Note for the Prime Gaps

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May 12, 2024

Article

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Abstract: A prime gap is the difference between two successive prime numbers. The nth prime gap, denoted g_n is the difference between the (n + 1)st and the nth prime numbers, i.e. $g_n = p_{n+1} - p_n$. There isn't a verified solution to Andrica's conjecture yet. The conjecture itself deals with the difference between the square roots of consecutive prime numbers. While mathematicians have showed it true for a vast number of primes, a general solution remains elusive. We consider the inequality $\frac{\theta(p_{n+1})}{\theta(p_n)} \geq \sqrt{\frac{p_{n+1}}{p_n}}$ for two successive prime numbers p_n and p_{n+1}, where $\theta(x)$ is the Chebyshev function. In this note, under the assumption that the inequality $\frac{\theta(p_{n+1})}{\theta(p_n)} \geq \sqrt{\frac{p_{n+1}}{p_n}}$ holds for all $n \geq 1.3002 \cdot 10^{16}$, we prove that the Andrica's conjecture is true. Since $\frac{\theta(p_{n+1})}{\theta(p_n)} \geq \sqrt{\frac{p_{n+1}}{p_n}}$ holds indeed for large enough prime number p_n, then we show that the statement of the Andrica's conjecture can always be true for all primes greater than some threshold.

Keywords: prime gaps; prime numbers; Chebyshev function; primorial numbers

MSC: 11A41; 11A25

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1. Introduction

Prime numbers, the building blocks of integers, have fascinated mathematicians for centuries. Their irregular distribution, with gaps of seemingly random size between them, is a source of ongoing intrigue. Andrica's conjecture tackles this very irregularity, proposing a relationship between the sizes of these prime gaps and the primes themselves. Andrica's conjecture (named after Dorin Andrica) is a conjecture regarding the gaps between prime numbers [1]. The conjecture states that the inequality

$$\sqrt{p_{n+1}} - \sqrt{p_n} < 1$$

holds for all n, where p_n is the nth prime number. If $g_n = p_{n+1} - p_n$ denotes the nth prime gap, then Andrica's conjecture can also be rewritten as

$$g_n < 2 \cdot \sqrt{p_n} + 1.$$

Imran Ghory has used data on the largest prime gaps to confirm the conjecture for n up to $1.3002 \cdot 10^{16}$ [2].

Legendre's conjecture, proposed by Adrien-Marie Legendre, states that there is a prime number between n^2 and $(n+1)^2$ for every positive integer n [2]. The conjecture is one of Landau's problems (1912) on prime numbers. If Legendre's conjecture is true, the gap between any prime p and the next largest prime would be $O(\sqrt{p})$, as expressed in big O notation. Oppermann's conjecture is another unsolved problem in mathematics on the distribution of prime numbers [2]. It is closely related to but stronger than Legendre's conjecture and Andrica's conjecture. It is named after Danish mathematician Ludvig Oppermann, who announced it in an unpublished lecture in March 1877 [3]. If the conjecture is true, then the gap size would be on the order of $g_n < \sqrt{p_n}$.

This seemingly simple statement has profound implications for our understanding of prime number distribution. Unfortunately, despite its apparent elegance, Andrica's conjecture remains unproven. Mathematicians have extensively verified it for a tremendous number of primes, but a universal solution proving its truth for all primes continues to be elusive. This lack of proof doesn't diminish the significance of the conjecture. It serves as a guidepost, nudging mathematicians towards a deeper understanding of prime number distribution. The quest to solve Andrica's conjecture pushes the boundaries of our knowledge and holds the potential to unlock new insights into the enigmatic world of primes.

We study the inequality $\frac{\theta(p_{n+1})}{\theta(p_n)} \geq \sqrt{\frac{p_{n+1}}{p_n}}$ for two successive prime numbers p_n and p_{n+1}, where $\theta(x)$ is the Chebyshev function. This is the main theorem:

Theorem 1. *There exists some natural number $n_0 \geq 1.3002 \cdot 10^{16}$ such that $g_n < 2 \cdot \sqrt{p_n} + 1$ for $n \geq n_0$. Moreover, the Andrica's conjecture is true if the inequality $\frac{\theta(p_{n+1})}{\theta(p_n)} \geq \sqrt{\frac{p_{n+1}}{p_n}}$ holds for all $n \geq 1.3002 \cdot 10^{16}$.*

In this way, we provide a new step forward that could help us to finally solve the Andrica's conjecture.

2. Materials and methods

In mathematics, the Chebyshev function $\theta(x)$ is given by

$$\theta(x) = \sum_{p \leq x} \log p$$

with the sum extending over all prime numbers p that are less than or equal to x, where log is the natural logarithm. We know the following properties of this function:

Proposition 1. *For every $x \geq 41$ [4, Corollary pp. 70]:*

$$\left(1 - \frac{1}{\log x}\right) \cdot x < \theta(x).$$

Proposition 2. *We have [5, pp. 1539]:*

$$\theta(x) \sim x \ \ as \ \ (x \to \infty).$$

A natural number N_n is called a primorial number of order n precisely when,

$$N_n = \prod_{k=1}^{n} p_k$$

where p_k is the kth prime number (We also use the notation p_n to denote the nth prime number). We deduce that $\theta(p_n) = \log N_n$.

Proposition 3. *For $n \geq 25$ there is always a prime between n and $\left(1 + \frac{1}{5}\right) \cdot n$ [6].*

Putting all together, we show a partial proof for the Andrica's conjecture.

3. Results

3.1. Central Lemma

The following is a key Lemma.

Lemma 1. *Let p_n and p_{n+1} be two successive prime numbers such that $n \geq 1.3002 \cdot 10^{16}$. Then,*

$$\theta(p_{n+1}) < \theta(p_n) \cdot \left(1 + \frac{1}{\sqrt{p_n}}\right).$$

Proof. The inequality

$$\theta(p_{n+1}) < \theta(p_n) \cdot \left(1 + \frac{1}{\sqrt{p_n}}\right).$$

would be

$$\log(\theta(p_{n+1})) - \log(\theta(p_n)) < \log\left(1 + \frac{1}{\sqrt{p_n}}\right).$$

after of applying the logarithm to the both sides and distributing the terms. By properties of the Chebyshev function, we have

$$\begin{aligned}
\log(\theta(p_{n+1})) - \log(\theta(p_n)) &= \log\log(N_{n+1}) - \log\log(N_n) \\
&= \log(\log(N_n) + \log(p_{n+1})) - \log\log(N_n) \\
&= \log\left((\log(N_n)) \cdot \left(1 + \frac{\log(p_{n+1})}{\log(N_n)}\right)\right) - \log\log(N_n) \\
&= \log\log(N_n) + \log\left(1 + \frac{\log(p_{n+1})}{\log(N_n)}\right) - \log\log(N_n) \\
&= \log\left(1 + \frac{\log(p_{n+1})}{\log(N_n)}\right) \\
&= \log\left(1 + \frac{\log(p_{n+1})}{\theta(p_n)}\right).
\end{aligned}$$

In this way, we obtain that

$$\log\left(1 + \frac{\log(p_{n+1})}{\theta(p_n)}\right) < \log\left(1 + \frac{1}{\sqrt{p_n}}\right)$$

which is

$$\left(1 + \frac{\log(p_{n+1})}{\theta(p_n)}\right) < \left(1 + \frac{1}{\sqrt{p_n}}\right)$$

and

$$\frac{\log(p_{n+1})}{\theta(p_n)} < \frac{1}{\sqrt{p_n}}$$

after simplifying the whole expression. We show that

$$\frac{\log(p_{n+1})}{\left(1 - \frac{1}{\log p_n}\right) \cdot p_n} < \frac{1}{\sqrt{p_n}}$$

since

$$\frac{1}{\left(1 - \frac{1}{\log p_n}\right) \cdot p_n} > \frac{1}{\theta(p_n)}$$

by Proposition 1. That is equivalent to

$$\frac{\log(p_n)}{\log(p_n) - 1} \cdot \log(p_{n+1}) < \sqrt{p_n}$$

because of

$$\sqrt{p_n} = \frac{p_n}{\sqrt{p_n}}.$$

That would be

$$2 \cdot \log(p_{n+1}) < \sqrt{p_n}$$

since the fraction $\frac{x}{x-1}$ decreases as x increases whenever $x > 1$ and so,

$$\frac{\log(p_n)}{\log(p_n) - 1} < \frac{2}{2-1} = 2.$$

Hence, it is enough to show that

$$2 \cdot \log\left(\left(1 + \frac{1}{5}\right) \cdot p_n\right) < \sqrt{p_n}$$

trivially holds for $n \geq 1.3002 \cdot 10^{16}$ according to the Preposition 3. Thus, the proof is done. □

3.2. Main Insight

This is a main insight.

Theorem 2. *For $n \geq 1.3002 \cdot 10^{16}$, the inequality*

$$\sqrt{p_{n+1}} - \sqrt{p_n} < 1$$

holds when

$$\frac{\theta(p_{n+1})}{\theta(p_n)} \geq \sqrt{\frac{p_{n+1}}{p_n}}$$

holds as well.

Proof. There is not any natural number n' such that

$$\sqrt{p_{n'+1}} - \sqrt{p_{n'}} = 1$$

since this implies that $g_{n'} = 2 \cdot \sqrt{p_{n'}} + 1$. For every n, g_n is a natural number and $2 \cdot \sqrt{p_n} + 1$ is always irrational. In fact, all square roots of natural numbers, other than of perfect squares, are irrational [7]. Suppose that there exists a natural number $n_0 \geq 1.3002 \cdot 10^{16}$ such that

$$\sqrt{p_{n_0+1}} - \sqrt{p_{n_0}} > 1$$

under the assumption that the inequality

$$\frac{\theta(p_{n_0+1})}{\theta(p_{n_0})} \geq \sqrt{\frac{p_{n_0+1}}{p_{n_0}}}$$

holds. That is equivalent to

$$\sqrt{\frac{p_{n_0+1}}{p_{n_0}}} - 1 > \frac{1}{\sqrt{p_{n_0}}}$$

and

$$\sqrt{\frac{p_{n_0+1}}{p_{n_0}}} > 1 + \frac{1}{\sqrt{p_{n_0}}}$$

after dividing both sides by $\sqrt{p_{n_0}}$ and distributing the terms. We obtain that

$$\frac{\theta(p_{n_0+1})}{\theta(p_{n_0})} > 1 + \frac{1}{\sqrt{p_{n_0}}}$$

when we assume that

$$\frac{\theta(p_{n_0+1})}{\theta(p_{n_0})} \geq \sqrt{\frac{p_{n_0+1}}{p_{n_0}}}.$$

That would be the same as

$$\theta(p_{n_0+1}) > \theta(p_{n_0}) \cdot \left(1 + \frac{1}{\sqrt{p_{n_0}}}\right).$$

Since this implies that the Lemma 1 should be false for some $n_0 \geq 1.3002 \cdot 10^{16}$, we reach a contradiction. Consequently, by reductio ad absurdum, we conclude that the Theorem 2 is true. □

3.3. Proof of Main Theorem 1

Proof. By Proposition 2, the inequality

$$\frac{\theta(p_{n+1})}{\theta(p_n)} \geq \sqrt{\frac{p_{n+1}}{p_n}}$$

holds for large enough prime number p_n since

$$\frac{\theta(p_{n+1})}{\theta(p_n)} \sim \frac{p_{n+1}}{p_n} \ \ as \ \ (n \to \infty)$$

and

$$\frac{p_{n+1}}{p_n} \gg \sqrt{\frac{p_{n+1}}{p_n}}$$

where the symbol $\gg$ means "much greater than". Therefore, there exists some natural number $n_0 \geq 1.3002 \cdot 10^{16}$ such that the inequality

$$\frac{\theta(p_{n+1})}{\theta(p_n)} \geq \sqrt{\frac{p_{n+1}}{p_n}}$$

holds for all $n \geq n_0$. To sum up, the Theorem 1 is a direct consequence of Theorem 2. □

4. Conclusion

Further exploration about this result may involve:

- Developing new techniques in analytic number theory, the branch of mathematics that studies the distribution of prime numbers.
- Leveraging advanced computational methods to test this result for even larger prime ranges and potentially uncover patterns.
- Investigating connections between this result and other unsolved problems in prime number theory.

This result could be a significant advancement in our understanding of prime number distribution.

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Short Biography of Authors

Frank Vega is essentially a Back-End Programmer and Mathematical Hobbyist who graduated in Computer Science in 2007. In May 2022, The Ramanujan Journal accepted his mathematical article about the Riemann hypothesis. The article "Robin's criterion on divisibility" makes several significant contributions to the field of number theory. It provides a proof of the Robin inequality for a large class of integers, and it suggests new directions for research in the area of analytic number theory.