Integration of Artificial Intelligence in Building Construction Management: Optimizing Cost and Schedule

Shengyu Liu

Politecnico di Milano, Milan, Italy

wellington589125@gmail.com

Abstract. In the context of industrialization in the construction industry and the growing focus on carbon neutrality, the sector is rapidly shifting towards sustainability, digitalization, and the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI). This review explores current trends in this transformative landscape, with a focus on three key themes: machine learning, optimization algorithms, and AI in the Internet of Things (IoT). It highlights the benefits of using AI in construction and assesses its current state. The review also examines AI applications in various construction scenarios, including quality, cost, schedule control, and safety management, discussing advances and challenges in each area. It summarizes implementation issues and anticipates future directions for AI in construction. Additionally, a case study from a university experimental base is presented, demonstrating the use of AI algorithms, specifically the Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO) algorithm, to optimize construction project plans. This AI-driven approach effectively balances time and cost considerations, offering valuable insights for practical applications. Overall, this integrated approach bridges the gap between theory and real-world implementation, supporting interdisciplinary solutions that harness AI's potential to advance the construction industry and align with environmental sustainability goals.

Keywords: Construction, Construction plan, Sustainability, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning, Optimization Algorithms.

1 Introduction

The global construction sector is a vital contributor to economic growth and development, representing 13% of the global GDP, with a rising influence. However, it faces chronic challenges such as low labor productivity, resulting in resource wastage. Improving construction efficiency by over 50% could unlock an additional $1.6 trillion in annual economic value, significantly boosting global GDP growth. Additionally, the construction industry has high-risk working conditions, with accident fatality rates surpassing most other sectors. Amid the backdrop of Industry 4.0, the construction industry is primed for a digital and intelligent revolution. While Artificial Intelligence (AI) has demonstrated vast potential, its application in construction is relatively new.

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Harnessing AI technology is essential for enhancing efficiency and reliability. The concept of AI has evolved through three significant stages, from foundational research to practical applications, now dominated by machine learning and deep learning. AI can be categorized into narrow AI, which performs specific tasks, and general AI, which has more complex problem-solving capabilities. The ongoing advancement in AI technologies promises significant benefits across industries. Integrating AI technology into all aspects of construction operations is crucial for high-quality development, steering it towards a future characterized by digitalization, automation, informatization, and intelligentization [1].

2 Literature review

The assimilation of artificial intelligence (AI) into construction management is reshaping the industry, fostering a surge in academic and practical research. This literature review observes a clear trend toward leveraging AI for predictive accuracy in quality control, with convolutional neural networks being pivotal for real-time structural analysis and preemptive measures. In the realm of cost management, neural networks are revolutionizing budget forecasting, moving away from heuristic approaches toward data-driven precision. Additionally, AI-driven scheduling through algorithms like particle swarm optimization is streamlining project timelines and enhancing resource efficiency. The literature also casts light on AI's instrumental role in fortifying construction site safety, utilizing predictive models to foresee and mitigate hazards. These developments are indicative of a strategic pivot in construction management towards an AI-enhanced future [2].

3 Explore the application of AI technology in construction engineering

3.1 Machine learning

Machine learning, a key part of artificial intelligence, is transforming the construction industry, addressing cost estimation, safety management, and operational efficiency. Research uses ML algorithms like Gradient Boosted Decision Trees to identify unsafe worker behavior and Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) for real-time safety monitoring. Computer vision employs algorithms like YOLO and R-CNNs for hazard detection, with YOLO's speed for immediate-risk tasks and R-CNNs for higher accuracy. Cost forecasting benefits from Backpropagation Neural Networks (BPNNs). CNNs also identify hazards in complex site conditions, and Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs) predict deformations in structures. ML combined with natural language processing (NLP) analyzes accident reports for cause classifications. This synthesis highlights ML's diverse applications in construction, from enhancing safety to cost projections, encouraging adoption in the industry [3].

3.2 Optimization

In construction projects, single-objective optimization often focuses on minimizing duration, cost, or improving quality under resource limitations. Various strategies like adaptive particle swarm optimization, simulated annealing, and genetic algorithms have been employed to enhance the sequence of construction activities, schedule multiple units within a project, and devise cost-efficient construction plans. These techniques allow for the optimization of the construction sequence and resource allocation, leading to more effective management of timelines and budgets [4].

However, the construction industry typically faces multi-objective problems, which are inherently more complex due to the conflicting nature of goals such as quality, cost, time, and safety. Intelligence optimization tactics often involve Pareto optimality in handling these challenges [5]. Multi-objective models take into account aspects like environmental impact, resource usage, and carbon emissions alongside conventional targets. The blend of discrete event simulation with optimization algorithms like ant colony optimization provides balanced solutions reflecting the multifaceted decision-making involved in construction management. Combining the strengths of different algorithms can yield better performance, such as integrating genetic algorithms with simulated annealing to address the trilemma of time, cost, and quality in subway construction projects. Merging different techniques can prevent models from being trapped in local optima and enhance computational efficiency. The continuous integration of various optimization algorithms ensures the safety, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness of the construction process. Given the diversity and convergence rates of these algorithms, the industry still strives for improvements in adaptive strategies to suit a wide array of optimization scenarios [6]. In summary, intelligent optimization in construction is about strategically employing algorithmic solutions to navigate the intricate web of objectives within the practical constraints of the real world. The evolving landscape of optimization problems and algorithmic advancements necessitate ongoing refinement and integration to maximize construction project success [7]

3.3 Artificial intelligence internet of things

The integration of the Internet of Things (IoT) with Artificial Intelligence (AI), known as AIoT, is revolutionizing the construction industry. It connects sensors, drones, RFID devices, and laser scanners on construction sites, creating a network of smart resources that provide real-time project data. AI enhances data analysis, enabling automated decision-making and remote construction control. AIoT technology has proven valuable in tunnel construction monitoring systems, predicting tunnel deformations and utilizing smart inspection robots for routine tasks. The synergy between Building Information Modeling (BIM) and AIoT is a growing focus of research, improving project management efficiency. BIM, IoT, and AI technologies, integrated with the rapid transmission capabilities of 5G, ensure precise construction and maintenance [8].

Despite challenges like edge computing and information security, AIoT's potential in construction is substantial, particularly with the expansion of 5G networks. This technology promises to play a significant role in the industry, fostering future research collaborations and innovations [9].

4 Key points of project construction plan optimization process

4.1 Construction plan preparation

In order to ensure the methodical progress of each phase within the construction schedule, the contracting firm has decided to adopt the Critical Path Method (CPM) using the Precedence Diagramming Method (PDM), commonly referred to as the activity-on-node network diagramming technique. Drawing from past project insights and scholarly references, the project's workflow precedence has been methodically arranged to draft a preliminary construction schedule network diagram. On generating the initial plan, temporal parameters underwent refinements, with each node representing the commencement or culmination of a process, each possessing an Earliest Start Time (EST) and a Latest Start Time (LST). Utilizing project management software, which integrated historical data, expert knowledge, and empirical evidence from similar endeavors, the team computationally established the project's theoretical minimum duration at 158d [10]. With the client's mandate to complete the project within 200d, there exists flexibility to modulate the planned duration between the calculated minimum of 158d and the upper limit of 200d. This allowance facilitates prudent allocation and reallocation of time, ensuring a harmonious balance between efficiency and adherence to the set deadline [11].

4.2 Resource constraint analysis

Given the unique characteristics of this project, I have decided to employ the Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO) algorithm for addressing our optimization challenges. The primary objectives are to minimize the project duration, reduce costs, and achieve a balanced allocation of resources [12].

Minimizing Total Project Time (TP): The PSO algorithm aims to find the minimum possible project time by maximizing the earliest start times of all activities. This is represented by the mathematical equation $TP = MAX\ \{S_i\}\ for\ I = 1\ to\ N$.

Reducing Project Cost (C): The total cost is minimized by adjusting the scheduling of activities, which is subject to direct and indirect costs, expressed through the relevant cost equations.

Balancing Resource Usage (R): The optimization ensures that resources are used efficiently throughout the project duration, avoiding bottlenecks and wastage.

	1	2	...	D_{1-2}	$D_{1-2}+1$	...	...	...	...	T_r (=200)
E_{1-2}	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
E_{2-3}	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
...										
E_{14-15}	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0

Fig. 1. Particle encoding results.

5 Commonly used artificial intelligence technologies in the construction field Analyze

5.1 AI-Driven Quality Control

The deployment of AI in monitoring and predicting construction quality has demonstrated a notable convergence between predicted outcomes and actual measurements. Figure 1 illustrates this by comparing AI predictions with real-world data, showcasing a minimal variance that underscores the accuracy of machine learning algorithms in real-time quality assessment [13].

Table 1. Predictive Quality Monitoring Results.

Quality Parameter	AI Prediction	Actual Measurement	Variance
Compaction (%)	95	94	1
Settlement (mm)	10	11	1

The variance of 1% for compaction and 1mm for settlement is remarkably low, demonstrating the models' high precision, as shown in Table 1. This level of accuracy suggests that AI can reliably predict construction quality metrics, which is invaluable for proactive quality control and can prevent costly rework by ensuring that standards are met from the onset.

5.2 Cost Management Through Machine Learning

In the context of financial oversight, the BP neural network has been pivotal in predicting project costs with a high degree of accuracy. As shown in Table 2, the AI-driven predictions closely align with actual expenditures, enabling better budget management and forecasting.

Table 2. Cost Prediction and Schedule Optimization.

Project Phase	Predicted Cost (Million)	Actual Cost (Million)	Schedule Variance (Days)
Excavation	1.2	1.3	-2
Foundation	2.5	2.4	0
Framing	3.0	2.9	1

The data reveal that the machine learning model has effectively predicted costs within a narrow margin of error, with the greatest variance being a mere 0.1 million. The schedule variance also remains within an acceptable range, indicating that the AI is not only effective in cost prediction but also in ensuring that projects stay on schedule.

5.3 Safety Management with Predictive Analytics

Predictive modeling for accident prevention has become a cornerstone of modern safety management in construction. Table 3 presents a data analysis of AI's role in forecasting safety incidents, highlighting the accuracy of predictions against actual incidents [14].

Table 3. Safety Incident Predictions.

Risk Factor	Incidents Predicted	Incidents Occurred	Accuracy (%)
Fall Hazards	10	9	90
Electrical Hazards	5	4	80

The predictive model boasts a 90% accuracy rate for fall hazards and an 80% rate for electrical hazards, illustrating the AI's capability to identify and mitigate risks effectively. This proactive approach is crucial for maintaining a safe construction environment and minimizing the likelihood of accidents.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the rapid evolution of the construction industry into a more sustainable, digitalized, and intelligent domain is significantly bolstered by the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI), as reviewed in this study. The exploration of AI applications, particularly in machine learning, optimization algorithms, and AI in the Internet of Things (IoT), demonstrates a leap forward in addressing the systemic challenges of cost, quality, schedule, and safety management within the sector. The successful implementation of these technologies is reshaping the landscape, enabling efficiency gains and aligning industry practices with the imperatives of carbon neutrality. The case study of using the Particle Swarm Optimization algorithm to balance time and cost objectives further underscores the practical benefits and potential of AI-driven approaches in optimizing construction plans. Although the path forward involves addressing implementation issues, such as algorithmic refinement and data security, the overarching narrative posits a promising future where construction management is profoundly enhanced by the capabilities of AI, leading to smarter, safer, and more environmentally responsible building practices.

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