \( q \)-group where \( q \) is a prime number, we get \( O(z) = q \neq 2 \). So \( y \not\in N \). If \( yz = zy \), then \( G \) is an abelian group and hence, Lemma 2.3 forces \( \text{Cay}(G, S) \) to admit a 3-NZF, a contradiction. If \( yz \neq zy \) and \( O(yz) = 2 \), then we have \( yzy = z^{-1} \). Thus \( L = \langle x, x^{-1}, z, z^{-1}, y \rangle \subset G \). Let \( L \triangleleft G \). We thus get that \( \text{Cay}(G, S) \) admits a 3-NZF by Theorem 3.1. This is a contradiction. Now, suppose that \( yz \neq zy \) and \( O(yz) \geq 3 \). Since \( O(z) = q \), \( z \in N \) and \( |M/N| = |\langle yN \rangle| = 2 \), we have \( |M| = 2q^t \), where \( t \in \mathbb{N} \). If \( O(yz) = q^s \), where \( n \leq t \), then \( yz \in N \). So \( y \in N \), a contradiction. Suppose that \( O(yz) = 2q^n \) where \( n \leq t \). Since \( \gcd(2, q^n) = 1 \), there exist \( k, s \in \mathbb{Z} \) such that \( 2s + kq^n = 1 \). So, \( O((yz)^{2s}) = q^n \) and \( O((yz)^{kq^n}) = 2 \). Thus we have \( (yz)^{2s} \in N \). Since \( z \in N \) and \( N \) is abelian, we can see that \( (yz)^{2s} \neq y(zy)^{2s} \). Therefore \( (yz)^{2s} \in Z(M) \leq Z(G) \). Thus \( \langle (yz)^{2s} \rangle \) is a normal subgroup of \( G \) and \( \langle (yz)^{2s} \rangle \leq N \). So \( z \in N \leq \langle (yz)^{2s} \rangle \leq Z(M) \leq Z(G) \) and hence \( yz = zy \). This is a contradiction with the above statements.

Subcase 3. Suppose that \( |S \cap Z(G)| = 4 \). Since \( |S| = 5 \), we can see \( |S| \setminus |S \cap Z(G)| = 1 \). It follows that \( |\langle S \rangle : \langle S \cap Z(G) \rangle| = 2 \). So \( \langle S \rangle/\langle \langle S \cap Z(G) \rangle \rangle \) is a cyclic group. On the other hand, \( \langle S \cap Z(G) \rangle \leq Z(\langle S \rangle) \). Therefore \( \langle S \rangle \) is abelian, and hence Lemma 2.3 yields that \( \text{Cay}(\langle S \rangle, S) \) admits a 3-NZF, and so does \( \text{Cay}(G, S) \), a contradiction.

**Corollary 3.7.** Let \( G \) be a solvable group such that the Sylow 2-subgroups of \( G \) are cyclic and every Cayley graph of valency at least 4 on \( G \) admits a 3-NZF. If \( H \) is a nilpotent group, then every Cayley graph of valency at least 4 on \( G \times H \) admits a 3-NZF.

**Proof.** Suppose that \( H \) is the smallest nilpotent group such that \( \text{Cay}(G \times H, S) \) does not admit a 3-NZF. Note that by the assumption on \( G \), we have \( H \neq 1 \). If there exists \( 1 \neq t \in Z(H) \) such that \( \langle t \rangle \cap S = \emptyset \), then since \( \langle t \rangle < G \times H \), our assumption on \( H \) shows that \( \text{Cay}(\langle G \times H \rangle/\langle t \rangle, S/\langle t \rangle) \) admits a 3-NZF. So Lemma 2.2 forces \( \text{Cay}(G \times H, S) \) to admit a 3-NZF. This is a contradiction. Thus for every \( t \in Z(H) \), \( \langle t \rangle \cap S \neq \emptyset \). If \( |H| \) is even, then \( S \) contains a central involution and hence, Lemma 2.1 shows that \( \text{Cay}(G \times H, S) \) admits a 3-NZF, a contradiction. Thus \( |H| \) is odd. Let the order of \( t \in Z(H) \) be odd. If \( |H \cap S| \) is odd, then \( 2 \mid |H| \). This is a contradiction. If \( |H \cap S| = 2 \), then \( H \cap S = \{x, x^{-1}\} \) and hence, \( Z(H) \cap S = \{x, x^{-1}\} \) and \( O(x) \) is a prime number. Since \( G \) is solvable, we can assume that \( K \) is a normal subgroup of \( G \times H \) such that \( K \leq G \) and \( K \) is maximal with the property that \( S \cap K = \emptyset \). If \( G = K \), then \( (G \times H)/G \) is nilpotent and \( |S/G| = |S| \), and hence, \( \text{Cay}((G \times H)/G, S/G) \) admits a 3-NZF, and so does \( \text{Cay}(G \times H, S) \). This is a contradiction. Thus \( G \neq K \) and for a minimal normal subgroup \( M/K \) of \( (G \times H)/K \) such that \( M/K \leq G/K \), we have \( M \cap S \neq \emptyset \). So one of the following possibilities occurs:

(I) Suppose that \( M \cap S \) contains an involution \( z \). Then \( 2 \mid |M/K| \). Since \( M/K \) is elementary abelian and the Sylow 2-subgroups of \( G \) are cyclic, we have \( M/K = \langle zK \rangle \) and hence \( \langle zK \rangle \leq \hat{Z}((G \times H)/K) \). Therefore, Lemma 2.1 shows that \( \text{Cay}((G \times H)/K, S/K) \) admits a 3-NZF, and so does \( \text{Cay}(G \times H, S) \) by Lemma 2.2, a contradiction.

(II) If \( M \cap S \) does not contain any involution, then \( |M \cap S| \) is an even number. Since \( |S| \) is odd, we get that \( S \setminus (M \cap S) \) contains an involution \( z \). But \( |H| \) is odd, so \( z \in G \). Let \( S_1 = (M \cap S) \cup \{z, x, x^{-1}\} \). We have \( |S_1| = |M \cap S, z| \times |x| \) and \( |S_1| \geq 5 \) is an odd number. Thus Theorem 3.6 shows that \( \text{Cay}((S_1, S_1) \) admits a 3-NZF, so
does $\text{Cay}(G \times H, S_1)$. Since $|S \setminus S_1|$ is even, $\text{Cay}(G \times H, S)$ admits a 3-NZF, a contradiction.

If $|H \cap S| \geq 4$, then there exists an element $x \in S$ such that $O(x) = 2$. Since $|H|$ is odd, we have $x \not\in H \cap S$ and the Sylow 2-subgroups of $G \times H$ are the Sylow 2-subgroups of $G$ and hence, $x \in G$. Therefore $x \in C_{G \times H}(H \cap S)$, the centralizer of $H \cap S$ in $G \times H$, and hence $x \in Z((H \cap S) \times \{x\})$. So Lemma 2.1 forces $\text{Cay}((H \cap S) \times \{x\}, (H \cap S) \cup \{x\})$ to admit a 3-NZF, so does $\text{Cay}(G \times H, (H \cap S) \cup \{x\})$. But $|S \setminus ((H \cap S) \cup \{x\})|$ is even, so $\text{Cay}(G \times H, S)$ admits a 3-NZF, a contradiction.

**Corollary 3.8.** If $L$ is a nilpotent group, then for every generalized dihedral group $D_H$, the Cayley graph of valency at least 4 on $D_H \times L$ admits a 3-NZF.

**Proof.** Let $D_H$ be the smallest generalized dihedral group such that the Cayley graph of valency at least 4 on $D_H \times L$ does not admit a 3-NZF. If $|H|$ is odd, then the Sylow 2-subgroups of $D_H$ are cyclic, and hence Corollary 3.7 shows that $\text{Cay}(D_H \times S, S)$ admits a 3-NZF, a contradiction. If $|H|$ is even, then $H$ contains a central involution $t$. If $t \in S$, then Lemma 2.1 shows that the Cayley graph of valency at least 4 on $D_H \times L$ admits a 3-NZF, a contradiction. If $t \not\in S$, then by our assumption, $\text{Cay}((D_H \times L)/\langle t \rangle, S/\langle t \rangle)$ admits a 3-NZF. It follows that $\text{Cay}(D_H \times L, S)$ admits a 3-NZF by Lemma 2.2. This is impossible. These contradictions show that every Cayley graph of valency at least 4 on $D_H \times L$ admits a 3-NZF.

**References**


