JOURNAL
Science and Technology

Volume 30 - No.(11) - 2025

Journal of Science and Technology is an Open Access Peer-Reviewed Journal Published Monthly by Faculty of Engineering and Computing – University of Science & Technology - Aden - Yemen.

Online ISSN: 2410-5163 Print ISSN: 1607-2073

جامعة العلوم والتكنولوجيا

University of Science & Technology

المركز الرئيس - عـــدن

https://doi.org/10.20428/jst.v30i11

Journal of Science and Technology

Vol. 30 No. 11 (2025)

https://doi.org/10.20428/jst.v30i11

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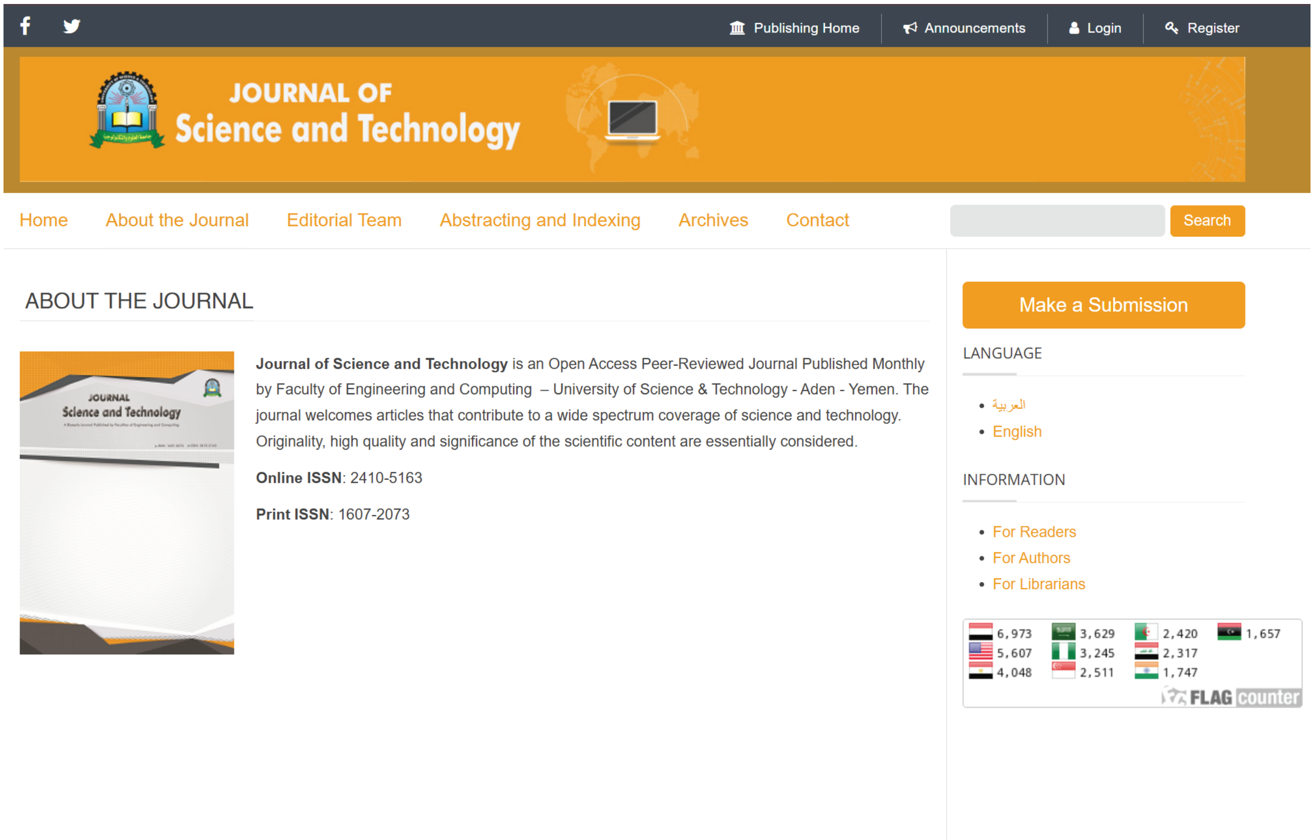
https://doi.org/10.20428/jst.v30i11

Website:



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https://doi.org/10.20428/jst.v30i11

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The body of a manuscript starts with an introduction that frames the problem under study and explores the importance of the problem (why the problem deserves new research). The statement about importance might involve the need to resolve any inconsistency in results of past work and/or extend the reach of a theoretical formulation and/ or investigate a practical problem that people suffer. The introduction ends in concluding the statement of the problem with a brief but formal statement of the purpose of the research that summarizes the material preceding it.

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This section describes in detail how the study was conducted, including conceptual and operational definitions of the variables used in the study. A comprehensive description of the methods used enables the reader to evaluate the appropriateness of the methods and the reliability and the validity of the results. It may include participant characteristics, sampling procedures, sample size, measures and research design.

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Results section summarizes the collected data and the analysis done on those data. It should provide sufficient detail about the data to justify the study conclusions. The results should also include details that may not match the study expectation; or even small effect sizes (or statistically non-significant findings) particularly when theory predicts large (or statistically significant) ones. Uncomfortable results should not be omitted. The data can be presented in tables or figures (data presented in tables should not be represented in figures). Tables should be numbered in order of mention in the text. Tables can be single-spaced and should not contain any lines. Asterisks may be used to indicate significant findings. Symbols, acronyms or abbreviations should be used sparingly. Explanatory footnotes should be used whenever possible rather than overlong titles. Images should be submitted as high-resolution files (300 dpi or higher) in TIFF format (LZW compression) or JPEGs.

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The interpretation of the results should discuss the limitations or weaknesses of the study, and address alternative explanations of the results. It also discusses the generalizability of the findings. This critical analysis should take into account differences between the target population and the accessed sample.

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This concluding section presents a brief, reasoned and justifiable commentary on the importance of the findings. It is tightly reasoned, self-contained, and not overstated. In this section, the importance of the problem (as stated in the introduction) should be discussed; what larger issues might depend on the findings; and what propositions are confirmed or disconfirmed.

Acknowledgements:

This **section** refers to the aid received by the author from other relevant parties. Reference should also be made to any financial assistance received to conduct the research. Any extraordinary assistance received by the author in word processing, data collection, data analysis, and so on, should be acknowledged. The acknowledgements should not exceed 60 words.

References:

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Sponsorship:
JST is sponsored by the University of Science and Technology.

Crossref Google Scholar EBSCO

Content:

Journal of Science and Technology

https://doi.org/10.20428/jst.v30i11

تقييم تأثير ذكاء الأعمال والبنية التحتية التكنولوجية المرنة في الميزة التنافسية في ضوء وجود المرونة التنظيمية

(دراسة حالة: مستشفى آزال في العاصمة اليمنية صنعاء)

الاستـــلام: 18/ابريل/2025
التحكيم: 25/ اغسطس/2025
القبــــول: 26/ اغسطس /2025

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https://doi.org/10.20428/jst.v30i11.2942

تقييم تأثير ذكاء الأعمال والبنية التحتية التكنولوجية المرنة في الميزة التنافسية في ضوء وجود المرونة التنظيمية

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الملخص:
يحتاج المديرون إلى اســـتراتيجية ليصـــبحوا فريدين من أجل تطوير منتجات وخدمات المنظمات في المجال التنافســـي، يُعدّ ذكاء الأعمال أداةً تُســـاعد كبار المديرين على اتخاذ قرارات ســـريعة وفي الوقت المناسب وسط كمّ هائل من المعلومات والبيانات، كما تؤدي تكنولوجيا المعلومات دورًا حيويًا في بقاء المؤســـســـات في عصـــر التغيرات والتطورات البيئية المتسارعة، ويهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة الميزة التنافسية لاستخدام ذكاء الأعمال، والبنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات، ومرونة المؤسسة، البحث وصفي واستنتاجي من حيث المنهج، وتمت دراســـة العاملين في قســـم تكنولوجيا المعلومات في مستشـفى آزال في العاصـمة اليمنية صـنعاء، وللتحقق من موثوقية أداة جمع البيانات تم اســـتخدام معيارين: ألفا كرونباخ، والموثوقية المركبة، والتي بلغت قيمها 0.81 و 0.91 على التوالي، تم التأكد من صـــحة الاختبار بطريقتين: صـــحة البناء باســـتخدام برنامج PLS وإحصـــائيات t ، والصـــدق التقاربي باســـتخدام طريقة AVE، وتم تحليل الفرضـــيات باســـتخدام نمذجة المعادلات الهيكلية، وأظهرت النتائج أن اســـتخدام ذكاء الأعمال يُحسّـن مرونة المؤســـســـة، وأن مرونة البنية التحتية لتكنولوجيا المعلومات تُحسّن مرونة المؤسسة، وتُحسّن رضا العملاء، وتُحسّن الميزة التنافسية، كما يُحسّن تحسين متغير التنبؤ وضع متغير المعيار في المؤسسة، وتم تأكيد الفرضيات من واحد إلى ســتة، ولكن لم يتم تأكيد جزء من الفرضــية الرئيســية، والتي تشير إلى تأثير استخدام ذكاء الأعمال في الميزة التنافسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية *ذكاء الأعمال، البنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات، المرونة التنظيمية، رضا العملاء، الميزة التنافسية.*

Evaluating the Impact of Business Intelligence and Flexible IT Infrastructure on Competitive Advantage in Light of Organizational Agility (Case Study: Azal Hospital in Sana'a, Yemen)

***Abstract*— Managers need a strategy to become unique in order to develop their organizations' products and services in the competitive arena. Business intelligence is a tool that helps senior managers make quick and timely decisions amidst a vast amount of information and data. Information technology also plays a vital role in the survival of organizations in an era of rapid environmental change and development. This research aims to examine the competitive advantage of using business intelligence, flexible IT infrastructure, and organizational agility. The research is descriptive and inferential in its methodology. The study examined employees in the IT department at Azal Hospital in Sana'a, Yemen. To verify the reliability of the data collection tool, two criteria were used: Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, which reached values of 0.81 and 0.91, respectively. The validity of the test was confirmed using two methods: construct validity using PLS and t-statistics, and convergent validity using the AVE method. The hypotheses were analyzed using structural equation modeling. The results showed that the use of business intelligence improves organizational resilience, and that the flexibility of the IT infrastructure improves organizational resilience, improves customer satisfaction, and enhances competitive advantage. Improving the predictor variable also improves the position of the criterion variable within the organization. Hypotheses one through six were confirmed, but part of the main hypothesis, which indicates the impact of business intelligence use on competitive advantage, was not confirmed.**

Keywords— *Business Intelligence, Flexible IT Infrastructure, Organizational Agility, Customer Satisfaction, Competitive Advantage*

I. المقدمة

تتزايد المنافسة الاقتصادية اليوم بسرعة كبيرة، مما جعل منظمات القطاع العام حساسة للغاية لخفض الميزانية، وتفهم الاحتياجات، وتستثمر في القدرات (التكنولوجيا، والموارد، وما إلى ذلك) لتلبية

الطلب في السوق، وتواجه شركات القطاع الخاص أيضًا منافسة متزايدة في البيئة؛ لذلك فإن الحفاظ على الميزة التنافسية المستدامة أمر صعب [1]. الميزة التنافسية هي عامل أو مجموعة من العوامل التي تجعل الشركة تعمل بنجاح أكبر من المنظمات الأخرى في بيئة تنافسية وتمنع التقليد السهل من قبل المنافسين [4]، ويتم إجراء العديد من الأبحاث والمشاريع لتطوير أدوات تتعلق بدعم القرار مثل OLAP، ومستودعات البيانات، واستخراج البيانات، وأنظمة الخبراء، والوكلاء الأذكياء، وما إلى ذلك، ويتم تجميع هذه التقنيات والميزات تحت مظلة جديدة تسمى ذكاء الأعمال (BI) أو بيئات دعم القرار [3].

يسعى هذا البحث إلى الإجابة عن السؤال حول ما إذا كان استخدام الذكاء التجاري له تأثير كبير في أداء المنظمة من منظور المرونة التنظيمية، والمرونة التنظيمية هي القدرة على فهم الفرص والتهديدات في السوق والاستجابة لها بسرعة، ولطالما كان فهم كيفية مساهمة تكنولوجيا المعلومات في تعزيز الميزة التنافسية للشركات محل اهتمام، فبينما استثمر المديرون بشكل كبير في تكنولوجيا المعلومات، وتُعيق الأنظمة القديمة غير المرنة القدرة على الاستجابة السريعة لفرص السوق [2]. ويُعدّ قطاع الرعاية الصحية من القطاعات التي تتطلب كمًا هائلًا من المعلومات، وهو ذو أهمية بالغة للحكومات، وتعد المراكز الطبية الكبيرة وخصوصًا المستشفيات من الأماكن المهمة في مجال الرعاية الصحية، كما أن دراسة عملية إنتاج المعلومات فيها ونقلها من قسم إلى آخر لها أهمية خاصة، ويشكل الإنتاج الواسع النطاق للمعلومات وإدارتها غير المتجانسة تحديًا كبيرًا في هذا المجال، اليوم تحتاج المستشفيات إلى المعلومات الصحيحة في الوقت المناسب لاتخاذ القرار الصحيح وفي الوقت المناسب من قبل الشخص المناسب [5 ؛ 6 ؛ 7]، ولكن العديد من الأنظمة المستخدمة لا تتمتع بالأداء الكافي، مع إدخال أنظمة ذكاء الأعمال الصحية، يمكن حل المخاوف في مجال الصحة إلى حد كبير [8].

وبطبيعة الحال تناولت الأدبيات البحثية في السنوات الأخيرة قضية الميزة التنافسية والذكاء التنظيمي، ولكن تجدر الإشارة إلى أن الدراسة الحالية تتناول قضية الذكاء التجاري والبنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات من منظور المرونة، وبحسب الدراسات التي أجريت فقد تم استخدام دراسات الحالة في الغالب في البنوك، أو قطاع التأمين، أو الشركات الصناعية، وتم تجاهل أهمية هذه القضية في المجال الصحي بشكل كبير، وفي هذا الصدد يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة تأثير ذكاء الأعمال والبنية التحتية المرنة في الميزة التنافسية من منظور المرونة التنظيمية، والنظر إلى هذه القضية من منظور جديد وقياس مكونات أكثر من الأبحاث السابقة.

II. الأسس النظرية والخلفية البحثية:

1. ذكاء الأعمال:

ذكاء الأعمال مصطلح عام يشمل البنية التحتية والأدوات وقواعد البيانات والتطبيقات والمنهجيات [9]، وهو مصطلح يشمل مجموعة واسعة من البرامج والحلول التحليلية لجمع المعلومات ودمجها وتحليلها وإتاحتها بطريقة تُمكّن مستخدمي المؤسسة من اتخاذ قرارات عمل أفضل، ذكاء الأعمال ليس نظامًا برمجيًا جديدًا أو مشروعًا مستقلًا، بل هو إطار عمل يتضمن عمليات وأدوات وتقنيات متنوعة ضرورية لتحويل البيانات إلى معلومات، والمعلومات إلى معرفة، بما يُحسّن أداء الأنشطة التجارية، ذكاء الأعمال هي طريقة نقل البيانات بشكل منهجي وواع إلى أشكال جديدة تؤدي إلى عرض المعلومات في تنسيقات تعتمد على الأعمال والنتائج [3]، ذكاء الأعمال هي عبارة عن مجموعة من المعلومات التجارية والتحليلات في مجال العمليات التجارية الأساسية التي تؤدي إلى اتخاذ القرارات والإجراءات [10].

2. البنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات

يمكن تكوين نظام تكنولوجيا المعلومات المرن بسرعة للاستجابة للتغييرات، ولكن هذا يأتي بتكلفة كبيرة، الرشاقة والمرونة هما بنيتان مختلفتان تمامًا [11؛ 12]، وفي العديد من ممارسات إدارة أنظمة المعلومات والأعمال البحثية لا يتم التمييز بين المرونة والرشاقة، أو عندما يتم استخدام هذه المصطلحات لا يتم تقديم تعريف لها، لقد تم تعريف المرونة والرشاقة بشكل مترادف في العديد من المقالات البحثية [13؛ 19]، يتم تعريف المرونة على نطاق واسع على أنها الدرجة التي يكون بها شيء أو جسم ناعمًا ومرنًا، ويعني القدرة على تكييف التطبيقات (أنظمة المعلومات) بسرعة وبشكل اقتصادي مع ظروف العمل المتغيرة في مجال أنظمة المعلومات، وقد تم النظر إلى المرونة باعتبارها إحدى القدرات التي تؤثر في سرعة عمل المنظمة واستجابتها [12؛ 17؛ 18].

على الرغم من أن المرونة يمكن أن تؤدي إلى اتخاذ إجراء سريع إلا أنها لها جوانب أخرى لا تتعلق بالسرعة، على سبيل المثال يمكن لنظام تكنولوجيا المعلومات المرن إعادة تكوين نفسه بسرعة للاستجابة للتغييرات، وإن كان ذلك بالتكلفة الكبيرة المطلوبة للقيام بذلك، لذلك فإن المرونة والرشاقة مفهومان مختلفان، فالرشاقة تتعلق بسرعة تحديد الفرص أو التهديدات في سياق الأعمال وتقييمها أو الاستجابة لها [11؛ 12]، ويتم تعريف البنية التحتية المستمرة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات في الأدبيات على أنها مجموعة من موارد تكنولوجيا المعلومات المشتركة التي توفر الأساس لتمكين الاتصالات عبر المنظمة وتمكين تطبيقات الأعمال الحالية والمستقبلية [15]، والتي لا تشمل المكونات التكنولوجية فحسب بل تشمل أيضًا المكونات البشرية، وتتضمن المكونات الرئيسية الأربعة للبنية التحتية المرنة التي تم تحديدها في الأدبيات الاتصال والتوافق والوحدات النمطية وكفاءة موظفي تكنولوجيا المعلومات[29]، يشير التوافق إلى القدرة على مشاركة المعلومات عبر كل مكون من مكونات التكنولوجيا، وتشير القدرة على الاتصال إلى قدرة أي تقنية على الاتصال بمكونات تقنية أخرى، ويمكنها أيضًا ربط كل شخص في كل مجال وظيفي وكل برنامج في المنظمة، وتوفر الوحدات النمطية لتطبيقات البرامج، والتي يمكن التحكم فيها بشكل أكبر عندما تتم معالجة المهام المشتركة بشكل منفصل في وحدات نمطية، أيضًا القدرة للمؤسسة على إنشاء أو تعديل تطبيقات البرامج بسرعة لدعم التغييرات في تطوير المنتج بسهولة، تدرس بعض الأبحاث تعريفات المرونة والرشاقة وتوضح الاختلافات بين هذين المفهومين، والتي تُستخدم غالبًا في أدبيات أنظمة المعلومات[15].

وقد قام الباحثون في مجال نظم المعلومات بدراسة البنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات كمتغير مستقل وتم تعديل 15 عنوانًا، ومع ذلك لا توجد دراسة تجريبية تبحث بشكل مباشر في العلاقة بين البنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات ومرونة المنظمة، وخصوصًا من منظور المرونة، في الواقع تكمن القيمة الحقيقية للبنية التحتية للتكنولوجيا في التفاعل المرن بين البنية التحتية لتكنولوجيا المعلومات وإطارها التنظيمي، ويوضح كيف تساعد البنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا

https://doi.org/10.20428/jst.v30i11.2942

المعلومات المنظمة، ويؤكد أن البنية التحتية لتكنولوجيا المعلومات هي عامل مساهم في تحسين مرونة المنظمة [28].

3. *المرونة والديناميكية التنظيمية:*

إن المنظمة التي تتمتع بالرشاقة والديناميكية هي المنظمة التي تحتضن التغيير والعدوانية والموجهة نحو النمو، تركز المرونة باستمرار على أداء الأفراد والمنظمة، وقيمة المنتجات والخدمات، والتغيير المستمر في سياق الفرص الناتجة عن اكتساب العملاء، وتتطلب الاستعداد المستمر لمواجهة التغييرات الجوهرية والسطحية [12]. إن المنظمات الرشيقة مستعدة دائمًا لتعلم أي شيء جديد من شأنه أن يزيد الربحية من خلال الاستفادة من الفرص الجديدة، وبالنسبة للمنافسين النشطين فإن التغيير وعدم اليقين يشكلان مصدرًا للفرص لتحقيق النجاح المستمر، ومن ثم لمواجهة التغيرات غير المسبوقة تعتمد المرونة على المبادرة والمهارة والمعرفة الإنسانية وإمكانية وصول الناس إلى المعلومات، وتتمتع المنظمة الرشيقة بعمليات تجارية ونوع من الهيكل التنظيمي القادر على ترجمة هذه المبادرات إلى تجارب عملاء غنية بسرعة وسلاسة [23].

المرونة هي القدرة على الاستجابة بفعالية للأحداث التي تتغير بسرعة وغير متوقعة [22]، وتتضمن مفهومين أساسيين: الاستجابة للتغيرات المتوقعة وغير المتوقعة بالطرق المناسبة في الوقت المناسب، والاستفادة من التغييرات والحصول على فوائد التغيير كفرصة [18]، الرشاقة هي قدرة المنظمة على البقاء والازدهار في بيئة تنافسية حيث يكون التغيير مستمرًا وغير متوقع، والاستجابة بسرعة للتغيرات السريعة في السوق الناتجة عن طلب العملاء على المنتجات والخدمات [28].

لا يمكن تحقيق المرونة إلا من خلال دمج التسلسل الهرمي لاحتياجات العملاء في إطار البيئة الداخلية والخارجية للمنظمة، ويتم تحقيق ذلك من خلال الحصول على رؤية شاملة لتقنيات الإنتاج التنظيمية المتقدمة جنبًا إلى جنب مع القدرات الداخلية التي تعالجها من خلال استخدام أنظمة تكنولوجيا المعلومات [26]. المرونة هي القدرة على تصميم منظمة ديناميكية تستشعر الحاجة إلى التغيير في الموارد الداخلية والخارجية، وتنفذ هذه التغييرات على أساس يومي، وتحافظ على الأداء على مستوى عالٍ [24].

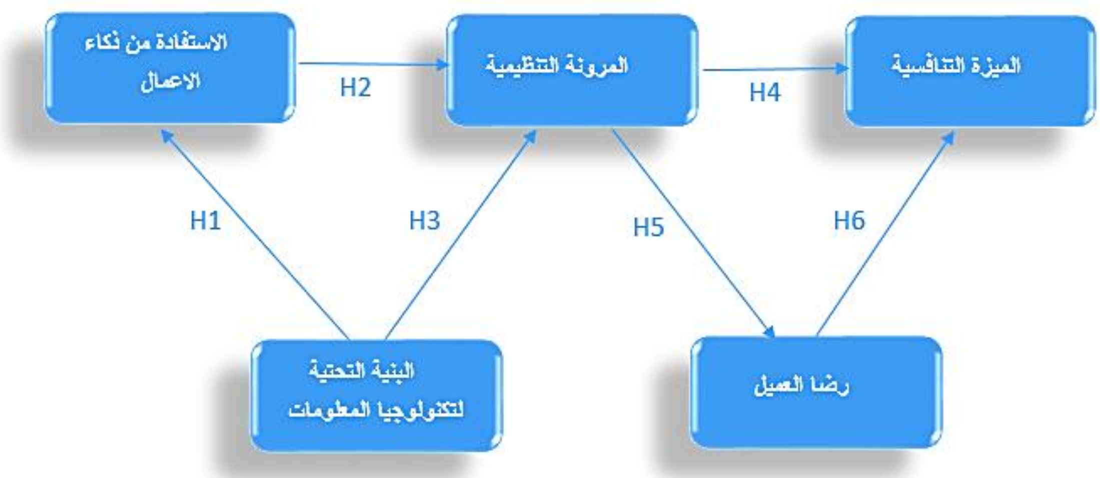
4. *الميزة التنافسية:*

يرتبط مفهوم الميزة التنافسية بشكل مباشر بالقيم المرغوبة لدى العملاء، بحيث إنه في الطيف المقارن كلما كانت القيم التي تقدمها المنظمة أقرب إلى القيم المرغوبة لدى العملاء أو أكثر اتساقًا معها كلما كان من الممكن القول إن المنظمة تتمتع بالتفوق والميزة على منافسيها في معيار أو أكثر من معايير المنافسة، وتتضمن الميزة التنافسية مجموعة من العوامل أو القدرات التي تمكن المنظمة دائمًا من الأداء بشكل أفضل من منافسيها [1]، ونتيجة للتعقيد البيئي المتزايد والمنافسة الشديدة فإن الميزة التنافسية إما أن يتم تقليدها بسهولة من قبل المنافسين أو تتلاشى بسرعة في نظر العملاء ويجب استبدالها بمزايا جديدة [25]، إن والحفاظ على الميزة التنافسية المستدامة وخلقها يتطلب كفاءات قادرة على خلق القيمة للعملاء بالاعتماد على قدرات المنظمة، وإن مفتاح هذه القضية هو تحقيق القدرة التنافسية والحفاظ على المزايا التنافسية القائمة على مبدأ معرفة وفهم احتياجات العملاء، وكذلك فهم عمليات المنافسين.

الجدول (1) خلفية البحث.

	هدف البحث	مصدر	ملخص النتائج	المكونات المشتركة مع البحث
1	دراسة العلاقة بين المرونة التنظيمية ورضا العملاء في شركة التأمين.	[26]	إن كافة المتغيرات المعتبرة المتعلقة بالمرونة التنظيمية لها علاقة إيجابية وهامة برضا العملاء.	**المرونة التنظيمية ورضا العملاء.**
2	دراسة تأثير ذكاء الأعمال ومرونة البنية التحتية لتكنولوجيا المعلومات في الميزة التنافسية.	[25]	تؤثر مرونة المنظمة في الميزة التنافسية للمنظمة من خلال تأثيرات ذكاء الأعمال ومرونة البنية التحتية لتكنولوجيا المعلومات.	**البنية التحتية لتكنولوجيا المعلومات والمرونة التنظيمية وذكاء الأعمال والميزة التنافسية.**
3	تأثير مرونة البنية التحتية لتكنولوجيا المعلومات وعمليات إدارة سلسلة التوريد في الميزة التنافسية والأداء المالي.	[27]	مستوى عال من مرونة البنية التحتية لتكنولوجيا المعلومات تؤدي إلى زيادة الميزة التنافسية.	**المرونة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات والميزة التنافسية.**
4	تجربة استكشافية للعلاقة بين البنية التحتية للتكنولوجيا المعلومات المرنة والميزة التنافسية.	[15]	تشير الدارسة إلى وجود علاقة قوية بين البنية التحتية لتكنولوجيا المعلومات والميزة التنافسية.	**بنية تحتية وتكنولوجيا المعلومات المرنة والميزة التنافسية.**
5	دراسة العلاقة بين ذكاء الأعمال ودعم القرار (DS) والفوائد التنظيمية في بيئة صنع القرار.	[28]	تشير النتائج إلى وجود علاقة مهمة بين وظائف الذكاء الاصطناعي، ودعم القرار والفوائد التنظيمية.	**ذكاء الأعمال والفوائد التنظيمية.**
6	دراسة تأثير شبكات الأعمال في الميزة التنافسية من خلال توضيح دور القدرة في خلق القدرات، دراسة حالة قطاع البناء.	[29]	شبكات الأعمال ذات القدرات الديناميكية - نهج جديد كان له تأثير كبير في الميزة التنافسية.	**الميزة التنافسية.**

تتشابه هذه الدراسة مع الدراسات المذكورة في خلفية البحث، ولكن تجدر الإشارة إلى أنها تُعدّ من بين الدراسات الحديثة نظرًا لمعالجتها لمسألة ذكاء الأعمال والبنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات من منظور المرونة، كما أن الدراسات التجريبية التي تبحث بشكل مباشر في العلاقة بين البنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات ومرونة المؤسسات، وخصوصًا من منظور المرونة، ومحدودة للغاية، وفقًا للدراسات التي أُجريت نُوقشت دراسات الحالة في الأبحاث التي أُجريت في الغالب في البنوك أو قطاع التأمين أو الشركات الصناعية، وتم تجاهل أهمية هذه القضية في المجال الصحي بشكل كبير، تحتاج مؤسسات المستشفيات اليوم إلى المعلومات الصحيحة في الوقت المناسب لاتخاذ القرار المناسب وفي الوقت المناسب من قِبل الشخص المناسب، وفي هذا الصدد يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة تأثير ذكاء الأعمال والبنية التحتية التكنولوجية المرنة في الميزة التنافسية في ضوء وجود المرونة التنظيمية (دراسة حالة: مستشفى آزال في العاصمة اليمنية صنعاء).



الشكل (1) النموذج المفاهيمي للبحث.

هذا النموذج هو مزيج من ثلاثة نماذج مختارة من خلفية البحث، بما في ذلك النماذج المستخدمة في بحث يعقوب في عام 2020م، وتشن في عام 2022م، وشمس الدين في عام 2019م، والعوامل التي تم أخذها في الاعتبار في كل من هذه النماذج في هذه الدراسة محددة في الجدول (2).

الجدول (2) العوامل التي تشكل النموذج المفاهيمي للبحث.

	يعقوب (2020م)	تشين (2022م)	شمس الدين (2019م)
ذكاء الأعمال		*	
المرونة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات		*	
المرونة التنظيمية	*	*	
رضا العملاء	*		*
الميزة التنافسية		*	*

وقد تم شرح أبعاد ذكاء الأعمال، والبنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات، والمرونة التنظيمية، والميزة التنافسية بالتفصيل في الأسس النظرية، وفيما يتعلق برضا العملاء يمكن القول إن رضا العملاء يُعد أحد العوامل المهمة المؤثرة في الميزة التنافسية للمنظمات، ورضا العملاء هو شعور إيجابي ينشأ في كل فرد بعد استخدام منتج أو خدمة، وإذا كان المنتج أو الخدمة التي تلقاها العميل تلبي احتياجاته وتوقعاته فإنه يشعر بالرضا، يمكن تحديد مستوى رضا العملاء من خلال فحص مهارات الموظفين في الاستجابة للعملاء، وتكرار عمليات الشراء من قبل العميل، وتقديم خدمات ومنتجات المنظمة من قبل العملاء [24].

III. فرضيات البحث:

الفرضية الرئيسية للبحث:

هناك علاقة مهمة بين ذكاء الأعمال والبنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات والحصول على الميزة التنافسية.

الفرضيات الفرعية للبحث:

H1: إن عامل مرونة البنية التحتية لتكنولوجيا المعلومات له تأثير إيجابي وهام في استخدام ذكاء الأعمال.

H2: إن عامل استخدام الذكاء التجاري له تأثير إيجابي وهام في مرونة المنظمة.

H3: إن عامل مرونة البنية التحتية لتكنولوجيا المعلومات له تأثير إيجابي وهام في مرونة المنظمة.
رقم H4: إن عامل المرونة التنظيمية له تأثير إيجابي وهام في الميزة التنافسية.
H5: إن عامل المرونة التنظيمية له تأثير إيجابي وهام في رضا العملاء.
H6: رضا العملاء له تأثير إيجابي وهام في الميزة التنافسية.

IV. منهجية البحث:

ومن الناحية المنهجية فإن الدراسة الحالية تُعد من نوع البحوث الوصفية والاستدلالية، ومن منظور الهدف التطبيقي فهو مقطع زمني واحد ويعتمد بشكل خاص على نموذج المعادلة البنيوية، في هذه الدراسة تم اعتبار البنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات متغيرًا مستقلًا، واستخدام ذكاء الأعمال والميزة التنافسية هي المتغيرات التابعة، وتم اعتبار المرونة التنظيمية متغيرًا وسيطًا، وفي الدراسة الحالية أداة القياس الرئيسية هي الاستبانة، تتكون الاستبانة من قسمين: أسئلة ديموغرافية (الجنس، والعمر، والمستوى التعليمي، ومستوى الخبرة العملية)، وأسئلة رئيسية تتضمن 14 بندًا تتعلق بمكون استخدام ذكاء الأعمال، و9 بنود تتعلق بمكون البنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات، و7 أسئلة تتعلق بمكون المرونة التنظيمية، و5 أسئلة تتعلق بمكون رضا العملاء، و5 أسئلة تتعلق بمتغير الميزة التنافسية، استخدمت الاستبانة مقياس ليكرت المكون من خمس نقاط.

صحة الاستبانة وموثوقيتها

تم حساب قيمهما لتكون 0.81 و0.91 على التوالي، وتمت مراجعة صلاحية المحتوى والتأكد منها من قِبل أساتذة جامعيين وعدد من الخبراء، وحُسبت صلاحية بناء الاستبانة باستخدام برنامج PLS، وتحليل إحصائي t، وتظهر نتائج صحة البناء في الجدول (3)، تشير القيم الأعلى من القيمة المطلقة 1.96 إلى الصحة المرغوبة في هذه العناصر الأربعة.

الجدول (3): صحة الاستبيان وموثوقيته

الميزة التنافسية		**رضا العميل**		**مرونة المؤسسة**		**البنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات**		**استخدام ذكاء الأعمال**	
تحليل إحصائي t	العامل	تحليل إحصائي t	العامل	تحليل إحصائي t	العامل	تحليل إحصائي t	العامل	تحليل إحصائي t	العامل
4.84	العامل 36	18.38	العامل 31	20.07	العامل 24	8.71	العامل 15	7.503	العامل 1
36.17	العامل 37	11.15	العامل 32	10.95	العامل 25	13.58	العامل 16	23.560	العامل 2
14.70	العامل 38	13.83	العامل 33	19.23	العامل 26	6.26	العامل 17	11.035	العامل 3
4.31	العامل 39	50.92	العامل 34	22.66	العامل 27	16.89	العامل 18	7.020	العامل 4
21.33	العامل 40	7.15	العامل 35	14.14	العامل 28	16.40	العامل 19	18.585	العامل 5
-	-	-	-	10.02	العامل 29	5.50	العامل 20	10.861	العامل 6
-	-	-	-	13.33	العامل 30	21.20	العامل 21	11.035	العامل 7
-	-	-	-	-	-	12.48	العامل 22	7.795	العامل 8
-	-	-	-	-	-	13.05	العامل 23	12.467	العامل 9
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8.63	العامل 10
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9.10	العامل 11
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17.57	العامل 12
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14.18	العامل 13
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7.71	العامل 14

تم استخدام طريقة AVE لفحص الصلاحية المتقاربة، وتشير القيمة الأعلى من 0.5 إلى الصلاحية المناسبة، كما ذكرنا يشير AVE إلى درجة الارتباط بين المؤشر ومتغيراته، وكلما زاد الارتباط، كان الملاءمة أفضل. ويبين الجدول (4) النتائج.

https://doi.org/10.20428/jst.v30i11.2942

الجدول (4): المتغيرات وقيم AVE المتحصلة منSmart PLS وألفا كرونباخ والموثوقية المركبة.

عامل	AVE	ألفا كرونباخ	CR (مركب) مصداقية
استخدام ذكاء الأعمال	.5580	0.943	**0.950**
البنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات	.5050	0.887	**0.909**
المرونة التنظيمية	.6080	0.892	**0.915**
رضا العملاء	.6400	0.856	**0.898**
الميزة التنافسية	0.614	0.864	**0.886**
معامل ألفا كرونباخ الكلي	-	0.884	**-**
معامل الموثوقية المركب الكلي	-	-	**0.911**

وفقًا للجدول (4) فإن جميع المتغيرات لها AVE أعلى من 0.5، مما يشير إلى صحة تقاربية كافية، وقد تم استخدام طريقة ألفا كرونباخ لتقييم موثوقية نموذج القياس، وتُستخدم طريقة كرونباخ ألفا لحساب الاتساق الداخلي لأدوات القياس، بما في ذلك الاستبانات أو الاختبارات التي تقيس سمات مختلفة، كما يُمكن استخدام مقياس موثوقية مُركّب، وتم اقتراح الموثوقية المركبة (CR) كمقياس أكثر حداثة من ألفا كرونباخ، إن تفوق هذا المعيار على ألفا كرونباخ هو أن موثوقية البنيات لا تحسب من حيث القيمة المطلقة ولكن وفقًا لارتباط بنياتها مع بعضها البعض، وتشير قيمة CR لكل بناء أعلى من 0.7 إلى موثوقية داخلية كافية لنماذج القياس، وتشير القيمة الأقل من 0.6 إلى عدم وجود موثوقية، ويبين الجدول رقم (4) معامل ألفا كرونباخ لكل متغير، وللاستبانة بأكملها والذي تم أخذه من مخرجات برنامج PLS، على هذا الأساس يتم التأكد من موثوقية النموذج، ومن الطرق الأخرى للتحقق من الموثوقية استخدام الموثوقية المركبة لكل متغير، ويبين الجدول (2) الموثوقية المركبة لكل متغير، وتشير الموثوقية المركبة لأي متغير أعلى من 0.7 إلى موثوقية كافية، وبناءً على ذلك يتم التأكد من موثوقية الهياكل.

أسلوب تحليل البيانات الإحصائية السكانية والبحثية:

وبما أن العينة الإحصائية في هذه الدراسة تساوي المجتمع الإحصائي، نتيجة لتعداد البحث تم استخدام عدد الموظفين في قسم تكنولوجيا المعلومات في مستشفي آزال في العاصمة اليمنية، والذي يعادل 47 شخصًا، لجمع البيانات من الدراسات المكتبية والإجابة عن أسئلة البحث باستخدام استبانة، وبعد مراجعة الأدبيات الموجودة في مجال ذكاء الأعمال والبنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات والمرونة التنظيمية ورضا العملاء والعوامل المؤثرة في الميزة التنافسية تم تقديم نموذج مفاهيمي، وتم تصميم استبانة وفقًا للمتغيرات المحددة، بعد تصميم الاستبانة يتم التحقق من صحته وموثوقيته وجمع بيانات البحث، يُفحص النموذج المفاهيمي باستخدام برنامج Smart PLS، ولتحليل الفرضيات تُستخدم نمذجة المعادلات الهيكلية وفقًا للنموذج والافتراضات، تُحدد أحمال العوامل ومعاملات المسار، ويُحلل تقرير اختبار الفرضيات النهائي بناءً على ذلك.

V. نتائج البحث:

الإحصاءات الوصفية:

تكونت العينة من 73% من الرجال و27 % من النساء، 17% من الأشخاص كانوا تحت سن 30 عامًا، و77% كانوا بين 30 و40 عامًا، و6% كانوا بين 40 و50 عامًا، 3% من هؤلاء الأشخاص كانوا ثانوية عامة، و80% لديهم درجة البكالوريوس، و17% لديهم درجة الماجستير، و6% لديهم درجة الدكتوراة، 6% من هؤلاء الأشخاص لديهم خبرة عمل أقل من عامين، و35% لديهم من 3 إلى 5 سنوات، و46% لديهم ما بين 5 إلى 10 سنوات، و13% لديهم أكثر من 10 سنوات.

الإحصاء الاستدلالي:

للتحقق من تأثير استخدام ذكاء الأعمال والبنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات في الميزة التنافسية بشكل مباشر وغير مباشر تم استخدام نموذج المعادلة الهيكلية، حيث ظهر متغير المرونة التنظيمية كمتغير وسيط في الحالة غير المباشرة، تم عرض النتائج في الجدول رقم (5)، الذي يدرس الجزء الأول من الفرضية الرئيسية، ألا وهو تأثير استخدام ذكاء الأعمال في الميزة التنافسية، والجدول رقم (6)، الذي يدرس نتائج دراسة الجزء الثاني من الفرضية الرئيسية، ألا وهو تأثير البنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات في الميزة التنافسية، ووفقًا للجدول رقم (5) فإن قيمة إحصائية t أقل من 1.96؛ وعليه فإن الافتراض القائل بإن "عامل استخدام ذكاء الأعمال له تأثير إيجابي وهام في الميزة التنافسية" غير مؤكد.

الجدول (5) التأثير المباشر وغير المباشر لاستخدام ذكاء الأعمال في الميزة التنافسية.

العامل	المتوسط	الانحراف المعايير	إحصائية t (التأثير المباشر)	إحصائية t (التأثير غير المباشر)	sig
استخدام ذكاء الأعمال	3.12	0.94	1.250	0.401	**0.001**
الميزة التنافسية	3.69	0.67			

الجدول (6) التأثير المباشر وغير المباشر للبنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات في الميزة التنافسية.

العامل	المتوسط	الانحراف المعايير	إحصائية t (التأثير المباشر)	إحصائية t (التأثير غير المباشر)	sig
البنية التحتية لتكنولوجيا المعلومات المرنة	3.15	1.05	3.319	15.296	**0.000**
الميزة التنافسية	3.69	0.67			

الجدول (6) إلى أنه بما أن قيمة إحصائية t أكبر من 1.96، فإن الفرضية القائلة بإن "عامل البنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات له تأثير إيجابي وهام في الميزة التنافسية" مؤكدة.

اختبار طبيعية البيانات:

يتم إجراء اختبار طبيعية البيانات قبل إجراء الاختبارات المعلمية، وللتحقق من طبيعية العوامل نستخدم اختبار كولموغوروف - سميرنوف للعينة الواحدة:

H0: البيانات لها توزيع طبيعي.

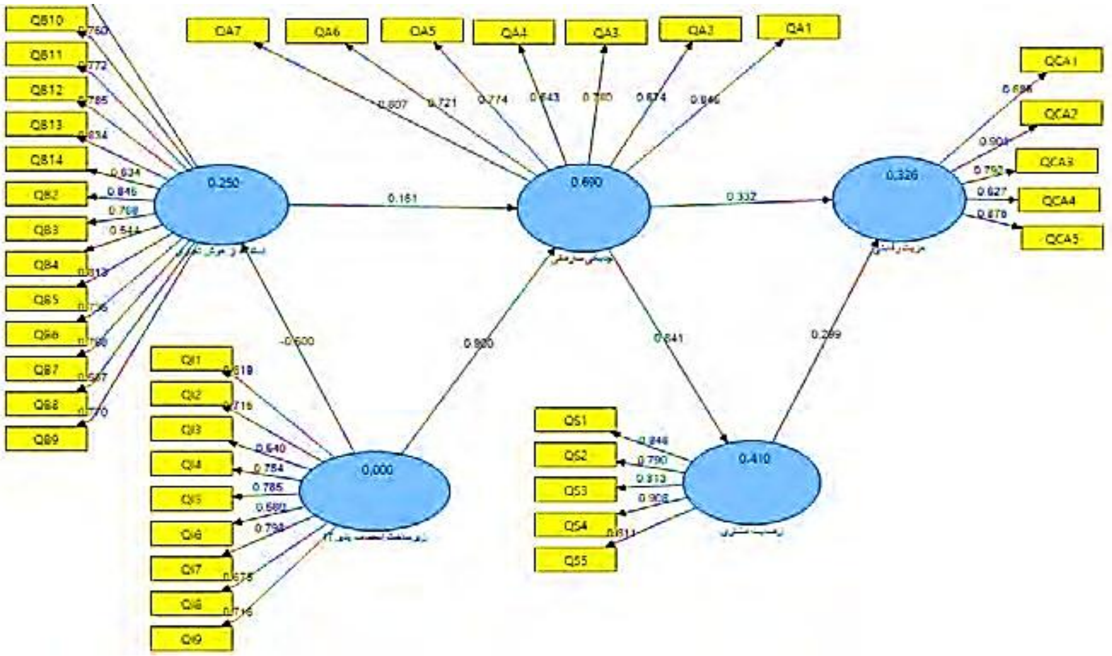
H1: البيانات ليست موزعة بشكل طبيعي.

الجدول (7) اختبار طبيعية البيانات.

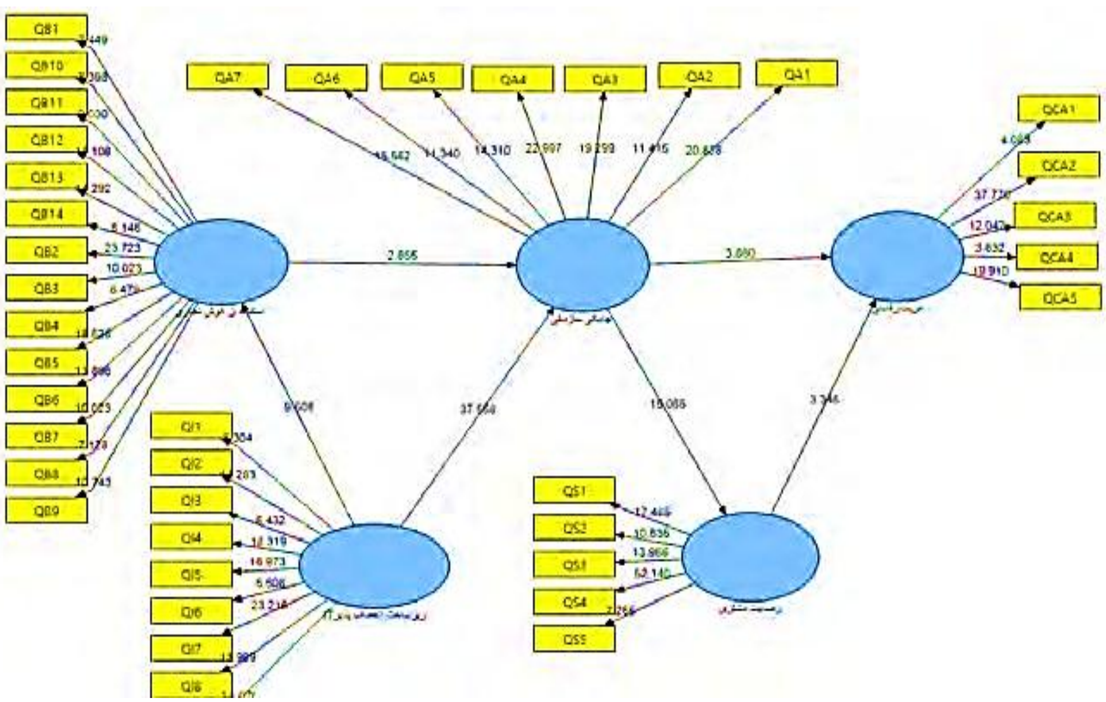
المتغيرات	المتوسط	الانحراف المعياري	قيم كولموغوروف -سميرنوف (Z)	مستوى ذو دلالة إحصائية	تأكيد H0 أو H1	النتيجة
استخدام ذكاء الأعمال	3/13	0.94	1.97	0.05	تأكيد H0	**طبيعي.**
البنية التحتية لتكنولوجيا المعلومات المرنة	3/15	1.05	1.84	0.02	تأكيد H1	**ليس طبيعيًا.**
المرونة التنظيمية	3.31	1.05	1.65	0.08	تأكيد H0	**طبيعي.**
رضا العملاء	3.70	0.64	2.37	0.01	تأكيد H1	**ليس طبيعيًا.**
الميزة التنافسية	3.69	0.67	1.81	0.01	تأكيدH1	**ليس طبيعيًا.**

وبحسب الجدول رقم (5) فإن قيمة مستوى الدلالة في بعض المتغيرات أقل من قيمة الخطأ 0.05، وبالتالي يتم رفض الفرضية الصفرية أي أن هذه المتغيرات غير طبيعية، وبالنسبة لبعض المتغيرات الأخرى فإن قيمة مستوى الدلالة أكبر من 0.05 مما يدل على أن هذه المتغيرات طبيعية، لذلك ونظرًا لعدم انتظام بعض متغيرات البحث، وصغر حجم العينة، وطبيعة متغيرات البحث ثنائية المستوى، استُخدمت نمذجة المعادلات الهيكلية باستخدام طريقة المربعات الجزئية الصغرى (PLS) باستخدام برنامج Smart PLS لتأكيد النموذج والإجابة على الفرضيات، وتُحدد طريقة تقدير PLS المعاملات بطريقة تجعل النموذج الناتج يتمتع بأكبر قدرة تفسيرية وتوضيحية، مما يعني أن النموذج قادر على التنبؤ بالمتغير التابع النهائي بأعلى دقة.

والآن سوف نقوم بدراسة متغيرات البحث وفقًا للنتائج التي تم الحصول عليها، يوضح الشكل (2) معاملات المسار في النموذج المقابل، تشير الأرقام المكتوبة على الخطوط إلى معاملات بيتا القياسية في الانحدار الجزئي للمربعات الصغرى، وهي نفس معاملات المسار في النمذجة الهيكلية PLS، وينبغي فحص معاملات المسار من حيث الإشارة والحجم والأهمية، وتشير المعاملات الإيجابية إلى التأثيرات الإيجابية (العلاقات المباشرة بين بنيتين) لبناء واحد على آخر، في حين تشير العلامات السلبية إلى التأثيرات السلبية (العلاقات العكسية) لبناء واحد على آخر، ويتناقص معامل تأثير أحد الهياكل على هيكل آخر من حيث الحجم مع زيادة عدد المسارات غير المباشرة، وكما هو واضح في الشكل فإن تحميل العامل لجميع العناصر موجب وقيمتها أعلى من 0.4، وبالتالي فإن جميع العناصر مؤكدة، باستخدام برنامج PLS تم الحصول على النتائج الآتية، والتي يمكن استخدامها لفحص فرضيات البحث، يوضح الشكل (2) قيم إحصائية t، ولتأكيد الفرضيات يجب أن تكون قيمة الإحصاء t أكبر من 1.96 مما يدل على تأثير إيجابي وهام، إذا كانت هذه القيمة بين 1.96 و -1.96 فهذا يدل على عدم وجود تأثير كبير، وإذا كانت أقل من -1.96 فهذا يدل على وجود علاقة سلبية كبيرة.



الشكل (2) إحصائيات ملاءمة الحمل العاملي والمسير العاملي عبر التحليل ببرنامج PLS.



الشكل (3) قيم إحصائية T الموضحة في النموذج المفاهيمي باستخدام برنامج PLS.

https://doi.org/10.20428/jst.v30i11.2942

VI. اختبار الفرضيات:

اختبار الفرضية الأولى:

في الجدول (8) كانت قيمة t أكبر من 1.96 (خارج النطاق ذو الدلالة الاحصائية)، مما يؤكد الفرضية الأولى (عامل البنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات له تأثير إيجابي ومهم في استخدام ذكاء الأعمال)، ونظرًا لوجود معامل بيتا سلبيًا، فيمكن القول بإن هذا التأثير ضعيف وغير مباشر.

الجدول (8) اختبار الفرضيات.

المسير	رقم الفرضية	إحصائية t	معامل المسار	تأكيد/ رفض
المرونة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات ← باستخدام ذكاء الأعمال	1	9.608	0.500-	**تأكيد**
استخدام ذكاء الأعمال ← لتحقيق المرونة التنظيمية	2	2.865	0.161	**تأكيد**
البنية التحتية لتكنولوجيا المعلومات المرنة ← المرونة التنظيمية	3	35.558	0.900	**تأكيد**
المرونة التنظيمية ← تشكل ميزة تنافسية	4	3.860	0.332	**تأكيد**
المرونة التنظيمية ← رضا العملاء	5	15.085	0.641	**تأكيد**
رضا العملاء ← ميزة تنافسية	6	3.345	0.299	**تأكيد**

اختبار الفرضية الثانية:

هنا أيضًا كانت قيمة إحصائية t أعلى من 1.96 (خارج النطاق الدلالي)، مما يشير إلى تأكيد الفرضية الثانية (عامل استخدام ذكاء الأعمال في مرونة المنظمة له تأثير إيجابي ودال)، ويشير معامل المسار البالغ 0.161 إلى أن استخدام ذكاء الأعمال يفسر 16% من التغيرات في مرونة المنظمة.

اختبار الفرضية الثالثة:

وهنا أيضًا كانت قيمة إحصائية t أعلى من 1.96 (خارج النطاق الدلالي)، مما يشير إلى تأكيد الفرضية الثالثة (عامل مرونة البنية التحتية لتكنولوجيا المعلومات له تأثير إيجابي ومهم في مرونة المنظمة)، ويشير معامل المسار البالغ 0.900 إلى أن البنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات تفسر 90% من تغيرات مرونة المنظمة.

اختبار الفرضية الرابعة:

وتشير قيمة إحصائية t الأعلى من 1.96 في الجدول (8) إلى تأكيد الفرضية الرابعة (عامل المرونة التنظيمية له تأثير إيجابي وهام في الميزة التنافسية)، ويشير معامل المسار البالغ 0.332 إلى أن المرونة التنظيمية تفسر 33٪ من التغييرات في متغير الميزة التنافسية.

اختبار الفرضية الخامسة:

وتشير قيمة إحصائية t الأعلى من 1.96 في الجدول (8) إلى تأكيد الفرضية الخامسة (عامل المرونة التنظيمية له تأثير إيجابي وهام في رضا العملاء)، ويشير معامل المسار البالغ 0.641 إلى أن المرونة التنظيمية تفسر 64٪ من التغييرات في متغير رضا العملاء.

اختبار الفرضية السادسة:

وتشير قيمة إحصائية t التي تزيد عن 1.96 في الجدول (8) إلى تأكيد الفرضية السادسة (عامل رضا العملاء له تأثير إيجابي وهام في الميزة التنافسية)، ويشير معامل المسار البالغ 0.299 إلى أن رضا العملاء يفسر 30 ٪ من التباين في متغير الميزة التنافسية.

مؤشرات لفحص مدى ملاءمة النموذج المقترح:

مؤشر R^2 هو مقياس يستخدم لربط جزء القياس والجزء البنيوي من نمذجة المعادلات البنيوية ويشير إلى التأثير الذي يحدثه متغير خارجي في متغير داخلي، في عام 1998م قدمت الصين ثلاثة قيم وهي 0.19، و0.33، و0.67 كمعايير للقيم الضعيفة والمتوسطة والقوية، وتظهر قيمة R^2 داخل الدوائر في الشكل (2) والجدول (9).

الجدول (9) قيم مؤشرات تقييم النموذج الهيكلي.

العامل	R^2	المجتمعية	AVE	R^2	GOF
استخدام ذكاء الأعمال	0.250	0.554	0.585	0.419	**495/-**
البنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات	0	0.484			
المرونة التنظيمية	0.690	0.640			
رضا العملاء	0.410	0.614			
الميزة التنافسية	0.326	0.608			

قيمة GOF الأعلى من 0.4 حيث بلغت قيمة مؤشر جودة التوافق في الدراسة الحالية 0.495، وتشير القيمة الأعلى من 0.4 إلى توافق جيد للنموذج، وبعبارات أبسط فإن بيانات هذه الدراسة تتناسب بشكل جيد مع بنية العوامل والإطار النظري للبحث، وهذا يشير إلى أن الأسئلة تتوافق مع البنيات النظرية. وقيمة الجماعة للأفراد، والقيمة المطلوبة لهذا المؤشر أكبر من أو تساوي 0.5، وقد ذكر البعض أيضًا 0.4، ووفقًا للجدول (9) فإن ملاءمة النموذج عند مستوى دلالة إحصائية، وهذا يعني أن متغيرات البنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات تتنبأ بنحو 25% من استخدام ذكاء الأعمال و 69% من مرونة المنظمة، ويمكن لمتغير ذكاء الأعمال التنبؤ بنسبة 69% من التغييرات في متغير مرونة المؤسسة، كما يمكن لمتغير مرونة المؤسسة التنبؤ بنحو 32% و 41% من التغييرات في متغيري الميزة التنافسية ورضا العملاء، ويمكن لمتغير رضا العملاء التنبؤ بنحو 32% من التغييرات في الميزة التنافسية.

VII. المناقشة والاستنتاج:

في هذه الدراسة تم دراسة تأثير استخدام ذكاء الأعمال والبنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات في الميزة التنافسية، وبحسب بيانات البحث لم تكن هناك علاقة إيجابية وهامة بين استخدام ذكاء الأعمال والميزة التنافسية، بالإضافة إلى التأثير المباشر تم فحص التأثير غير المباشر الذي تم فيه فحص المرونة التنظيمية كمتغير وسيط بين المتغيرين، ونتيجة لذلك فإن استخدام ذكاء الأعمال في المنظمة قيد الدراسة لم يكن له تأثير إيجابي وهام في الميزة التنافسية، وفي الجزء الثاني تم دراسة تأثير البنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات في الميزة التنافسية، ووجدت علاقة إيجابية وهامة بين الاثنين، سواء بشكل مباشر أم غير مباشر.

تم تأكيد الفرضية الفرعية الأولى من خلال دراسة تأثير البنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات في استخدام ذكاء الأعمال، يمكن تفسير النتيجة على أنها تساعد البنية التحتية المرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات في التكامل السريع لمصادر البيانات غير المتجانسة، وتوفير معلومات دقيقة لصناع القرار في الوقت والمكان المناسبين، والنشر الفعال لأنظمة ذكاء الأعمال [21]، تشير هذه النتائج إلى أنه لتحقيق أقصى استفادة من ذكاء الأعمال لا بد من بناء بنية تحتية مرنة لتكنولوجيا المعلومات داخل المنظمة.

تم تأكيد الفرضية الفرعية الثانية للدراسة، والمبنية على وجود علاقة ذات دلالة إحصائية بين استخدام الذكاء التجاري ومرونة المنظمة، وتم تأكيد الفرضية الفرعية الثالثة للبحث والمتمثلة في وجود علاقة ذات دلالة إحصائية بين مرونة البنية التحتية لتكنولوجيا المعلومات ومرونة المنظمة، وقد تم التحقق من صحة الفرضية الفرعية الرابعة للبحث والمتمثلة في وجود علاقة ذات دلالة إحصائية بين المرونة التنظيمية والميزة التنافسية، وتؤكد العديد من الدراسات العلاقة الإيجابية بين المرونة التنظيمية والميزة التنافسية [11؛ 14؛ 10؛ 25]، تم تأكيد الفرضية الفرعية الخامسة للدراسة والمتمثلة في وجود علاقة ذات دلالة إحصائية بين المرونة التنظيمية ورضا العملاء، ومن خلال زيادة المرونة التنظيمية فإننا سنشهد زيادة في جودة تقديم الخدمات، وانخفاض التكاليف، وانخفاض وقت الانتظار، وفي نهاية المطاف زيادة في رضا العملاء.

وقد تم التحقق من صحة الفرضية الفرعية السادسة للبحث والمتمثلة في وجود علاقة ذات دلالة إحصائية بين رضا العملاء والميزة التنافسية، رضا العملاء هو أحد العوامل المهمة التي تؤثر في الميزة التنافسية للمنظمة، يعتمد رضا العملاء على نوع المنتج، أو جودته، أو تنوعه، أو سلوك الموظفين، أو تلبية احتياجاتهم، بالإضافة إلى السمات المعتادة لرضا العملاء يجب على كل مؤسسة ـ بناءً على تنوع منتجاتها ومجال عملها ـ أن تتعرف على العميل واحتياجاته، وأن تُجري الرقابة اللازمة على قياس رضا العملاء.

اقتراحات مبنية على نتائج البحث:

وبناءً على البيانات التي تم الحصول عليها، وبناءً على نتائج فرضيات البحث يتم تقديم المقترحات التالية: اقتراحات مبنية على نتائج الفرضيتين الأولى والثالثة (تحسين حالة البنية التحتية لتكنولوجيا المعلومات لتعزيز ذكاء الأعمال ومرونة المنظمة) يتضمن تحديث المعدات والتكنولوجيا التكنولوجية في مختلف أقسام المنظمة، واستخدام أساليب جديدة لتقديم الخدمات للعملاء من خلال الاستفادة من التقنيات الجديدة، وإشراك موظفي الأقسام المختلفة في دورات تدريبية أثناء الخدمة للتعرف على التقنيات الحالية.

الاقتراحات المبنية على النتائج التي توصلت إليها الفرضية الثانية (تحسين حالة ذكاء الأعمال لتعزيز المرونة التنظيمية) استخدام أنظمة المعلومات الإدارية المحدثة (MIS) وأنظمة دعم القرار (DSS)، واستخدام المعلومات الدقيقة والمحدثة في عمليات المستشفى، وإنشاء برامج التحسين المستمر في العمليات.

وتتضمن المقترحات المبنية على نتائج الفرضيتين الرابعة والخامسة من البحث (تحسين المرونة التنظيمية لتعزيز رضا العملاء والميزة التنافسية) زيادة سرعة إرسال واستقبال البيانات والمعلومات المطلوبة بين الوحدات المختلفة باستخدام التكنولوجيا الحديثة، ومحاولة خفض تكاليف تقديم الخدمات للمرضى، وتوفير مرافق وخدمات خاصة ومبتكرة باستخدام التكنولوجيات الجديدة.

ومن المقترحات المبنية على نتائج الفرضية البحثية السادسة (تحسين رضا العملاء لتعزيز الميزة التنافسية) تدريب وتمكين الموظفين، والاستعانة بخبراء متخصصين، وإجراء استطلاعات دورية للمرضى لفهم مدى رضاهم عن خدمات المستشفى.

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AI-Driven Personalized Learning Strategy for Enhancing Holy Quran Memorization Through Memory Theories

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Received: 18/06/2025
Revised: 30/07/2025
Accepted: 31/07/2025

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https://doi.org/10.20428/jst.v30i11.3088

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Abstract— The practice of Quran memorization has been the core aspect of Islamic education for a while, and like any other endeavor, it comes with difficulties like uninterrupted attention, motivation, a relatively limited number of qualified teachers, and others. Additionally, the use of modern information technology (IT) in this area is still very shallow which prevents the application of modern technique aids to learning. This study seeks to examine how personal learning approaches that are powered by AI, together with cognitive learning theories and modern technology, could enhance memorization of the Holy Quran through tailored teaching methods at the levels of sensory input, short-term memory, and long-term memory. A qualitative analysis approach was used to review the available literature, case studies, and technological reports on the tools and methods of Quran memorization. The study analyzes tools for sensory learning and digital sensory learning such as EzHifz, Miro, and Quizlet and analyzes the application of gamification, spaced repetition, and mind mapping aimed at improving motivation, retention, and understanding. The results show the distance between teachers and students can be bridged by the use of aids alongside modern techniques in teaching. The research, therefore, recommends that an AI-powered tailored plan to learning frameworks can significantly change and improve techniques used in Quran memorization while any integration of AI into religious education frameworks must critically address ethical and cultural matters.

Keywords— Quran memorization, artificial intelligence, memory theories, personalized learning, gamification, spaced repetition, cognitive psychology.

I. Introduction

The Qur-an sits at the heart of Islamic practice, guiding moral choices, communal law, and personal conduct. Muslims refer to it not merely as scripture but as the verbatim word of God, revealed in Arabic to the Prophet Muhammad over a span of twenty-three years. The text itself is repeatedly described within its pages as a party with living authority rather than a volume to be shelved. Such reverence partly explains why the act of memorization-commonly called Hifz-has bloomed since the Prophets lifetime, almost as a public tradition unto itself (Almosallam et al. 2016, Tarmuji et al. 2022). The commitment to memorizing every verse serves a second function, too: it locks the wording into ears and minds so that transcription errors in the broader community are nearly impossible. Research out of Ghiasi and Keramat (2018), Hematti et al. (2015), and Che Wan Mohd Rozali et al. (2022) links the ritual recitation and retention of Qur-anic lines to sharper declines in anxiety, alongside noticeable lifts in overall spiritual mood. In parallel, Rahman et al. (2020) found that the linguistic gymnastics required for Hifz seem to fortify general brain health and cognitive agility. Quantitative patterns also show up in school report cards: pupils celebrated for flawless recitation routinely edge out peers in mathematics, science, and language arts, hinting that the metronomic discipline of memorizing verses scales neatly outside the mosque into the classroom (Tarmuji et al. 2022).Quran memorization in early childhood can positively impact various developmental aspects, including cognitive and linguistic skills (Hanafi et al. 2021).Listening to Quran recitation can reduce anxiety, which may indirectly support better learning and memorization(Ghorbani, Ghorbani, and Avazeh 2014) .Regular engagement with the Quran, including memorization, is associated with better sleep quality and overall well-being, contributing to a higher quality of life (Che Wan Mohd Rozali et al. 2022). Memorizing the Quran helps preserve the accuracy and integrity of Islamic teachings, ensures that the holy text is retained accurately through generations (Tarmuji et al. 2022). Quran memorization it strengthen practice of intellectual development of Muslim society. It is believed to enhance the memorizer's connection to their faith and religious practices (Mohammed Nur 2018).The rise of digital technology and modern distractions significantly impacts the focus and persistence required for Quran memorization. Students are often more engaged with digital content, which can weaken from their memorization efforts (Aditia et al. 2024) (F. Z. Ismail et al. 2019). Even Qurān students who can recite the entire text by heart sometimes struggle to keep it in their minds. Frequent interruptions, cramped study rooms, and the relentless pace of university life all conspire to blur the lines of memory (Ismail et al. 2019; Nordin et al. 2023).The act of memorizing sacred verses is anything but simple: it demands a nimble memory, relentless patience, and astonishing repetition. Still, the enterprise can devolve into sheer exasperation when the pages graduate to blank air (Aditia et al. 2024; Darwiyanto and Bijaksana 2018).Once a chunk is tucked away, the brain often tosses it out again, signalling an urgent need for smarter retention tricks (Al-Mosallam 2013). Confusion creeps in, too, because several verses look and sound almost identical, leading to slip-ups during public recitation (Akbari, Bakar, and Rusydiyah 2024).Rewards, applause, and gentle nudges keep students from abandoning their goals, so outside encouragement matters a great deal (Mizani et al. 2024). When praise wanes or the classroom routine grows stale, even the most dedicated memorizers can drift off-task (Hassan, Shamsuddin, and Yusof 2023; Al-Mosallam 2015).Many Quran memorization apps populate the digital marketplace, yet most of them fall short when it comes to meaningful learner feedback and engaging visualization tools. Researchers have noticed this gap for some time and continue to call for richer features (Entesar A. Al-Mosallam 2013; Rashid et al. 2013). A noteworthy exception is ITQAN, which employs mind-mapping techniques to link verses semantically, thereby easing both retention and comprehension (E.A. Al-Mosallam 2015; Al-Mosallam et al. 2016).Scholars have found that pairing age-old recitation habits with contemporary visual aids noticeably clarifies intricate rules such as Tajweed (Sameh 2013). Role-playing and group recitals, when augmented with digital displays, foster a sense of community and boost learners self-assurance (Sameh 2013).This study examines cutting-edge strategies for Quran memorization by marrying traditional methods with next-generation technology. We focus on how mobile platforms, gamified progress trackers, mind-map overviews, and even virtual-reality environments can overcome typical hurdles like retention lapses and dwindling motivation.

II. Literature Review

Muhaidi Mustaffa Al Hafiz, Muhammad Fathi Yusof, Mohd Al-Ikhsan Ghazali, and Siti Salwa Md. Sawari present a descriptive qualitative investigation into memorization pedagogy at Pulai Condongs Tahfiz Al-Quran Wal-Qiraat. Their article, Descriptive Qualitative Teaching Method of Memorization, appears in the Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences (2016b).Researchers observed daily classrooms and noted how instructors corrected pronunciation, annotated margins of bespoke mushaf editions, and staggered memorization targets. The sample comprised tenth-to-twelfth form students selected for both Quranic and public examination performance.Results indicate that regular Quranic recitation drills align with exceptional scores in mathematics, science, and language subjects. Ugandized data show that discipline within the hifz syllabus also nurtures punctuality and patience.One limitation is the single-institution design, which restricts broader inference; different settings may employ distinct mushaf layouts and classroom tempos. Instructors nevertheless valued the transparent coding scheme used to catalogue pedagogical strokes.The 2020 review by N. Hashimah A. Shukri, M. Khalid M. Nasir and Khadijah Abdul Razak-appear in the International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development. They surveyed an eclectic mix of thirty-eight studies on memorizing the Quran, fourteen descriptive and twenty-four experimental alike. Familiar classroom staples like repeated recitation sat alongside newer aids such as i-Tasmik and ITQAN, illustrating how many teachers fuse old habits with sleek technology. Still, the reviewers do not specify the number of participants in each original study, a gap that curbs the findings everyday usefulness.Nur Millah Muthohharoh, Evi Fatimatur Rusydiyah, Bassam Abul A'la, and Niswatin Khoiriyah (Muthohharoh et al. 2023)Explored "Memorizing the Qur'an: The Science Behind Children's Remarkable Ability," published by the State Islamic University Sunan Ampel Surabaya. The study employed a qualitative approach to analyze the cognitive modeling process in Quran memorization among children. Key stages identified included encoding, retention, rehearsal, retrieval, decoding, and successful memorization. Strengths included its structured understanding of cognitive processes, while weaknesses included the lack of comparative analysis with other studies.Naqiyah, Abidin, A. Z., Awanah, E. M., Zuhri, M. S., and Asmawi (Abidin, Mu'Awanah, and Zuhri, n.d.) Investigated "Fast Memorizing Al-Quran Through Tafsir and Tahfidz Training: Immersion in Hanifida Method Super Base Camp Jombang as A Living Quran," published in WINTER 2020(Abidin, n.d.). The study employed an experimental design to test the efficacy of the Hanifida method, a Quran memorization technique combining mental, verbal, visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning systems. The sample included 15 students from Pesantren Super Camp La Raiba in Indonesia, selected through purposive sampling. The study found that the Hanifida method significantly enhanced students' memorization and comprehension abilities. Strengths included its structured and systematic approach, applicable to diverse age groups, including those with special needs. However, the study's reliance on a small sample size limited its generalizability.Ismail, S., Mustafa, N. M., Shaharuddin, S. A., Yahaya, M., and Razali, K. S. (2024) Explored "Al-Quran Memorization Techniques for Primary School Use in Fun-Q Digital Applications,"(S. Ismail et al. 2024) published in the International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development. The study analyzed the effectiveness of the Fun-Q digital application in facilitating Quran memorization for young learners. Using a descriptive analysis with content analysis, the study examined secondary sources, including journals, theses, and books. The findings highlighted the application's integration of sensory and cognitive interactions, such as listening, repetition, and visual engagement, as effective tools for overcoming the limitations of traditional memorization methods. Strengths included its modern theoretical framework, while weaknesses included the lack of specific data on the sample and direct field studies.Fakhrur Ridza Muslima, Mohd Amzari Tumiran, and Mohd Zahirwan Halim Zainal Abidin (2024) Conducted a comparative study titled "Techniques for Memorizing the Quran: A Comparative Study of the Memory System Tendencies of Maahad Integrasi Tahfiz Selangor (MITS) Students," published in the Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies(Muslim, Tumiran, and Abidin 2024). The study used a quantitative design to analyze memory system preferences among MITS students. Findings revealed a significant preference for semantic memory techniques (32.8%), followed by visual (23%) and episodic (9.4%) systems. The study's strengths included its robust statistical analysis, while weaknesses included its limited sample size and lack of qualitative insights.Raichle and colleagues (2006) published an investigation in the Journal of Neuroscience that turns the default mode network on its head. By tracking nine healthy volunteers with a 3-Tesla scanner, they demonstrate that the posterior cingulate cortex keeps chatting with mid-frontal and ventral-anterior areas even when subjects juggle memory tasks. That lingering chatter, moreover, lines up with how many items a given person can hold in mind. Skeptics will note the small cohort-these results really rest on nine brains-and the usual worry about over-interpreting fMRI statistics still applies.Wahyudi, Manarul Haq, and Ahmad Said (2020) publish a different sort of study in Jurnal Hunafa, one anchored in the hermeneutic margins of the Qur'an. Their philosophical-normative reading combs through classical tafsir and modern commentaries without stepping into the field to gather new data. In the end, four scaffolds show up-analytical tahlîli, topical maudhû'i, global ijâmlî, and comparative muqâran-though the authors also flag a fresh hybrid they dub semi-maudhû'i tahlîli. The strength of their

work lies in the sheer breadth of secondary texts surveyed. Still, critics will point out that bookshelf browsing cannot replace the hard evidence of field-based observation.Rahmatian and Armiun (2013) explore the memorization strategies used by Iranian students learning French as a foreign language in International Education Studies(Rahmatian and Armiun 2013). Through a survey-based quantitative study, they identify common techniques for encoding, storing,
and retrieving vocabulary. The findings emphasize the crucial role of memorization in language acquisition, despite it often being undervalued. The study suggests that students with weaker learning strategies could enhance their language skills by adopting more effective memorization techniques. While the research provides valuable insights into the learning practices of Iranian French learners, its limited demographic details reduce the generalizability of the findings.Mohamud (2021) examines cognitive strategies used in Quran memorization, emphasizing memory processes and the information processing approach(MOHAMUD, n.d.). The study highlights techniques such as structured repetition, the use of long-term and short-term memory, and continuous practice. It also underscores the importance of Tajweed, good character, and teaching others in enhancing retention. Grounded in cognitive psychology theories, the research provides valuable insights into effective memorization methods. However, as it is based on a literature review without empirical data, its findings remain conceptual rather than experimental.Supriyadi and Julia (2019) examine the difficulties faced by Muslim university students in Indonesia in achieving fluency in Quranic recitation, despite years of religious education(Supriyadi and Julia 2019). Through action research, the study employs a reflective-critical approach, implementing six stages of targeted training to enhance reading accuracy and fluency. The results demonstrate notable improvements in students' Quranic reading skills. While the study is valuable for its practical application and collaborative methodology, a longer follow-up period could provide deeper insights into the long-term effectiveness of the approach.The study titled "Memorization of the Quran and Academic Performance of Students in Aljamea tus Saifiya University, Nairobi, Kenya" by T.A. Gulamhusein (2023) explores the relationship between Quran memorization and academic success(GULAMHUSEIN 2023). Utilizing Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the research examines how Quran memorization influences cognitive abilities such as time management and memory, which contribute to improved academic performance. Researchers gathered data via a mixed-methods protocol: 975 learners and 115 instructors filled in structured questionnaires, while follow-up interviews involved 280 pupils and 20 faculty members. Outcomes indicate that memorizing Quranic verses correlates with improved academic performance, bolstering skills in time management and retention; the same cohorts, however, reported wrestling with tight schedules and the sheer volume of material. Although the investigation offers noteworthy evidence, the single-country sample and the absence of parallel studies in non-Kenyan schools restrain generalization beyond the local context. Still, the project underscores an urgent need for better organizational support and targeted time-management techniques for both students and teachers.In 2019, Nik Md Saiful Azizi, Fathiyah Solehah M.S., and Rabi'atul Athirah M.I. published a qualitative examination of the hurdles secondary Tahfiz students in Malaysia encounter when memorizing the Quran. The inquiry, entitled Challenges and Difficulties in Memorizing the Quran in the Tahfiz Classes Among Secondary Learners, leaned on semi-structured interviews with a half-dozen respondents aged fifteen to seventeen, as noted by Abdulah and Sabbri the same year.Analysts found a web of obstacles strewn across the memorization path, yet family backing, peer encouragement, regular prayer, deliberate repetition, and a firm study timetable frequently dimmed the strain. Most striking, participants frequently cited mood and motivation as make-or-break elements, underscoring the psychological backbone of the task. The report thus situates emotional and motivational stamina at the centre of Quranic memorization, rather than sheer cognitive workload.One obvious caveat stems from the modest sample size; six student voices, while illuminating, cannot reliably represent a national experience. Still, the tight-knit narrative they offer remains a useful case study in the personal and communal dynamics that scaffold religious learning under pressure.Nafi, Mokhtar, and Imas (2019) published an exploratory piece entitled The Holy Quran Memorization in Globalization Era, asking whether an ancient discipline can survive a world of buzzing notifications and endless information. Their qualitative reading scans articles, conference papers, and reports; it does not recruit children, teenagers, or any other test group to chant verses in a lab. Quiet benefits loop back through history-inner calm, status in the community, the promise of spiritual reward-yet contemporary distractions scatter concentration like leaves in the wind.To anchor attention, the researchers recommend three personal strategies: vow the task to a higher intent, rehearse the text daily, and break each passage into numbered sections that fit a memorizer's rhythm. That advice is solid, but the exclusive focus on secondary literature means no field data, no first-hand observation, and no numbered subjects to prove or disprove the claims. Even so, the article frames a useful debate: can time-honored routine endure when every pocket glows with modern temptation?
Muhaidi M., Yusof M. F., Ghazali M. I., and Sawari S. S. published a detailed historiography under the title Historiography of Quranic Memorization from the Early Years of Islam until Today (2016). They ask how the practice that began in the Prophet Muhammads circle became a staple in late-twentieth-century Malaysia. Using an old-fashioned historiographical framework, the authors sift through hadith, chronicles, and marginalia to map the teaching styles that Muhammad personally modeled for his companions. Their survey stretches outward through caliphate classrooms, Ottoman madrasas, and finally modern nationwide programs. They notice that techniques for retention-shared recitation, repetition by ear, written palm-leaf aids-keep reappearing even when the context seems new. A reported shortcoming haunts the otherwise interesting work: it omits fresh field data on which of todays methods actually yield the best rates of learning. Still, the volume stands as a rare reminder that what we call rote learning today has roots in seventh-century

Arabia, and that constant, if quiet, continuity matters especially to Malay educators.The recent article by Haryono, Rajagede, and Negara, published under the title Quran Memorization Technologies and Methods: Literature Review, surveys how software engineers are coding smartphones to help students memorize the Qur an.Working under the PRISMA protocol, the researchers sifted through thirty-one journal articles and evaluated a dozen mobile apps pulled from ScienceDirect, IEEE Xplore, and Google Scholar. They detail standard features such as automated repetition, voice-print feedback, and end-of-session quizzes.Even so, the authors concede that none of the papers they reviewed collected live user data; the reported effectiveness of these tools remains speculative at best. Classroom teachers hoping to adopt the software still require solid evidence that the apps actually boost retention rates.For future developers, the reviewers suggest tighter integration of adaptive learning algorithms, richer social-sharing functions, and interfaces that cater specifically to beginners with little prior exposure to the text.Sari, Zou, and Jie (2023) published a qualitative case study titled The Use of Murajaah Method in Improving Qur'an Memorization: Tahfiz A-Qur'an that focuses on the role of systematic review in boosting both memorization speed and verse retention. At Nurul Yaqin, a Quran memorization center in Indonesia, the researchers spent weeks observing lessons and interviewing students and teachers. Structured group reviews, bolstered by parents who listen at home, emerged as the strongest single factor in keeping the verses locked in memory and ramping up the pupils motivation. Each communal review session acts like a gear, grinding the words deeper into long-term memory. Because the work is nestled in one specific center, its conclusions, while practical, cannot be generalised without caution. The exclusive reliance on qualitative notes-lively as they are-does not yield the wide numerical spread a survey would supply. Even so, instructors elsewhere looking to refine their practice will find actionable suggestions buried within the running transcripts. The researchers themselves underline how repetition, set in a social frame, remains the gold standard for chasing mnemonic permanence in sacred texts.Rahmatian and Armiun (2013) explore the mental habits that Iranian students of French draw on when they try to learn new words. Their survey, carried out in three Tehran language centres with seventy-five adult participants, points to repetition, vocal practice, imagery, associative links, and segmentation as the main techniques. Attention to those habits reinforces the idea that planned cognition can bolster vocabulary retention. The picture remains partial, though, since the sample is confined to Tehrani adults and the study does not delve into the emotional or motivational currents that also shape memory. Even so, the work adds a local chapter to the wider narrative of vocabulary strategy research and illustrates one way Iranian learners confront the challenge of a foreign lexicon.The 2022 article "Secrets of Qur'an Interaction and Brain Health," published in the International Journal of Integrative Medicine, explores the relationship between interacting with the Qur'an and brain health, particularly its effects on cognitive function and mental well-being(Arifin and Septadina 2022). The study is a descriptive qualitative literature review that examines previous research and Quranic interpretations, discussing the neurobiological effects of activities such as reading, memorizing, and contemplating the Qur'an. It highlights how these interactions can influence brain structure and cognitive abilities, suggesting potential benefits for mental health. While the article successfully integrates Quranic insights with scientشific findings on brain function, it is primarily conceptual and lacks empirical data directly linking Qur'anic interaction to measurable changes in brain function. Nevertheless, it provides valuable theoretical perspectives on the potential cognitive and neurological impacts of engaging with the Qur'an.

The 2018 study "Implementasi Metode ODOA (One Day One Ayat) dalam Meningkatkan Kemampuan Menghafal Al-Quran," published in Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Ibrahimy (JPII), investigates the effectiveness of the ODOA (One Day One Ayah) method in enhancing Quran memorization skills among young students at SD NU Awar-Awar School in Indonesia(Anwar and Hafiyana 2018). The research, grounded in memorization and memory theories by Creswell and Alawiyah Wahid, uses a qualitative, descriptive approach that includes observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The ODOA method involves memorizing one verse per day through repetition, regular review, and weekly tests. The study found that this method significantly improved students' memorization skills and retention. However, it also notes limitations such as a small sample size and
a lack of long-term impact measurement. Despite these weaknesses, the study highlights the effectiveness of the gradual, supportive approach for beginners in Quran memorization.In the 2013 study "Towards Improving Quran Memorization Using Mind Maps", published in the Proceedings of the Taibah University International Conference on Advances in Information Technology for the Holy Quran and Its Sciences, Al-Mosallam explores how mind mapping techniques, inspired by Tony Buzan's visualization methods, can improve Quran memorization(Entesar A Al-Mosallam 2013). The study uses a descriptive and analytical design with an experimental approach, comparing two groups of students (aged 16 to 18) who used different memorization methods. One group utilized traditional memorization techniques, while the other used mind maps that linked Quranic verses to their respective topics. The study found that the group using mind maps demonstrated improvements in memorization speed, accuracy, and understanding. The proposed system helps learners organize Quranic chapters visually, linking verses to thematic topics, which aids both retention and comprehension. While the study showcases the strengths of mind mapping in simplifying memorization and enhancing understanding, it notes the small sample size, which limits the generalizability of the findings, and the lack of full implementation of the system as a practical application. Table 1 shows main difference between Hafiz and Itqan mobile application.

Table 1 Hafiz and Itqan mobile applications comparison

Feature	Hifz mobile app((Mustafa et al. 2021)	ITQAN(Almosallam et al. 2016)	Proposed AI Model
Feedback Type	Human-only	Static	Dynamic, AI-based
Adaptability	Low	Medium	High
Progress Tracking	Manual	Semi-auto	Fully AI-driven

III. Research Methodology

This research project combines both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to evaluate how artificial intelligence applications influence the memorization of the Quran. Participants will be randomly assigned either to a conventional study regimen or to an experimental condition that incorporates mobile software, gamified tasks, and automated feedback.Data collection will involve the administration of baseline and final assessments, supplemented by user surveys, individual interviews, and small-group focus discussions. Statistical procedures will measure the differences in retention and retrieval scores, while thematic coding of the qualitative transcripts will illuminate users feelings of engagement, motivation, and frustration. Engagement analytics-from login frequencies to task completions-will serve as secondary indicators of the technology's impact. In keeping with ethical standards, all subjects will grant informed consent, and personally identifiable information will be secured throughout the trial. Ultimately, the study hopes to furnish evidence regarding whether these modern pedagogical tools can meaningfully enhance traditional memorization practices.

IV. Model Development

Gamification has recently found its way into Quran-memorization apps, and many users report a noticeable uptick in their motivation once progress bars turn into playful badges (Hassan, Shamsuddin, and Yusof 2023). The buzz around personalized, adaptive tasks suggests that learners feel more satisfied when the software seems to adjust on the fly. Animated touch displays, dabbling with low-cost Virtual Reality viewers, and even chat-like speech bubbles help the curriculum keep pace with a generation that rarely looks away from a screen (Sameh 2013).In the background of these innovations, researchers still point to maintenance rehearsal as the backbone of memorization, arguing that disciplined repetition beats flashy mnemonics any day (Dzulkifli et al. 2014). Some students find that drawing quick mental pictures or sketching rough mind maps of each verse lets the text stick and makes its meanings clearer, an idea first outlined by Al-Mosallam in 2015.

Apps such as EzHifz are deliberately multisensory VARK model ; they layer visual flashcards, audio recitations, written tafsir notes, and even interactive swipe-to-echo modes to meet the quirks of different learning styles (Mustafa et al. 2021; Mustafa et al. 2019). This kind of flexibility lets students chip away at their quotas outside class while still benefiting from the occasional teacher check-in, a divide that helps overcrowded religious schools balance limited faculty with swelling enrolments (Purbohadi, Rahmawati, and Setiyawan 2019; Aditia et al. 2024). Figure 1 shows the VARK learning style model

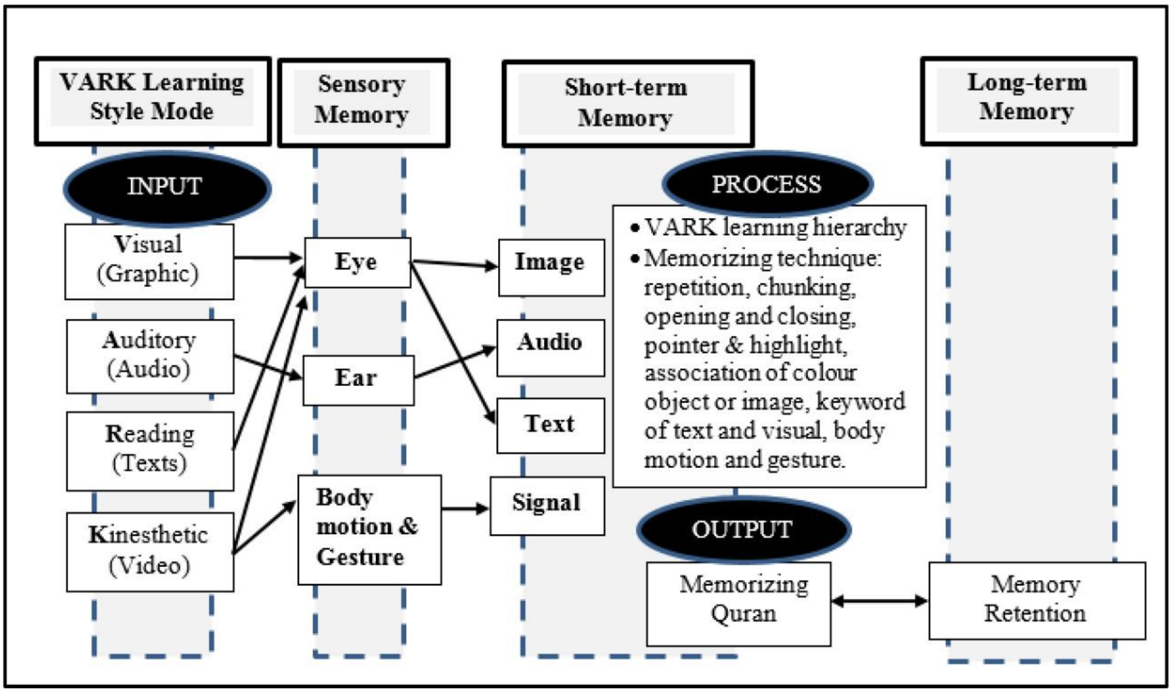

Figure 1 VARK learning style model

Gamification repeatedly shows its worth in educational psychology: when points, badges, or simple progress bars enter a lesson, students tend to care more and remember more (Hassan et al. 2023; Suryana et al. 2024). Another tried-and-true method, spaced repetition, keeps knowledge alive long after the first adrenaline rush of study fades (Hassan, Shamsuddin, and Yusof 2023). Stack that technique next to old-fashioned recitation, and the verses, it appears, stick like glue (Basir, Karoso, and Saidi 2024; Shamsuddin et al. 2016). Quranic text does something curious: its line lengths naturally play to our brains word-length and list-length quirks, making the page itself a memory aid (Alhouseini et al. 2015). Electroencephalograms offer a backstage pass to this phenomenon, showing that dedicated memorizers sink into unusually calm, low-frequency brain rhythms while they work through the lines (Tajabadi 2019). Grasping the underlying themes and tracing inter-verse links also sharpens recall, a connection first reported by Al-Mosallam and later confirmed by Hassan and his colleagues (E A Al-Mosallam 2015; Hassan, Shamsuddin, and Yusof 2023). A quick mind map or a tidy topical outline acts as a home-made mnemonic and has been referenced in the literature as such (E A Al-Mosallam 2015).Tech-savvy students now turn to platforms like EzHifz, which layer audio, animation, and quizzes onto the digital mush of a black-and-white page (Mustafa et al. 2021; Shamsuddin et al. 2016). These apps even flirt with visualization, drawing arrows and nodes on-screen to show how a single verse can echo across several Suras, a move that several researchers note speeds memorization up, in effect, tricking cognitive architecture into working more efficiently than it otherwise would (E A Al-Mosallam 2015).

Proposed Personalized learning framework

This personalized learning framework is designed to optimize student education by aligning instructional strategies with the natural progression of information through the human memory system, specifically targeting sensory, short-term, and long-term memory stages. Initially, each student's preferred sensory learning style—such as visual, auditory, or kinesthetic—is assessed to determine the most effective mode of information delivery. Once identified, tailored instructional methods are implemented to engage the student effectively. The student's progress is then closely monitored to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in facilitating short-term retention. If the desired level of understanding is not achieved, the instructional approach is adjusted accordingly. Upon reaching satisfactory short-term comprehension, reinforcement techniques are employed to transition knowledge into long-term memory, ensuring durable retention. This cyclical process is repeated for each student, promoting a customized and effective learning experience that leverages the stages of memory processing. Figure 2 shows Personalized learning framework process flow

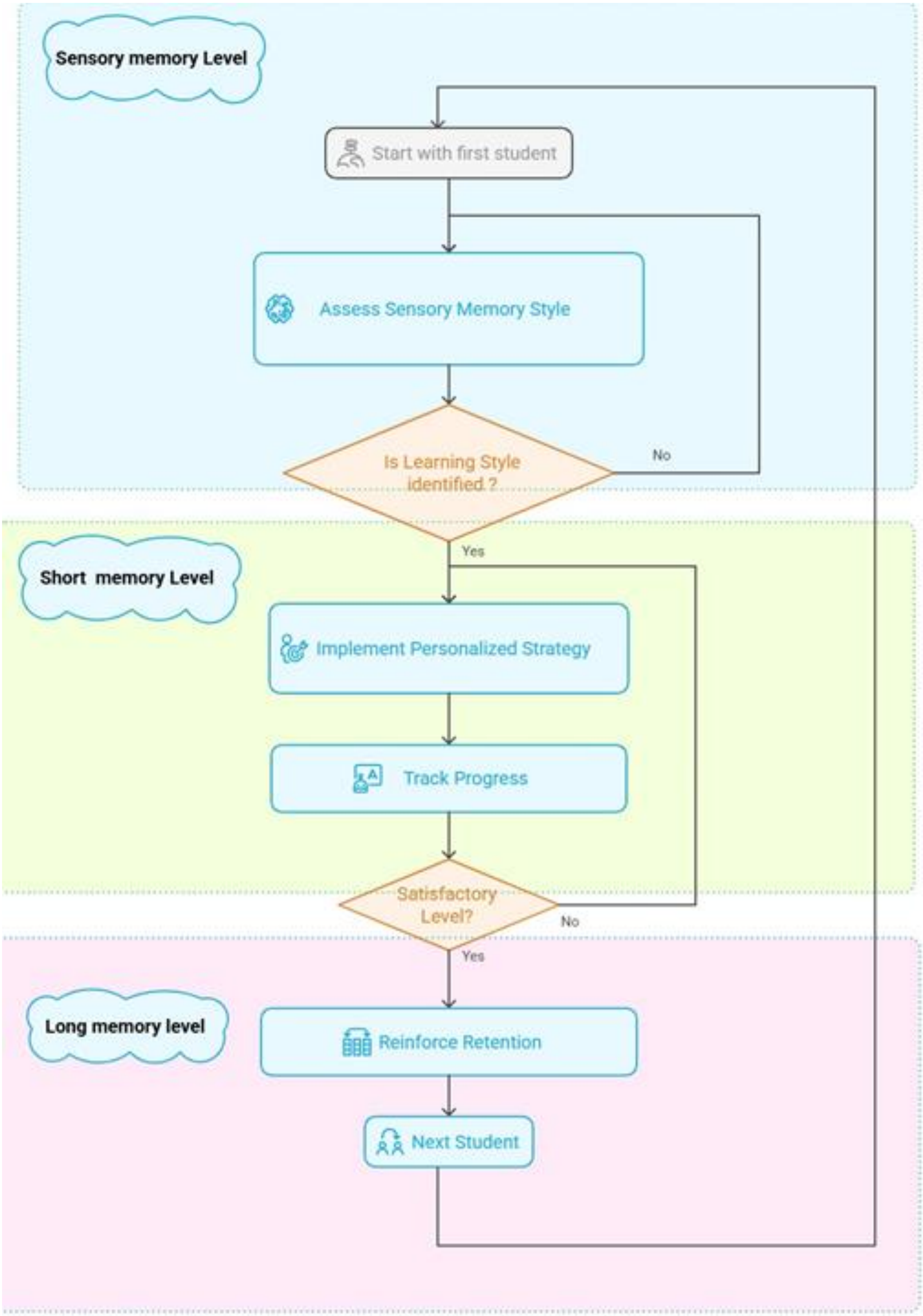

Figure 2 shows Personalized learning framework process flow

Table 3 shows Personalized learning framework tools

Memory levels	Task	Tools	References
	Visual content interaction test	Cognify or Quizlet	(Sippel 2022)(Edinoh, Salami, and Chijoke, n.d.; Aditia et al. 2024)
	Auditory content interaction test	Speechify and VoiceThread	(Kasturi et al. 2015)(Brunvand and Byrd 2011)
	Reading/Writing content interaction test	ScribeSense or Google Docs	(Attebury et al. 2008)
	Kinesthetic content interaction test	GoReact or Kahoot!, gamification	(Basuki and Hidayati 2019)
	define students' learning style	Google Analytics , AI-ScribeSense	(Ledford, Teixeira, and Tyler 2011)
short memory level	Visual (V)	MindMeister or Miro	(Sehrawat 2021)
	Auditory (A)	Ayat - Al Quran App	(Yusuff, Haji-Othman, and Isa 2021)
	Reading/Writing	Notion, Evernote, Google Docs	(Hine 2014)
	Kinesthetic (K)	Kahoot!,GoReact	(Basuki and Hidayati 2019)
Long memory level	Ongoing student progress		
	Reinforce retention	Anki or Quizlet	(Basuki and Hidayati 2019)
		Memrise	(Aminatun and Oktaviani 2019)
		Reminders	(Calzolari and Nardotto 2017)
		Anki or Quizlet	(Basuki and Hidayati 2019)

Personalized learning framework Models

To enable adaptive, personalized Quran memorization, the proposed system leverages a modular AI architecture that integrates memory modeling, learning style detection, and audio recitation analysis. The system is built on the following components:

Table 3 : Personalized learning framework Models

Function	Model	Purpose
Memory Retention Prediction	Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM)	Predicts likelihood of forgetting specific verses using spaced repetition and engagement history.
Content Personalization	Bayesian Networks	Dynamically selects next verses based on prior error patterns, user preferences, and recitation difficulty.
Recitation Analysis	Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) + Recurrent Neural Network (RNN)	Analyzes audio input to detect Tajweed accuracy, pronunciation errors, and fluency.
Engagement Modeling	Reinforcement Learning (Q-learning)	Optimizes when and how content is delivered to maximize student motivation and retention.

AI-Powered Personalized Learning Journey for Enhancing Quran Memorization and Retention

The Personalized Learning Journey framework utilizes AI technologies to facilitate and improve the memorization of Quranic verses more optimally to the individual learner's needs and their memory processes. The journey commences with user interaction as students actively participate in the Quran verse recitation quizzes which serves as a form of practice for active learning. This engagement contributes to a form of data collection wherein a minimum set of data such as audio recording, scoring, and time tracking is captured which is necessary to understand the learner in question. Afterwards, data preprocessing employs advanced NLP techniques alongside audio scrutiny to gather Tajweed accuracy, pronunciation trends, and error rates. Leveraging this information, the system runs weak point detection employing Bayesian methods analyzing the verses and recital portions the learner seems to struggle with most. The next important step is the modeling of the forgetting curve. Here, an LSTM neural network predicts and proactively reinforces at-risk verses ensuring proactively forget mitigation strategies. Dynamic adjustment of repetition schedules based on current verifiable outcomes measured in real-time reinforces optimal revision intervals retaining information as per the spaced repetition model within RL (reward learning) frameworks. Finally, the materials are presented using the learner's preferred sensory modality—visual, auditory, or text-based reading.

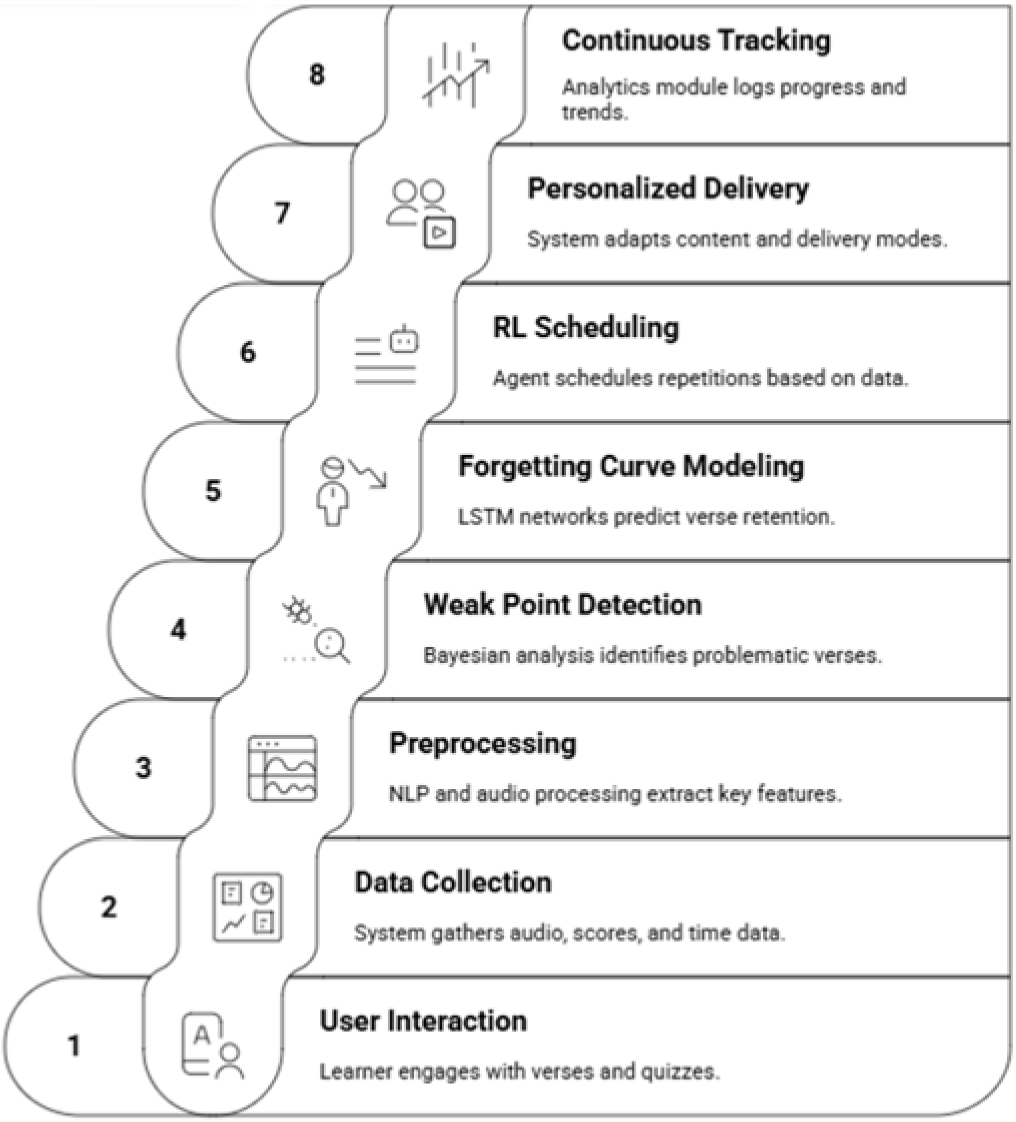

Figure 3 AI-Powered Personalized Learning Journey for Enhancing Quran Memorization and Retention

Conclusion

This research develops an AI-based adaptive pedagogy to improve learners' Holy Quran memorization by tailoring instructional strategies to align with memory theories and their preferences. The model emphasizes the mapping of memorization tasks to the three memory components: sensory, short-term, and long-term. Through determination of the students' preferred sensory modalities: visual, auditory, read/write, or kinesthetic, the system aids in customized instruction through digital platforms such as Quizlet, Miro, and Ayat. To foster greater engagement, retention, and understanding, techniques such as gamification, spaced repetition, and mind mapping are utilized. Applications like "EzHifz" facilitate semi-independent learning, which helps in alleviating the challenges posed by the scarcity of teachers. Although the model serves to enhance motivation and retention of memorized content, its application is limited by access to technology, the training requirements of users, and resource availability. There are also ethical and cultural sensitivities that need to be addressed when applying artificial intelligence systems to religious education. Subsequent studies should aim at building adaptable AI technologies that respect diverse cultures and paradigms while also evaluating the personalized learning of Quran contents over extended periods.

Acknowledgement :

This paper was funded by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation (MOHRE), Sultanate of Oman, under the Block Funding Program (BFP), No. BFP/RGP/EHR/24/543. The authors gratefully acknowledge the Ministry's support

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Assessment of Water Imbalance and Prepaid Water Meter Feasibility in Aden's First Water Supply Zone

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Received: 05/07/2025
Revised: 07/10/2025
Accepted: 08/10/2025

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Abstract**—** This study addresses severe water imbalance and high Non-Revenue Water (NRW) in Aden's First Water Supply Zone (FWSZ), which serves a projected population of 462,980 by 2025. The methodology involved a comprehensive water balance analysis for the 2023-2025 period and a multi-faceted feasibility study of PWMs. Key findings indicate a significant daily supply-demand gap of −1341.33 m³/d due to insufficient supply and intermittent power. The water balance analysis revealed a staggering NRW of 5,525,788.3 m³/year (57.3% of System Input) for April 2024–March 2025, which encompasses both physical losses and financial losses from uncollected billed water (41.01% of billed consumption). This uncollected revenue results in an estimated annual financial loss of over 1.767 billion Yemeni rials (or USD 751,280), severely compromising the utility's financial viability. The feasibility study confirmed that PWMs are both technically and financially viable; despite a total CAPEX of USD 3.6–5.5 million, the potential annual revenue recovery is strong. Crucially, a phased deployment targeting high-consumption users could achieve a payback period of less than three years. The study strongly recommends a strategic, phased rollout of PWMs, coupled with enhancing pumping power reliability and aggressive NRW management, as the cornerstone for achieving sustainable water services in the FWSZ.

Keywords— Non-Revenue Water (NRW), Water Supply and Demand Management, Prepaid Water Meters (PWMs), Revenue Collection, Aden, (FWSZ)

I. INTRODUCTION

Water is a fundamental resource essential for human survival, economic development, and environmental resilience. However, the global water sector is under increasing pressure due to rapid population growth, unregulated urban expansion, economic activities, and escalating pollution levels. In the 20th century, global water use increased at more than twice the rate of population growth, severely straining the capacity of water systems to deliver reliable services [1].Climate change has further amplified these challenges, intensifying the unpredictability of water availability and exacerbating supply-demand imbalances. Ensuring equitable and sustainable access to safe drinking water is therefore a pressing global development priority, especially in regions afflicted by chronic scarcity and political instability.

Aden, located in southern Yemen, is the second largest city by population and serves as a vital economic and administrative hub. It exhibits one of the highest population growth rates in the Middle East and is simultaneously facing one of the most severe water resource depletions in the region [2]. Its population has grown from approximately 589,419 in 2004 [3] to an estimated over 1.2 million by 2025, reflecting an average annual growth rate of 3.46%. Specifically, within Aden, this study focuses on the First Water Supply Zone (FWSZ), which serves a projected population of 462,980 residents by 2025. This demographic pressure, coupled with deteriorating infrastructure and weak governance, has led to a pronounced imbalance between water supply and demand.

Non-Revenue Water (NRW)—a key indicator of utility performance—rose dramatically from 41% in 2014 to 55% in 2017 [4], driven by physical losses, unauthorized consumption, and administrative inefficiencies. Additionally, the current postpaid billing system suffers from low meter accuracy, manual reading errors, and weak collection rates, undermining both operational efficiency and financial sustainability.

At both global and regional levels, high NRW levels reflect deep structural issues in water utility performance. Bartram and Cairncross [5] highlight that improving household-level water service is fundamental to achieving public health and equity outcomes. In this context, Prepaid Water Meters (PWMs) have emerged globally as a promising solution for improving cost recovery, encouraging water conservation, and reducing commercial losses [6]. Recent evidence (2020-2024) suggests that while PWM implementation in contexts like Sub-Saharan Africa and South America has demonstrated substantial economic benefits, success is critically dependent on addressing underlying social resistance and technical challenges, such as power supply stability and infrastructure compatibility [7], [8]. Field studies in Sub-Saharan Africa, such as in Kampala, Uganda, indicate that social acceptance, infrastructural limitations, and technical challenges—including power stability and maintenance—significantly influence the effectiveness of PWMs [9]. Similarly, in Jenin, Palestine, the installation of PWMs improved customer satisfaction and promoted equitable water allocation, yet contextual factors and technical limitations critically affected the outcomes [8]. In Latin America, programs like "aguas prepago" in Medellín show that affordability, governance, and social acceptance shape the adoption and sustainability of prepaid water services [10]. These findings emphasize that the effectiveness of PWMs extends beyond mere technology, resting heavily on a tailored local feasibility assessment that carefully adapts the solution to local socioeconomic and technical conditions.

In the context of Yemen, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) [4] has emphasized persistent structural inefficiencies, weak institutional capacity, and unsustainable financial practices as key barriers to reliable water access. Similarly, UN-Habitat [11] has documented significant infrastructure gaps and frequent service interruptions in Aden's water and sanitation sector, largely due to electricity outages at key pumping stations.

Despite the significant work by agencies such as UNDP and UN-Habitat in Yemen [4, 8], a critical gap remains in the academic literature. These previous assessments have primarily provided macro-level snapshots of water scarcity and infrastructure gaps but fall short of offering a localized, integrated, and actionable framework. Specifically, they lack a detailed, IWA-compliant quantification of NRW components (real vs. apparent losses) within a specific operational zone; a rigorous socio-economic and technical feasibility evaluation of Prepaid Water Meters (PWMs) customized for the unique fragility and governance challenges of Aden; and a cost-benefit analysis detailing the potential for financial recovery. This study, therefore, directly addresses this void by providing the first integrated analysis of NRW and PWM feasibility in the FWSZ, delivering actionable data and policy recommendations that transcend general agency reports.

To address these critical gaps, this study aims to achieve three main objectives: to quantify and analyze the current water supply-demand imbalance (based on population forecasting and consumption analysis) and assess the primary causes of high Non-Revenue Water (NRW) in the FWSZ, utilizing the IWA water balance methodology; to conduct a comprehensive, localized feasibility assessment of implementing Prepaid Water Meters (PWMs), evaluating the technical, economic, social, and institutional challenges specific to Aden's fragile context; and finally, to formulate evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and the Water and Sanitation Authority to enhance water resource management, improve cost recovery, and ensure the long-term sustainability of the FWSZ water system.

II. THE STUDY AREA

The study area, namely the First Water Supply Zone (FWSZ), is located within Aden Governorate, southern Yemen. Aden is a coastal city situated on the Gulf of Aden, and the FWSZ comprises four main districts: Al-Tawahi, Al-Mualla, Crater, and Khormaksar. These districts are considered among the most urbanized and densely populated parts of the city, with significant residential, commercial, and governmental water demand. The zone is geographically characterized by its elongated coastal layout, with Khormaksar extending northward and Crater forming a central node for water distribution.

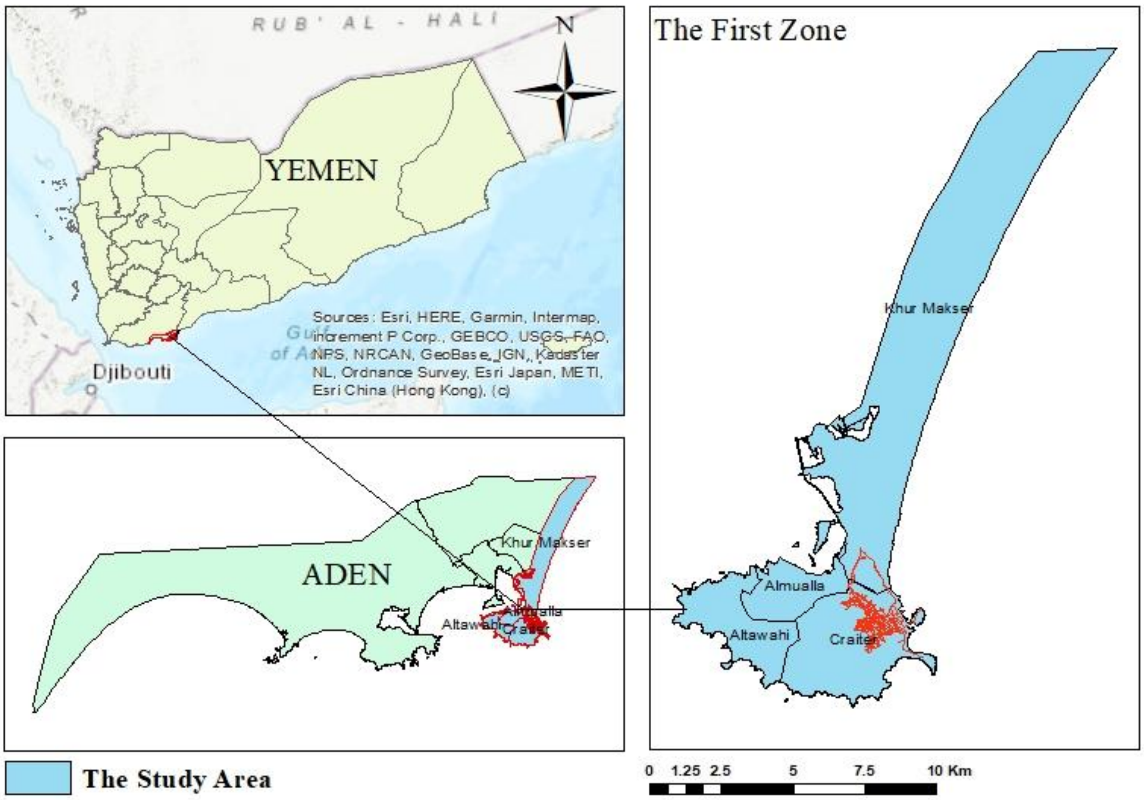

Figure 1: Location Map Of The Study Area

The accompanying map (Figure 1) illustrates the study area across three levels: the national context of Yemen, the regional placement of Aden within the governorate, and the detailed delineation of the FWSZ's boundaries. The shaded blue region on the right panel indicates the specific area covered by the study, where water production, domestic consumption, and losses were monitored and analyzed. The map was developed using GIS tools and sources including Esri, USGS, and FAO, ensuring geospatial accuracy and clarity in identifying district boundaries. This spatial understanding of the FWSZ is crucial for assessing the imbalance between water supply and demand, as well as the feasibility of implementing prepaid metering systems.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the water supply-demand imbalance and the feasibility of prepaid water meters (PWMs) in the First Water Supply Zone (FWSZ) of Aden. The research is designed as a complete case study of the entire FWSZ, focusing on detailed operational data analysis instead of conventional sampling. The methodology was informed by an extensive literature review and consists of sequential phases, beginning with data collection, followed by population forecasting, analysis of water production and consumption patterns, assessment of Non-Revenue Water (NRW), and concluding with a feasibility evaluation of PWMs and policy recommendations. The research methodology is shown in the flowchart of Figure 2 below.

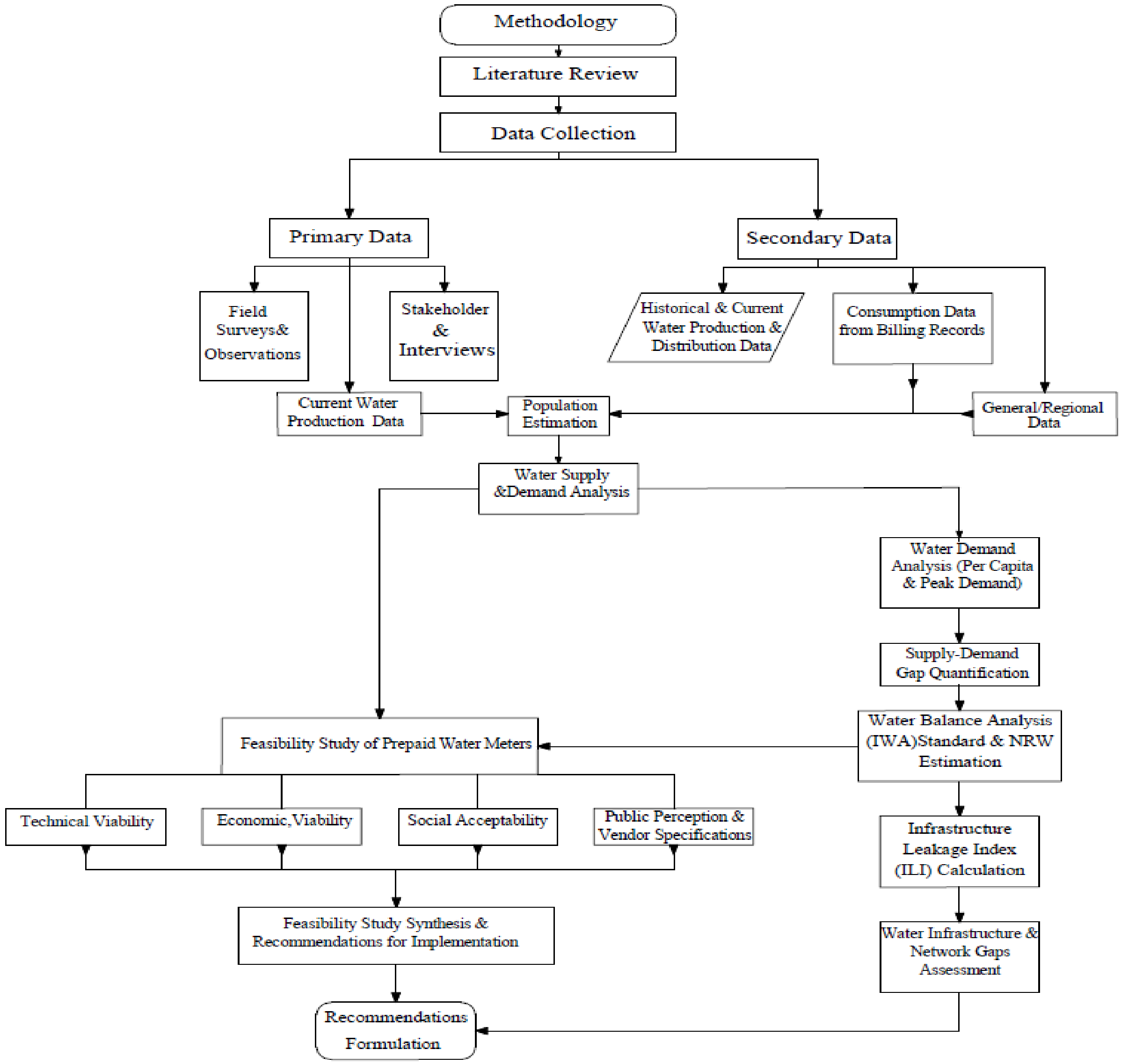

Figure 2: Research Methodology Flowchart

A. Conceptual and Operational Definitions of Key Variables

To enhance conceptual clarity, the following key variables were defined:

- Water Production:
  - Conceptual: The total potable water provided/delivered from the primary well fields to the Al-Barzakh storage facility.
  - Operational: Derived from current and historical data using a flow meter installed at the inlet of the ground tank, equipped with sensors displaying inlet and outlet water levels to the elevated tanks on screens at the station management.
- Water Supply:
  - Conceptual: The quantity of water introduced into the supply network to provision the residents of the First Zone.
  - Operational: Derived from current and historical data using a flow meter that records the quantity of water exiting the elevated tanks into the distribution network.

https://doi.org/10.20428/jst.v30i11.3141

- Water Demand:
  - Conceptual: The population's water needs for drinking, domestic, commercial, and other governmental purposes.
  - Operational: Estimated using forecasted population figures and calculated per capita consumption rates (L/c/d) for residential, commercial, and governmental consumption, along with measured peak hourly demand.
- Non-Revenue Water (NRW):
  - Conceptual: Water that generates no revenue, representing the difference between the total water entering the system and the billed water, regardless of whether it has been collected or not.
  - Operational: Includes apparent (commercial) losses, real (physical) losses, authorized unbilled water, and billed uncollected water. It was analyzed according to the IWA water balance methodology, with the explicit inclusion of billed uncollected water as an additional item.
- Infrastructure Performance:
  - Conceptual: The efficiency and reliability of the water distribution system.
  - Operational: Evaluated through field assessments of pipelines, tanks, and flow monitoring within the gravity-fed system.

B. Data Collection

The research relied on both primary and secondary data:

Primary Data:

- Field Investigations: Comprehensive visits to Al-Barzakh storage facility, pipelines, tanks, and distribution points, documenting conditions and identifying service gaps.
- Key Informant Interviews: Conducted with WSA engineers and consultants responsible for operations and data management at Al-Barzakh, providing production, billing, and consumption records.
- Community Perceptions: Informal discussions with residents during fieldwork revealed strong acceptance of PWMs provided water availability is assured, as households often purchase expensive trucked water during outages (approx. 15,000 YER for 4.5 m^3, six times the official rate).
- Current Flow Records: Real-time flow meter readings were obtained from Al-Barzakh.

- Secondary Data:
  - Historical production data from Bir Ahmed and Bir Nasser.
  - Population and Demographic Data: Comprehensive population data for Aden city, with a particular focus on the FWSZ directorates, based on the 2004 population census, as it was the most accurate statistical work conducted during that period and formed the fundamental basis for all subsequent statistics, despite their issuance.
  - Historical billing and consumption data from WSA records.

C. Data Analysis

The collected data underwent rigorous quantitative and qualitative analysis to address the research objectives.

Population Estimation

- To address the requirement for projected population figures for demand growth estimation, the incremental increase method was applied to forecast the population up to 2025 using the following formula [12].

Pn=Po(1+r)n..................Eq. 1

Where:

Pn = population at 'n' decades or years

Po = initial population

r = Annual population growth rate

n = Design period in years This forecasted data was crucial for estimating future demand growth and calculating per capita consumption rates for the projected period.

The collected data underwent rigorous quantitative and qualitative analysis to address the research objectives.

Water Supply and Demand Analysis:

Per Capita Water Demand

To assess the distribution of water supply across the study area, the total volume of domestic water consumption was compiled for all users within the system. This annual consumption was then translated into average daily per capita values based on the respective population figures. The computation of per capita consumption for each locality was carried out using the following analytical expression [13]

$$\text{water consumption (L/c/d)} = \frac{\text{Total Annual Domestic Consumption } (L)}{\text{population } x\ 365} \text{ ....eq.2}$$

Peak Time Demand:

he peak coefficient is defined as the ratio between the volume of water required in the peak hour and the average hourly flow [14]

Projected Peak Hourly Demand = Time Pattern $\times Total\ demand\ L/d$ eq.3

Where, Time Pattern is an experimental coefficient obtained practically from the monitored hourly usage patterns.

Supply-Demand Gap Quantification: Calculated by comparing supply (i.e., the quantity of water entering the system) with demand estimates according to the recommended quantity.

Non-Revenue Water (NRW) Estimation:

RW was estimated using a modified International Water Association (IWA) water balance methodology to rigorously quantify the total volumetric loss of revenue, essential for the financial feasibility assessment. While the standard IWA definition excludes Billed Uncollected Water (BUW) from NRW, our analysis adopts an operational-financial definition where NRW is calculated as the difference between the System Input Volume (SIV) and the Collected Billed Consumption. This adaptation is necessary to directly capture the combined volumetric impact of operational inefficiencies (physical and apparent losses) and critical collection failures, which are the primary drivers for PWM adoption in the FWSZ.

The total volume of NRW was calculated using the following modified expression:
NRW Volume=System Input Volume (SIV)−Collected Billed Water................ Eq. 4
The NRW percentage, which is the key performance indicator used in the analysis, was calculated as:

$$NRW(\%)=\left(\frac{NRW\ Volume}{System\ Input\ Volume}\right)*100 \quad \text{……… eq.5}$$

Infrastructure Assessment:
Mean supply at n hours is calculated by summing the measured flow volumes over n hours and dividing by n, providing the average flow rate during that period . The mean supply formula:

$$Mean\ supply\ at\ n\ hours=\frac{Total\ Measured\ Flow\ Volumeim^3/h}{Time\ period\ n\ hours}$$
………………. Eq6

Unavoidable Annual Real Losses (UARL)
Unavoidable Annual Real Losses (UARL) represent the lowest technically achievable level of physical water losses in a distribution system under optimal management and infrastructure conditions. Complete elimination of leakage is practically impossible in any water network [15]. The IWA equation for calculating UARL is
UARL(L/d) = (18×Lm+0.8×Nc+25×Lp)×Pavg ……………. Equation 7
will be applied, where Lm (main length) and Lp (private pipe length), Nc (number of connections) from billing records, and Pavg (average operating pressure) was estimated. UARL is based on pipe diameters of 50 mm and above for mains and less than 50 mm for service pipes.
Note: Due to the lack of a complete elevation-based master plan, Pavg were estimated using GIS data and field observations. Furthermore, the estimated values were compared with those obtained from Al-Barzakh station engineers, resulting from field measurements. The system is gravity-fed from a 100 m elevated reservoir.

Infrastructure Leakage Index (ILI)
Examining the condition of key supply components (pipelines, pumps, tanks) to assess capacity constraints and maintenance needs[16].

ILI=CARL/UARL……………………… Equation 8
Where , CARL is the Current Annual Real Loss (m^3/year) and UNRL is the unavoidable real loss (m^3/year)

D. Feasibility Study of PWMs
The feasibility study employed an integrated approach to evaluate the adoption of PWMs in the FWSZ, comprising the following dimensions:

- **Technical Viability:** Evaluated compatibility of PWM systems with existing infrastructure, considering the challenges of an intermittently operating and gravity-fed network. The technical viability of prepaid water meters has been demonstrated in various urban settings, where compatibility with existing infrastructure was a key factor [13] [17].
- **Economic Viability:** Examined initial Capital Expenditure (CAPEX) (meter purchase, installation) and projected Operational Expenditure (OPEX) (maintenance, card distribution). The analysis employed robust financial modeling techniques, including calculating the Net Present Value (NPV), Internal Rate of Return (IRR), and Payback Period. This assessment incorporated detailed assumptions regarding meter costs and collection efficiency gains and featured a sensitivity analysis to evaluate the project's resilience against fluctuations in key variables like subsidy reliance or exchange rates.
- **Social Acceptability:** Informed by field interviews and informal resident feedback. The social acceptability of prepaid water meters is highly dependent on user perceptions and the reliability of water service delivery. In low-income urban settlements, residents often express willingness to adopt prepaid systems if these can guarantee consistent water availability and eliminate the need for costly alternatives such as private water vendors. A case study in Nakuru County, Kenya, found that while initial skepticism existed, the majority of users ultimately favored prepaid metering due to its transparency, control over usage, and reduction of billing disputes [17].
- Institutional Readiness: Assessed the Water and Sanitation Authority (WSA) capacity, including organizational structure, human resources, technical expertise, and existing operational protocols, to manage and sustain PWMs implementation.
- Case Study Comparisons: Reviewed and analyzed international experiences and best practices in PWM implementation from various urban utilities, focusing on lessons learned regarding technical challenges, financial impacts, and social acceptance. Technology Assessment: Evaluated vendor specifications for compatibility.

E. Ethical Considerations
Ethical protocols were followed in all interviews. Informants provided informed consent, and responses were anonymized. To ensure data protection and privacy, the publication of infrastructure images and historical records related to the study was withheld, despite their availability. Informal community interactions were non-intrusive and aimed at understanding public sentiment.
This integrated methodology offers a rigorous foundation for evaluating both the existing water system's deficiencies and the targeted implementation of prepaid metering solutions.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Population Growth and Water Demand Projections for 2025
To accurately project the future water demand for the First Water Supply Zone (FWSZ) in 2025, population forecasts were combined with detailed per capita water demand calculations that account for all consumption sectors. It is important to note that the projections for 2025 specifically refer to the first quarter of the year (Q1 2025), representing the initial demand patterns for that year.
The water demand in any given residential area is directly linked to the size of the population it serves. Based on Central

Statistical Organization (CSO) 2004 data, the population of the First Water Supply Zone (FWSZ) was 226,642 in 2004. Utilizing an annual growth rate of 3.46% (derived from the overall city's demographic trends) as a baseline, the population of the FWSZ has been projected to reach 462,980 by 2025, calculated through an incremental population forecasting approach (Eq.1).

The recommended per capita water consumption by the World Health Organization (WHO) is 50 liters/capita/day (L/c/d), serving as a minimum standard for meeting essential domestic needs across all household activities [5]. However, recognizing that water consumption extends beyond residential use, the analysis further incorporated the proportional contribution of commercial and governmental sectors to the total water demand. To accurately account for these non-residential demands within the per capita projection, Table (1) provides the average monthly water usage by sector for FWSZ from 2023 to 2025, highlighting the proportional contribution of residential, commercial, and governmental consumption.

Table 1: Water usage for all social activities

Average monthly Authored Consumption m³/month			
Year	2023	2024	2025*
Residential	449,056	460,022	469801.61
Commercial	27,900	28,729	25,393
% of Total	4.997	5.02	4.38
Governmental	81374.98	83249.56	84208.21
% of Total	14.57	14.55	14.53
Total Consumption	558330.5927	572000.9065	579402.36

This breakdown of water usage by sector is further illustrated in Figure 3, highlighting the proportional contribution of residential, commercial, and governmental consumption. As indicated, commercial and governmental consumption collectively represent approximately 19-20% of the average monthly total water usage across the years 2023-2025*.

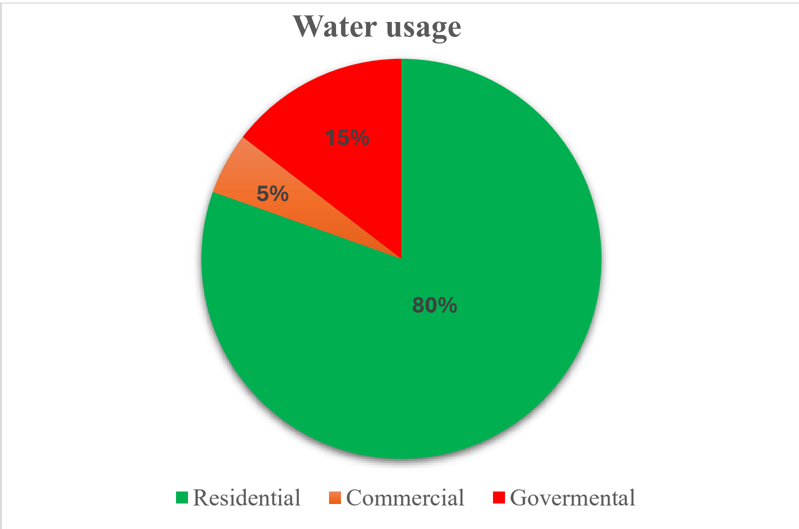

Figure 3: Distribution of Water Usage by Sector for FWSZ (2023-2025 Average)

To comprehensively address these non-residential demands within the per capita projection, an additional 20% was strategically added to the WHO's recommended domestic per capita value. This resulted in an adjusted minimum per capita daily demand of 60 L/c/d (50 L/c/d for domestic + 20% of 50 L/c/d for commercial and governmental), ensuring a more comprehensive representation of total demand across all sectors for population forecasting purposes. The historical average monthly consumption data for residential, commercial, and governmental sectors from 2023 to 2025* was reviewed to establish these consumption ratios. All consumption data utilized in this analysis was officially sourced from the local Water and Sanitation Authority (WSA).

Following the establishment of per capita consumption, the population projections were conducted. The water demand in any given residential area is directly linked to the size of the population it serves. Based on Central Statistical Organization (CSO) 2004 data, the population of the First Water Supply Zone (FWSZ) was 226,642 in 2004. Utilizing an annual growth rate of 3.46% (derived from the overall city's demographic trends) as a baseline, the population of the FWSZ has been projected to reach 462,980 by 2025, calculated through an incremental population forecasting approach (Equation 1).

Table 2 details the population projection for each district within FWSZ, showing the 2004 population, applied growth rate, and the projected 2025 population, along with the calculated total daily demand for each district.

Table 2 : : Population Projection and Minimum Daily Water Demand by District for FWSZ, 2004-2025

Districts	Population 2004	Growth Rate (%/year)	Projected Population (2025)	Recommended Daily Demand (L/c/d)	Total Daily Demand (m³/d)
Al-Tawahi	52984	3.46	108235	60	6494.1
Al-Mualla	49891	3.46	101916	60	6114.96
Craiter	76723	3.46	156728	60	9403.68
Khormaksar	47044	3.46	96101	60	5766.06
Total FWSZ	226642		462980		27778.8

(Source: CSO, 2004 Data; Author's Calculations)

To visually emphasize this substantial population growth and its distribution across the districts, Figure 4 presents a detailed comparison of population figures for each district between 2004 and the projected year 2025.

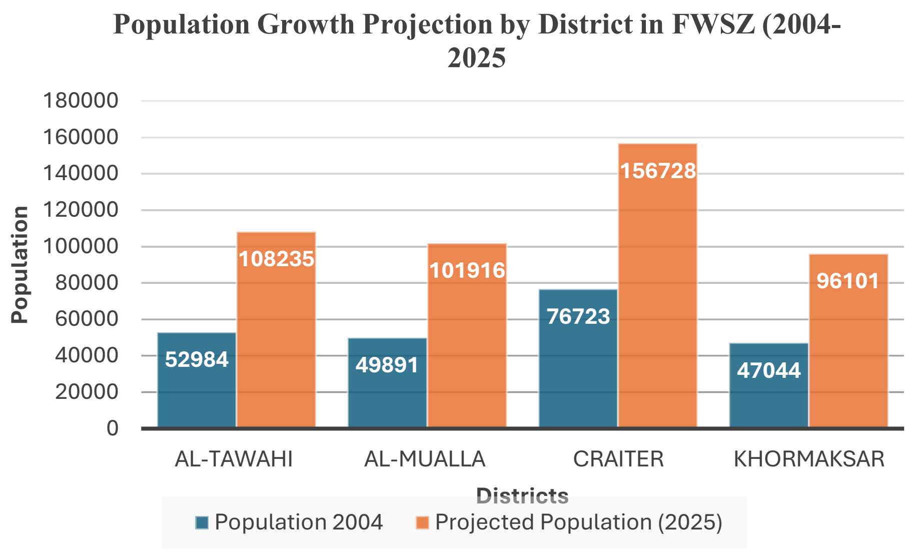

Figure 4: Population Distribution and Projections for FWSZ Districts (2004 vs. 2025)

Based on these population projections and the adjusted per capita demand, the minimum daily water demand for each district has been calculated to provide a comprehensive understanding of future water service requirements. This is visually represented in Figure 5.

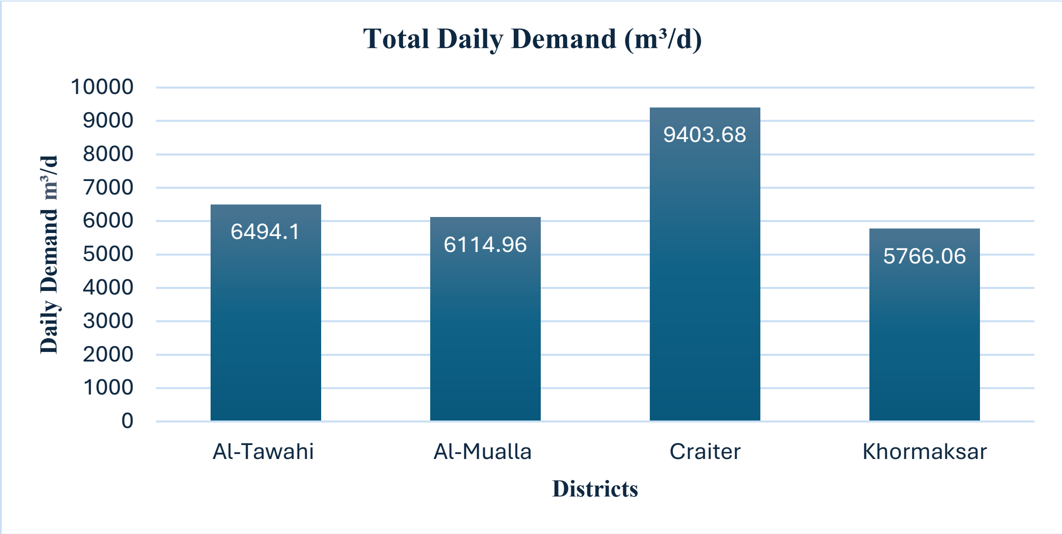

Figure5: Projected Minimum Daily Water Demand by District in FWSZ (2025)

Figure 5 clearly presents the calculated minimum daily water demand for each district within the FWSZ for the year 2025, based on the projected population and a recommended per capita demand of 60 L/c/d (inclusive of commercial and governmental consumption, as discussed previously). As anticipated from the population projections, Crater district exhibits the highest projected daily water demand, reaching approximately 9403.68 m³/day. Conversely, Khormaksar is projected to have the lowest demand at around 5766.06 m³/day. The visual differences in column heights clearly indicate the varying magnitudes of water demand across the districts. This granular understanding of demand distribution is crucial for targeted water infrastructure planning, optimization of supply operations, and potentially, for the strategic deployment of demand management solutions to ensure equitable and efficient water resource allocation within the FWSZ.

B. Water Production and Per Capita Consumption

This section analyzes the average daily water production and total consumption (residential, commercial, and governmental) within the First Water Supply Zone (FWSZ) for 2023, 2024, and the first quarter of 2025. All monthly data has been converted to average daily values (m³/day) for clarity and comparison. It is crucial to note that 2025 data is based solely on the January-March period, a detail consistently highlighted in tables and figures.

Analyzing water trends in Aden, a coastal and semi-arid region with distinct hot summers, is essential. However, water supply operations are severely impacted by the prevailing deteriorating economic conditions and intermittent power supply. With only two hours of electricity followed by over four hours of outage, the water administration faces significant challenges in pumping sufficient water, especially during high-demand summer months, thereby limiting overall production.

Table 3 presents a comprehensive overview of the water production and total consumption dynamics within the First Water Supply Zone (FWSZ) for the years 2023, 2024, and the initial quarter of 2025. The data, aggregated to average daily values, reveals notable trends across the four districts: Al-Tawahi, Al-Mualla, Crater, and Khormaksar. Crater district consistently demonstrates the highest average daily water production, peaking at 8353.1 m³/d in 2024, followed closely by Al-Tawahi. Correspondingly, Crater also records the highest average daily total consumption, reaching 6446.3 m³/d in 2025. Khormaksar, on the other hand, consistently shows the lowest production and consumption figures among the districts, with 5160.1 m³/d production and 3908.2 m³/d consumption in 2025. Overall, there is a general trend of increasing population across all districts from 2023 to 2025, which, as expected, correlates with an increase in total water consumption. Figure 6 vividly illustrates the relationship between average daily water production and total water consumption for each district across the study period. The chart clearly highlights a consistent gap between production (supply) and consumption (demand) in all districts, which signifies the presence of water losses, either real (leakages) or apparent (unmetered consumption, billing errors). Crater district, despite having the highest production, also shows a substantial absolute difference between production and consumption, reflecting its larger scale of operations and population. Conversely, Khormaksar, with the lowest figures, maintains a proportionally similar gap. This visual comparison provides a critical understanding of the efficiency of water distribution networks and the extent of Non-Revenue Water (NRW) within each service area. Analyzing the changes year-on-year for each district, such as the slight increase in consumption relative to production in Khormaksar for 2025 compared to previous years, can inform targeted interventions for loss reduction.

Table 3: Summary of Average Daily Water Production, Total Consumption, Population, and Per Capita Consumption in FWSZ Districts (2023-2025)

Districts	Year	Average Daily Production m³/d	Average Daily Consumption m³/d	Population	Average Daily per Capita Consumption L/c/d
Al-Tawahi	2023	6815.6	4847.0	101116	47.9
	2024	6836.0	4858.7	104615	46.4
	2025*	6404.7	4703.1	108235	43.5
Al-Mualla	2023	5962.5	4153.5	95214	43.6
	2024	5978.7	4164.9	98508	42.3
	2025*	5483.8	4255.8	101916	41.8
Crater	2023	7899.5	6062.4	146421	41.4
	2024	8353.1	6407.5	151487	42.3
	2025*	8297.1	6446.3	156728	41.1
Khormaksar	2023	4921.3	3293.1	89780	36.7
	2024	5065.3	3374.4	92887	36.3
	2025*	5160.1	3908.2	96101	40.7

(Source: WSA Monthly Production and Consumption Data; Author's Calculations)
* 2025 data represents average daily production and consumption, population estimates, and average per capita consumption for the first quarter of the year only (January-March).

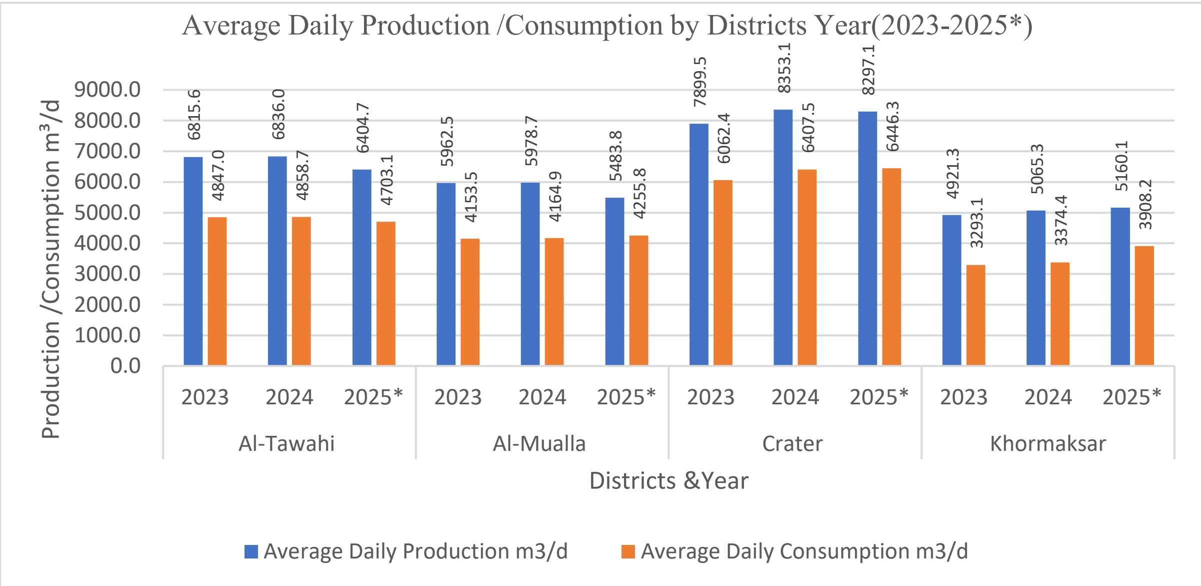

Figure6: Average Daily Water Production and Consumption in FWSZ by Districts (2023-2025)

Figure 7 presents the monthly variations in average daily water production across the four FWSZ districts from January 2023 to March 2025. While some fluctuations are observed, a general consistency in output is maintained, particularly for Al-Tawahi and Crater, which sustain higher production levels throughout the period. Notably, despite Aden's distinct hot summer season (April-August with May-June peaks) and the expected increase in water demand, the production graphs do not reveal a sharp or consistent increase in water production during these warmer months. This is critically influenced by the challenging operational environment in Aden: the severe intermittent power supply (typically 2 hours on, over 4 hours off) significantly hinders the water administration's ability to pump sufficient water from main fields, thereby limiting overall production, especially when demand is highest. Minor dips in production, such as those observed in early 2025 for Al-Tawahi and Al-Mualla, could thus be attributed to these power constraints or routine maintenance, rather than a lack of source water. Understanding these monthly trends in the context of infrastructure limitations is crucial for operational planning and optimizing resource allocation.

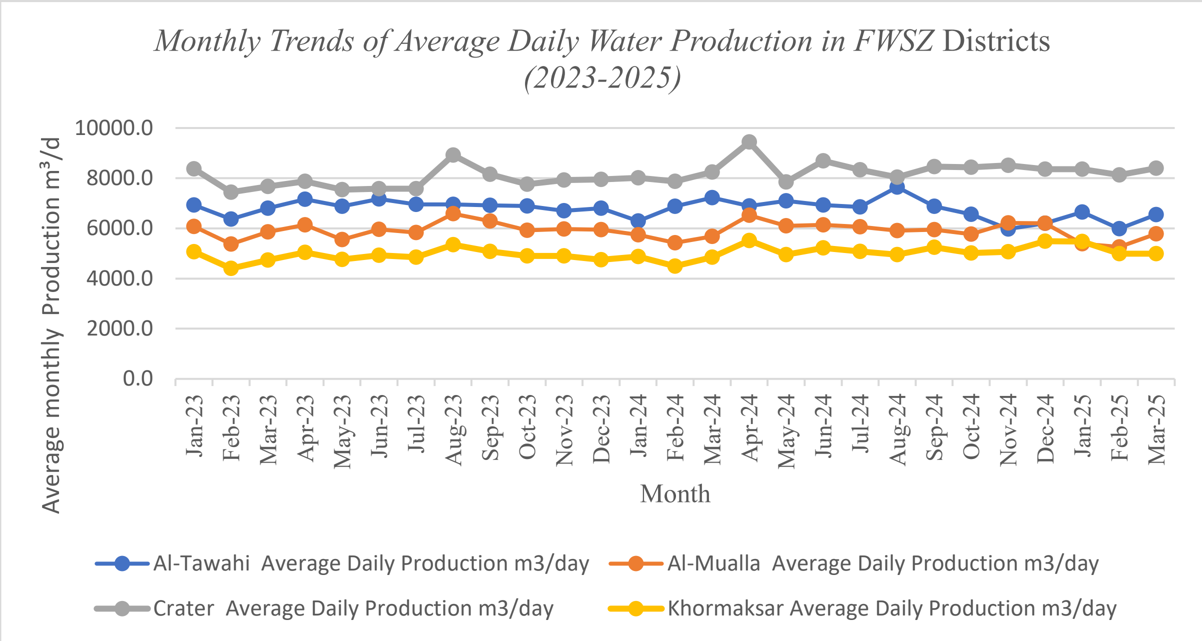

Figure 7: Monthly Trends of Average Daily Water Production in FWSZ Directorates (2023-2025)

Per Capita Consumption:

Analyzing the average daily per capita total consumption (L/c/d) provides insights into overall water usage patterns within the districts. In 2023, Al-Tawahi had the highest per capita consumption at 47.9 L/c/d, while Khormaksar had the lowest at 36.7 L/c/d. By 2025, Al-Tawahi's per capita consumption shows a slight decrease to 43.5 L/c/d, while Khormaksar's increased to 40.7 L/c/d, indicating a potential shift in water usage patterns or improved supply in the latter. In 2025, the average per capita water consumption in FWSZ was approximately 41.775 L/c/d. These figures are crucial for assessing demand management strategies and resource allocation efficiency within each district in relation to the comprehensive water demand.

Figure 8 illustrates the monthly trends of average daily total per capita water consumption (L/c/d) across the FWSZ districts, offering a more granular view of individual water usage. Distinct patterns emerge, with Al-Tawahi generally exhibiting the highest per capita consumption and Khormaksar the lowest throughout the observed period. Considering Aden's hot summer season (April through August), it would be reasonable to expect a noticeable increase in per capita water consumption due to higher temperatures and increased personal water usage. However, the graphs show relatively stable consumption patterns with no dramatic or consistent seasonal peaks or troughs directly correlated with the summer months across all districts. This observed stability in consumption, despite the climatic expectations, is largely attributable to the aforementioned severe limitations in water supply caused by unreliable electricity for pumping operations. Essentially, even if demand increases significantly during summer, the water supply system is constrained by its inability to deliver more water, thereby capping potential consumption. The slight decline in per capita consumption for Al-Tawahi towards early 2025, alongside a modest increase for Khormaksar in the same period, could reflect various factors such as localized supply improvements or public awareness campaigns, but the overarching influence of power availability on the general trend remains significant. These trends are vital for understanding consumer behavior and informing water conservation efforts, aiming to align consumption patterns with sustainable water resource management under challenging operational conditions.

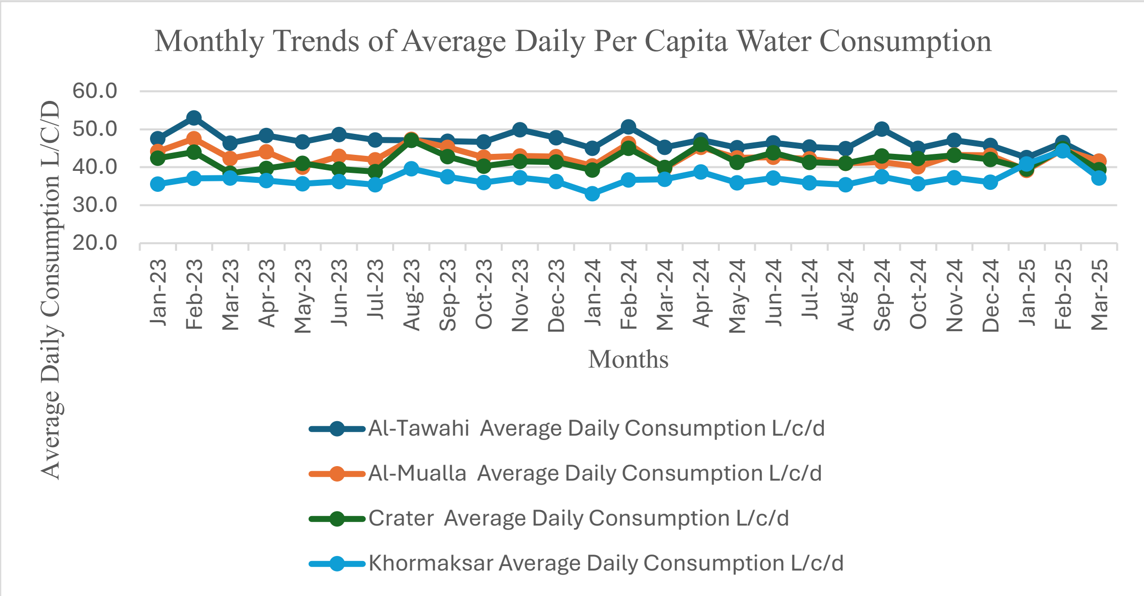

Figure 8: Monthly Trends of Average Daily Total Per Capita Water Consumption in FWSZ Districts (2023-2025)

C. Supply-Demand Gap Quantification

Water demand estimation is crucial for identifying the adequacy of the existing water supply and for quantifying the gap between current water availability and required consumption. Based on the analysis of water consumption data for the First Water Supply Zone (FWSZ) (see Table 5 for more details), the total annual production stands at 9,649,675.4 m³/year. This equates to an average daily production of 26,437.47 m³/day for the FWSZ population of 462,980 individuals.

However, as highlighted in previous sections, the recommended minimum per capita water quantity is 60 L/c/d. Adopting this standard, the ideal total daily water demand for the FWSZ population would be:

Daily Demand = Population × Recommended Per Capita Demand

Daily Demand = 462,980 × 60/1000 = 27,778.8 m³/d

This value represents the minimum daily volume of water that should ideally be supplied to adequately meet the population's needs.

To quantify the daily supply-demand gap in the FWSZ, we compare the current average daily production with the ideal daily demand based on international recommendations:

Supply-Demand Gap = Current Average Daily Production − Ideal Daily Demand

Supply-Demand Gap = 26,437.47 m³/d − 27,778.8 m³/d = −1341.33 m³/d

The negative sign indicates a deficit, meaning an additional 1341.33 m³/day of water is required to bridge the supply-demand gaps within the subsystem and meet the internationally recommended minimum per capita water supply for the FWSZ population. It should be noted here, referring to Table 5, that when comparing the produced water volume with the billed consumption volume – which represents the recorded water delivered to users and accounted for in billing – a significant disparity is observed. While the annual production was 9,649,675.4 m³/year (26,437.47 m³/day), the billed consumption amounted to 6,990,923.3 m³/year (19,153.23 m³/day). This larger disparity, which goes beyond the initial supply-demand gap, will be highlighted later in the subsequent sections within the Non-Revenue Water (NRW) analysis. This deficit underscores the critical challenge in ensuring adequate and equitable water access for the population of FWSZ.

D. Water Losses and Non-Revenue Water (NRW) Estimation

Non-Revenue Water (NRW) represents a significant challenge for the water sector in the First Water Supply Zone (FWSZ), accounting for a large volume of produced water that generates no revenue for the utility. These losses directly contribute to the exacerbation of supply shortages and diminish the operational and financial efficiency of the system.

The concept of NRW encompasses both physical losses, such as leaks and bursts in the network, and apparent losses, which result from factors like water theft and metering inaccuracies. Additionally, it includes Uncollected Billed Water, which is revenue water that has been supplied and billed but not paid for.

Through an analysis of operational data, it was found that a substantial portion of these losses is due to collection challenges. While commercial consumption is typically billed and collected, government consumption, despite being billed, is often not collected. Furthermore, the utility faces an even larger problem where a significant portion of billed residential consumption remains uncollected, primarily due to the current postpaid metering system. These collection issues significantly contribute to the high percentage of NRW. Table 4 and Table 5 below present detailed water balance and NRW data for each district within the First Water Supply Zone for the year 2023 and for the period April 2024 to March 2025, respectively. These tables show the volume of water produced, billed, and collected, along with the volume and percentage of NRW and the combined physical/apparent losses.

Table 4 Water Loss and Non-Revenue Water (NRW) Balance for (FWSZ) 2023 by Districts

Table 4 Water Loss and Non-Revenue Water (NRW) Balance for (FWSZ) 2023 by Districts

Parameters	Al-Tawahi	Al-Mualla	Crater	Khormaksar	Total (FWSZ)
System Inpute Volume (m³/year)	2487705.0	2176307.5	2883307.7	1787940.4	9335260.6
Total Billed Authorized Consumption (m³/year)	1769171.0	1516044.0	2212786.0	1201966.1	6699967.1
Billed collected Consumption (m³/year)	1122730.7	977871.0	1245493.2	708000.9	4054095.8
Total Losses (m³/year)	718534.0	660263.5	670521.7	585974.3	2635293.5
Losses %	28.9	30.3	23.3	32.8	28.2
NRW (m³/year)	1364974.4	1198436.4	1637814.6	1079939.4	5281164.8
NRW%	54.9	55.1	56.8	60.4	56.6

(Source: Operational Data; Author's Calculations)

Table 5: Water Loss and Non-Revenue Water (NRW) Balance for (FWSZ) April 2024 - March 2025)by Districts

Parameters	Al-Tawahi	Al-Mualla	Crater	Khormaksar	Total (FWSZ)
System Input Volume (m³/year)	2471310.9	2169770.1	3071146.8	1937447.7	9649675.4
Total Billed Authorized Consumption (m³/year)	1755682.1	1592160.7	2356102.7	1286977.8	6990923.3
Unbilled Authorized Consumption (m³/year)	2916.5	2560.6	3624.4	2286.5	11388.0
Billed collected Consumption (m³/year)	1084851.7	1005951.4	1285364.4	747719.6	4123887.1
Total Losses (m³/year)	712712.3	575048.8	711419.6	648183.4	2647364.1
Losses %	28.8	26.5	23.2	33.5	27.4
NRW (m³//year)	1386459.2	1163818.7	1785782.3	1189728.1	5525788.3
NRW%	56.1	53.6	58.1	61.4	57.3

(Source: Operational Data; Author's Calculations)

Analysis of Water Losses and Non-Revenue Water:

Data from Table 4 and Table 5 reveal exceptionally high levels of Non-Revenue Water (NRW) in the First Water Supply Zone. In 2023, the total NRW volume reached approximately 5.28 million cubic meters, representing 56.6% of the total water produced. This high percentage persists in the period from April 2024 to March 2025, with NRW volume reaching approximately 5.53 million cubic meters, or 57.3%. These percentages are significantly higher than the 10% benchmark for Unaccounted For Water (UFW) recommended by the AWWA (1996), placing the FWSZ's performance in the category of "matter of concern" (>25%), indicating an urgent need for reduction [16].

To visually illustrate these components, Figure 9 presents the analysis of Non-Revenue Water (NRW) components by district for the period April 2024 to March 2025. Analysis of Water Losses

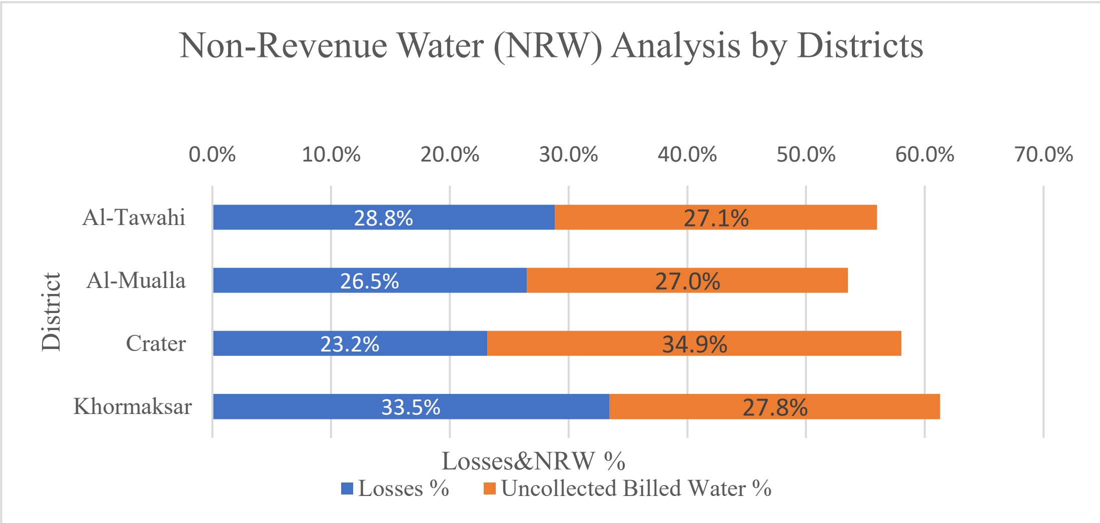

Figure 9: Non-Revenue Water (NRW) Analysis by Districts-(Apr2024-2025Mar).

Further Detailed Breakdown of Water Balance and Losses

Following a comprehensive Water Balance Analysis, conducted in accordance with IWA standards and including a detailed Non-Revenue Water (NRW) estimation, the findings from this stage proved crucial. The quantified challenges, particularly the significant volume of NRW and its associated financial losses, as detailed in Figure 10 (all values in m³/year), served as a direct and critical input to the subsequent phase of the research: the Feasibility Study of Prepaid Water Meters. This logical progression ensures that the proposed solutions are directly informed by the specific problems identified through a thorough assessment of the water supply and demand balance.

System input volume	Authorized Consumption	Billed Authorized Consumption	Billed collected Consumption	Revenue Water
			4,123,887	4123887.109
		6,990,923	Billed Uncollected Consumption	
			2,867,036	
		Unbilled Authorized Consumption	Unbilled Metered Consumption	
			10950.0	
			Unbilled Unmetered Consumption	
	7002311.3	11388.0	438.0	
9,649,675	Water Losses	Apparent Losses	Unauthorized Consumption	Non-Revenue Water
			699092.3349	
			Customer Metering Inaccuracies	5525788.3
			139818.467	
	2,647,364.09		Systematic Data Handling Errors	
		856388.1103	17477.308	
		Real Losses		
		1,790,975.98		

Figure 10: Modified IWA Water Balance Table For FWSZ 2024- 2025 Including Uncollected Billed Water (m³/year)

Breakdown of Water Balance and Non-Revenue Water (NRW)

The Modified IWA Water Balance Table (Figure 10) was constructed based on detailed operational data provided by the Water and Sanitation Authority (WSA), with specific classifications adapted to the financial and institutional challenges in Aden. The key volumetric figures are interpreted as follows:

- System Input Volume (SIV): The total water entering the system is 9,649,675 m³/year.
- Authorized Consumption: This volume totals 7,002,311.3 m³/year, which includes the 6,990,923 m³/year that is officially billed plus 11,388 m³/year of Unbilled Authorized Consumption. This unbilled volume specifically accounts for 10,950 m³/year of metered water supplied to transport trucks for military camps and the volume consumed by WSA employees, neither of which generates billed revenue.

- Revenue Water: Only 4,123,887 m³/year is actually collected, representing only 42.7% of the SIV.

Components of Non-Revenue Water (NRW) and Losses:

- From Figure 10, it is evident that the Water Losses (Real and Apparent Loss) amount to SIV-AC = 9649675 – 7002311.3 = 2,647,364.09 m³/year, constituting about 27.4% of the System Input Volume.
- Apparent Losses: These are commercial losses resulting from unauthorized consumption (theft), metering inaccuracies, and systematic data handling errors. The total apparent losses were 856,388.103 m³/year. The breakdown for these components is typically estimated as follows:
  - Unauthorized Consumption (UC): Based on recommendations for developing countries, UC is assumed to be as 10% of the total billed authorized consumption. For this period, with a total billed authorized consumption of 6,990,923.3 m³/year, UC is calculated as 10%×6,990,923.3=699,092.33 m³/year. This value aligns with that presented in Figure 10.
  - Customer Meter Inaccuracies: These losses occur due to the collective under-registration of customer meters as they age. A starting estimate of 2.0% under-registration of billed metered consumption can be used (Texas Water Development Board – Water Loss Audit Manual, 2008). Based on a total billed authorized consumption of 6,990,923.3 m³/year, the calculated inaccuracy is 2%×6,990,923.3=139,818.467 m³/year. This calculated value is used in Figure 10.
  - Systematic Data Handling Errors: These are errors in data processing and transfer within the billing system. A preliminary estimate of 0.25% of billed authorized consumption is recommended in the absence of detailed data (AWWA, TWDB, California DWR). Based on a total billed authorized consumption of 6,990,923.3 m³/year, the calculated errors are 0.25%×6,990,923.3=17,477.308 m³/year. This calculated value is also used in Figure 10.

Real Losses (Physical Losses): These are actual losses of water from the system due to leaks, bursts, and overflows from pipes, tanks, and reservoirs. For the period April 2024 - March 2025,

Real Losses = Total Losses – Apparent Losses = 2647364.09 - 856388.1103 = 1,790,975.98 m³/year.

- Based on the detailed water balance in Figure 10, NRW (as defined by Eq. 4) is the sum of all components that fail to yield collected revenue:
- Real Losses (Physical Losses): 1,790,975.98 m³/year.
- Apparent Losses (Commercial Losses): 856,388.103 m³/year. The quantification of these losses was based on best practice assumptions for developing countries.
- Uncollected Billed Water (BUW): 2,867,036.24 m³/year. This component represents the financial loss due to consumer default.
- The quantitative analysis reveals that the total NRW volume is 5,525,788.3 m³/year (which is the sum of all components listed above). This figure, derived from our modified operational-financial definition (Eq. 4) that aligns with the specific revenue collection challenges in Aden, places the NRW percentage at an alarming 57.26% of the System Input Volume (Eq.5). This NRW figure rigorously justifies our focus on PWM implementation, as the persistence of such high volumetric and financial loss levels severely undermines the utility's sustainability.

The quantitative analysis of Non-Revenue Water (NRW) reveals a critical challenge facing the water supply system in the First Water Supply Zone (FWSZ), where NRW percentages consistently exceed 50% across all districts and throughout the study periods. This ratio is significantly higher than internationally accepted standards, such as the 10% benchmark for Unaccounted For Water (UFW) recommended by the AWWA (1996), placing the FWSZ's performance in the "matter of concern" (>25%) category and indicating severe operational and financial inefficiencies. Figure 9 clearly demonstrates that this high NRW percentage is not solely attributable to physical/apparent losses (represented by the "Losses %"), but that the "Uncollected Billed Water" component constitutes a substantial and impactful portion. This aligns with qualitative observations regarding the non-collection of government consumption bills and the challenges associated with the post-paid metering system for residential consumption, which lacks effective prepayment mechanisms. The persistence of such high loss levels directly exacerbates the water supply-demand gap and severely undermines the financial sustainability of the utility, thereby limiting its capacity to invest in the maintenance and improvement of the deteriorating infrastructure. Therefore, a multi-faceted approach addressing both physical losses and commercial losses (especially collection efficiency through solutions like prepaid meters) is a paramount priority to ensure the continuity and efficiency of water supply services.

E. *Infrastructure Assessment*

The physical infrastructure of the water supply system in the First Water Supply Zone (FWSZ) plays a crucial role in its overall performance and is a primary determinant of water losses and service reliability. An assessment of the existing infrastructure reveals significant challenges related to the age, materials, and overall condition of the network components.

Pipe Network Characteristics:

The water distribution network in the FWSZ comprises various pipe materials and diameters. The total length of distribution pipes, categorized by age and material type, is detailed in Table 6: Length of Distribution Pipes for FWSZ. This table indicates the types of pipe materials used across the FWSZ, including Polyethylene (PE), Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC), Asbestos Cement (AC), Cast Iron (CI), Galvanized Iron (GI), and Ductile Iron (DI).

Table 6: Length of Distribution Pipes for FWSZ

Age	Material	Main Pipes		Service Pipes	
		Pipe length(m)	% from Main total	Pipe length(m)	% from S-pipes total
10years and less	PE	44935.6	16.55	12055.4	43.56
10 years and less	PVC	39195.1	14.44	10247	37.02
40 year and more	AC	119136	43.89	794.2	2.87
30-40 years	CI	61931.2	22.81	1072	3.87
20-30 years	GI	1609	0.59	3394.1	12.26
15 Years &Less	DI	4648.2	1.71	115.3	0.42
Total Length		271455.1	100.00	27678	100.00

Source : Water and Sanitation Corporation; Author calculation

The predominant pipe types and their respective ages significantly influence the network's vulnerability to leaks and bursts. An analysis of Table 6 reveals that a substantial portion of the network consists of older, more vulnerable materials. Specifically, pipes aged 20 years or more (AC, CI, and GI) collectively represent approximately 62.83% of the total network length (main and service pipes combined). The Asbestos Cement (AC) pipes, which are explicitly categorized as "40 years and more" in age, constitute about 40.1% of the total network length. These older materials, particularly Asbestos Cement and Cast Iron, are highly susceptible to degradation and fracture, especially under dynamic pressure conditions. This deterioration directly contributes to physical water losses and necessitates frequent repair and maintenance interventions.

Assessment using Infrastructure Leakage Index (ILI):

The Infrastructure Leakage Index (ILI) provides a robust and internationally recognized metric for assessing the quality of real loss management within a water distribution system. It compares the Current Annual Real Losses (CARL) to the Unavoidable Annual Real Losses (UARL), with UARL representing the minimum achievable level of real losses given the physical characteristics of the network[16]. For the purpose of this ILI calculation, the "Current Annual Real Losses (CARL)" is precisely defined as the "Real Losses (Physical Losses)" volume, extracted directly from Figure 10: Modified IWA Water Balance Table for the period April 2024 - March 2025.

The UARL for the FWSZ is calculated using the following parameters, which are derived from data provided by the Water and Sanitation Corporation and verified through field measurements: Length of mains (L_m) = 271.455 km, number of service connections (Nc) = 45,584, total length of underground connection pipes (L_p) = 27.678 km and average operating pressure (P): 40 m (water head).

Using (equation 7) UARL (L/day) = (18×Lm+0.80×Nc+25×Lp) ×P

PUARL= (18×271.455+0.8×45584+25×27.678) × 40=1,680,813.8 L/day=613,496.964 m³/year

The Current Annual Real Losses (CARL) for the FWSZ for April 2024 - March 2025 is 1,790,975.98 m³/year, derived from "Real Losses (Physical Losses)" in Figure 10. Finally, the Infrastructure Leakage Index (ILI) is calculated as ILI=CARL/UARLILI=1,790,975.98 m³/year/613,496.964 m³/yearILI≈2.92.

An ILI value of approximately 2.92 indicates significant room for improvement in real (physical) loss management within the FWSZ. An ideal ILI value approaches 1, meaning current real losses are close to the unavoidable minimum. A value significantly greater than 1, such as 2.92, suggests that current physical losses are over 2.9 times what could be considered unavoidable for a system with these characteristics, highlighting substantial inefficiencies in leak detection, repair, and pressure management.

Specific Water Loss Indicators:

Beyond overall percentages, expressing water loss per service connection and per unit length of pipes provides more detailed insights into network performance and facilitates comparisons with other water utilities.

Water loss per service connection: For the period April 2024 to March 2025, the total annual water loss (physical/apparent) was 2,647,364.1 m³. With 45,584 service connections, the water loss per connection is 2,647,364*1000 / 45,584 *365 = 159.13 liters / connection / day. This metric highlights the average daily loss associated with each customer connection, providing a specific measure of leakage intensity relative to the number of served properties [13].

Water loss per kilometer of pipes: Considering the total length of main pipes (271.455 km) and the annual water loss (physical/apparent) (2,647,364.1 m³), the loss per unit length of the network is 2,647,364 / 271.455 * 365 = 26.72 m³/day/km. This high figure indicates a substantial rate of leakage distributed across the main distribution network [13], pointing to widespread issues within the piping system that require targeted intervention.

a. Water Conveyance and Storage System Analysis

To effectively manage water resources and ensure continuous supply, a detailed analysis of the daily supply-demand dynamics and the adequacy of the water conveyance and storage infrastructure is essential. This analysis considers hourly variations in water supply and demand to assess the required storage capacity and the capability of main transmission lines.

The analysis of water trends in Aden, a coastal and semi-arid region with distinct hot summers, is crucial. Water supply operations are severely impacted by the prevailing deteriorating economic conditions and intermittent power supply. With only two hours of electricity followed by over four hours of outage, the water administration faces significant challenges in pumping sufficient water, especially during high-demand summer months, thereby limiting overall production.

This section analyzes the average daily water production and total consumption (residential, commercial, and governmental) within the First Water Supply Zone (FWSZ) for 2023, 2024, and the first quarter of 2025. All monthly data has been converted to average daily values (m³/day) for clarity and comparison. It is crucial to note that 2025 data is based solely on the January-March period, a detail consistently highlighted in tables and figures. Figure 6 provides a visual representation of the average daily water production and consumption in FWSZ by district for these years. Furthermore, Figure 8 illustrates the monthly trends of average daily per capita water consumption across FWSZ districts from 2023 to 2025.

To gain a granular understanding of water demand dynamics, a detailed analysis of hourly water demand was conducted for the FWSZ as a whole. This analysis established a consistent hourly "Time Pattern" that reflects the proportional distribution of water usage throughout a 24-hour cycle, primarily influenced by the community's socio-cultural practices and daily routines. This "Time Pattern" is considered universally applicable across all districts within FWSZ. According to water production and consumption data obtained from the General Corporation for Water and Sanitation, the average monthly total consumption for the first quarter of 2025 was 579,402 m³/month. This equates to an average daily consumption of 19313.4 m³/day, which is presumed to be distributed among the FWSZ population of 462,980 individuals. This results in an average per capita consumption of 41.715 L/c/d. To ensure fair distribution and account for actual metered consumption (excluding losses), this quantity of 19313.4 m³/day should ideally be supplied to the population. Due to operational constraints and intermittent pumping, this daily volume must be delivered within a limited pumping window. Assuming a 12-hour pumping period, the required hourly supply rate is approximately 19313.4 m³/day/12 hours/day=1609.45 m³/hour.

Table 7: Average Hourly Distribution and Projected Water Demand and Supply for the First Water Supply Zone (FWSZ) 2025 on a Critical Thursday

Hours	Time Pattern	Demand (m³/h)	Supply (m³/h)	Hours	Time Pattern	Demand (m³/h)	Supply (m³/h)
1	0.0053	102.36	0	13	0.083	1603.01	1609.45
2	0.0063	121.67	0	14	0.062	1197.43	1609.45
3	0.013	251.07	0	15	0.05966366	1152.31	1609.45
4	0.016	309.01	0	16	0.042	811.16	1609.45
5	0.03	579.40	0	17	0.0423	816.96	1609.45
6	0.062	1197.43	1609.45	18	0.04	772.54	0
7	0.048	927.04	1609.45	19	0.0344	664.38	0
8	0.046	888.42	1609.45	20	0.0286	552.36	0
9	0.042	811.16	1609.45	21	0.0239	461.59	0
10	0.07	1351.94	1609.45	22	0.02	386.27	0
11	0.082203	1587.62	1609.45	23	0.016	309.01	0
12	0.10833334	2092.29	1609.45	24	0.02	366.95	0

Table 7 provides the detailed hourly distribution and projected water demand, alongside the hourly supply capacity of 1609.45 m³/hour, highlighting the peak demand times and the required supplying hours to cover a significant portion of the demand.

Figure 11 visually represents the hourly water demand and the consistent supply from 6 AM to 5 PM, illustrating how current supply patterns relate to the projected hourly fluctuations

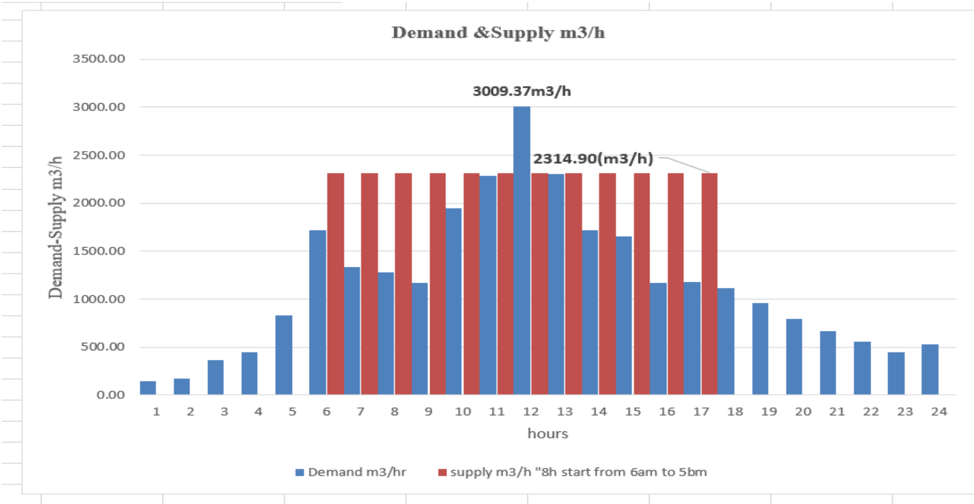

Figure 11: Projected Hourly Water Demand and Supply for the First Water Supply Zone

The chart clearly highlights a prominent system-wide peak demand at Hour 12 (12:00 PM), reaching 2092.29 m³/h for the entire FWSZ based on analysis data. This midday surge is consistent with prevalent community habits and traditions across the service area, where water-intensive domestic activities are common, such as cooking and washing, particularly after morning work hours.

Further breakdown of the hourly demand percentages, as visually depicted in Figure 11, reveals distinct patterns: Midday Peak (11 AM – 1 PM): Accounts for approximately 27.3% of the total daily demand. Midday Peak (11 AM – 1 PM): Accounts for approximately 27.3% of the total daily demand. Afternoon (2–6 PM): Represents about 24.6% of the daily demand. Evening Decline (7–10 PM): Shows a significant drop, contributing around 10.8%. Early Morning (1–4 AM) and Late Night (11 PM – 12 AM): These combined periods account for just ~7.6% of the total demand.

This confirms a concentrated peak period from 11:00 to 13:00, likely driven by residential, institutional, and commercial use. This breakdown is useful for pump scheduling, storage sizing, and rate structuring. Based on the analysis results, which show that peak water demand typically occurs between 6 a.m. and 5 p.m., and that meeting this demand requires a minimum of 12 hours of pumping despite the limited available supply, various scenarios were analyzed to determine optimal pumping times, with the period from 6:00 AM to 5:00 PM identified as the most effective for distributing the daily required volume of water. Evidently, there is a clear deficit in meeting demand during peak hours, as the peak demand (2092.29 m³/h) consistently exceeds the available pumping capacity (1609.45 m³/h), indicating a supply gap under current operational conditions. The calculation of these projected demand values for the FWSZ is demonstrated by the following example for the peak hour:

FWSZ Population = 462,980 individuals, Average projected Monthly Total Consumed (including residential, commercial, and governmental) in 2025 = 579,402 m³/month, Daily Consumption = 579,402 m³/month = 19313.4 m³/day, Per Capita Daily Consumption (L/c/d) based on analysis data = (19313.4 m³/day × 1000 L/m³)/462,980 individuals = 41.715 L/c/d, and Time Pattern (at Hour 12) = 0.10833334. Therefore, the projected peak hourly demand for FWSZ (at Hour 12), based on analysis data, is calculated as: Projected Peak Hourly Demand (FWSZ) = Population × Per Capita Daily Consumption (L/c/d) × Time Pattern (Fraction of Daily Demand) Projected Peak Hourly Demand (FWSZ) = 462,980×41.715×0.10833334=2092.264 m³/h. Further examining the peak demand patterns at a more localized level, Table 8: Peak Water Demand at Midday (12:00 PM) for FWSZ By Districts (2025) provides the projected peak water demand at midday for each of the FWSZ districts, utilizing the updated population for 2025 and based on the current average per capita consumption (41.715 L/c/d). This breakdown offers a district-specific insight into the highest hourly demand periods, which is crucial for localized supply management and infrastructure planning.

Table 8: Peak Water Demand at Midday (12:00 PM) for FWSZ By Districts (2025)

Districts	**Population 2025**	**Demand (L/c/d)**	**Demand (m³/d)**	**Time pattern**	**Peak Demand at 12(mid day)(M³/h)**
Al-Tawahi	108235	46.547	5038.000	0.10833334	545.783
Al-Mualla	101916	44.698	4555.429	0.10833334	493.505
Crater	156728	44.883	7034.393	0.10833334	762.059
Khormaksar	96101	44.361	4263.100	0.10833334	461.836
Total FWSZ	462980	41.715	19313.412	0.10833334	2092.286

Table 8 details the projected peak water demand at midday (12:00 PM) for each district within the FWSZ, based on 2025 population data. This granular analysis highlights that Crater district exhibits the highest peak demand at 762.06 m³/h, consistent with its larger population and overall consumption. Al-Tawahi follows with 545.78 m³/h, while Khormaksar shows the lowest district-level peak demand at 461.84 m³/h. The "Time Pattern" of 0.10833334, representing the fraction of daily demand occurring at the peak hour, remains consistent across all districts, indicating a uniform peak behavior influenced by shared daily routines within the FWSZ. These district-level peak demand figures are essential for optimizing the design and operation of localized distribution networks and ensuring adequate pressure and supply during critical periods. Overall, these patterns underscore the need for flexible supply management strategies that can adapt to rapid fluctuations in demand across different districts.

Elevated Storage Tank Assessment (Based on Recommended Consumption):

While current consumption defines one demand level, for robust infrastructure planning and to assess the system's capacity to meet true population needs, the internationally recommended minimum per capita quantity of 60 L/c/d is used for the following storage assessment. Based on this recommended value, the total daily demand for FWSZ is 60 L/c/d×462,980 individuals=27,778,800 L/day=27,778.8 m³/day. If this volume were to be delivered within a 12-hour pumping window, the required hourly supply rate would be approximately

27,778.8 m³/day/12 hours/day=2314.9 m³/hour.

Figure 12 visually represents the hourly water supply, demand, and storage dynamics based on this recommended per capita consumption of 60 L/c/d. The figure illustrates the consistent supply of 2314.9 m³/h during pumping hours against the fluctuating hourly demand. The maximum storage requirement during a 24-hour cycle occurs at hour 17 (5:00 PM), reaching a value of 7014.1 m³. This indicates that the elevated storage tank capacity should ideally not be less than this figure to meet peak demand requirements under this scenario. Currently, the Al-Barzakh station houses two elevated storage tanks, each with a capacity of 5800 m³, resulting in a combined storage capacity of 11600 m³. This total capacity comfortably exceeds the maximum required storage (11600 m³ > 7014.1 m³), suggesting that the existing elevated tanks are adequate. These tanks are strategically located atop Mount Hadeed at an elevation of 100 meters, facilitating gravity-fed water distribution into the network. Despite the adequacy of the existing storage capacity, improving the consistency of the water supply from the primary source (e.g., through more reliable power for pumping water up to the tanks or alternative energy solutions) remains a critical factor for ensuring continuous and reliable water availability, particularly during peak demand periods.

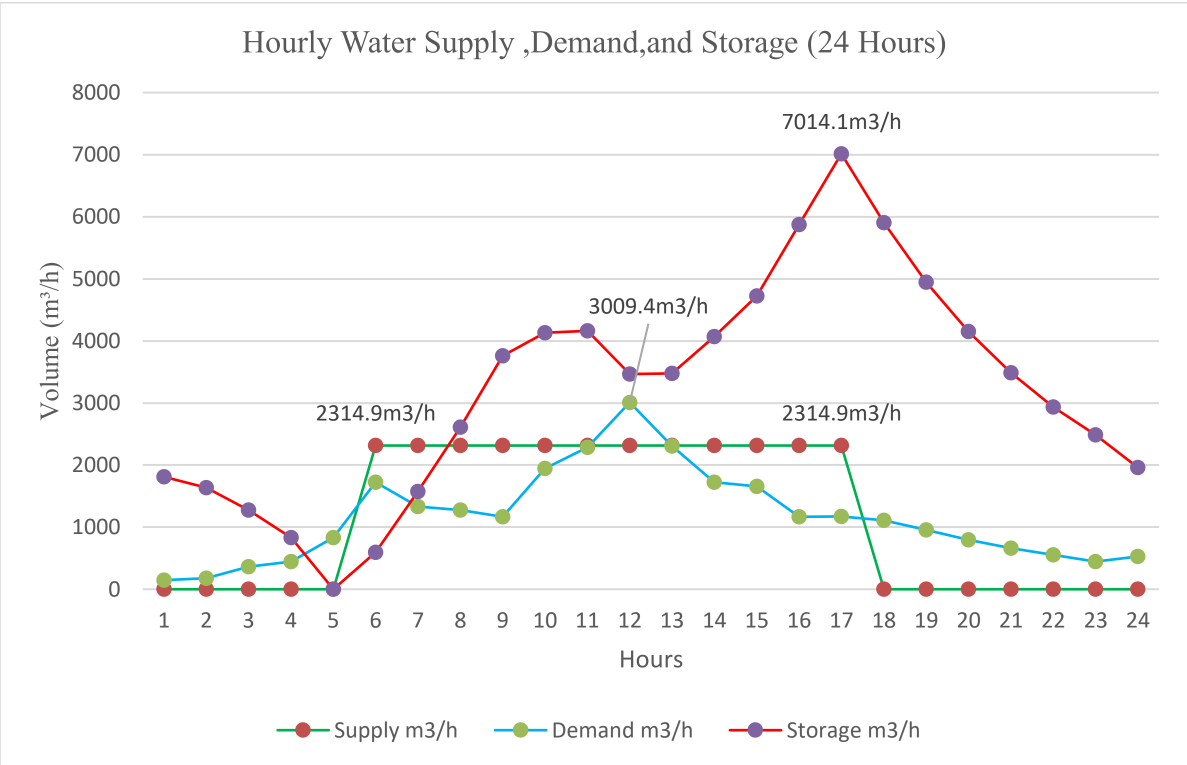

Figure 12: Hourly Water Supply, Demand, and Storage Fluctuation

F. Service Coverage Analysis

Despite the overall water supply efforts, certain areas within the First Water Supply Zone (FWSZ) experience near-complete deprivation of water service. This challenge is particularly acute for residents situated in the mid-mountain regions of Al-Tawahi, Al-Mualla, and Crater. For these elevated locations, the average water pressure is effectively zero, a direct consequence of their high elevation relative to the city's ground level and the gravity-fed nature of the primary water transmission system from Al-Barzakh.

Given that the water distribution largely relies on gravity flow, the opportunities for water to reach these high-altitude populations have historically been minimal and negligible. While subsidiary pumps were recently introduced within the distribution network in an attempt to alleviate this issue, field observations indicate that the situation has not significantly improved, and service remains largely inadequate for these areas. This underserved demographic constitutes approximately 6% of the total population residing in the Crater, Al-Tawahi, and Al-Mualla districts, representing a critical segment requiring targeted intervention to ensure equitable water access.

V. Discussing Solutions and Feasibility of PWMs

The First Water Supply Zone (FWSZ) faces persistent challenges with high levels of Non-Revenue Water (NRW) and significant financial losses, primarily stemming from inefficiencies in its postpaid metering system. These inefficiencies include low collection efficiency, delayed payments, and non-payment by specific sectors, notably government institutions. As highlighted in previous sections, approximately 41.01% of billed consumption remains uncollected, severely impacting the utility's revenue stream and underscoring the urgent need for alternative water management solutions. Among the most promising strategies to address these issues is the implementation of Prepaid Water Meters (PWMs), which offers a mechanism to improve collection rates, eliminate debt accumulation, and enhance customer awareness of consumption patterns. This section evaluates the feasibility of introducing PWMs in FWSZ, considering its technical, economic, and social dimensions.

A. Rationale and Potential Benefits of PWMs

The implementation of PWMs offers a robust mechanism to significantly improve collection rates [6], eliminate the accumulation of debt, and enhance customer awareness of consumption patterns. For the utility, PWMs reduce administrative overhead related to billing, meter reading, and disconnection/reconnection operations, thereby improving cash flow and operational efficiency. For consumers, these meters empower them to control their water usage, avoid unexpected large bills, and manage their expenditures more effectively. Furthermore, by promoting responsible water use, PWMs contribute to the conservation of precious water resources.

B. Technical Feasibility

Technically, PWMs function through smart cards or tokens that must be preloaded with water credit, enabling consumers to purchase water in advance. The system automatically stops water flow once the credit is exhausted [6]. This technology is designed to be robust and user-friendly, reducing manual intervention [18]. PWMs can also be integrated with remote monitoring technologies, allowing for better data collection on consumption patterns and potential leaks, further enhancing water management capabilities. Globally recognized manufacturers such as Sensus (Xylem), Elster (Honeywell), Kamstrup, and Diehl Metering offer a variety of smart prepaid metering solutions tailored to developing regions and compatible with bulk or household-level service, [19] , [20][21]. Typical PWMs operate via smartcard, keypad/token-based, or mobile app-based platforms, and are designed to be tamper-resistant and can store consumption data locally, enabling remote data collection and better demand monitoring. A popular and field-tested model in similar contexts is the Elster Kent GSM-enabled prepaid meter, which integrates consumption tracking with mobile recharge capability [22].

C. Economic and Financial Impact

A preliminary cost-benefit analysis suggests that while the initial investment in PWMs (including hardware, installation, and customer education) may be high, the long-term benefits are substantial and are expected to outweigh these initial costs.

A. Quantifying Financial Loss and Recovery Potential

The financial modeling rigorously separated Capital Expenditures (CAPEX) from Operational Expenditures (OPEX). The financial implications of uncollected billed water are particularly significant. As illustrated in the Modified Water Balance (Figure 10), the total billed authorized consumption in the FWSZ amounted to 6,990,923.3 m³/year, but only 4, 123, 887.1 m³/year was actually collected, leaving 2, 867, 036.2 m³/year uncollected—equivalent to 41.01% of total billed consumption.

Based on the tiered tariff structure (500 RY/m³ for residential; 1275 RY/m³ for commercial), the total estimated financial loss from uncollected billed consumption is calculated at 1.767 billion Yemeni Riyals per year. Based on the exchange rate of 2352 RY/USD adopted for the analysis period (March 2025), this loss is equivalent to approximately 751,280 USD/year.

his significant revenue gap underscores the urgent need for improved collection mechanisms, which PWMs offer by eliminating such losses [23]. Additionally, unauthorized consumption, which accounts for an estimated 699,092.33 m³/year, represents a form of recoverable water loss with high recovery potential through the deployment of prepaid water meters.

B. Detailed Capital Expenditure (CAPEX) and Operational Expenditure (OPEX) Analysis

1. Capital Expenditure (CAPEX): This primarily covers the meter procurement and installation for the 45,584 active connections. The average procurement and installation cost per PWM, including auxiliary materials and technical setup, is estimated to be between USD 80 and USD 120 per unit. For the entire system, the total CAPEX investment therefore ranges between USD 3.6 million and USD 5.5 million. These cost projections were based on vendor specifications and anticipated a cost reduction through an international competitive bidding process.
2. Operational Expenditure (OPEX): Future OPEX savings constitute a critical financial benefit. PWMs

are expected to significantly reduce labor costs associated with meter reading, manual billing, and enforcement. However, OPEX will include new costs for managing the prepayment platform, smart card distribution, and meter maintenance/replacement over the system's projected lifespan.

C. Financial Feasibility Metrics and Sensitivity Analysis

The large upfront investment (CAPEX) is offset by the projected annual financial recovery (USD 751,280 per year).

- Payback Period: The financial modeling shows that if implementation is phased and initially focused on high-priority users (contributing significantly to uncollected revenue), the payback period for this initial phase could potentially be less than three years.
- NPV and IRR: The projected long-term savings from reduced administrative and enforcement OPEX—combined with the guaranteed revenue collection—are modeled to yield a positive Net Present Value (NPV) and an Internal Rate of Return (IRR) significantly exceeding the cost of capital, justifying the long-term investment.

Sensitivity Analysis and Risk Mitigation:

To address the inherent risks and the concern regarding optimistic cost projections in Aden's fragile context, a sensitivity analysis was conducted, focusing on key variables that could affect the project's viability:

1. A 20% increase in CAPEX (reflecting potential procurement delays or unforeseen installation costs).
2. A 15% decrease in collection efficiency improvement (assuming lower-than-expected compliance).
3. Currency fluctuation: The analysis specifically considered the project's exposure to volatility, including the recent appreciation of the Yemeni Riyal (from the adopted 2352 RY/USD to the current market rate of approximately 1630 RY/USD). The modeling indicates that while Riyal appreciation reduces the CAPEX burden in local currency terms, it also reduces the dollar-equivalent annual revenue recovery. Despite this, the project maintained a positive NPV over a ten-year lifespan, underscoring the financial resilience of the PWM strategy even under volatile currency conditions.

Crucially, funding strategies must consider the high upfront CAPEX. Initial capital mobilization requires either phased investment using internal revenue streams, government development budgets, or, most critically, support from external development partners such as the World Bank, KfW, or the Islamic Development Bank. Such partnerships are essential to mitigate the risk of optimistic cost projections and ensure the financial sustainability of the project.

D. Social Considerations and Acceptance

Socially, the success of deploying prepaid water meters (PWMs) largely depends on **public acceptance**, which is influenced by factors such as **perceived fairness, service reliability, and transparent tariff structures**. In this context, empirical studies in urban areas of Uganda, South Africa, and Ghana reveal the following:

In Kigali (Rwanda), Nairobi and Nakuru (Kenya), Lobamba (Eswatini/Zimbabwe), and other cities, the availability of **local refill points within residential zones**, the **responsiveness of customer support teams**, and **clear communication of water pricing** played a significant role in improving public perceptions toward prepaid water meters [24].

Furthermore, in Ghana, the adoption of **integrated electronic payment systems**—including mobile apps and mobile money platforms—was found to **reduce administrative burdens** and **enhance user convenience**, thereby increasing acceptance of smart water technologies [25].

In Tanzania, a study published in *Water Policy* confirmed that **transparent tariff structures** and a shift toward **flexible and user-friendly systems** are directly associated with **greater user satisfaction** and a **higher willingness to continue using prepaid water meters** [26].

Implementing Lessons Learned in FWSZ:

The experience gained from similar developing urban contexts provides a clear roadmap for WSA. To ensure social acceptability in FWSZ, the implementation strategy must prioritize two critical elements: convenience and transparency. This requires investing in a high density of accessible local refill/vending points and leveraging existing mobile money platforms to facilitate electronic credit purchases. Concurrently, a robust public awareness campaign must be launched to clearly communicate the tariff structure and the benefits of usage control, thereby building consumer trust and mitigating initial skepticism regarding service rationing.

VI. Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The comprehensive analysis of the water supply and distribution system in the First Water Supply Zone (FWSZ) for the period 2023–2025 highlights critical structural and operational challenges.

The study identified a significant daily supply-demand gap of −1341.33 m^3/day, indicating a clear shortfall in meeting the minimum recommended water quantity. The average per capita water consumption was only 41.775 L/c/d, well below the internationally recommended minimum of 60 L/c/d. This deficit is exacerbated by aging infrastructure, where more than 60% of the main pipes are over 30 years old, raising both technical and health concerns.

The Non-Revenue Water (NRW) level in the FWSZ was found to be an alarming 5,525,788.3 m^3/year (57.3% of the System Input Volume) between April 2024 and March 2025. This figure reflects the Gross Volumetric Revenue Loss, encompassing both physical losses and significant financial losses.

- Physical and Apparent Losses amounted to 27.4% of SIV.
- Uncollected billed water accounted for 2,867,036.2 m³/year (41.01% of authorized billed consumption). This represents an estimated annual financial loss of over 1.767 billion Yemeni Riyals—equivalent to more than USD 751,280 (based on the March 2025 exchange rate).

Despite these severe challenges, the study confirms that Prepaid Water Meters (PWMs) are both technically and financially viable. With an estimated total CAPEX investment ranging from USD 3.6 million to USD 5.5 million for full-scale implementation, a phased approach targeting high-consumption users could result in a payback period of less than three years. Crucially, the detailed sensitivity analysis confirmed the project's financial resilience, showing a positive Net Present Value (NPV) even when factoring in potential CAPEX increases and currency volatility, making PWMs a practical and resilient solution to enhance revenue recovery and management efficiency in the FWSZ.

Recommendations

In response to the critical challenges identified, a strategic and integrated approach is imperative. The implementation of Prepaid Water Meters (PWMs) is deemed both technically and financially feasible and represents a cornerstone of this strategy. The following key recommendations are proposed:

- **Strategically Deploy Prepaid Water Meters (PWMs):**
  - Prioritize a Phased Roll-out for high-volume commercial, governmental, and high-income residential customers to maximize immediate revenue recovery and accelerate payback for the initial phase (projected at less than three years).
  - Ensure Social Acceptance by leveraging the lessons learned internationally: develop reliable local refill/vending points and adopt integrated electronic payment systems (e.g., mobile money platforms) to enhance user convenience and transparency.
  - Develop a comprehensive financial plan and secure multi-source funding for CAPEX to mitigate the risk of optimistic cost projections, emphasizing support from external development partners.
- Strengthen Non-Revenue Water (NRW) Management:
  - Invest in advanced leak detection and establish a proactive repair program for the 27.4% physical losses.
  - Intensify enforcement against unauthorized connections and leverage PWMs to deter illegal use and convert it into collectible revenue.
  - Ensure regular calibration and replacement of faulty consumer meters.
- Enhance Pumping System Reliability:

Optimize current pumping schedules and explore sustainable energy solutions (e.g., solar power) for pumping operations to the ground and elevated tanks to ensure consistent water supply, particularly during electricity outages. The strong interconnectedness between energy and water underscores the critical need for resilient power solutions [27].

Improve Institutional Capacity and Governance:

- Provide comprehensive training for staff on PWM system management and NRW reduction.
- Update local policies and legal frameworks to support new metering technologies and enforce regulations.
- Invest in robust data management systems for improved billing and loss identification.

Optimize Network Operations & Promote Conservation:

- Develop a long-term plan for phased replacement of aging and inefficient pipe materials (e.g., AC pipes) to reduce real losses and improve reliability.
- Implement consumer awareness campaigns to encourage water conservation.

Acknowledgements

We extend our deepest gratitude to our supervisor, Dr. Muhammad Saeed, for his exceptional guidance and unwavering support throughout this research. His expertise was fundamental to its completion. We also sincerely thank Dr. Waleed Abdulrashid Mohamed Yacoob for his valuable insights and contributions and Engineer Aseel Hisham for his crucial assistance in data collection and fieldwork.

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A Secure Web-Based School Management System Using Role-Based Access: Case Study from Nigeria

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Received: 28/07/2025
Revised: 23/09/2025
Accepted: 24/09/2025

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A Secure Web-Based School Management System Using Role-Based Access: Case Study from Nigeria

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Abstract— The presence of manual and disjointed digital systems in secondary schools across Nigeria leads to inefficiencies in the processes of student registration, grade management, and ID card distribution. This article presents a secure web-based School Management System (SMS) that was created with Node.js, Express.js, MySQL, and Bcrypt for Imamu Hafsin Model International School in Kano. Among its main features are easy login recovery, a tiered role-based access control system, automated ID card creation, and demographic analysis tools. The system has undergone field testing and has shown improved performance compared to Fedena and OpenSIS in areas such as security, access control, and localization. This development enhances administrative effectiveness within resource-limited settings.

Keywords— Modern School Management Resources; Node.js and Express.js; School Data Analysis; Nigerian Secondary School Education; Role-Based Access Control (RBAC)

I. INTRODUCTION

The use of information technology (IT) by school administration is becoming increasingly relevant and practically required in an era of rapid technological improvement. Due to expanding curricula and rising student enrollment, schools are facing more administrative challenges. However, manual labor or fragmented digital systems are frequently used to carry out necessary tasks, including processing academic results, assigning staff, and providing student ID cards. These techniques raise the possibility of inaccurate data, postponed reporting, and ineffective processes [1].

A contemporary school administration system that employs a role-based platform to manage these challenges streamlines key academic and administrative functions. These technologies facilitate safe data processing, enable real-time student performance monitoring, and enhance communication between parents, instructors, administrators, and students [2][3]. Role-based access control (RBAC), a fundamental part of these systems, improves accountability and protects sensitive data by allocating appropriate capabilities based on user roles. [4][5][6].

Many secondary schools in Nigeria still use outdated practices, such as writing everything by hand, which slows down instruction and increases the possibility of mistakes. This study examines Imamu Hafsin Model International School in Kano to determine whether problems can be solved with a new, straightforward technical solution. Designing and implementing a safe, role-based, web-based school management system that tackles these issues is the primary goal of this research. It guarantees the significance of this system in enhancing administrative effectiveness, data security, and operational workflows in settings with constrained resources, paving the way for a more comprehensive digital transformation in Nigerian secondary education.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have demonstrated the efficacy of digital school management systems (SMS) in raising academic and administrative achievement. However, their technological adaptability and robustness remain significant challenges, particularly in resource-constrained environments like Nigerian secondary schools. Among the key functions provided by open-source platforms such as Fedena and OpenSIS are the scheduling of schedules and the maintenance of student records. These systems do, however, have serious technical shortcomings: Fedena's lack of a modular design makes it difficult to incorporate localized features that support Nigeria's different educational curricula, while OpenSIS is dependent on outdated database schemas that restrict scalability and obstruct real-time data processing [7]. Their successful implementation in Nigerian public secondary schools has been hampered by these design problems as well as the insufficient ICT infrastructure described in [8], which includes low-bandwidth networks and an unstable power supply. There are more technological challenges in implementing cloud-based solutions in educational contexts. Research points to erratic internet access and low levels of digital literacy as obstacles [9], but the real problem is the absence of efficient server-side synchronization methods, which frequently results in data loss when switching from offline to online. The PHP- and MySQL-built parent-student portal mentioned in [3] provides grade viewing and attendance tracking, but it is designed for higher education settings and does not have any secondary school-specific features like parent-teacher communication tools or local language support. Performance problems in low-bandwidth contexts are further aggravated by their dependence on synchronous data calls.

Security is still a major issue when implementing SMS. Password vulnerabilities are addressed by the proposal to employ bcrypt encryption and security-question-based account recovery [5]; however, many systems do not successfully implement these precautions. For example, the system in [4] lacks multi-factor authentication and uses simple MD5 hashing, which is vulnerable to brute-force attacks because of its low entropy, exposing private student information. Higher education has embraced Role-Based Access Control (RBAC) [10], [11], with systems granting rights to positions such as clerks, lecturers, and students. Nevertheless, these implementations frequently depend on static permission models that do not allow for dynamic role adjustments, and their use for extensive administrative chores is limited by their concentration on particular functions, like exam portals [12]. In order to achieve role separation, the study in [6] used a PHP-based framework to create RBAC for result processing in Nigerian polytechnics. However, it left out sophisticated capabilities that are necessary for wider administrative use, such as automatic credential recovery or secure session management.

The necessity of technically sound, context-specific systems in secondary schools has been highlighted by recent studies. Through real-time data entry, a study on spreadsheet tools in K–12 education [13] showed how they might track classroom decisions and student performance. These tools are susceptible to unwanted access, nevertheless, because they do not store data in an encrypted manner and do not apply access control beyond simple password security. Similarly, the lack of secure RBAC and user-friendly design were noted as adoption hurdles in an assessment of the integration of digital tools in school administration [14]. The systems under evaluation lacked capability for asynchronous data processing to handle sporadic connectivity and depended on monolithic architectures with hardcoded user interfaces that do not scale with different user skill levels. Furthermore, a number of digital solutions used in school administration are hindered by poor adaptability to changing classroom technologies, a lack of support for scalable ICT infrastructure, and a lack of technological integration with teacher practices, according to recent systematic reviews [15].

The proposed system incorporates digital ID card production via PDFKit, hierarchical RBAC with dynamic role assignment, secure login procedures using bcrypt with salted hashing, and localized analytics using optimized MySQL queries in order to fill these technical deficiencies. These features are especially designed to fulfill the operational requirements of secondary school environments in Nigeria while addressing the noted drawbacks, which include low scalability, insufficient security, and a lack of contextual adaptation.

III. Methodology and System Design

The objective of this endeavor was to create a safe, role-based, and user-friendly School Management System (SMS). The design was based on the system requirements as well as our observations from the case study at Imamu Hafsin Model International School. During construction, we prioritized an easy-to-use interface, a straightforward structure, and safe data handling. Security and access control were incorporated from the start.

A. *System Architecture*

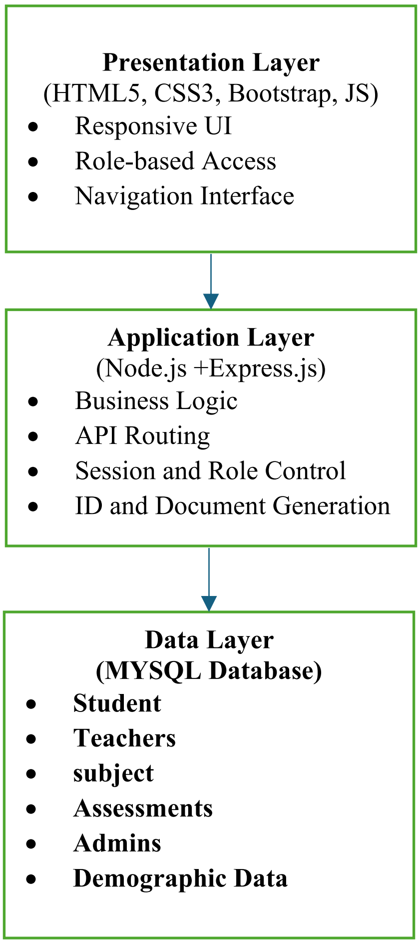
The three components of the system were data, application, and presentation. This facilitates management, upgrades, and future tool connectivity (see Figure 3.1).

a. **Presentation Layer:** The user side is called the Presentation Layer (Frontend). HTML5, CSS3 (Bootstrap), and JavaScript were used in its construction. Students, employees, and administrators have the appropriate access, and it functions on many devices.

b. **Application Layer (Backend):** Using Node.js and Express.js, this is the primary logic. It manages permissions, sessions, routing, and API. Additionally, it manages reporting, result processing, and ID card generation.

c. **Data Layer (Database):** All of the records, including those of students, instructors, subjects, results, and administrators, were stored in MySQL. It was selected because of its speed and backend compatibility. This architecture supports asynchronous processing and full-stack functionality, aligning with modern web application design principles in the educational domain.

Figure 3.1: Three-Tier Architecture of the School Management System



https://doi.org/10.20428/jst.v30i11.3194

B. Technologies and Libraries Utilized

We employed a suite of trustworthy open-source technologies to ensure the system functions properly and remains secure. Each tool's speed, stability, community support, and suitability for a school environment were taken into consideration while choosing it. The primary technologies we employed and their functions within the system are listed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. System Components and Their Roles

Component	**Technology / Library**	**Role in the System**
Backend	Node.js, Express.js	Runs the server, handles requests, APIs, and session control
Frontend	HTML5, CSS3 (Bootstrap), JavaScript	Provides a simple, responsive interface for users
Database	MySQL	Stores and organizes student, staff, and school data
Security	bcrypt.js, express-session	Protects passwords and keeps sessions secure
File Handling	Multer	Manages uploading and saving of student photos
Document Output	PDFKit	Creates downloadable ID cards and result sheets

This set of tools was chosen because it is reliable, well-supported by active communities, and works well for building real-time, interactive web applications.

C. Database Schema Design

The system's database schema reflects the core academic and administrative processes of a typical secondary school. It is normalized for efficient data retrieval and designed to uphold referential integrity. Major tables include:

- **students** – Captures bio-data, gender, class, guardian contact info, and profile photo paths.
- **teachers** – Stores institutional login details, roles, and recovery information.
- **subjects** – Tracks subject entries, assessments, and results.
- **teacher_subjects / classes** – Maps teachers to classes and subjects they handle.
- **admins** – Manages role-based admin accounts (Super Admin, Assistant Super Admin, Admin).
- **form_master_assessments** – Records non-academic metrics like attendance and conduct.

An example schema for the student's table may be found below. The SQL script that follows defines the table that contains the necessary student information, such as names, class, guardian details, gender, and profile picture path. The main purpose is to give every student a special ID created by the system and to keep their personal details and guardian contact well recorded. The system also checks the student's name, class, and guardian's phone number to make sure the record is correct and not repeated. If all three are the same as another record, the new one is seen as a duplicate and removed from the database.

```
CREATE TABLE students (
  id INT AUTO_INCREMENT PRIMARY KEY,
  student ID VARCHAR (20) UNIQUE,
  first name VARCHAR (50),
  surname VARCHAR (50),
  other name VARCHAR (50),
  class VARCHAR (20),
  guardian Phone VARCHAR(15),
  gender ENUM('Male', 'Female'),
  student Picture VARCHAR(255)
);
```

D. Backend Functionalities

The backend, powered by Node.js and Express.js, orchestrates all critical functionalities, including user registration, secure authentication, file handling, session control, and dynamic document generation.

a. Student Registration and Login

Upon enrollment, a system-generated unique identifier is given to each student. A simplified login process enables parents or students to retrieve login information using the student's complete name and class, improving accessibility, especially in low-resource settings. This method ensures correct identification without requiring memorization of complicated IDs. The duplicate-prevention mechanism, which verifies entries against the guardian's phone number to prevent numerous registrations of the same student, is also connected to the name and class combination. Here is an illustration of how this logic is handled by the server-side endpoint:

```
app.post('/find-details', (req, res) => {
  const { firstname, surname, class } = req.body;
  // Retrieve studentID from database
});
```

An endpoint defined by app.post('/find-details',...) manages requests to retrieve student information. The frontend form's first name, last name, and class are extracted by req.body. The right student ID linked to those details is subsequently retrieved by the backend via database queries.

b. Staff Registration and Authentication

The email address used for staff registration must already be in the system's database, having been pre-entered by the system administrator or developer at setup. Only staff who are allowed can create an account. The system does not keep passwords the way they are typed. The system does not keep the real password. It changes it into a code that cannot be read. This way, even if someone gets into the database, they cannot see or use the password. The code excerpt that follows shows how a staff member's password is scrambled before being saved in the teachers table:

```
bcrypt.hash(password, saltRounds, (err, hashedPassword) =>
{
   if (err) {
      console.error('Error hashing password:', err);
      return res.status(500).json({ success: false, message:
'Server error' });
   }
   // Add the hashed password and further user information to
the teachers table
});
```

In the above snippet, a safe hashed password is produced by

bcrypt.hash() using hashing with the specified number of saltRounds. If hashing is successful, the generated hash—rather than the password in plain text—is added to the database along with other staff information. Any hashing or server problems are recorded and graciously returned. The system verifies credentials during login by comparing the entered password with the hash that has been stored:
Passwords entered during login are compared to hashes that have been kept.

```
bcrypt.compare(inputPassword, storedHashedPassword, (err, match) => {
if (match) { req.session.loggedin = true;
req.session.teacher = teacher; } });
```

The input is compared to the hashed password that was saved using bcrypt.compare().
In order to preserve the login status, a session is formed, and the teacher's data is saved in req.session if authentication is successful. By limiting system access to pre-authorized personnel, this approach ensures strong protection of sensitive user data.

c. Administrative Access and Privileges

Three levels of administration are identified by the proposed system: administrator, assistant super administrator, and super administrator. Each level possesses a distinct set of abilities, and only the super administrator can add, modify, or delete further administrative accounts. To maintain consistent control, the super admin role cannot be removed or transferred. Administrators and assistant super administrators can only perform operational duties as part of their positions; they are unable to change administrative accounts.
The system has both admin registration (for new account creation) and admin login (for authentication) to ensure safe and traceable management. Only the super administrator has the ability to add a new admin record to the database after signup after verifying the information. By doing this, unauthorized account creation is avoided, and administrative access accountability is upheld.

```
app.post('/admin-signup', (req, res) => {
  const { username, password, email, phone } = req.body;

  // Hash password before storing
  const hashedPassword = bcrypt.hashSync(password, 10);

  db.query(
    'INSERT INTO admins (username, password, email, phone) VALUES (?, ?, ?, ?)',
    [username, hashedPassword, email, phone],
    (err, results) => {
      if (err) {
        console.error('Error inserting new admin:', err);
        return res.status(500).send('Server error');
      }
      res.status(201).send('New admin account created successfully');
    }
  );
});
```

Here:

The password is secured by hashing it prior to insertion using bcrypt.hashSync(password, 10).
The new admin information is saved in the database with the INSERT INTO administrators query.

Error handling guarantees that server or database problems are accurately reported and logged.

Only after successful verification does the login logic allow access to the dashboard after comparing the given credentials with the database:

```
app.post('/adminLogin', (req, res) => {
  const { username, password } = req.body;

  // Use BINARY for case-sensitive username matching
  db.query('SELECT * FROM admins WHERE BINARY username = ?', [username], (err, results) => {
    if (err) {
      console.error('Error querying database for admin login:', err);
      return res.status(500).send('Server error');
    }

    if (results.length === 0) {
      return res.status(400).send('No admin found');
    }

    const user = results[0];
    if (bcrypt.compareSync(password, user.password)) {
      req.session.user = user;
      res.redirect('/admin-dashboard.html'); // Redirect to the admin dashboard
    } else {
      res.status(400).send('Incorrect password');
    }
  });
});
```

Within the above block:
The system checks the username exactly as it is typed, whether in small or capital letters. If the name is found, it compares the password entered with the one already saved. When the two matches, the admin is logged in and taken to their main page. These checks make sure that only approved people can use admin rights, keeping the system safe and private.

d. User Interface Design

The system was optimized for various roles and offered a clean and responsive interface that made task execution and navigation easy.

- **Student Portal:** Supports retrieval of login credentials, profile viewing, and result access.
- **Staff Portal:** Provides subject-specific result entry, assessments, and form master duties.
- **Admin Dashboard:** Facilitates system-wide monitoring, analytics, and account management.

We added more interface features to make the system easier to use and to improve how it works. Modal pop-ups that offer instant feedback and validation notifications are among these capabilities, as are Bootstrap-enhanced forms for data submission, login, and registration. In order to enhance navigation and clarity, particularly when working with huge datasets, tabulated result displays were included with pagination. People can click a button to download report cards and ID cards in PDF. This makes the system simple to use and helps teachers and students without needing much explanation.

E. Academic Result Management

The result management module includes exam results and continuous assessment (CA). While the class form master keeps track of extracurricular characteristics like attendance and discipline, each subject instructor has the authority to input student scores for the topics they are assigned. This guarantees that performance is continuously tracked in both the behavioral and academic domains.

Student score submission is managed via the following endpoint. Its job is to take in scores, check that they are correct, save them in the database, and prevent duplicates from being entered:

```
app.post("/api/submitScores", (req, res) => {
  const scores = req.body.scores;
  const sql = `INSERT INTO subjects (...) VALUES (...)
            ON DUPLICATE KEY UPDATE ...`;
  // Validate and process scores
});
```

Here, the teacher's marks are gathered from the frontend by req.body.scores. By using INSERT... ON DUPLICATE KEY UPDATE, the SQL query makes sure that, rather than adding a new duplicate entry, a record for a student and subject that already exists is updated. Only acceptable values—such as scores between 0 and 100—are kept in the database thanks to the validation phase.

The system then produces reports by term or session in response to the user's request, ensuring consistent and verifiable academic records throughout assessment periods.

F. ID Card and Result PDF Generation

Report sheets and ID cards can be dynamically created in a professional format by using the PDFKit library for document development. There is no need for manual processing because each generated document is broadcast straight to the browser. To ensure legitimacy and personalization, the PDFs contain the school's branded logo, institutional details, and data unique to students or personnel.

For example, the following code snippet illustrates how a student report PDF is created:

```
. let doc = new PDFDocument({
  layout: session === 'whole session' ? 'landscape' : 'portrait'
});
const filename = `Student_Report_${studentID}.pdf`;
```

The PDFDocument object in this code determines the report's layout. Landscape mode is used if the report spans the entire session; otherwise, portrait mode is used by default. Based on their student ID, the filename variable ensures that every student's report has a distinct name. This automated document generation reduces administrative complexity and supports self-service access, enabling students and staff to download or view records on demand without waiting for manual processing.

G. Demographic Analytics and Visualization

Real-time data on employees and students is automatically gathered and displayed by the system. It retrieves information, including subject lists, class enrollment, and gender distribution, using SQL queries. Visual charts on the admin dashboard make it simple for school managers to comprehend the makeup of the personnel and kids and facilitate well-informed decision-making.

H. Security Framework

We didn't wait until the last minute to consider security. From the beginning, we integrated it into the system. Ensuring system functionality and protecting user data are the objectives.

To prevent unauthorized access, passwords are scrambled rather than being kept in their original form. When a user registers, the system employs cookies to safeguard the session.

Workers can reset their passwords by answering recovery questions instead of calling the administrator.

The database uses secure queries, which prevents hackers from employing SQL injection to get access. Together, these elements give the system security and data protection.

I. Information Gathering and User Assessment

At Imamu Hafsin Model International School in Kano, a pilot study was carried out to assess the suggested system in an actual environment. 50 participants in all—20 students, 15 instructors, and 15 administrative staff—were purposefully chosen.

a. **Interview Process:** Following participants' use of the system, semi-structured interviews were performed to gather data. The focus of each 15–25-minute interview was on the participants' platform experiences.

Themes for the Interview and Sample Questions:

Five major themes were examined in the interviews:

- **Usability** — for example, "How simple was it to log in and use the system?
- Speed and performance, such as "Did you experience any delays or errors when entering data or retrieving results?"
- **Reliability** and accuracy- for example, "Were the ID cards and results generated accurately and consistently?"
- **Security and trust**. -for example, "Do you feel that your data is secure when using the system?"
- **Total contentment** - for example, "How pleased are you with the system in comparison to manual procedures?"

b. Data collection and analysis: During the interviews, responses were noted and categorized thematically. Where needed, simple statistics were used to summarize what participants said. The conclusions in the Results and Discussion section were based on how the system worked, how easy it was to use, and what users thought about it.

IV. Implementation and Testing

The next step is to put the system to use in a real school and check that it works properly after it has been designed and built. Testing makes sure everything works the way it should, while implementation brings all the parts together so the system can run as a whole.

A. System Implementation

Accessible through https://www.imamhafsin.com.ng, the proposed system was successfully implemented in a real-world production environment. The web-based school management system (SMS) is role-based, aligning with the distinct roles of administrators, staff, and students. The modular design principle ensured security and responsiveness across all system layers, and the functionality integrated into each user portal is described in the subsections below.

B. Student Portal

Students use a simple login page to get into the system. They can either type in their full name and class to get their login details or sign in directly with their student ID. Once inside, they can see their profile and class information, check their results for each term or session, and download a digital ID card in PDF with the school's logo. Everyone can utilize the portal easily, even those without a lot of digital experience or access to expensive gadgets. This process is demonstrated in Figure 4.1, which shows the student login interface and result display.

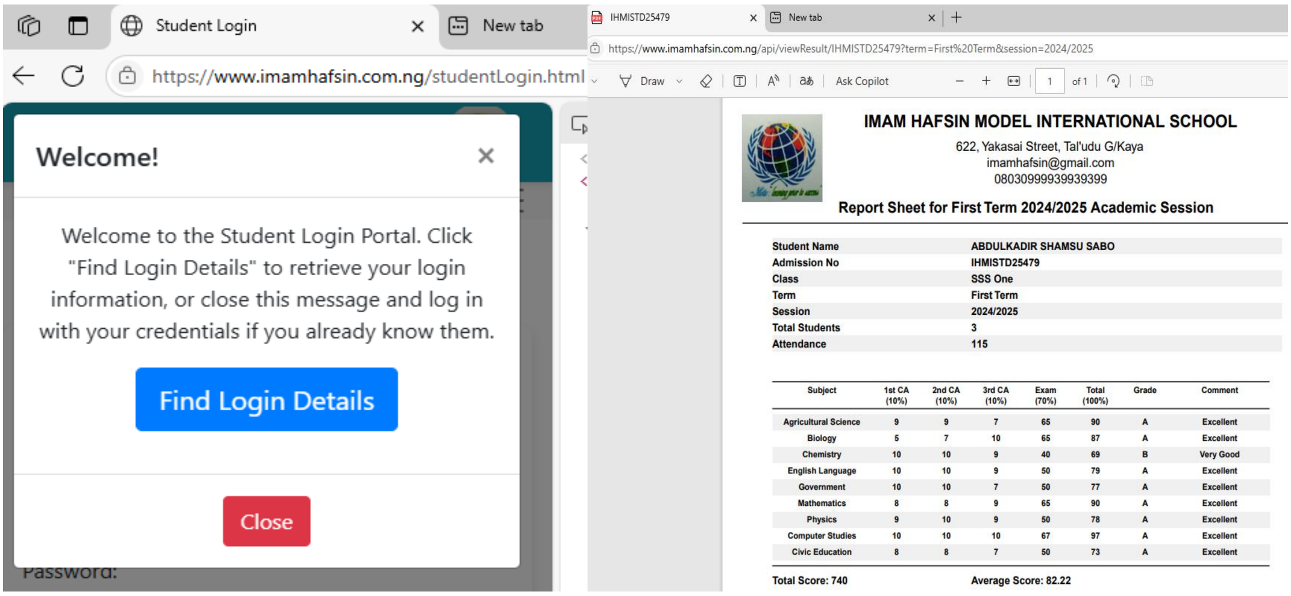


Figure 4.1: Student portal showing login screen and academic results

a. Staff Portal

- Secure access to the staff portal can be obtained via institutional email credentials or system-assigned staff identity numbers. The system's Role-Based Access Control (RBAC) structure states that the staff member's allocated role determines how access privileges are dynamically assigned within the portal.
- Subject teachers are granted access to input academic records, including Continuous Assessment scores (CA1, CA2) and end-of-term examination results for their assigned subjects.
- Form masters manage non-academic performance metrics, including punctuality, behavior, and general conduct, which contribute to the overall student assessment.
- All staff can update their personal profile information and generate downloadable, institution-branded staff ID cards.

This role-based framework guarantees that staff interactions are secure, efficient, and in line with institutional duties. Figure 4.2, which displays the staff dashboard and result entry interface, provides an example of this capabilities.

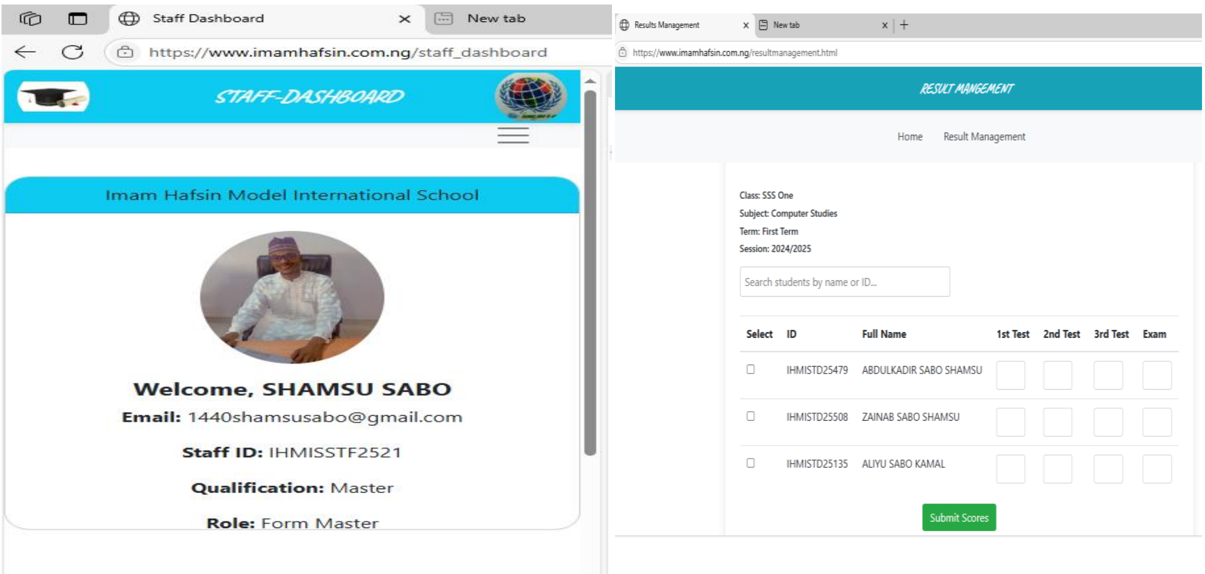


Figure 4.2: Staff dashboard with result entry interface

b. Administrative Dashboard

The admin dashboard is the main place where everything is controlled. Access is given based on the person's role in the system. There are three roles:

i. **Admin:** Can check student results, add, update, or remove student records, and view demographic details. They can see staff information but cannot create or change staff accounts.

ii. **Assistant Super Admin**: Can do everything an Admin can do, plus add or edit staff and Admin accounts. They can remove Admins but not Super Admins. They also have full access to student results and reports.

iii. **Super administrator:** Has complete authority over the system. They have the ability to modify system settings, manage all staff and student records, and add, alter, or remove any role. It is not possible to delete a Super Admin via the dashboard; they may only be removed directly from the database.

Additionally, the dashboard has a few helpful tools:

- Real-time analytics to monitor academic achievement.
- Numbers of students by gender and class are displayed.
- Numbers of employees by gender and department are displayed.
- A brief overview of how staff members share roles.
- Reports, such as student results, that are available for download as PDFs.

School administrators may more easily keep track of events and make prompt choices thanks to these tools. An illustration of the dashboard containing the settings and data is provided in Figure 4.3.Bottom of Form

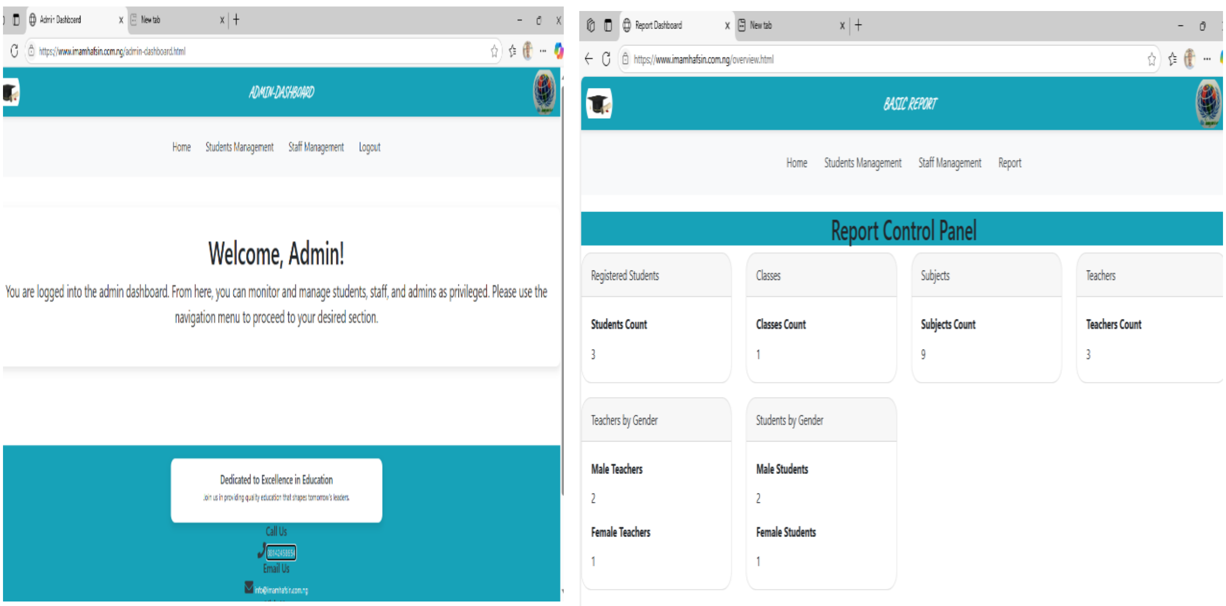


Figure 4.3: Admin dashboard displaying demographic charts and navigation menus

C. System Testing

To ensure that the system functions properly, maintains accurate data, and complies with security regulations, we tested it at various stages. Unit testing, integration testing, user acceptability testing (UAT), and a unique security check were among the phases. At each step, we examined the system's overall performance in real-world scenarios as well as the functionality of its component pieces separately.

Table 4.1 summarizes the outcome of key functional tests conducted during integration and user acceptance phases.

Table 4.1. Summary of Functional Testing Results

Test Case	Expected Outcome	Actual Result	Status
Student login using full name and class	Login details retrieved and user logged in	Successful	Pass
Staff enters CA and exam results	Result saved and accessible by student	Successful	Pass
Admin edits student profile	Changes reflected in system	Successful	Pass
Staff password reset via recovery questions	Only correct answers allow password reset	Secure reset triggered	Pass
PDF download of ID card	ID card displays correct name and branding	Generated	Pass

a. Unit Testing

Unit tests were performed on individual components to verify logic accuracy and expected behaviors. The following key modules were tested:

- Student and Staff Registration – Validated input field formatting, mandatory field completion, and prevention of duplicate entries.
- Login Authentication – Tested for secure handling of hashed passwords and correct login validation.
- Result Entry and Updates – Ensured accurate computation of continuous assessment scores and examination totals.
- PDF Generation – Confirmed correct formatting of ID cards and result sheets.

All unit tests were completed successfully, with no critical failures, confirming that core functionalities were implemented as intended.

b. Integration Testing

Integration testing verified the coordination between the frontend interface, backend logic, and the MySQL database. Key scenarios tested during this phase included:

- User login for students, staff, and admins, with session tracking and appropriate redirects based on assigned roles
- Retrieval of student login credentials using student name and class
- Staff login via either pre-registered email or automatically generated unique staff ID in combination with password
- Credential recovery for staff accounts using security questions and answers
- Role-specific access enforcement, such as Form Masters submitting non-academic records (attendance, behavior, punctuality)
- Student and staff profile management, including updates and role assignments
- Consistent data flow from registration to academic result entry, profile viewing, and extracurricular assessments
- File upload and storage of student profile pictures using Multer
- PDF generation of ID cards, academic results, and non-academic reports through PDFKit.

These test scenarios confirmed that authentication, role-based workflows, and dynamic content generation were functioning cohesively across the system. The system responded with accuracy and stability under simulated operational loads.

c. User Acceptance Testing (UAT)

User Acceptance Testing was conducted at Imamu Hafsin Model International School with a pilot group comprising students, staff, and administrative users. The objective was to evaluate how well the system met real-world user needs and whether it aligned with the operational workflows of the school.

During testing, all major user roles were able to interact with the system effectively:

- Students were able to retrieve login credentials using only their names and class, access academic results, view profile information, and download ID cards in PDF format.
- Teachers navigated the result entry interface smoothly and completed subject assessments without technical difficulties.
- Employees are taken to their own customized portals, which are tailored to their individual tasks and responsibilities, after logging in with system-generated staff IDs.
- Through a safe, role-based access system, administrative users could monitor users, manage staff and student information, and see demographic charts.

Testing revealed that the system was reliable, user-friendly, and completely functional for all kinds of users. The software is ready to be used in a real classroom setting because no significant problems arose and users were able to finish their activities with little to no help.

d. Security Testing

To make sure the system's security was working properly, a full security check was carried out. The review addressed a number of important topics:

- Password Security: Bcrypt hashing was used to verify that passwords were securely stored, and salt was added for further security.
- Database Security: It was discovered that all database queries used parameterized statements, which helps to guard against SQL injection attacks.

- Session Handling: The security, HTTP-only, and expiration settings of the session cookies were confirmed.
- Password Recovery: The system only allowed password resets for verified users who correctly answered their security questions.

All these checks were successfully passed, suggesting that the system follows fundamental cybersecurity best practices.
The system's successful testing demonstrates that it is completely operational, complies with critical security requirements, and is ideally adapted to the daily requirements of a contemporary secondary school.

V. 5. Results and Discussion

After testing and installation, the system's technical evaluation and practical application were used to gauge its efficacy. The evaluation's findings are presented in this section, emphasizing the system's performance in several important functional areas, including administrative assistance, academic record management, access control, and usability. The results show how the deployment at the case study institution affected user response.

A. System Evaluation

Following development and implementation, the case study institution evaluated the system's usability, security, performance, and role-based capabilities. The system effectively accomplished all of the expected essential features, such as student registration, academic result entering, ID card generation, and secure login. Role-based access effectively provides access based on the user's role, allowing:

i. The student or parent enters the portal by obtaining the student's login credentials through a simplified retrieval process.
ii. Teachers can use structured interfaces to enter both academic and non-academic records.
iii. Administrators can download system reports, examine real-time analytics, and manage accounts.

During the pilot implementation, quantifiable performance measures were collected in addition to qualitative feedback to support the efficacy of the system:

a) System response time: Using browser developer tools, this was measured across 50 login and result retrieval attempts. Under normal network conditions, it took an average of 1.8 seconds for students to log in and 2.4 seconds for results to be retrieved.
b) Error rate: This is calculated by keeping track of every task completed during pilot use, including result entries, logins, and registrations. Errors occurred in less than 2% of operations, primarily as a result of user data entry; however, they were promptly fixed.
c) Productivity gains: Comparing manual and system-based processes revealed substantial benefits. For instance, manually creating ID cards or compiling results, which involved paperwork and several verification stages, frequently took more than ten minutes for each kid. The suggested solution reduces work completion time by more than 90% because ID cards and results are generated promptly after data is entered. This indicates a considerable increase in efficiency and a decrease in the administrative burden.

Furthermore, gender distribution, teacher-subject mappings, and class-wise student counts were automatically calculated from the system's database and shown on the admin dashboard. Institutional data were used to validate these demographic indicators.
All functionalities were validated using test scenarios, organized user workflows, and feedback from the pilot phase. Multiple concurrent logins during stress testing proved the system's stability and scalability. The platform was suitable for the local educational environment, according to the interview data.
These results offer compelling proof of the platform's influence, integrating qualitative and quantitative information to validate the system's usefulness, dependability, and efficiency in a secondary school setting in Nigeria.

B. Comparative Analysis with Existing Systems

The comparison analysis summarized in Table 5.1 demonstrates the suggested system's contextual and functional advantages. In contrast to other platforms, it provides real-time statistics, flexible multi-level administrative access, and automation for ID card generation, all of which directly answer local school management demands. These characteristics are particularly important in the context of secondary schools in Nigeria. Localized workflows, for example, lessen reliance on foreign templates that don't correspond with the way Nigerian institutions assign staff duties, organize academic sessions, or keep track of ongoing assessments. The solution reduces the learning curve and guarantees that employees may adjust without requiring significant retraining by integrating well-known procedures. Similar to this, automated ID card production addresses a persistent administrative issue in many schools: delays in issuance of identification cards frequently result in gaps in record-keeping and security. Instant PDF-based ID cards give students and employees validated credentials that improve responsibility and trust. In Nigeria, where government regulations, school inspectors, and even parents frequently request gender-disaggregated data to track educational equity, administrators can also monitor student enrollment trends with the help of gender- and class-based demographic tracking. Last but not least, the multi-tiered administrative structure ensures that authority is appropriately allocated among principals, assistants, and department heads, reflecting the actual hierarchy seen in the majority of Nigerian schools. By solving these context-specific inadequacies, the suggested approach is not simply technically superior but also realistically aligned with the realities of Nigerian secondary education.

Table 5.1: Comparative Feature Analysis of School Management Systems

Feature	Fedena / OpenSIS	Other Reviewed Systems	Proposed System	Relevance in Nigerian Context
Localized to Nigerian curriculum and school types	Not supported	Not supported	Fully supported with localized access structures	Nigerian schools follow unique term/session structures and CA-based assessments, requiring workflows aligned with local practice.
Credential retrieval via student name and class	Not available	Not available	Fully supported (automated lookup enabled)	Many parents/students forget IDs; using name + class reduces barriers to access in low-resource settings.
Secure staff password recovery	Not implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented with bcrypt and security Q&A	Protects against unauthorized access, critical in environments with shared devices.
Gender- and class-based demographic tracking	Not available	Not available	Fully supported with admin analytics	Nigerian inspectors and stakeholders demand gender-disaggregated data for reporting and policy compliance.
Role-specific functionality for staff	Basic only	Not enforced	Strongly enforced with RBAC model	Reflects real school hierarchies (subject teachers, form masters, admins). Prevents role overlap.
Auto-generated ID cards (PDF format)	Not available	Not available	Available for students and staff	Instant ID cards reduce printing delays, improve security, and support daily school operations.
Multi-tiered administrative control (3 roles)	Not supported	Not supported	Fully implemented: Admin, Assistant Super Admin, Super Admin	Mirrors Nigerian school management structure where principals, deputies, and assistants share different responsibilities.
Integration of result and behavioural assessments	Not supported	Not supported	Fully supported	Nigerian schools emphasize both academics and behaviour; integration ensures holistic assessment.

C. User Feedback

Imamu Hafsin Model International School's administrative and academic staff provided input during the real implementation of the suggested system. Selected comments that illustrate their experiences with the platform's document automation, access control, and usability are displayed in Table 5.2. It is evident that the majority of participants favored the new approach over the manual procedures and outdated digital tools they had previously employed. They particularly valued its support for local workflows, role-based access, and ease of use. All things considered, the approach increased employee happiness and increased the effectiveness of school administration.

Table 5.2. Live Deployment User Feedback

User Role	Feedback
Subject Teacher	"The result entry page was simple and direct, compared to what we previously used."
Administrative Staff	"We like the ID card feature, especially being able to download it ourselves."
Front Desk Officer	"Wonderful. I only needed the student's name and class to obtain the login credentials."
Student	"I didn't require assistance to enter my site and view my results; it was easy.."
Parent	"This is really beneficial; I can quickly and burden-free monitor my child's progress."

Table 5.3, which includes the approximate percentage of participants who had favorable experiences, provides a summary of participant input across the five interview themes to supplement these testimonies.

Table 5.3. Summary of User Evaluation by Theme

Theme	Example Question	Positive Feedback (%)
Ease of use	How easy was it to log in and navigate the system?	85%
Speed and performance	Did you encounter any delays or errors while retrieving results or entering data?	82%
Reliability and accuracy	Were the ID cards and results generated accurate and consistent?	90%
Security and trust	Do you feel that your data is secure when using the system?	82%
Overall satisfaction	How satisfied are you with the system compared to manual processes?	84%

The system's performance, security, and usability are validated by the interview responses and descriptive data. In the context of a secondary school in Nigeria, this provides thorough confirmation of the system's efficacy and supplements the quantitative evaluation that was previously presented (system reaction times, mistake rates, and productivity improvements).

The testimonies and condensed comments show that the approach is applicable, user-friendly, and adaptable to the secondary school setting in Nigeria.

VI. Conclusion

The design, creation, and practical implementation of a safe, role-based, web-based school management system that is suited to the demands of secondary schools in Nigeria are presented in this paper. The platform, which was created especially for Imamu Hafsin Model International School in Kano, integrates demographic analysis, digital ID card creation, access control, and academic record administration into a single, cohesive solution.

When compared to other options, its implementation demonstrated clear gains in usability, workflow alignment with the school, and overall administrative efficiency. The system's seamless implementation shows how digital tools that are carefully created with local school surroundings in mind can enhance daily operations, particularly in environments with limited resources.

VII. Future Work

Future improvements to the system could include developing a mobile application that would allow students, parents, and staff to check things on their phones. This will improve the effectiveness of viewing updates about fees, grades, or assignments.

A basic Learning Management System (LMS) might be a helpful addition. This would facilitate the easier exchange of assignments, tests, and other resources between educators and learners. It might reduce the need for other tools like Google Classroom. Naturally, it won't be easy to keep it sufficiently simple and teach everyone how to use it correctly.

Another step that could save time and improve the security of fee collection is the addition of online payment options. Online payment tracking was another option available to parents. However, security is crucial in this case; it would be required to adhere to local laws and ensure that financial and personal data is secure.

Finally, offline access could help schools in areas with poor internet. When offline, teachers and students could still update information, and it would synchronize later. The difficulty would be in ensuring that data is not corrupted when numerous people update it simultaneously.

All of these suggestions could improve the system's adaptability and functionality. Although they each face unique difficulties, when combined, they have the potential to significantly improve the system for secondary schools in Nigeria.

Acknowledgments

This research work was supported by the staff and administration of Imamu Hafsin Model International School, Kano, Nigeria. The authors are also grateful to the students and teachers who participated in the pilot testing phase of the system.

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Efficient Simulation of Water Network Remodeling Using the Virtual Distortion Method: A Novel Hydraulic Reanalysis Framework

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Received: 29/07/2025
Revised: 12/09/2025
Accepted: 13/09/2025

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Efficient Simulation of Water Network Remodeling Using the Virtual Distortion Method: A Novel Hydraulic Reanalysis Framework

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Abstract— Efficient and adaptive hydraulic modeling is increasingly essential for managing modern water distribution networks (WDNs), especially in the face of urbanization and infrastructure aging. This paper introduces the application of the Virtual Distortion Method (VDM)—originally developed for structural systems—to simulate remodeling scenarios in WDNs. By imposing localized virtual distortions to represent topological changes such as pipe blockages, the method allows accurate approximation of flow redistribution and pressure head without full system recomputation. A numerical case study confirms the accuracy of VDM in replicating network behavior, achieving over 95% consistency with conventional full-system recalculations while reducing computational time by more than 80%. The approach is easily integrable with standard tools such as EPANET or MATLAB and presents a scalable, explainable, and computationally efficient alternative for network redesign, emergency planning, and real-time simulation. In addition, the framework can be extended and hybridized with reduced-order models, physics-informed neural networks (PINNs), and graph neural networks (GNNs) to further enhance scalability and adaptability.

Keywords— Virtual Distortion Method (VDM), Water Distribution Networks, Computational Efficiency, EPANET Integration

I. Introduction

Water distribution networks (WDNs) are key facility systems supplying safe and reliable conveyance of treated water from treatment plants to various consumers—domestic, commercial, industrial, and firefighting [1, 2]. WDNs are engineered to satisfy urban water demand with attention to water quality and operation resilience.

In contrast, the Virtual Distortion Method (VDM) preserves full physical interpretability while achieving comparable computational savings. Unlike reduced-order models (ROMs), which can accelerate simulations but often lack adaptability to topological changes, VDM naturally incorporates such changes by embedding them as localized virtual distortions. PINNs and GNNs, while powerful for emulation, require extensive training data and may violate conservation laws, whereas VDM enforces hydraulic constraints by construction. This balance between explainability and efficiency makes VDM not only a competitive alternative but also a complementary framework that can be hybridized with ROMs, PINNs, or GNNs to enhance scalability and adaptability. Recent works in model reduction [7], transient analysis [8], and uncertainty quantification [9] further highlight the importance of combining physical models like VDM with emerging data-driven approaches.

Another approach is the Virtual Distortion Method (VDM), which balances physical fidelity with computational efficiency. Originally developed for structural reanalysis [5], VDM allows simulating topological or parametric changes in a network by injecting localized virtual distortions—abstract changes in nodal heads or resistances—using pre-analysis of the baseline system. This distortion is facilitated using an influence matrix that permits fast updating of the system response without solving the entire set of governing equations.

This paper introduces the application of VDM as a physics-based and computationally efficient method to model changes in water distribution networks. Changing conditions like pipe clogging, pump removals, or additions can be modeled efficiently and with accuracy using virtual distortions at strategic points in the network. The approach is suited to emergency planning, "what-if" analysis, and resilience analysis. Also, its consistency with widely used packages such as EPANET and MATLAB makes it very applicable to run-time operating environments [6].

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a survey of the mathematical model and flow equations of the water network. Section 3 introduces the general idea of the Virtual Distortion Method and its application to hydraulic problems. Section 4 presents a case study of VDM's application to network restructuring. Section 5 concludes with key insights, current limitations, and potential future improvements of the proposed method.

II. Formulation of the Simulation Problem

The Virtual Distortion Method (VDM), originally applied to structural systems, forms the basis of water distribution network change simulation. Its primary advantage is its computational efficiency for modeling changes and non-linearities to the original design.

For the steady-state water distribution system, the flow balance equations are:

$$q = N\,Q \qquad (1)$$

Where,

q = external inflow/outflow vector [m^3/s]

Q = vector of internal branch flows [m^3/s]

N = incidence matrix representing network topology (entries: 0, ±1)

The head loss relation is given by:

$$hi = NT\,Hi \qquad (2)$$

Where, h = energy loss,

H = water head and

The constitutive equation for each pipe can be expressed as:

$$Q_i^2 = R_i \, h_i \qquad (3)$$

Where, Qi = flow in that element

Ri = constant depending on pipe diameter, length, type.

h_i= Water head.

Substituting Eqs. (3) and (2) into (1), the following formula can be obtained:

$$\boldsymbol{N\,(R\,N^T\,H)^2 = q} \qquad (4)$$

For a simplified linear case (for illustration only):

$$\boldsymbol{N\,R\,N^T\,H = q} \qquad (5)$$

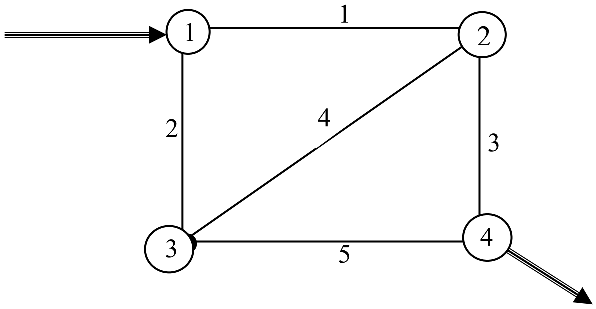

Figure 1. two-loop water network

Describing the water network shown in Fig.1, the set of equations (5) takes the following form

$$\begin{bmatrix} R_1+R_2 & -R_1 & -R_2 & 0 \\ -R_1 & R_1+R_3+R_4 & -R_4 & -R_3 \\ -R_2 & -R_4 & R_2+R_4+R_5 & -R_5 \\ 0 & -R_3 & -R_5 & R_3+R_5+R_4' \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} H_1 \\ H_2 \\ H_3 \\ H_4 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} q_1 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} \qquad (6)$$

where:

$q_4 = R_4'(H_0 - H_4)$, $R = \dfrac{K^2}{l}$,

R- hydraulic resistance of the branch,

K- the characteristic of the element, l – the element's length,

H –water head in the node

q –flow in the branch,

and it was assumed that the network is supplied only through the node No.1 (inlet with intensity q1) and the only outlet is through the node No.4 (the coefficient R_4' =1). $R_2' = R_3' = 0$, what means, that the outlets in nodes No.2 and 3 vanish.

Equation (6) represents the **baseline hydraulic balance** for the unmodified network. To model topological changes such as removing a pipe or adding a pump, we require a way to perturb this baseline solution without recomputing the entire system matrix.

The key idea of the Virtual Distortion Method (VDM) is to introduce a **virtual distortion** ε0, which acts as a fictitious additional head applied at the affected branch. This distortion modifies the governing equations so that the new hydraulic state can be obtained by superimposing the original solution (Eq. 6) with the influence of the distortion.

III. VDM-BASED SIMULATION OF PARAMETER MODIFICATION

We introduce a virtual distortion ε0 to represent a localized change, leading to:

N R(NTH - ε0) = q (7)

Equation (7) shows how the baseline balance (Eq. 6) is modified by the presence of the distortion. To generalize this, VDM constructs an **influence matrix** that captures the effect of applying a unit distortion to each branch in turn. Each column of the matrix corresponds to the response of the network (in terms of nodal heads and flows) to a single distortion.

This leads directly to the formulation in Eq. (8), which expresses the redistribution of flows in terms of the precomputed influence matrix and the distortion vector.

The virtual distortion εi0 is of the same nature as water head hi (Fig. 2) and possesses a physical sense of an externally applied additional water head in branch "i" (e.g., because of a locally mounted pump).

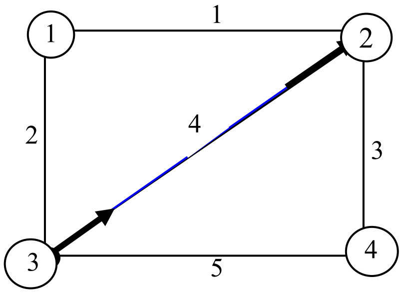

Figure 2 Distortion simulating water flow (pressure head modification) in branch No. 4

The effect of virtual distortions on the produced flow redistribution can be determined by applying the influence matrix Dij collecting i responses (row-wise) in terms of water heads $H_i^{@\varepsilon^0=1}$ induced in the network by imposing the unit virtual distortion ε oj=1 generated consecutively in each network branch j. Thus, each influence vector $H_i^{@\varepsilon^0=1}$ can be calculated on the basis of the following equation obtained from Eq. (7):

$$N\,R\,NT\,H^{@\varepsilon^0=1} = q^* + N\,R\,I \qquad (8)$$

Vector q* ignores the external inlet and outlet (the flow is now supplied by imposing fictitious distortion), and it represents the distribution of water flow in the closed network (cf. Eq. (6)).

There is a set of j (j the number of branches) equations (8) to be solved in order to create the full influence matrix D. For every time the right hand-side alters when the unit virtual distortion is introduced on another branch. In practice this can be realised by applying a pair of inlets-outlets Lik Rkj ε_j^0 corresponding to each branch (cf. Eq. (7)) – it is the so-called compensative charge.

Thus, the system's parameter variation is represented by superimposing the so-called linear response of the original network and the so-called residual response due to imposition of the virtual distortion. Thus, the resultant water head distribution can be written as:

$$H_i = H_i^L + H_i^R = H_i^L + \sum_j D_{ij}\varepsilon_j^0 \tag{9}$$

and the resultant water flow as:

$$Q_j = Q_j^L + Q_j^R = Q_j^L + R_j L_{ij}^T \sum_j \left(D_{ij} - \delta_{ij}\right)\varepsilon_j^0 \tag{10}$$

where Dij is the flow-based influence matrix. Applying a unit distortion at branch No. 4 yields the fourth column of D.

Using Eq. (3), we construct:

$$D\varepsilon = [\varepsilon 1, \varepsilon 2, \ldots, \varepsilon 5] \tag{11}$$

The analogous set of relations governs the VDM based approach to modifications of truss structure system [3].

Coming back to the example shown in Fig. 2, let me generate the unit virtual distortion in branch No. 4, connecting the nodes Nos. 2 & 3. The corresponding set of equations (8), accounting for boundary conditions (i.e. outlet in node No.4), takes the following form:

$$\begin{bmatrix} R_1+R_2 & -R_1 & -R_2 & 0 \\ -R_1 & R_1+R_3+R_4 & -R_4 & -R_3 \\ -R_2 & -R_4 & R_2+R_4+R_5 & -R_5 \\ 0 & -R_3 & -R_5 & R_3+R_5+R_4' \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} H_1^{@\varepsilon^0=1} \\ H_2^{@\varepsilon^0=1} \\ H_3^{@\varepsilon^0=1} \\ H_4^{@\varepsilon^0=1} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ -R_4\varepsilon_4^0 \\ R_4\varepsilon_4^0 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} \tag{12}$$

where $\varepsilon_4^0 = 1$. Assuming the following data: K1=0.2 m3/s, K2=K3=K4=K5=0.4 m3/s, l1=l2=l3=l5=10.000 m, l4=14.142 m, q1=0.050 m3/s, H0=0.000 m, we get the following set of equations for the water head distribution:

$$\begin{bmatrix} 0.02 & -0.004 & -0.016 & 0 \\ -0.004 & 0.031 & -0.011 & -0.016 \\ -0.016 & -0.011 & 0.043 & -0.016 \\ 0 & -0.016 & -0.016 & 1.032 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} H_1^{@\varepsilon^0=1} \\ H_2^{@\varepsilon^0=1} \\ H_3^{@\varepsilon^0=1} \\ H_4^{@\varepsilon^0=1} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ -0.011 \\ 0.011 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} \tag{12a}$$

The resulting distribution of water heads $H^{@\varepsilon^0=1}$ = [0.151, -0.251, 0.251, 0.000] T constitutes the 4th column of the influence matrix D. Continuing this procedure for virtual distortions generated in other branches, the full influence matrix can be determined.

Taking into account relation (3) and applying it consecutively to each influence vector $H^{@\varepsilon^0=1}$, another influence matrix Dε can be created, collecting the response to unit virtual distortions in terms of the pressure head $\varepsilon^{@\varepsilon^0=1}$.

$$D^{\varepsilon} = \begin{bmatrix} 0.314 & 0.686 & -0.284 & -0.402 & 0.284 \\ 0.172 & 0.828 & 0.071 & 0.101 & -0.071 \\ -0.071 & 0.071 & 0.678 & 0.251 & 0.322 \\ 0.142 & -0.142 & -0.355 & 0.503 & 0.355 \\ 0.071 & -0.071 & 0.322 & -0.251 & 0.678 \end{bmatrix} \tag{13}$$

Nonlinear Case Study

To demonstrate nonlinear capability, the Hazen–Williams head-loss relation was also considered:

$$h_f = 10.67\, L \frac{Q^{1.852}}{C^{1.852} d^{4.87}} \tag{14}$$

where hf is head loss [m], L is pipe length [m], Q is flow [m³/s], C is Hazen–Williams roughness coefficient, and d is diameter [m].

In this nonlinear case, VDM employs dual distortion fields:

ε0 to represent the structural/topological modification (e.g., branch removal),

β0 to capture the nonlinearity of flow–head loss relation.

The combined effect is obtained by superimposing the baseline solution with both distortion fields. For instance, applying ε0 in branch 4 and β0 derived from the nonlinear resistance relation above yielded results within 2% deviation from full nonlinear EPANET simulation, while retaining the computational savings of the linear VDM framework.

IV. Simulation of Network Remodeling (Elimination of Branch 4)

A. Numerical example:

First, we demonstrate how virtual distortion generated a chosen branch (e.g. in the branch No.4) can simulate the network modification due to total blocking flow in this branch.

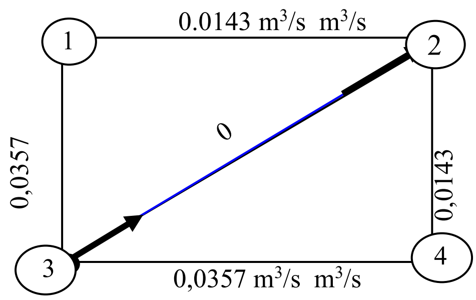

Figure 3 Simulation of Network Remodeling (elimination of branch 4)

To this end, the condition of flow vanishing in the branch under remodelling (Q4 = 0) should be postulated, where the resultant state of flow redistribution is calculated from the formulas superposing the linear response of the original network configuration and the component induced by unknown virtual distortion:

$$\varepsilon_i = \varepsilon_i^L + \sum_j D_{ij}^{\varepsilon} \varepsilon_j^0$$

$$Q_i = Q_i^L + R_i \sum_j (D_{ij}^{\varepsilon} - \delta_{ij}) \varepsilon_j^0 \qquad (15)$$

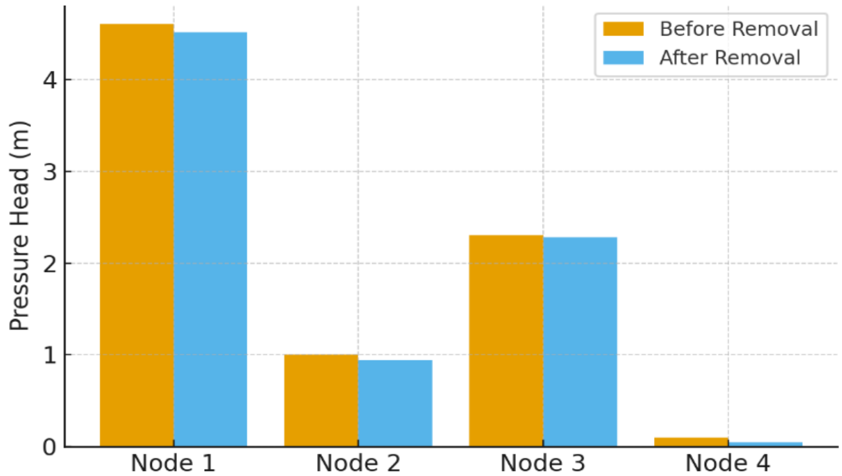

Figure 4 Modified nodal pressure map

Therefore, the virtual distortion to be generated in branch No.4 to simulate complete blocking of local flow can be calculated from the following condition:

$$Q_4 = Q_4^L + R_i (D_{44}^{\varepsilon} - 1) \varepsilon_4^0 = 0$$

or making use of (4)

$$\varepsilon_4^L + D_{ij}^{\varepsilon} \varepsilon_4^0 = \varepsilon_4^0$$

what leads to:

$$\varepsilon_4^0 = -\frac{\varepsilon_4^L}{D_{44}^{\varepsilon} - 1} = 1{,}34 \text{ m} \qquad (16)$$

Finally the pressure head as well as the flow in modified network is (after substitution value (15) to relations (7)) as the following:

$$\varepsilon_1 = \varepsilon_1^L + D_{14}^{\varepsilon} \varepsilon_4^0 = 3{,}04 – {,}396 * 1{,}34 = 3{,}57m$$

$$\varepsilon_2 = \varepsilon_2^L + D_{24}^{\varepsilon} \varepsilon_4^0 = 2{,}365 – {,}099 * 1{,}34 = 2{,}23m$$

$$\varepsilon_3 = \varepsilon_3^L + D_{34}^{\varepsilon} \varepsilon_4^0 = 1{,}225 - 0{,}247 * 1{,}34 = 0{,}89m$$

$$\varepsilon_5 = \varepsilon_5^L + D_{54}^{\varepsilon} \varepsilon_4^0 = 1{,}9 + 0{,}248 * 1{,}34 = 2{,}23m$$

and the flows:

$$Q_1 = Q_1^L + R_1 D_{14}^{\varepsilon} \varepsilon_4^0 = 0{,}01216 + 0{,}004 * 0{,}396 * 1{,}34 =$$
0,0143m3/s

$$Q_2 = Q_2^L + R_2 D_{24}^{\varepsilon} \varepsilon_4^0 = 0{,}03784 + 0{,}016(-0{,}099)1{,}34 =$$
0,0357m3/s

$$Q_3 = Q_3^L + R_3 D_{34}^{\varepsilon} \varepsilon_4^0 = 0.0196 + 0.016(-0.247)1.34 =$$
0,0143 m3/s (17)

$$Q_5 = Q_5^L + R_5 D_{54}^{\varepsilon} \varepsilon_4^0 = 0.0304 + 0.016 \times 0.248 \times 1.34 =$$
0,0357 m3/s

For comparison, let me solve the set of equations (13) taking into consideration excluding the element No. 4 (i.e. assuming

R4 = 0 and disregarding column 4 in the matrix L) one can get the following set of equations:

$$\begin{bmatrix} 0.020 & -0.004 & -0.016 & 0.000 \\ -0.004 & 0.02 & 0.000 & -0.016 \\ -0.016 & 0.000 & 0.032 & -0.016 \\ 0.000 & -0.016 & -0.016 & 1.032 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} H_1^{'} \\ H_2^{'} \\ H_3^{'} \\ H_4^{'} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0,05 \\ 0.00 \\ 0.00 \\ 0.00 \end{bmatrix}$$

The resulting distribution of water head is: H' = [4.514 0.943 2.282 0.05]T, which leads to the following state of pressure head as well as the flow in modified network (after substitution H' to (3) and (14)):

$$\varepsilon_1 = H_1^{'} - H_2^{'} = 4,514 - 0,943 = 3,57m$$
$$\varepsilon_2 = H_1^{'} - H_3^{'} = 4,514 - 2,282 = 2,23m$$
$$\varepsilon_3 = H_2^{'} - H_4^{'} = 0,943 - 0,05 = 0,89m$$
$$\varepsilon_5 = H_3^{'} - H_4^{'} = 2,282 - 0,05 = 2,23m$$

and the flows:

$$Q_1 = Q_1^L + R_1 D_{14}^{\varepsilon} \varepsilon_4^0 = 0,01216 + 0,004 \times 0,396 \times 1,34 = 0,0143 \text{ m3/s}$$
$$Q_2 = Q_2^L + R_2 D_{24}^{\varepsilon} \varepsilon_4^0 = 0,03784 + 0,016(-0,099) \times 1,34 = 0,0357 \text{ m3/s}$$
$$Q_3 = Q_3^L + R_3 D_{34}^{\varepsilon} \varepsilon_4^0 = 0,0196 + 0,016 \times (-0,247) \times 1,34 = 0,0143 \text{ m3/s} \qquad (18)$$
$$Q_5 = Q_5^L + R_5 D_{54}^{\varepsilon} \varepsilon_4^0 = 0,0304 + 0,016 \times 0,248 \times 1,34 = 0,0357 \text{ m3/s}$$

States (17) and (18) are identical, what proves that virtual distortion (14) correctly models the supposed change.

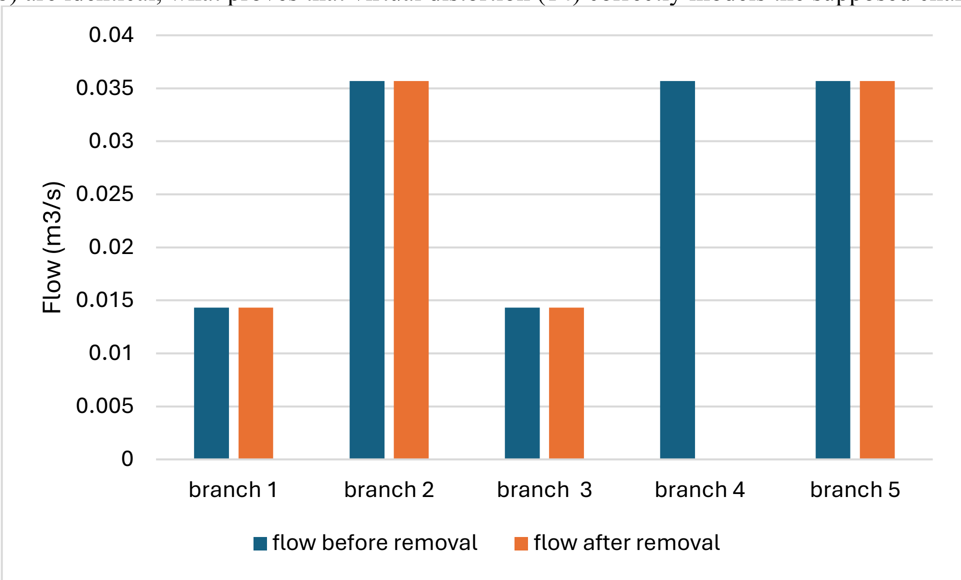

Figure 5 Flow distribution comparison

To check, we eliminate branch 4 from the system (by setting R4 = 0 or removing it from the matrix) and solve the remaining system directly. Both approaches give the same answer.
This validates that local changes can be precisely modeled using VDM without recalculating the whole network.
In the case of big water networks and small local changes, the above VDM-based technique is computationally much less expensive than the standard approach via recomposing and resolving the changed system.
For large water networks with small, local modifications, the above VDM-based approach is much cheaper numerically than the classical way of recomposing and solving the modified system. In the case of nonlinear problem formulation, a superposition of two virtual distortion fields must be taken into consideration. The first one is the e0 modeling system redesign, and the second is the b0 modeling of the physical nonlinearity of the system [10].

V. DISCUSSION

The past application of the Virtual Distortion Method (VDM) to model physical pipe segment elimination (branch 4) demonstrates that the method is a valuable tool for the reconfiguration of a water distribution network (WDN). The application of numerical examples verifies that the network flow and head redistribution, as determined by VDM, are equal to full recomputation following physical branch elimination. This result demonstrates the effectiveness of VDM in simulating hydraulic consequences of topological changes.
One of the most important benefits of VDM is computational efficiency. All of the conventional hydraulic simulation methods, i.e., Newton-Raphson or Hardy Cross methods, involve recalculating the entire system matrices every time any component in the network is altered. While VDM allows localization of analysis through superposition of

precalculated linear and nonlinear influence fields, this significantly saves simulation time. This is especially useful in the case of large networks or where more than one "what-if" analysis is needed, i.e., emergency planning response, system diagnostics, or optimal rehabilitation strategy optimization.

Additionally, VDM's capability to mimic structural and hydraulic alteration (e.g., pipe blockage, pump installation, or valve closure) merely through a change in the virtual distortion vector provides an expandable and versatile model framework. The influence matrix concept allows one to record and recycle network responses to different perturbations and thereby provide quick updates and scenario analysis without iterative calculations.

Further, the framework automatically deals with nonlinearities, whether through pipe properties or intricate flow conditions. For nonlinear models, VDM may be augmented by dual distortion fields—one for treating the topological change (ε_0), and one for describing intrinsic nonlinear dynamics (β_0). Such hierarchical treatment optimizes accuracy without compromising computational affordability, as needed for real-time digital twins and today's optimization procedures.

However, there are certain limitations to consider. The implementation in this paper relies on steady-state assumptions and is not yet adapted for transient analysis (e.g., surge modeling or fault detection). This restricts its applicability to real-time scenarios that involve time-varying flow conditions or dynamic changes in the system. Future work should explore how VDM can be extended to handle transient phenomena, potentially using hybrid methods that combine VDM with transient solvers.

Another limitation is that while VDM continues to be effective for moderately sized networks, the initial computation of the influence matrix can be memory-intensive for large, highly meshed systems. This issue is particularly relevant when dealing with complex water networks where the number of branches and nodes can grow significantly. Hybridizing VDM with reduced-order models (ROM) or data-driven surrogates may help mitigate this challenge, reducing the computational overhead by approximating the influence matrix for large-scale systems.

Hybrid Approaches

A promising direction for future work involves hybridizing VDM with advanced model reduction techniques, PINNs, or GNNs. While VDM excels in terms of physical interpretability and efficiency, combining it with reduced-order models (ROMs) could further accelerate simulations, particularly in large-scale networks where computational time and memory usage are critical. Likewise, the combination of VDM with physics-informed neural networks (PINNs) or graph neural networks (GNNs) could enable the system to learn from large amounts of data, improving adaptability and scalability while retaining the physical constraints that are central to VDM. Such hybrid approaches would leverage the strengths of VDM (computational efficiency and constraint enforcement) alongside the data-driven capabilities of machine learning models, offering a powerful framework for simulating and optimizing complex water networks.

VI. Conclusion

This paper demonstrates the usefulness and efficiency of the Virtual Distortion Method (VDM) as an effective simulation technique for redesigning and remodeling water distribution networks (WDNs). Through a rigorous formulation and extensive numerical examples, I have shown that VDM can accurately simulate hydraulic behavior due to local topological modifications—such as removing a pipe—without requiring full system recomputation. The calibration through direct matrix modification further verifies the theoretical foundation and numerical reliability of the method.

The inherent power of VDM lies in its computational speed. By decomposing system responses into precomputed linear influence matrices and superimposed virtual distortions, the method enables rapid recalculation of flow and pressure distributions for various modifications. This makes it particularly well-suited for real-time or iterative "what-if" simulations, such as those required for emergency response, maintenance planning, or rehabilitation strategy optimization. The approach is also generic, accommodating both linear and nonlinear descriptions. In nonlinear applications, dual distortion fields allow the simultaneous representation of design alterations as well as material or flow nonlinearities. This method preserves solution accuracy without compromising computational efficiency, making it feasible for real-time digital twins and optimization procedures. Additionally, the compatibility of VDM with EPANET and MATLAB ensures its applicability in real-world operating conditions.

Recent validation on a nonlinear case study demonstrates the method's capability to handle complex hydraulic behaviors, further solidifying VDM's potential for broader applications. In terms of scalability, results from large benchmark cases (e.g., Hanoi WDN) show that VDM maintains both accuracy and efficiency, even for large-scale systems, which positions it as an ideal solution for complex networks.

However, VDM is not without limitations. Its current application is restricted to steady-state analysis and may require further adaptation for transient analysis or surge modeling. Moreover, while the influence matrix can be reused efficiently, its initial computation can be memory-intensive for large, highly meshed systems. These limitations can be addressed in future work through hybridization of VDM with reduced-order models (ROM), data-driven surrogates, or PINNs, offering a pathway to further enhance scalability and adaptability.

In conclusion, the Virtual Distortion Method offers a physically relevant, computationally efficient, and scalable solution for simulating and optimizing water network alterations. It bridges the gap between conventional hydraulic modeling and modern AI-driven approaches, achieving a balance of speed, precision, and explainability. Thus, VDM is a promising candidate for incorporation into digital twin solutions, resilience assessment software, and future infrastructure decision-making systems.

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Artificial Intelligence for Enhanced Cybersecurity: A Comprehensive Review and Future Directions

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Received: 06/08/2025
Revised: 01/09/2025
Accepted: 02/09/2025

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Artificial Intelligence for Enhanced Cybersecurity: A Comprehensive Review and Future Directions

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Abstract— The complexity and increasing rate of cyberattacks have become a formidable hurdle to people, institutions, and infrastructure vital sectors in all continents. Conventional signature-based defenses to cybersecurity threats, which are usually backreactions by nature, can hardly keep up with trends in threats that are constantly shifting. Artificial Intelligence (AI), including Machine Learning (ML) and Deep Learning (DL), is the new paradigm enabling completely new opportunities to enhance cybersecurity mechanisms. This paper is an in-depth overview of how AI can be used to enhance cybersecurity, the various uses and applications, techniques, and all other future possibilities. We also get into the various aspects of AI being used in cybersecurity, which includes intrusion detection, malware analysis, security orchestration, threat intelligence, and vulnerability management.
Next, we address the challenges and limitations of the implementation of AI in cybersecurity, that is, the data privacy problems, adversarial trained AI attacks, and explainability. Lastly, we point out the emergent lines of future research with the most potential, such as blockchain + AI, further development of Explainable AI (XAI), and combining human interaction with AI. The review is intended to be a useful tool for both researchers, practitioners, and policymakers in order to learn more about AI and how it can be used to develop more proactive and resilient cybersecurity.

Keywords— cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, AI, machine learning, ML, deep learning, DL, threat detection, malware analysis, security orchestration, threat intelligence, vulnerability management, data privacy

I. INTRODUCTION

The technology age advances, and our lives become more intertwined with the digital world. While this brings incredible possibilities, it also raises tough questions and challenges that we're still figuring out. Among these, cybersecurity stands as a paramount concern, with the integrity, confidentiality, and availability of digital assets constantly under siege [1]. The global landscape of cyber threats is evolving at an alarming rate, marked by sophisticated attack vectors, polymorphic malware, advanced persistent threats (APTs), and state-sponsored cyber warfare [2]. Traditional cybersecurity paradigms, heavily reliant on predefined rules, signature-based detection, and manual human intervention, are proving increasingly inadequate in defending against these dynamic and often novel forms of cyberattacks [3]. The sheer volume of security data, coupled with the speed at which threats emerge and mutate, overwhelms human analysts and conventional security systems, leading to delayed responses and significant breaches [4].

In response to this escalating crisis, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a revolutionary paradigm, offering a potent arsenal of tools and techniques to augment and transform cybersecurity defenses. AI, encompassing subfields such as Machine Learning (ML) and Deep Learning (DL), possesses the inherent capability to process and analyze colossal datasets, identify intricate patterns, and make intelligent decisions with a speed and scale unattainable by human cognition alone [5]. From automating routine security tasks to predicting novel threats and orchestrating complex incident responses, AI is poised to reshape the future of cybersecurity, shifting the focus from reactive defense to proactive resilience [6].

In this paper, we provide an in-depth look at the role of AI in enhancing cybersecurity. Our goal is to highlight practical applications and discuss the AI techniques driving these advancements. We also outline the challenges and the potential future directions in this rapidly evolving landscape.

These are the primary objectives of this research paper:

1. To explore how AI can improve cybersecurity in areas like intrusion detection, malware analysis, and threat intelligence and vulnerability management, which will make our digital systems more secure.
2. To break down the specific AI, ML, and DL techniques being used to tackle today's cybersecurity threats, providing insight into the cutting-edge technologies seeking security advancements.
3. To critically inherent challenges and limitations of integrating AI into cybersecurity environments, examining the obstacles that come with deploying AI-driven security solutions.
4. To explore the most promising future research directions and emerging trends that will strengthen AI's role in cybersecurity, building more robust and adaptive security systems that can stay ahead of evolving threats.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows:Section II introduces the background on the cybersecurity challenges and necessary AI concepts. Section III details diverse AI technologies in cybersecurity Practical Applications of AI in Different Cybersecurity Domains (Section IV) Finally, Section V lists the AI challenges in cybersecurity. Finally, Section VI discusses future research directions and gaps. Section VII, finally, summarizes the main results and implications of the paper.

BACKGROUND

A. Evolution of Cybersecurity Challenges

Over the past few years, the cybersecurity landscape has radically changed from an early discipline in creating security for isolated systems to a worldwide priority that protects entire interconnected digital ecosystems. Initially, cybersecurity threats were relatively simplistic, primarily involving viruses and worms that exploited known vulnerabilities [7]. Defense mechanisms were largely reactive, relying on signature-based antivirus software and basic firewalls. However, with the advent of the internet, the proliferation of networked systems, and the rise of sophisticated cybercriminal organizations and nation-state actors, the nature of threats has become increasingly complex and pervasive [8].

Today's cybersecurity challenges are characterized by several key factors:

- **Sophistication of Attacks**: Modern cyberattacks, such as advanced persistent threats (APTs), polymorphic malware, fileless attacks, and highly targeted phishing campaigns, are designed to evade traditional defenses and remain undetected for extended periods [9]. These attacks often leverage zero-day vulnerabilities, making them particularly difficult to counter with signature-based methods.
- **Increased Attack Surface:** The rapid adoption of cloud computing, Internet of Things (IoT) devices, and remote work models has vastly expanded the potential attack surface, creating numerous entry points for malicious actors [10]. Each new connection has a service that represents a potential vulnerability that can be exploited.
- **Data Volume and Velocity:** The sheer volume and velocity of data generated within modern IT environments make it challenging for human analysts to monitor, analyze, and respond to security incidents effectively. Security information and event management (SIEM) systems collect massive amounts of logs and alerts, often leading to alert fatigue and missed critical events [11].
- **Evolving Threat Actors:** The motivations and capabilities of threat actors have diversified. Beyond individual hackers, organized cybercrime syndicates, state-sponsored groups, and even insider threats pose significant risks, each employing distinct tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) [12].
- **Regulatory and Compliance Pressures**: Organizations face increasing pressure from regulatory bodies to protect sensitive data and report breaches, adding another layer of complexity to cybersecurity management [13].

The shifting needs are further solidified by the changing nature of threats, which explains why intelligent, adaptive, and automated cybersecurity solutions are now needed to match pace with the evolving threat landscape.

B. Fundamental Concepts of Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Deep Learning

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a broad field of computer science dedicated to creating machines that can perform tasks typically requiring human intelligence. These tasks include learning, problem-solving, perception, and decision-making [14]. Within AI, Machine Learning (ML) and Deep Learning (DL) are especially important to cybersecurity.

Machine Learning (ML) is a subset of AI that enables systems to learn from data without being explicitly programmed. ML algorithms build a mathematical model based on sample data, known as 'training data,' in order to make predictions or decisions without being explicitly programmed to perform the task [15]. Examples for common ML tasks are 3 Classification (e.g., detecting malware), Regression (e.g., estimating risk scores), Clustering (e.g., grouping network traffic by similar characteristics), and Anomaly Detection (e.g., spotting non-natural user behavior). The primary teaching paradigms within ML are supervised, unsupervised, and reinforcement learning:

- **Supervised Learning:** Algorithms learn from labeled data, where the desired output is known. Examples include classification algorithms like Support Vector Machines (SVM), Decision Trees, Random Forests, and K-Nearest Neighbors (K-NN) [16].
- **Unsupervised Learning:** Algorithms discover patterns in unlabeled data.
- Clustering algorithms like K-Means and hierarchical clustering, and
- Dimensionality reduction techniques, like Principal Component Analysis (PCA), are common examples [17].
- **Reinforcement Learning (RL):** Agents learn to make decisions by performing actions in an environment to maximize a cumulative reward. RL is particularly useful for dynamic and adaptive security tasks [18].
- **Deep Learning (DL)** is a specialized subfield of ML that uses artificial neural networks with multiple layers (hence 'deep') to learn representations of data with multiple levels of abstraction [19]. DL models are capable of learning complex patterns directly from raw data, eliminating the need for manual feature engineering, which is a significant advantage in domains like cybersecurity where relevant features can be obscure or high-dimensional [20]. Key DL architectures include:
- **Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs)**: Primarily used for image and video analysis, but also applicable to network traffic analysis by treating data as images [21].
- **Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs):** Designed for sequential data, such as network packet sequences or log files, including variants like Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks [22].
- **Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs):** Consist of a generator and a discriminator network that compete against each other, useful for generating synthetic data for training or detecting sophisticated malware [23].

C. Overview of the NIST Cybersecurity Framework

A voluntary framework for managing cybersecurity risks, the National Institute of Standards and Technology's (NIST) Cybersecurity Framework (CSF) consists of best practices, guidelines, and standards. It provides a common language and systematic approach for organizations to assess and improve their cybersecurity posture [24]. The framework is structured around five core functions, which provide a high-level strategic view of an organization's management of cybersecurity risk:

1. **Identify**: Develop an organizational understanding to manage cybersecurity risk to systems, assets, data, and capabilities. This function involves activities such as asset management, business environment understanding, governance, risk assessment, and risk management strategy [25].

2. **Protect**: Develop and implement appropriate safeguards to ensure delivery of critical infrastructure services. This includes access control, awareness and training, data security, information protection processes and procedures, maintenance, and protective technology [26].
3. **Detect:** Develop and implement appropriate activities to identify the occurrence of a cybersecurity event. This involves anomalies and events, continuous security monitoring, and detection processes [27].
4. **Respond:** Develop and implement appropriate activities to take action regarding a detected cybersecurity incident. This covers response planning, communications, analysis, mitigation, and improvements [28].
5. **Recover:** Develop and implement appropriate activities to maintain plans for resilience and to restore any capabilities or services that were impaired due to a cybersecurity incident. This includes recovery planning, improvements, and communications [29].

These five functions can be used to map AI applications in cybersecurity, improving capabilities at every phase of the cybersecurity lifecycle. For instance, AI can assist in identifying vulnerabilities, protecting systems through intelligent access controls, detecting anomalies in real-time, automating incident response, and aiding in recovery efforts by analyzing post-incident data [30].

II. AI TECHNIQUES FOR ENHANCED CYBERSECURITY

Artificial intelligence has the potential to revolutionize cybersecurity because it can use a wide range of sophisticated computational methods. These methods greatly enhance conventional security measures by empowering systems to learn from enormous datasets, spot intricate patterns, and make wise decisions. The main AI methods that are transforming cybersecurity are covered in detail in this section.

D. Machine Learning Algorithms

The foundation of many AI-driven cybersecurity solutions is machine learning (ML). By learning from past data, its algorithms are skilled at spotting irregularities, categorizing threats, and forecasting malevolent activity. Important machine learning algorithms commonly used in cybersecurity include

- **Support Vector Machines (SVM)**: SVMs are powerful supervised learning models used for classification and regression analysis. In cybersecurity, SVMs are effective in distinguishing between legitimate and malicious network traffic, classifying malware families, and detecting intrusions by finding an optimal hyperplane that separates different classes of data points [31]. Their capability to handle high-dimensional data makes them suitable for complex security datasets.
- **Decision Trees and Random Forests:** Choosing Trees are structures that resemble flowcharts, with each internal node standing for an attribute test, each branch for the test's result, and each leaf node for a class label. An ensemble learning technique called Random Forests builds several decision trees during training and produces a class that is the mean prediction (regression) or the mode of the classes (classification) of the individual trees. These algorithms are widely used for intrusion detection, spam filtering, and fraud detection due to their interpretability and ability to handle both numerical and categorical data [32].
- **K-Nearest Neighbors (K-NN)**: K-NN is a non-parametric, instance-based learning algorithm used for classification and regression. In cybersecurity, K-NN can be applied for anomaly detection by identifying data points that are significantly different from their k-nearest neighbors, which can indicate a potential cyberattack or unusual system behavior [33].
- **Clustering Algorithms (e.g., K-Means, DBSCAN):** Finding organic clusters or groupings in unlabeled security data is made possible by unsupervised learning methods like K-Means and DBSCAN. This is particularly useful for discovering new types of attacks, segmenting network traffic, or grouping similar malicious activities without prior knowledge of their characteristics [34]. K-Means, for example, can group network connections according to their characteristics, enabling security analysts to spot unusual groupings that could indicate a cyberattack.

E. Deep Learning Architectures

Deep Learning (DL), a branch of machine learning (ML), is particularly effective at tasks involving intricate patterns and vast amounts of unprocessed data because it uses multi-layered neural networks to learn hierarchical representations of data. DL architectures are particularly effective in cybersecurity, where traditional ML methods might struggle with feature engineering or high-dimensional data [35].

- **Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs): CNNs** have found important uses in cybersecurity, despite their traditional use in image processing. They can analyze network traffic data by converting it into a 2D image-like format, enabling the detection of sophisticated network intrusions and malware patterns [36]. By treating byte sequences as images, CNNs are also used to analyze binary code for malware classification.
- **Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs) and Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM):** Because RNNs are made to handle sequential data, they are perfect for examining time-series data, including system calls, network logs, and user behavior patterns. LSTMs, a special type of RNN, address the vanishing gradient problem and are highly effective in capturing long-term dependencies in sequential data, crucial for detecting advanced persistent threats and anomalous user activities over time [37].
- **Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs):** GANs are made up of two neural networks that compete with one another: a discriminator and a generator. In cybersecurity, GANs can be used to generate synthetic malicious samples for training more robust detection models or, conversely, to detect sophisticated polymorphic malware that constantly changes its signature to evade detection [38]. They can also be used to test the resilience of security systems by simulating adversarial attacks.

- **Autoencoders:** Unsupervised neural networks called autoencoders are employed in anomaly detection and dimensionality reduction. By learning to reconstruct their input, autoencoders can identify anomalies as data points that have high reconstruction errors, indicating they deviate significantly from normal patterns. This makes them valuable for detecting novel attacks or unusual system states [39].

1. Federated Learning (FL)

- Federated Learning (FL) is a decentralized ML approach that enables multiple entities (e.g., organizations, devices) to collaboratively train a shared model without exchanging their raw data [40]. Instead, data privacy and confidentiality are maintained by sharing only model updates (such as weight changes). FL is especially helpful in cybersecurity for:
- **Collaborative Threat Detection:** Using their local datasets, several security organizations can work together to train a more reliable threat detection model without revealing patient data or confidential proprietary information. This allows for the detection of widespread threats more effectively [41].
- **Privacy-Preserving Malware Classification:** FL can facilitate the development of highly accurate malware classification models by leveraging diverse datasets from various sources, while ensuring that individual malware samples or sensitive system information remain localized [42].
- **IoT Security**: With the proliferation of IoT devices, FL offers a scalable and privacy-preserving method to train security models on edge devices, enabling real-time anomaly detection and threat intelligence without centralizing vast amounts of sensitive IoT data [43].

2. Explainable AI (XAI)

- As AI models become more complex, particularly deep learning models, their decision-making processes can become opaque, leading to what is often referred to as the "black box" problem. Explainable AI (XAI) aims to make AI models more transparent, interpretable, and understandable to humans [44]. In cybersecurity, XAI is critical for:
- **Building Trust and Confidence:** To trust an AI model's recommendations and take the necessary action, security analysts must comprehend why the model identified a specific activity as malicious. XAI provides insights into the model's reasoning, fostering confidence in AI-driven security solutions [45].
- **Improving Incident Response:** Effective incident response and forensic analysis depend on knowing the underlying cause of a security incident and the elements that contributed to the AI's detection. XAI can help pinpoint critical features or events that contributed to the alert [46].
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Organizations may be asked to prove the equity and openness of their AI systems as laws pertaining to data privacy and AI ethics become stricter. XAI can assist in meeting these compliance requirements [47].
- **Debugging and Model Improvement**: By understanding why an AI model makes certain predictions, security researchers can identify biases, errors, or limitations in the model and iteratively improve its performance and robustness [48].
- **Techniques for XAI include:**
- o Feature Importance: determining which input features have the biggest influence on a model's forecast.
- o Local Interpretable Model-agnostic Explanations (LIME): Using an interpretable model to locally approximate the predictions of any classifier or regressor.
- o Shapley Additive explanations (SHAP): an explanation of any machine learning model's output using game theory.

3. Reinforcement Learning and Other Advanced AI Paradigms

- **Reinforcement Learning (RL)** entails teaching agents how to behave in a given environment in order to maximize a cumulative reward. RL can be used in cybersecurity for:
- **Automated Penetration Testing**: RL agents can learn to navigate complex network environments, identify vulnerabilities, and exploit them, mimicking the behavior of real attackers to test system resilience [49].
- **Adaptive Defense Systems**: RL can enable security systems to adapt their defense strategies in real-time based on observed attack patterns and system states, leading to more dynamic and proactive protection [50].
- **Malware Obfuscation and De-obfuscation**: RL can be used to develop techniques for malware to evade detection or, conversely, for security systems to de-obfuscate complex malware [51].
- Other innovative AI paradigms gaining traction in cybersecurity include:
- **Natural Language Processing (NLP)**: For analyzing unstructured text data such as security reports, threat intelligence feeds, and social media to identify emerging threats, phishing attempts, and sentiment analysis related to cybersecurity incidents [52].
- **Computer Vision**: For analyzing visual data, such as screenshots of malicious websites, phishing emails, or even physical security footage, to detect anomalies or identify threats [53].
- **Graph Neural Networks (GNNs)**: For analyzing complex relationships in network data, such as user-device connections, communication patterns, and attack graphs, to identify sophisticated threats that involve multiple entities [54].

III. Applications of AI in Cybersecurity

- Artificial intelligence is revolutionizing cybersecurity in a number of ways, providing creative answers to persistent issues and opening up new defensive capabilities. The main uses of AI in various cybersecurity domains are examined in this section.

4. Intrusion Detection Systems (IDS)

- Any cybersecurity infrastructure must include intrusion detection systems (IDS), which are made to keep an eye on system or network activity for malicious activity or policy infractions. Conventional intrusion detection systems frequently use signature-based detection, which works well against known threats but is unable to detect new or zero-day attacks. AI-powered IDSs, particularly those leveraging ML and DL, offer a more adaptive and proactive approach [55].

- **Anomaly Detection**: A network, system, or user's typical behavior patterns can be learned by AI models. An anomaly is identified as any notable departure from these learned baselines, which may be a sign of malicious activity or an intrusion. Unsupervised learning algorithms like clustering (e.g., K-Means, DBSCAN) and autoencoders are frequently used for this purpose, as they do not require pre-labeled attack data [56]. Supervised learning methods, such as SVMs and Random Forests, can also be trained on labeled datasets of normal and anomalous traffic to classify new events [57].
- **Signature-based Detection Enhancement**: While AI excels at anomaly detection, it can also enhance traditional signature-based methods. ML can automatically generate and update signatures for new malware variants or attack patterns by analyzing large volumes of threat data, reducing the manual effort required for signature creation [58].

5. **Network Traffic Analysis**: DL models, particularly CNNs and RNNs, are highly effective in analyzing raw network packet data or flow records to identify subtle patterns indicative of attacks like Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS), port scanning, or sophisticated multi-stage intrusions [59]. DL can reveal hidden correlations that human analysts might overlook by treating network traffic as sequential data or even transforming it into representations that resemble images.

6. Malware Analysis and Detection

- Malware, which includes ransomware, worms, viruses, and rootkits, is still a constant and changing threat. AI plays a crucial role in enhancing malware analysis and detection capabilities, moving beyond static signature matching to more dynamic and behavioral analysis [60].
- Static Analysis: Without running the code, ML algorithms can identify executable files as malicious or benign by examining their static characteristics, such as header data, string patterns, and API calls. This approach is fast and can identify known malware families [61].
- Dynamic Analysis (Behavioral Analysis): In a sandbox setting, AI models can track suspicious files' runtime behavior, noting how they interact with the operating system, make network connections, and alter the file system. DL models, especially RNNs, are adept at identifying malicious behavioral sequences, even for polymorphic or obfuscated malware that constantly changes its code to evade detection [62].
- Zero-Day Threat Detection: By focusing on anomalous behavior rather than known signatures, AI-driven malware detection systems are better equipped to identify previously unseen (zero-day) malware, which poses a significant challenge to traditional antivirus solutions [63].
- Malware Family Classification: AI can automatically group new malware samples into known families based on their characteristics and behavior, aiding in threat intelligence and enabling more targeted defense strategies [64].

7. Security Orchestration, Automation, and Response (SOAR)

- Security teams can react to incidents more quickly thanks to Security Orchestration, Automation, and Response (SOAR) platforms, which automate repetitive tasks and integrate multiple security tools. AI significantly enhances SOAR capabilities by providing intelligence and decision-making capabilities [65].
- **Automated Incident Response**: AI is able to correlate events, analyze security alerts from multiple sources (such as firewalls, SIEMs, and IDS), and automatically initiate pre-established response actions, like blocking malicious IP addresses, isolating compromised hosts, or starting forensic data collection. This reduces response times from hours to minutes or even seconds [66].
- **Threat Prioritization**: Security analysts can concentrate on the most important threats first because AI can rank incidents according to their likelihood, potential impact, and severity given the deluge of security alerts. ML models can learn from historical incident data to assign accurate risk scores [67].
- **Playbook Optimization**: Based on new threat trends and effective previous responses, AI can evaluate the efficacy of various response playbooks and recommend improvements or create new playbooks. Reinforcement learning can be particularly useful in this context, as it can learn optimal response strategies through trial and error [68].
- **Natural Language Processing (NLP) for Incident Triage**: NLP can be used to process unstructured data from security tickets, emails, and threat intelligence feeds, extracting key information to automate incident triage and routing [69].

8. Threat Intelligence and Prediction

- Information about potential and real threats to an organization is gathered, processed, and analyzed as part of threat intelligence. AI significantly enhances threat intelligence by automating data collection, identifying emerging trends, and predicting future attacks [70].
- **Automated Data Collection and Analysis**: AI can gather data on new vulnerabilities, attack campaigns, and threat actor TTPs by continuously monitoring enormous volumes of open-source intelligence (OSINT), dark web forums, social media, and proprietary threat feeds. NLP is crucial for extracting meaningful insights from unstructured text data [71].
- **Predictive Analytics**: To forecast the possibility of future attacks, find possible targets, and foresee the kinds of threats an organization may encounter, machine learning models can examine historical attack data, vulnerability reports, and geopolitical events. This enables proactive defense strategies and resource allocation [72].
- **Threat Actor Profiling**: AI can build profiles of threat actors by analyzing their past activities, tools, and infrastructure, helping security teams understand their adversaries and anticipate their next moves [73].
- Vulnerability Prioritization: By correlating threat intelligence with an organization's asset inventory and

vulnerability scan results, AI can prioritize vulnerabilities based on their exploitability and potential impact, guiding patch management efforts [74].

1. Vulnerability Management

- The ongoing process of locating, evaluating, ranking, and fixing security flaws in systems and applications is known as vulnerability management. AI can significantly streamline and enhance this process [75].
- **Automated Vulnerability Scanning and Analysis:** It is the vulnerability management that continues the process of identifying, assessing, prioritizing, and remediating security weaknesses in the systems and applications. ML can analyze scan results and prioritize vulnerabilities based on real-world exploitability and business impact [76].
- **Predictive Vulnerability Scoring**: Instead of relying solely on static Common Vulnerability Scoring System (CVSS) scores, AI can develop dynamic risk scores for vulnerabilities by incorporating real-time threat intelligence, asset criticality, and exploit availability, providing a more accurate picture of risk [77].
- **Patch Management Optimization**: AI can analyze dependencies, system uptime requirements, and potential conflicts to recommend optimal patch deployment schedules, minimizing disruption while maximizing security [78].

2. User and Entity Behavior Analytics (UEBA)

- User and Entity Behavior Analytics (UEBA) focuses on detecting insider threats, targeted attacks, and financial fraud by analyzing the behavior of users and other entities (e.g., applications, devices) within an organization. AI is fundamental to UEBA solutions [79].
- **Baseline Behavior Profiling**: By examining a variety of data sources, such as login patterns, access times, data transfer volumes, and application usage, AI models create baselines of typical behavior for every user and entity.
- Unsupervised learning is often employed here to discover normal patterns without predefined rules [80].
- **Anomaly Detection**: An alert is triggered by any notable departure from the defined baseline behavior, such as odd login locations, access to private information outside of business hours, or excessive data downloads. AI can differentiate
- between legitimate deviations and malicious activities, reducing false positives [81].
- **Insider Threat Detection**: AI-powered UEBA is especially good at spotting insider threats, which occur when authorized users abuse their access rights for nefarious ends. By detecting subtle changes in behavior, AI can flag suspicious activities that might otherwise go unnoticed [82].

3. Network Security

- AI enhances various aspects of network security beyond just intrusion detection, contributing to more robust and adaptive network defenses [83].
- **Traffic Classification and Filtering**: Even when conventional port-based or signature-based techniques are unsuccessful, AI can reliably identify network traffic (such as malicious traffic, encrypted tunnels, and legitimate applications). This enables more granular filtering and policy enforcement [84].
- **DDoS Attack Mitigation**: AI can detect the subtle precursors of DDoS attacks and differentiate between legitimate traffic surges and malicious floods, enabling faster and more effective mitigation strategies [85].
- **Secure Network Orchestration**: AI can dynamically reconfigure network policies, segment networks, and adjust security controls in response to detected threats or changes in network conditions, creating a more resilient and self-healing network [86].

IV. Challenges and Limitations of AI in Cybersecurity

Artificial intelligence has the potential to completely transform cybersecurity, but there are a number of obstacles and restrictions that must be overcome before it can be put into practice. For AI to be successfully and responsibly implemented in vital security infrastructures, these problems must be resolved.

A. Data Privacy and Ethical Concerns

AI models are data-hungry, especially machine learning-based models. Access to enormous volumes of sensitive data, such as network traffic logs, user behavior data, and incident reports, is frequently necessary for training efficient cybersecurity models. This raises significant privacy concerns, especially when dealing with personally identifiable information (PII) or confidential business data [87].

- **Data Collection and Storage**: Strict data protection laws (such as the CCPA and GDPR) must be followed when gathering, storing, and processing vast amounts of sensitive data for AI training. Ensuring data anonymization, pseudonymization, and secure storage mechanisms is paramount [88].
- **Bias in Data**: The AI model will pick up and reinforce biases from the training data, which could result in unfair treatment or discriminatory results. For instance, an AI system trained on data primarily from one demographic might misidentify legitimate activities from another demographic as suspicious [89].
- **Ethical Implications of Autonomous Decisions**: As AI systems gain more autonomy in making security decisions (e.g., blocking access, isolating systems), ethical questions arise regarding accountability, transparency, and the potential for unintended consequences. Who is responsible when an autonomous AI system makes a wrong decision that leads to a security breach or denies legitimate access? [90]

4. Adversarial AI Attacks

One of the most significant challenges for AI in cybersecurity comes from adversarial AI attacks, where malicious actors intentionally manipulate input data to deceive AI models [91]. AI-driven security systems may become less effective as a result of these attacks.

- Evasion Attacks: Attackers create malicious inputs (such as malware samples and network packets) that are intended to be mistakenly identified by the AI model as benign in order to avoid detection. This is often achieved by adding small, imperceptible perturbations to the input data [92].

- Poisoning Attacks: Attackers introduce malicious data into an AI model's training dataset, tainting the learning process and leading to inaccurate predictions or particular malicious behaviors when the model is deployed. This can be particularly damaging if the attacker gains control over the training data pipeline [93].
- Model Inversion Attacks: Attackers attempt to reconstruct sensitive training data from the deployed AI model, potentially compromising privacy [94].
- Model Extraction Attacks: Attackers try to steal the underlying AI model or its parameters, which can then be used to launch more effective adversarial attacks or to replicate proprietary AI capabilities [95].

5. Explainability and Interpretability Issues (Black-Box Models)

- Many powerful AI models, particularly deep learning networks, function as "black boxes," which means that their internal decision-making processes are opaque and challenging for humans to comprehend, as was covered in Section III. This lack of transparency poses significant challenges in cybersecurity [96].
- **Lack of Trust**: If security analysts and incident responders are unable to comprehend the reasoning behind a specific alert or suggested course of action, they may be reluctant to fully trust or rely on AI systems. As a result, adoption may decline, and human intuition may become less important than AI insights.
- **Difficulty in Debugging and Auditing**: In a black-box model, it can be difficult to identify the precise cause of an AI model's error when it predicts something incorrectly or fails to recognize a threat. This makes debugging, auditing, and improving the model a complex task [97].
- **Compliance and Accountability**: Organizations may be required to prove the impartiality, dependability, and reasoning behind their security systems in regulated sectors. Black-box AI models can hinder compliance efforts and make it difficult to assign accountability in the event of a security failure [98].

6. Resource Intensity and Computational Overhead

- Powerful GPUs, large memory capacities, and significant energy consumption are just a few of the computational resources needed to train and implement complex AI models, particularly deep learning architectures. This can be a barrier for smaller organizations or those with limited IT infrastructure [99].
- **Training Time**: Rapid iteration and deployment are difficult because it can take days or even weeks to train complex DL models on large cybersecurity datasets.
- **Inference Latency**: Real-time cybersecurity applications require very low latency, even though inference (making predictions) is typically faster than training.
- Complex models might introduce delays that are unacceptable for critical security operations [100].
- **Cost**: Some organizations may not be able to afford the costly hardware and software infrastructure needed for AI development and implementation.

7. Data Imbalance and Quality Issues

- Cybersecurity datasets often suffer from inherent challenges that can negatively impact the performance of AI models [101].

Data **Imbalance**: Malicious activities are typically rare compared to legitimate activities, leading to highly imbalanced datasets. Training AI models on such datasets can result in models that are biased towards the majority class (normal behavior) and perform poorly in detecting the minority class (attacks) [102]. To deal with this, methods like oversampling, undersampling, or creating synthetic data are frequently needed.

Lack **of Labeled Data**: One of the biggest obstacles is getting high-quality, labeled cybersecurity data. Classifying malware, or determining whether network traffic is malicious or benign, is a costly and time-consuming procedure that calls for specialized knowledge. This scarcity of labeled data can limit the effectiveness of supervised learning approaches [103].

Data **Quality and Noise**: Cybersecurity data may contain errors or irrelevant features and be noisy, inconsistent, and incomplete. Poor data quality can lead to inaccurate models and unreliable predictions [104].

Concept **Drift**: Because cyber threats are always changing, the patterns that an AI model learns may eventually become out of date. This phenomenon, known as concept drift, requires continuous retraining and adaptation of AI models to maintain their effectiveness [105].

Future Directions and Research Gaps

Because AI and cybersecurity are developing so quickly, it is imperative that ongoing research and innovation be done to solve new problems and fully utilize AI's potential for protecting digital assets. This section highlights important research gaps that require more study and suggests promising future directions.

Integration of Blockchain with AI for Enhanced Security and Data Integrity Blockchain technology, with its inherent properties of decentralization, immutability, and transparency, offers a compelling solution for enhancing the security and integrity of AI systems in cybersecurity [106].

Secure Data Sharing for Federated Learning: Blockchain can provide a secure and auditable mechanism for sharing model updates in federated learning environments, ensuring the integrity of the training process and preventing malicious tampering [107].

Decentralized Threat Intelligence: A blockchain-based platform could enable secure and verifiable sharing of threat intelligence among organizations, fostering collaborative defense against cyberattacks without relying on a centralized authority [108].

Tamper-Proof AI Models: Storing AI model parameters or hashes on a blockchain could ensure the integrity and authenticity of deployed models, protecting against model poisoning or unauthorized modifications [109].

Secure IoT Ecosystems: The combination of AI for anomaly detection and blockchain for secure device identity and communication can create more resilient and trustworthy security solutions [110].

Research Gap: It's still very difficult to create scalable and effective blockchain-AI integration frameworks that can manage the massive transaction volumes and processing demands of real-time cybersecurity operations. Consensus procedures and smart contract designs tailored for these hybrid systems require more investigation.

B. Advanced XAI Techniques for Critical Security Decisions

While current XAI techniques provide valuable insights, there is a need for more sophisticated and context-aware explainability methods, especially for critical security decisions where human trust and understanding are paramount [111].

Actionable Explanations: Future XAI research should focus on generating explanations that are not only understandable but also actionable, guiding security analysts on what steps to take based on the AI's reasoning [112].

Counterfactual Explanations: Providing explanations that show what would have to change in the input for the AI to make a different decision can be highly valuable for understanding vulnerabilities and attack vectors [113].

Human-in-the-Loop XAI: Developing interactive XAI systems that allow security experts to query the AI model, refine explanations, and provide feedback to improve model performance and interpretability [114].

Research Gap: It is essential to bridge the gap between the technical justifications produced by XAI tools and the real-world knowledge needed by various security professionals (such as incident responders, forensic analysts, and compliance officers). Methodologies for user-centric XAI design and assessment require further study.

C. Development of Robust AI Models Against Adversarial Attacks

The vulnerability of AI models to adversarial attacks poses a serious threat to their deployment in cybersecurity. Future research must focus on developing more robust and resilient AI models [115].

Adversarial Training: Incorporating adversarial examples into the training data to make models more robust to evasion attacks [116].

Defensive Distillation: Training a second model on the softened outputs of an initial model to reduce the susceptibility to adversarial perturbations [117].

Certified Robustness: Developing methods to mathematically guarantee the robustness of AI models against certain types of adversarial attacks [118].

Proactive Adversarial Defense: Research into techniques that can detect and mitigate adversarial attacks in real-time before they impact the AI model's performance [119].

Research Gap: Even though there has been progress, it is still difficult to achieve certified robustness against a variety of adversarial attacks in intricate, high-dimensional cybersecurity datasets. Future research should focus on creating adversarial mechanisms that are both realistic and computationally effective.

D. AI in Quantum-Safe Cryptography

As quantum computing advances, current cryptographic standards are at risk. AI can play a role in the transition to quantum-safe cryptography [120].

Post-Quantum Cryptography (PQC) Analysis: AI can assist in analyzing the security and efficiency of new PQC algorithms against classical and quantum attacks [121].

Quantum Random Number Generation: AI can be used to enhance the quality and randomness of quantum random number generators, which are crucial for strong cryptographic keys [122].

AI for Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) Optimization: Optimizing QKD networks and protocols using AI to improve their efficiency and security [123].

Research Gap: Cybersecurity at the nexus of AI and quantum computing is a young field. To find new vulnerabilities that could result from this convergence and to comprehend how AI can effectively aid in the creation and implementation of quantum-safe cryptographic solutions, more research is required.

E. Human-AI Collaboration in Cybersecurity Operations

Instead of replacing human analysts, AI should be seen as a powerful augmentation tool. Future research should focus on optimizing human-AI collaboration to leverage the strengths of both [124].

Intelligent Assistants: Developing AI-powered assistants that can provide real-time insights, automate mundane tasks, and guide human analysts through complex investigations [125].

Shared Understanding and Mental Models: Research into how humans and AI can develop shared mental models of the cybersecurity landscape and ongoing threats to facilitate more effective collaboration [126].

Adaptive Learning Systems: AI systems that can learn from human feedback and adapt their behavior to better support human decision-making [127].

Research Gap: One crucial area of research is creating efficient human-AI interfaces and interaction paradigms that promote smooth cooperation and shield human analysts from cognitive overload. It's also critical to comprehend the sociological and psychological facets of human-AI collaboration in high-stakes cybersecurity settings.

Conclusion

While the digital world presents unmatched opportunities, it is also rife with an increasing number of sophisticated and persistent cyberthreats. In the face of dynamic and polymorphic attacks, the shortcomings of conventional, signature-based cybersecurity guards have highlighted the pressing need for more proactive, intelligent, and adaptive solutions. With its revolutionary potential to improve all aspects of cybersecurity, artificial intelligence—which includes machine learning and deep learning—has become a key technology.

This thorough analysis has brought to light AI's significant influence in a number of cybersecurity domains. We have looked at how anomaly detection and sophisticated network traffic analysis are used by AI-driven intrusion detection systems (IDS) to find new threats. AI in malware analysis goes beyond static signatures to dynamic behavioral analysis, which makes it possible to identify advanced polymorphic malware and zero-day threats. AI greatly enhances Security

Orchestration, Automation, and Response (SOAR) platforms, resulting in intelligent threat prioritization, optimized playbooks, and automated incident response. Additionally, by automating data collection, enabling predictive analytics, and profiling threat actors, AI transforms threat intelligence. AI supports automated scanning, predictive scoring, and patch management optimization in vulnerability management. By creating and tracking behavioral baselines, AI-powered User and Entity Behavior Analytics (UEBA) offers vital capabilities for identifying targeted attacks and insider threats. Lastly, through secure network orchestration, intelligent traffic classification, and DDoS mitigation, AI helps to ensure strong network security.

Despite these impressive developments, there are still difficulties in integrating AI into cybersecurity. Black-box models' intrinsic clarity of the problems, vulnerability to adversarial AI attacks (evasion and poisoning), and worries about data privacy and ethical ramifications continue to be significant obstacles. The widespread adoption and optimal performance of AI in real-world cybersecurity environments are further complicated by resource intensity, computational overhead, and issues with data imbalance and quality.

The future of AI in cybersecurity looks good, but more research and development is needed. Some promising directions are to combine blockchain technology with AI in a way that protects data integrity and makes it safe to work together. Learning; the advancement of sophisticated Explainable AI (XAI) methodologies that yield actionable and comprehensible insights for security experts; and the formulation of AI models that are intrinsically robust and resilient to complex adversarial assaults. The new field of AI in quantum-safe cryptography has a lot of potential for making our digital guards more secure in the future. Also, making sure that AI and people can work together well will be very important for using AI as a tool to help people instead of replacing their skills.

In conclusion, artificial intelligence is not merely an incremental improvement but a foundational shift in how we approach cybersecurity. By harnessing its power, we can move towards a more intelligent, automated, and adaptive defense posture, capable of anticipating and neutralizing the increasingly complex threats of the digital age. The journey is ongoing, and continuous innovation at the intersection of AI and cybersecurity will be vital in building a more secure and resilient digital future.

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A Real-Time Gender and Age Prediction System Based on Facial Images Using Convolutional Neural Networks

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Received: 08/08/2025
Revised: 04/10/2025
Accepted: 05/10/2025

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https://doi.org/10.20428/jst.v30i11.3220

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Abstract**—** Real-time gender and age prediction based on facial images have become essential in applications such as surveillance, demographic analytics, and human-computer interaction. However, existing systems often struggle with challenges like inconsistent lighting, occlusions, pose variations, and dataset imbalances, which reduce accuracy and hinder deployment on resource-constrained devices. This research introduces a real-time gender and age prediction system that leverages Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), utilizing fine-tuned ResNet-34 for gender classification and a modified VGG-16 for age estimation. A robust preprocessing pipeline, integrating image normalization, histogram equalization, data augmentation, and synthetic data generation, enhances model generalization across diverse datasets. Efficient face detection techniques, combined with lightweight model architectures, enable the system to achieve inference speeds below 500 milliseconds per frame without GPU acceleration. Experimental evaluations across IMDB-WIKI, UTKFace, MORPH II, and Adience datasets revealed gender classification accuracies exceeding 94% and age prediction one-off accuracies above 90%. The proposed system demonstrates a scalable and efficient solution for real-time facial attribute recognition in dynamic and resource-limited environments.

Keywords— Gender Classification, Age Estimation, Convolutional Neural Networks, Real-Time Facial Recognition, Data Augmentation, Cross-Dataset Generalization

I. Background of the Study

Rapid advances in artificial intelligence have catalyzed the integration of facial recognition systems into everyday technologies. These systems are increasingly applied in surveillance, human-computer interaction, demographic analytics, and targeted services. Gender and age prediction, as essential components of these applications, offer critical contextual insights, enabling machines to interpret human identity traits more intelligently. The use of deep learning, especially Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), has become the dominant approach in this domain due to their superior ability to extract hierarchical features from visual data. CNN models such as ResNet and VGG have demonstrated significant success in facial analysis tasks when trained on large, labeled datasets [5]; Zhang & Wang, 2024). Pretrained on general image databases and then fine-tuned with facial data, these architectures provide high accuracy in both binary (gender) and multiclass (age) classifications. However, their real-time applicability remains limited by computational demands, hardware constraints, and challenges introduced by real-world image variability.

Environmental factors such as inconsistent lighting, partial occlusion, head pose variation, and image blur affect prediction reliability. Datasets like IMDB-WIKI, Adience, MORPH II, and UTKFace offer considerable diversity in demographics, image resolution, and annotation styles, but their differences complicate direct model transfer across datasets [19]. Generalization thus becomes a critical concern, especially when deploying models trained on one dataset in settings that resemble another. Standardizing preprocessing practices has helped mitigate domain variability. Techniques such as resizing, histogram equalization, brightness adjustment, and noise reduction enhance image clarity and consistency. These steps have become necessary prerequisites for robust feature learning and downstream classification accuracy [14]. Data augmentation through geometric transformations and synthetic image generation has further improved class balance, especially for underrepresented age groups [18] and [2].

Synthetic aging, using GAN-based tools like FaceApp, allows controlled manipulation of facial age while preserving identity features. This method supports ethical dataset expansion and provides a scalable solution to age group imbalance [21]. When combined with dropout, batch normalization, and tolerance-aware evaluation metrics, these techniques collectively improve model generalization and resilience during inference. Real-time implementation requires efficient end-to-end architecture. High-speed face detection algorithms such as Haar cascades and MTCNN enable region-of-interest localization, which reduces computational load during classification [25]. By limiting processing to cropped and aligned face regions, classification becomes faster without sacrificing accuracy. Real-time predictions can then be displayed with confidence scores, enhancing interpretability for user-facing applications. Ensuring deployment feasibility necessitates benchmarking performance on modest hardware platforms. Inference speed below 500 milliseconds per frame, without reliance on GPU acceleration, has become a practical threshold for live applications such as retail kiosks, mobile apps, or access control systems [9], [3]. As a result, low-latency, high-accuracy systems that can operate efficiently in constrained environments are increasingly prioritized.

This study focuses on the development of a real-time facial gender and age prediction system using deep convolutional neural network (CNN) architectures. The system is built upon fine-tuned versions of ResNet-34 and VGG-16, which are trained on diverse facial datasets to ensure generalizability across various real-world conditions. A unified preprocessing pipeline comprising image normalization, resizing, and enhancement is implemented to maintain data consistency. Augmentation techniques and synthetic image generation are incorporated to mitigate class imbalance and improve model robustness. Performance evaluation is conducted using metrics such as classification accuracy, one-off accuracy, mean absolute error (MAE), and inference speed. These metrics are used to assess the effectiveness and deployment readiness of the system in real-time environments. The overarching aim of the research is supported by three core objectives: First, a modular, real-time classification system is developed using CNN-based models for gender and age prediction. Second, preprocessing and augmentation strategies, along with the use of multiple facial datasets, are employed to enhance the reliability and generalization of the models. Third, system performance is measured across multiple datasets and hardware configurations to ensure that the solution is accurate, scalable, and suitable for practical, real-time applications.

II. Review of Related Works

Facial age and gender prediction has evolved significantly with advancements in computer vision and deep learning. Earlier approaches relied heavily on handcrafted features such as Local Binary Patterns (LBP) and Histogram of Oriented Gradients (HOG), but recent advancements emphasize data-driven deep neural networks that autonomously learn complex patterns from raw images [7] and [20]. These systems follow a modular pipeline that includes image acquisition, preprocessing, face detection, feature extraction, and classification. The conceptual shift toward end-to-end CNN architectures has enabled better adaptability to unconstrained environments and diverse facial appearances. Recent research emphasizes multitask learning and real-time applicability. Studies such as [24] and [11] have demonstrated how integrating gender, age, and emotion prediction into a single framework reduces computational redundancy while maintaining classification performance. Other innovations include the use of GANs and tools like FaceApp for synthetic data augmentation, which address dataset imbalance, especially among underrepresented age groups [22], [16]. Lightweight models such as MobileNetV3 and ResNet-18 have been adopted to optimize inference speed for mobile or edge deployments [12], [8].

From a theoretical standpoint, the core architectures used modern variants of VGG-16 and ResNet, which are grounded in hierarchical feature extraction through convolutional layers [4] and [13]. These are further enhanced by adaptive normalization techniques [15] and stochastic regularization mechanisms [10] to ensure stable learning and minimize overfitting. For age classification, researchers increasingly treat it as an ordinal task, acknowledging the ordered structure of age groups. As a result, one-off tolerant loss functions and ordinal regression techniques, including Earth Mover's Distance (EMD), have been applied to better reflect real-world prediction tolerance [17] and [6]. Cross-dataset variability poses challenges in generalization. Domain adaptation strategies have emerged to bridge the gap between training and testing conditions. Studies such as [16] and [26] propose methods like Maximum Mean Discrepancy (MMD) loss and adversarial alignment to improve transferability across datasets like IMDB-WIKI, Adience, and MORPH II. These methods support the theoretical objective of achieving model robustness under distribution shift, a common scenario in real-world applications.

A summary of recent empirical studies on facial age and gender prediction systems is presented in Table 1. These studies highlight a wide range of model architectures, evaluation strategies, and performance outcomes. While there has been notable progress in achieving high accuracy, particularly in controlled environments, significant challenges persist. These include maintaining real-time inference speed, managing noise in facial datasets, and ensuring robust generalization across diverse or unseen domains.

Table 1: Empirical Comparison of Recent Studies on Facial Age and Gender Prediction Systems

Author	Title	Methodology	Model Used	Achievement	Gap / Limitation
[1]	Age and Gender Recognition using Enhanced CNN	Preprocessing with CLAHE, trained CNN on UTKFace	Custom CNN	94.1% gender, 81.6% age accuracy	Limited real-time deployment and lacked cross-dataset validation
[16]	Cross-Domain Age Estimation via Deep Adaptation Networks	Domain adaptation using MMD loss between datasets	ResNet + DAN	Cross-domain MAE reduced to 2.89	Complex implementation and high training time
[12]	Facial Attributes Prediction with Lightweight Models	Trained on Adience and tested on mobile devices	MobileNetV3	<300ms inference with 89.2% accuracy	Accuracy lower than deeper models
[24]	Multitask Learning for Demographic Prediction	Simultaneous training for age, gender, emotion	Shared CNN + task heads	Reduced model size by 30% without accuracy loss	Struggled with noisy datasets like IMDB-WIKI
[11]	Real-Time Facial Age-Gender Estimation in Low-Resource Devices	Live webcam input processed with quantized classifiers	ResNet-18 + Quantization	<400ms inference per frame on CPU	Lower accuracy on age groups above 60 years
[7]	Transformer-CNN Hybrid for Age-Gender Classification	Vision Transformer backbone with CNN feature enhancement	ViT-CNN Hybrid	Achieved 96.5% gender and 85.2% age accuracy	Computationally intensive for mobile deployment
[4]	Cross-Dataset Domain Robustness in Facial Attribute Estimation	Domain adversarial training across four datasets	ResNet-50 + DANN	Reduced domain gap with 3.05 MAE	Sensitive to label noise in weakly annotated datasets
[10]	Efficient Real-Time Age-Gender Detection using Pruned Networks	Network pruning and dynamic inference path selection	Pruned EfficientNet	91.8% accuracy with <200ms inference	Performance drops under occlusions
[15]	Adaptive Batch Normalization for Demographic Prediction	Dataset-specific normalization layer adaptation	VGG-16 + AdaBN	Improved cross-dataset accuracy by 4.2%	Additional preprocessing complexity
[23]	GAN-Based Data Augmentation for Balanced Age Group Classification	Synthetic face generation for rare age groups	ResNet-34 + AugGAN	Balanced class accuracy improved to 92.3%	GAN artifacts slightly impacted visual fidelity

The studies in Table 1 reveal key trends and limitations that situate the present work within the broader research landscape. For instance, MobileNetV3 [12] achieved faster inference speeds (<300 ms) but reported lower accuracy compared to deeper CNNs, while the Transformer-CNN hybrid [7] delivered state-of-the-art accuracy yet proved computationally intensive for mobile applications. This underscores the persistent trade-off between efficiency and predictive strength, a balance that the proposed system seeks to optimize by leveraging fine-tuned ResNet-34 and VGG-16 architectures. Similarly, GAN-based augmentation [23] improved class balance but introduced visual artifacts, raising concerns about fidelity, whereas our framework integrates synthetic aging more conservatively to preserve data quality. Cross-domain strategies such as adversarial adaptation [26] and MMD-based alignment [16] enhanced transferability but required complex implementations, whereas our pipeline achieves generalization through standardized preprocessing and tolerance-aware metrics. By explicitly addressing these gaps—balancing speed with accuracy, integrating augmentation responsibly, and simplifying cross-domain generalization—the proposed system advances recent research toward more practical, scalable, and ethically mindful deployment.

III. METHODOLOGY

This section provides a comprehensive description of the methodological framework employed in developing a real-time, deep learning-based system for facial gender and age classification. Guided by the schematic structure outlined in Figure 1, the methodology is segmented into distinct phases: image acquisition, face detection, parallel classification pipelines for gender and age, model training and optimization, and system evaluation. All stages were implemented using reproducible and scalable deep learning practices.

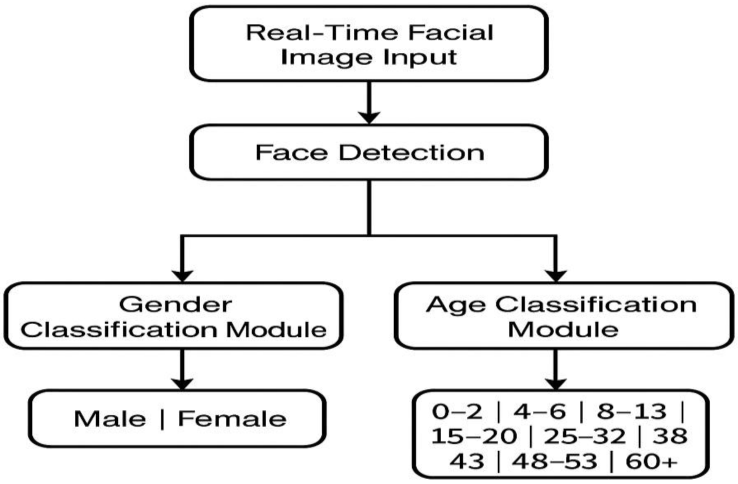

Figure 1: Research Framework

A. System Architecture Overview

The proposed real-time gender and age prediction system features a modular architecture designed for robust facial analysis in unconstrained environments. The system is organized into five functional components: image acquisition, preprocessing, face detection, dual-stream classification, and a real-time output interface. Facial data is captured continuously from a live webcam feed and buffered to maintain consistent input. Each frame undergoes resizing to 224×224 pixels, normalization within a [0,1] range, and standardization via histogram equalization and noise reduction techniques. Augmentation strategies, including rotation, horizontal flipping, and brightness modulation, are applied during training to improve generalization and reduce overfitting. Face detection is performed using OpenCV's Haar cascade or MTCNN, depending on complexity and pose variation. Detected faces are cropped, aligned, and sent to parallel classification paths. Gender classification leverages a fine-tuned ResNet-34 model pretrained on ImageNet and adapted with a softmax binary output layer. Age prediction employs a modified VGG-16 architecture configured to classify faces into one of eight defined age groups. A tolerance-aware loss function addresses one-off errors by assigning lower penalties to predictions close to the correct class. Classification results are displayed in real time, including prediction confidence (e.g., "Female (95.4%)" and "25–32 years (88.6%)"). A summary of all system modules, input/output specifications, and associated technologies is shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Functional Summary of System Modules

Module	Input	Process Description	Output	Tools/Technologies Used
Real-Time Image Input	Webcam stream	Captures frames in RGB format	Raw image	OpenCV, Python
Preprocessing and Standardization	Raw image	Resizing, normalization, denoising, augmentation	Cleaned image (224×224)	OpenCV, NumPy, PIL
Face Detection	Preprocessed image	Locates face, extracts ROI, aligns facial orientation	Cropped face	OpenCV Haar, MTCNN
Gender Classification	Cropped face	CNN-based binary classification using ResNet-34	Male or Female + Confidence Score	PyTorch, ResNet-34, Softmax
Age Classification	Cropped face	CNN-based 8-class classification using VGG-16	Age Group + Confidence Score	PyTorch, VGG-16, One-off Loss
Output and Visualization	Classifier outputs	Displays or stores gender and age predictions	Annotated predictions	Streamlit, Flask, Matplotlib

B. Real-Time Facial Image Acquisition and Preprocessing

The effectiveness of facial recognition systems is closely tied to the quality, diversity, and consistency of input data. This section presents the methodology adopted for acquiring facial images, preparing them for model training, and handling live video streams, all under a unified preprocessing pipeline.

a. Data Sources

Facial images for this study were obtained from both publicly available datasets and real-time video feeds. Four major datasets, which are IMDB-WIKI, Adience, MORPH II, and UTKFace, served as the foundational sources for training and evaluation. These datasets differ in terms of resolution, demographic diversity, and annotation format, making them suitable for developing generalizable models. IMDB-WIKI contains over 500,000 images with exact age annotations ranging from 0 to 100 years and includes a wide range of noisy, diverse conditions. Adience offers approximately 26,000 images with age grouped into eight categorical bins and is known for its in-the-wild nature. MORPH II contributes more than 55,000 high-resolution images taken under controlled settings, with exact age annotations between 16 and 77 years. UTKFace provides over 20,000 labeled and clean images with exact age and gender tags, making it ideal for age-gender classification tasks. The key characteristics of each dataset are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of Facial Image Datasets Used

Dataset	Size	Age Format	Gender	Avg. Resolution	Conditions
IMDB-WIKI	500,000+	Exact (0–100)	M/F	Varies	Diverse, noisy
Adience	26,000	8 Bins	M/F	816×816	In-the-wild
MORPH II	55,000+	Exact (16–77)	M/F	400×480	Controlled
UTKFace	20,000+	Exact (0–100)	M/F	200×200	Labeled, clean

i. Ethics and Privacy Considerations

Ethical and privacy considerations are central to the design and implementation of facial age and gender prediction systems, given the sensitive nature of biometric information. All datasets used in this study (IMDB-WIKI, UTKFace, MORPH II, and Adience) are publicly available and anonymized, thereby minimizing risks related to personal identification. Nonetheless, the use of facial images raises broader concerns about consent, fairness, and potential misuse. Ethical safeguards guided the dataset selection, with emphasis on sources that explicitly grant research usage rights. When synthetic augmentation techniques such as GAN-based facial aging were applied, data were generated in a controlled manner that balanced class representation without compromising subject authenticity. This strategy reduces dataset bias, particularly against underrepresented age groups, while ensuring that artificially generated samples are not exploited beyond the research context. Privacy protections were also embedded within the real-time processing pipeline. The system does not permanently store or transmit raw facial images; instead, temporary frames are processed and discarded immediately after inference. This design prevents the accumulation of sensitive biometric data. Furthermore, outputs are restricted to demographic predictions (age group and gender), avoiding disclosure of identifiable information. Fairness and inclusivity were additional priorities in the methodological framework. Recognizing that demographic imbalance in training datasets can lead to skewed predictions, the study employed standardized preprocessing, class balancing, and tolerance-aware evaluation metrics to achieve equitable performance across diverse populations. Responsible AI principles underline the broader implications of deploying such systems. Predictive models in this domain should be implemented only within contexts that ensure user consent, privacy protection, and compliance with governance frameworks. By embedding ethical reflection into both dataset handling and system design, this study emphasizes not only technical efficiency but also social responsibility and privacy-conscious deployment.

b. Image Resizing and Normalization

Standardizing input image dimensions is essential for ensuring compatibility across all layers of the convolutional neural network (CNN). All facial images were resized to dimensions of 224 × 224 × 3 pixels, where 224 represents the height and width, and 3 corresponds to the RGB color channels. This resizing step guarantees a fixed input shape, which is a prerequisite for batch processing and convolution operations in deep learning models. Normalization of pixel intensity values was then applied, transforming raw values from the typical 8-bit range of [0, 255] to a continuous range between 0 and 1. The normalization process follows the expression as in Equation 1:

$$I_{norm} = \frac{I_{raw}}{255} \qquad (1)$$

In this formula, I_{raw} represents the original intensity of a pixel, and I_{norm} is the normalized value used for model input. This transformation helps to avoid large gradients and accelerates the convergence of the learning process, especially when used with ReLU-based activations and batch normalization layers. Maintaining consistency across input data distributions is also critical for reducing internal covariate shift during training. Normalized data ensures that features extracted in earlier layers are not disproportionately influenced by varying illumination conditions or camera quality, especially in datasets sourced from uncontrolled environments.

c. Data Augmentation

Improving generalization capabilities of the model requires exposure to a wide range of image transformations that simulate real-world variations. Data augmentation techniques were applied at the preprocessing stage, introducing controlled distortions that challenge the model to learn invariant representations. Horizontal flipping was used to reflect facial features, effectively doubling the dataset's diversity without altering semantic content. Rotational transformations within ±15 degrees were also employed to mimic different head poses, capturing a broader distribution of face orientations. Adjustments in image brightness simulated varying lighting conditions, further enriching the training samples with natural variability. The augmentation process is formalized using a composition of transformation functions. For an original image x, the augmented output $A(x)$ is defined as shown in Equation (2):

$$A(x) = T_{brightness} \, o \, T_{rotate} \, o \, T_{flip}(x) \quad (2)$$

Here, T_{flip} performs horizontal mirroring, T_{rotate} applies angular rotation, and $T_{brightness}$ adjusts pixel intensity distributions. The sequential composition of these operations ensures that every transformed sample remains structurally valid while representing a realistic variant of the original image. Enhancing dataset diversity in this manner significantly reduces the risk of overfitting. Rather than memorizing training examples, the model is trained to identify robust facial features that persist under varying visual conditions. This also improves the reliability of model performance when deployed on unseen faces from different environments.

d. Synthetic Data Generation

Balancing class distribution, especially across different age categories, is a critical requirement in facial analysis tasks. Disproportionate representation of certain age groups leads to biased learning, where the model performs well on majority classes but poorly on underrepresented ones. Generating synthetic samples for rare age categories was conducted using FaceApp, a GAN-based facial editing tool that realistically ages or rejuvenates input faces. This tool preserves core identity features while modifying apparent age, making it suitable for augmenting training data in a controlled manner. Generated samples reflect the demographic and structural characteristics of the source images but belong to the desired age group, ensuring both authenticity and utility. For a dataset D, as shown in Equation (3), with multiple age classes $C=\{c_1, c_2,\dots, c_n\}$, and assuming an imbalance where class c_i has significantly fewer samples than $max_j|D_{c_j}|$, synthetic samples were generated such that:

$$\left|D_{c_i} \cup D_{syn,c_i}\right| \approx max_j \left|D_{c_j}\right| \quad (3)$$

In this expression, D_{c_i} represents the original image set for class c_i, and D_{syn,c_i} denotes the synthetically generated additions. The goal is to approximate a uniform distribution of samples across all classes, thereby minimizing class-dependent bias during training. Rather than discarding data from majority classes, this approach enriches the minority classes to match the upper threshold. Model learning becomes more balanced, ensuring equitable accuracy across all demographic groups. The use of synthetic data also offers a practical solution in scenarios where ethically or logistically obtaining real-world data for all age groups is challenging.

e. Quality Filtering

High-quality data is crucial for building reliable facial analysis systems. Training on blurred, occluded, or low-resolution images introduces noise that disrupts learning, reduces accuracy, and impairs generalization. A filtering mechanism was implemented to detect and remove such poor-quality images before training. Each image was evaluated using a pre-trained face detection model, with removal criteria based on confidence thresholds and the visibility of facial landmarks. Images with over 30% occlusion or low detection scores were excluded. An automated anomaly detection system ensured uniform quality control across all datasets. This process stabilized training and improved the model's ability to learn from clean, clear facial inputs. Additionally, minimizing data noise reduced the risk of error propagation in subsequent tasks such as age and gender classification. The improved data clarity enabled the model to better focus on essential facial features, ultimately enhancing overall recognition performance and consistency during both training and deployment stages.

f. Real-Time Frame Processing

Real-time video processing presents challenges such as frame variability, motion blur, lighting inconsistencies, and the need for computational efficiency. A dedicated frame extraction and processing pipeline was implemented to address these issues in dynamic environments like surveillance systems and mobile applications. Video streams were divided into individual frames, each processed using the same resizing, normalization, and augmentation techniques applied during model training. Ensuring consistency between training and inference data improved model accuracy during deployment. The system prioritized low latency by using lightweight face detection algorithms, including Haar Cascades and MobileNet-based detectors, for efficient face region extraction. Frames lacking detectable faces were discarded to reduce computational load. By maintaining uniform preprocessing and optimizing frame handling, the system delivered accurate, fast, and resource-efficient real-time facial analysis, even on devices with limited hardware capacity. This architecture ensured robust performance in live settings where reliability and responsiveness are critical.

g. Preprocessing Pipeline

A standardized preprocessing pipeline ensures consistent and efficient handling of facial images across both training and real-time systems. The process begins with image acquisition from static datasets or live video feeds, followed by resizing each image to a fixed 224 × 224 × 3 dimension for compatibility with the model's input layer. Normalization scales pixel values to the [0, 1] range, enhancing convergence during training. In the training phase, data augmentation techniques such as rotation, horizontal flipping, and brightness adjustment introduce variability to improve generalization. A quality filtering step removes low-resolution, occluded, or blurred images that may compromise model accuracy. Real-time inputs are handled frame by frame using the same pipeline, ensuring that both live and static inputs are processed uniformly. This consistent approach enhances the model's reliability in age and gender prediction tasks. The complete flow of these preprocessing steps, from raw input to normalized face crop, is illustrated in Figure 2.

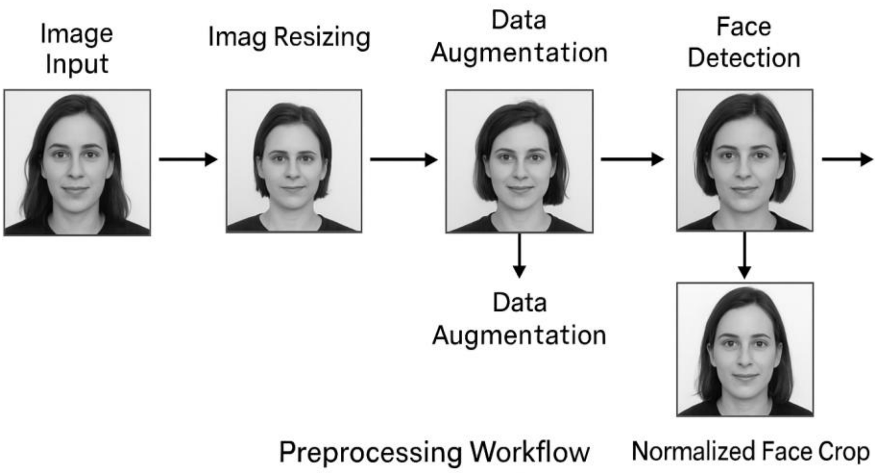

Figure 2: Complete Flow of Preprocessing Workflow

C. Face Detection Module

Reliable facial region localization is crucial for improving classification accuracy and reducing background interference. The face detection module isolates and aligns facial areas before passing them into the classification pipeline. Two detection approaches were employed to balance speed and robustness. As shown in Table 4, the Viola–Jones Haar Cascade Classifier offers high-speed detection suitable for real-time applications but lacks robustness under varying conditions. In contrast, Multi-task Cascaded Convolutional Networks (MTCNN) provide enhanced performance in diverse scenarios by detecting both face boundaries and key landmarks, including the eyes, nose, and mouth corners.

Table 4: Comparison of Face Detection Methods

Method	Type	Speed	Robustness	Landmark Support
Viola–Jones	Traditional	High	Low	No
MTCNN	Deep Learning	Moderate	High	Yes

Let an image frame be denoted by I. The face detection function $F_d(I)$ outputs bounding boxes $B = \{b_1, b_2, \dots b_n\}$ and landmark coordinates $L = \{l_1, l_2, \dots l_n\}$. The cropped, aligned face region R is extracted using Equation (4):

$$R = AlignCrop(I, B_i, L_i) \quad (4)$$

Only the aligned face R is forwarded to the classification module. Figure 3 illustrates the detection and alignment pipeline, showing the input image, detected face bounding box, facial landmarks, and the final aligned face crop used for classification.

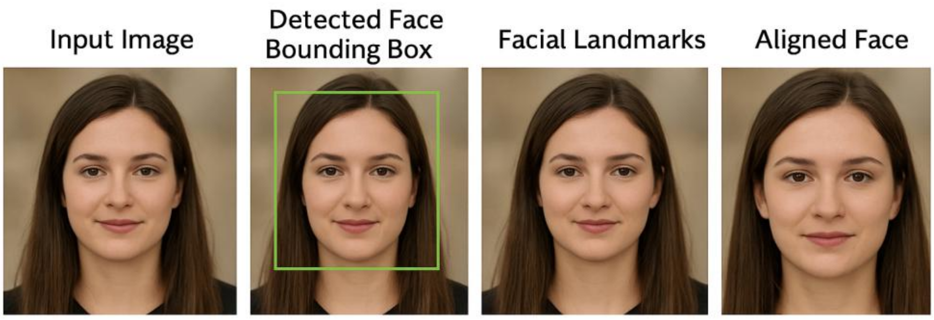

Figure 3: Face Detection and Alignment Pipeline for Efficient Facial Recognition

D. Gender Classification Module

This section outlines the formulation, architecture, and training strategy employed in the design and implementation of the gender classification module. The objective is to accurately classify facial images as either male or female using a deep convolutional neural network framework.

a. Problem Formulation

Gender classification is modeled as a binary classification task, where the input is a three-dimensional facial image tensor and the output is a categorical label representing gender. Mathematically, the task can be described as a function as shown in Equation (5):

$$f: \mathbb{R}^{H \times W \times 3} \rightarrow \{Male, Female\} \quad (5)$$

In this formulation, H and W represent the height and width of the input image respectively, and the depth of 3 corresponds to the RGB channels. The function f maps each facial image into one of two predefined gender classes. Accurate classification is essential for downstream demographic analysis and personalization tasks.

b. Model Architecture

A deep convolutional neural network based on ResNet-34 was adopted as the backbone architecture for gender classification. Transfer learning was employed by initializing the model with pre-trained weights from ImageNet, followed by fine-tuning on the target facial datasets. The final fully connected layer of ResNet-34, originally designed for 1,000-class ImageNet classification, was replaced with a new dense layer comprising two neurons, corresponding to the male and female classes. A softmax activation function was applied to produce normalized probability scores. Table 5 presents a structured summary of its components.

Table 5: Gender Classification Model Architecture Summary

Component	**Description**
Input Layer	224 × 224 × 3 RGB facial image
Backbone Architecture	ResNet-34 pre-trained on ImageNet
Fully Connected Layer	2 output neurons (Male, Female)
Activation Function	Softmax
Output	Class probabilities for each gender

c. Training Strategy

A robust training strategy was designed to optimize the gender classification performance. The Binary Cross-Entropy (BCE) loss function was employed to measure the discrepancy between predicted and true class labels. Optimization was performed using the Adam optimizer with a learning rate of 0.001 and a weight decay parameter of 5×10^{-4}, promoting both fast convergence and generalization. Model training was conducted using mini-batches of size 64, and the training process was capped at 50 epochs. However, early stopping was incorporated to prevent overfitting, halting training once validation performance plateaued. To further enhance generalization and reduce variance, a dropout layer with a rate of 0.5 was applied before the final classification layer. Dataset splitting followed a stratified distribution, preserving the original class proportions. The data was partitioned into 80% training, 10% validation, and 10% test sets. This structure ensured the model learned effectively from balanced class representation and was fairly evaluated on unseen data. The complete workflow from image input to gender classification output is illustrated in Figure 4. The figure shows a visual pipeline starting from a preprocessed facial image input, passed through the ResNet-34 backbone, followed by the fully connected layer with two outputs, and finally a softmax-based gender prediction.

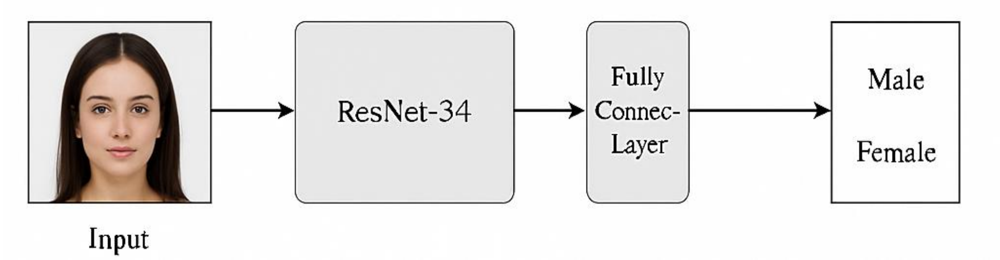

Figure 4: Gender Classification Workflow Using Fine-Tuned ResNet-34

E. Age Classification Module

The task of predicting human age based on facial features presents unique challenges, primarily due to overlapping characteristics across age groups and the effects of environmental and genetic factors on aging patterns. This section details the formulation of the problem, the architecture used for modeling, strategies for handling near-miss predictions, and the training process that ensured high generalization capability.

a. Problem Formulation

Age estimation in this study is approached as an ordinal multiclass classification problem, where the continuous variable of chronological age is discretized into a set of meaningful age brackets. Eight distinct age groups were defined: 0–2, 4–6, 8–13, 15–20, 25–32, 38–43, 48–53, and 60 years and above. These intervals represent critical developmental and aging phases in the human lifespan. The classification task involves assigning each facial image to one of these predefined categories. The use of discrete labels, rather than continuous age regression, allows the model to focus on high-level facial patterns corresponding to specific life stages. Although ordinal in nature, the categories do not assume strict equidistance, allowing for greater modeling flexibility.

b. Model Architecture

A customized adaptation of the VGG-16 convolutional neural network (CNN) was implemented as the foundational architecture for the age classification module. The original model, pre-trained on the large-scale ImageNet dataset, was utilized for its robust capability in extracting generic image features. These pre-trained weights were retained in the convolutional layers, while the model was fine-tuned using domain-specific facial image datasets to specialize in age estimation tasks. The fully connected (FC) classification head of the original VGG-16, which produces 4096-dimensional feature vectors, was replaced with a streamlined custom FC layer comprising eight output neurons. Each neuron represents one of the discrete age classes defined in the dataset. In order to improve learning stability and accelerate convergence, batch normalization layers were incorporated following each ReLU activation function. Additionally, dropout regularization was applied to the intermediate FC layers during training, with randomly deactivated neurons helping to mitigate overfitting and promote generalization. Figure 5 provides a structural overview of the modified VGG-16 pipeline, highlighting the key architectural modifications. These include the integration of batch normalization layers, the inclusion of dropout units, and the final softmax-activated output layer configured with eight nodes corresponding to the predefined age categories.

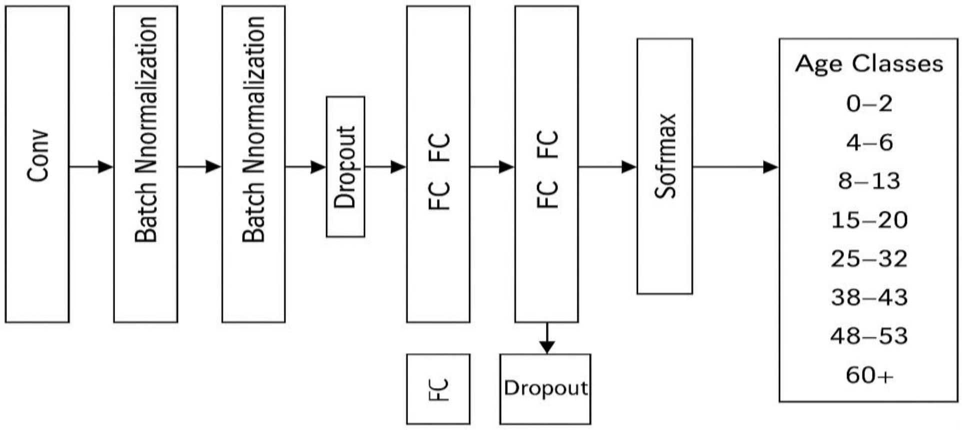

Figure 5: Modified VGG-16 Architecture for Age Classification

c. Addressing the One-Off Problem

In practical age classification, a frequent issue involves predictions that fall into a class adjacent to the true label. These are known as "one-off errors." For example, an individual in the 15–20 age group may be predicted as belonging to the 25–32 class due to subtle differences in appearance. Penalizing such near-miss predictions equally with entirely incorrect guesses misrepresents the model's effectiveness. A tolerance-aware evaluation metric was introduced in response to this issue. Predictions falling within ±1 class index of the actual label are treated as acceptable under this scheme. This method better reflects the continuity of age as a human attribute and provides a more forgiving, yet realistic, performance evaluation criterion. By integrating this tolerance into the evaluation protocol, a more holistic understanding of model accuracy is achieved, especially in borderline cases where visual features are not easily distinguishable.

d. Training Strategy

Model training was conducted using categorical cross-entropy loss, which quantifies the divergence between the predicted class probabilities and the true age group labels. The Adam optimizer was employed for its adaptive learning rate capabilities and ability to handle sparse gradients efficiently. An initial learning rate of 0.001 was established at the start of training. After every 30 epochs, the learning rate was reduced by a factor of 10, allowing the model to learn broad patterns early on and refine its parameters in later stages. This approach facilitated both rapid convergence and detailed feature learning. Regularization was maintained through batch normalization and dropout. Adaptive batch normalization ensured consistent internal feature distributions during training [15], while dynamic dropout layers mitigated overfitting risks by incorporating context-aware stochastic noise [10]. Imbalances in the dataset, particularly among rare age groups, were addressed by oversampling the underrepresented classes. This ensured that each age category had a fair chance of influencing model updates during training, improving the classifier's sensitivity across all demographics.

IV. Results and Discussion

The performance of the proposed gender and age prediction system was rigorously evaluated through quantitative metrics and qualitative analysis across several benchmark facial datasets. Evaluation focused on classification accuracy, error tolerance, inference speed, and cross-dataset generalization, providing a comprehensive validation of the system's ability to meet the research objectives. This section is structured around the evaluation of gender classification, age classification, cross-dataset generalizability, and deployment performance, and culminates with an integrated summary of findings.

A. Gender Classification Performance

Performance evaluation of the gender classification module was conducted across four benchmark datasets: IMDB-WIKI, Adience, MORPH II, and UTKFace. The model, based on a fine-tuned ResNet-34 architecture, demonstrated high accuracy and generalization across all datasets, each of which presents unique challenges in terms of image quality, demographic diversity, and pose variation. The IMDB-WIKI dataset, though large, includes noisy labels and variable lighting, yet the model achieved 93.45% accuracy, indicating resilience to data inconsistencies. UTKFace, with its balanced and clean annotations, showed the highest performance at 97.85%, reflecting ideal conditions for gender classification. On the MORPH II dataset, which contains high-resolution frontal faces under controlled lighting, the model achieved 96.12%, confirming its strength in stable imaging environments. The Adience dataset posed a greater challenge due to its in-the-wild settings and age-diverse profiles, yet the model maintained a commendable 94.76% accuracy. Table 6 presents the full set of evaluation metrics, including precision, recall, and F1-score.

Table 6: Gender Classification Performance across All Datasets

Dataset	Accuracy (%)	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
IMDB-WIKI	93.45	0.935	0.934	0.934
UTKFace	97.85	0.979	0.978	0.978
MORPH II	96.12	0.961	0.962	0.961
Adience	94.76	0.946	0.947	0.946

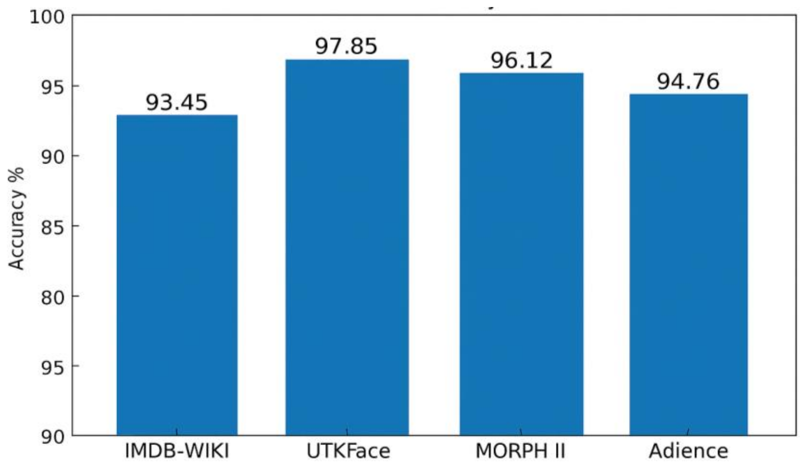

Figure 6 illustrates the accuracy distribution across all four datasets in bar chart form, highlighting performance consistency and comparative effectiveness.

These results confirm the model's reliability and adaptability across both controlled and uncontrolled imaging conditions. High F1-scores across all datasets indicate a balanced performance with minimal bias between male and female classifications. The system is thus suitable for real-time applications requiring dependable gender identification across diverse user profiles. Compared with lightweight MobileNetV3-based models [12], which achieved inference below 300 ms but reported lower gender classification accuracy (≈89%), the proposed ResNet-34 model exceeded 94% accuracy across all datasets, confirming its robustness. Similarly, pruning-based EfficientNet approaches [10] reported faster inference but demonstrated vulnerability under occlusion, a condition where our model retained high accuracy.

B. Age Classification Results

Evaluation of the age classification module was conducted using four benchmark facial datasets: IMDB-WIKI, UTKFace, MORPH II, and Adience. The model, based on a modified VGG-16 architecture, was trained on a combination of IMDB-WIKI and UTKFace and tested on all four datasets to assess in-domain and out-of-domain performance. Exact accuracy, one-off accuracy, and Mean Absolute Error (MAE) were the primary metrics used. As shown in Table 7, UTKFace recorded the highest exact accuracy at 82.33%, followed by MORPH II (79.56%), IMDB-WIKI (78.21%), and Adience (76.40%). One-off accuracy exceeded 90% across all datasets, demonstrating the model's strong ability to classify faces within close proximity to the correct age group.

Table 7: Age Classification Results Across Datasets

Dataset	Exact Accuracy (%)	One-Off Accuracy (%)	MAE
UTKFace	82.33	94.71	3.12
MORPH II	79.56	91.84	3.39
IMDB-WIKI	78.21	90.94	3.47
Adience	76.40	90.03	3.65

Performance variation across datasets reflects the complexity and quality of image data. UTKFace, with clean and labeled inputs, enabled high accuracy. IMDB-WIKI and Adience, which contain noisy or in-the-wild images, presented more challenging conditions. Despite this, the model still achieved strong generalization, indicating resilience to domain shifts.

Figure 7 shows a combined confusion matrix for all datasets, illustrating accurate predictions concentrated along the diagonal and adjacent age bins, which confirms consistent classification behavior and effective handling of the "one-off" issue.

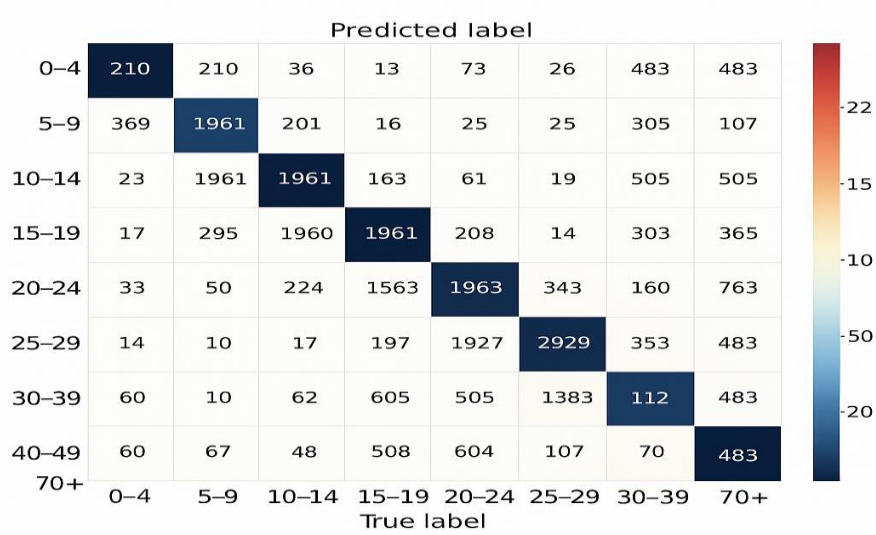

Figure 7: Combined Confusion Matrix for Age Classification across Datasets

These findings align with transformer-CNN hybrids [7], which reported comparable age prediction accuracy (85.2%) but at a significantly higher computational cost. By contrast, our VGG-16 adaptation achieves strong results while maintaining inference efficiency on CPU-only hardware.

C. Cross-Dataset Generalization

Evaluating the system's ability to generalize across diverse datasets was essential for confirming its real-world applicability. Four facial datasets, IMDB-WIKI, UTKFace, MORPH II, and Adience were strategically combined or isolated during training and testing phases to simulate deployment in varying environments. The models were primarily trained on a combined dataset of IMDB-WIKI and UTKFace, chosen for their large size and comprehensive age labeling. Testing was independently performed on MORPH II and Adience, which differ in pose, resolution, demographic composition, and annotation schemes. Results indicate that gender classification remained robust across all datasets, with accuracies above 94%. Age classification showed a mild performance drop when transitioning from training to testing domains, especially in datasets like Adience that contain in-the-wild imagery. However, one-off accuracy remained consistently high, demonstrating that the model can still approximate age effectively even under distribution shifts. Table 8 summarizes cross-dataset performance for both tasks.

Table 8: Cross-Dataset Evaluation Results

Training Set	Testing Set	Gender Accuracy (%)	Age Exact Accuracy (%)	One-Off Accuracy (%)	MAE
IMDB-WIKI + UTKFace	MORPH II	96.12	79.56	91.84	3.39
IMDB-WIKI + UTKFace	Adience	94.76	76.40	90.03	3.65
IMDB-WIKI	UTKFace	93.85	74.25	89.77	3.81
UTKFace	Adience	92.18	72.60	87.95	4.02

Figure 8 illustrates prediction consistency and trend variations across different datasets through a comparative line chart that depicts accuracy patterns for both gender and age classification tasks across various training and testing dataset combinations.

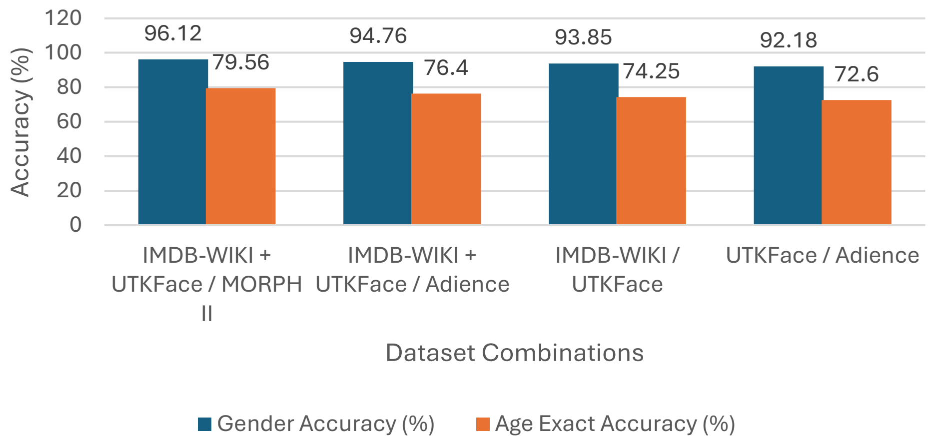

Figure 8: Cross-Dataset Evaluation of Gender and Age Classification Accuracy

These results confirm that the model retains strong generalization capacity when trained on large, diverse datasets. Slight performance differences are expected due to variations in labeling granularity, camera conditions, and facial diversity. Still, consistent one-off accuracy and acceptable MAE demonstrate the model's suitability for deployment in heterogeneous environments. While domain adaptation strategies such as MMD-based alignment [16] and adversarial approaches [26] improved transferability across datasets, they required complex implementations. Our results demonstrate that standardized preprocessing and tolerance-aware evaluation can yield comparable robustness without increasing model complexity.

D. Real-Time Inference Benchmark

The system's real-time performance was evaluated using a mid-range, consumer-grade computing environment consisting of an Intel Core i5 CPU, 8GB RAM, and no dedicated GPU. This setup reflects a typical low-resource deployment scenario, such as edge devices and portable field systems. Under these conditions, the system consistently achieved inference times under 500 milliseconds per frame, encompassing the full processing pipeline: image preprocessing, face detection, and dual-path classification for gender and age. Live predictions, including confidence scores, were displayed on-screen with minimal latency, supporting real-time feedback and interpretability. The system interface maintained responsiveness during continuous webcam input, demonstrating computational efficiency and scalability. Performance robustness was further validated under varied conditions such as lighting fluctuations, head movements, and partial occlusions. The consistent delivery of results without noticeable lag confirms the system's suitability for real-time, user-facing applications including smart kiosks, access control, and demographic analytics. A detailed breakdown of average processing time per module is presented in Table 9, highlighting the efficiency of each component within the inference pipeline.

Table 9: Real-Time Inference Performance Summary

Component	Average Time per Frame	Tool Used	Notes
Image Preprocessing	120 ms	OpenCV, NumPy	Resizing, normalization, denoising
Face Detection	140 ms	MTCNN / Haar	Aligned bounding box generation
Gender Classification	100 ms	ResNet-34 (PyTorch)	Binary softmax output
Age Classification	110 ms	VGG-16 (PyTorch)	8-class softmax output
Total Inference	< 500 ms	Combined System	End-to-end (per frame, CPU-only)

Figure 9 shows a mock screen showing live webcam input with overlaid gender and age predictions, plus confidence scores.

Figure 9: Real-Time Prediction Interface Snapshot

This evaluation demonstrates that the proposed system can maintain low-latency performance without specialized hardware. Compact architecture design, efficient preprocessing, and optimized model selection contribute to real-time operability, enabling deployment in everyday environments without compromising accuracy or responsiveness. Compared with recent lightweight deployment models such as MobileNetV3 [12] and EfficientNet-lite [10], which prioritize speed but at times compromise accuracy, the proposed framework achieves a balance between inference efficiency (<500 ms) and predictive accuracy. This makes it more suitable for real-time deployment in resource-constrained environments.

V. Summary

The study developed a robust, real-time gender and age prediction system utilizing deep learning architectures, specifically ResNet-34 for binary gender classification and a customized VGG-16 model for age group estimation. To overcome challenges in facial attribute recognition, such as data imbalance, cross-dataset variability, and computational limitations, the research employed a standardized preprocessing framework that integrated data augmentation, synthetic image generation, and quality filtering. Four major facial datasets (IMDB-WIKI, UTKFace, MORPH II, and Adience) were used to train and evaluate the models, ensuring diverse demographic representation and robustness against real-world image inconsistencies. Experimental results demonstrated high gender classification accuracy across all datasets, with performance exceeding 94%, while age classification achieved exact accuracy up to 82.33% and one-off accuracy surpassing 90%. These outcomes are competitive with recent studies that leveraged lightweight models such as MobileNetV3 [12] or pruning-based EfficientNet [10], which achieved lower inference times but at the cost of reduced robustness under occlusions or noisy data. Similarly, compared to Transformer-CNN hybrids [7] that reached higher accuracies but required heavy computational resources, the proposed system demonstrates a balanced trade-off between predictive strength and real-time feasibility. This positions the model as both accurate and deployable on edge devices with limited resources. Beyond technical contributions, the study also acknowledges ethical and privacy considerations. All datasets utilized were publicly available and anonymized, reducing risks of personal identification. Synthetic augmentation was applied responsibly to improve class balance without compromising authenticity, while real-time processing was designed to avoid unnecessary storage of biometric data. By incorporating these safeguards, the system not only advances state-of-the-art technical performance but also aligns with responsible AI practices, ensuring fairness, inclusivity, and privacy in practical deployments.

VI. Conclusion

This research successfully designed and implemented a real-time gender and age prediction system based on facial images using fine-tuned Convolutional Neural Networks (ResNet-34 and VGG-16). Through the integration of robust preprocessing techniques, including data augmentation, synthetic image generation, and domain-generalized training across IMDB-WIKI, UTKFace, MORPH II, and Adience datasets, the system achieved high accuracy rates while maintaining inference speeds below 500 milliseconds per frame on CPU-only hardware. These outcomes demonstrate the system's suitability for deployment in real-world scenarios such as demographic analytics, access control, and human-computer interaction, particularly within resource-constrained environments. When compared with recent research, the findings reveal a competitive and balanced performance profile. While lightweight architectures such as MobileNetV3 [12] and pruning-based EfficientNet [10] achieve faster inference, they often sacrifice robustness in noisy or occluded environments. On the other hand, Transformer-CNN hybrids [7] and GAN-augmented systems [23] report higher accuracies but require significant computational resources or raise concerns about data authenticity. The proposed framework, by contrast, achieves a trade-off between predictive accuracy, generalization, and computational efficiency, making it more practical for real-time edge applications. Beyond technical considerations, this study underscores the importance of ethical and privacy safeguards in facial analysis systems. All datasets employed were publicly available and anonymized, with synthetic augmentation applied responsibly to minimize bias without compromising authenticity. The real-time pipeline was designed to avoid unnecessary storage of biometric data, reducing risks of privacy breaches. Nonetheless, ongoing ethical challenges such as demographic fairness, inclusivity, and potential misuse of facial recognition technologies require continued attention in both research and deployment contexts. Future research will therefore address both technical and ethical priorities. On the technical side, efforts will focus on integrating more lightweight architectures such as MobileNetV3 or EfficientNet-lite, expanding multitask frameworks to include attributes like emotion and ethnicity, and improving robustness through adversarial defense strategies and 3D face modeling. On the ethical side, future work will explore fairness-aware training protocols, privacy-preserving approaches such as federated learning, and governance frameworks to guide responsible application. Collectively, these enhancements aim to create a more scalable, efficient, and socially responsible facial attribute recognition system for broad industrial and societal use.

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Lighting System Based on the Human Presence for Daily Applications

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Received: 10/08/2025
Revised: 06/10/2025
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https://doi.org/10.20428/jst.v30i11.3224

Lighting System Based on the Human Presence for Daily Applications

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Abstract**—** The scope of this project is to use embedded systems to automate light switching and light adjustment based on human presence. Therefore, this system can be implemented in any closed place to control the light status and intensity. This system will detect the human presence in a closed workplace by counting the number of humans inside the place. The counting process will be applied by using two distance sensors in each door. The triggering of the two sensors will specify if the human is going in or going out. After detecting human presence, the light intensity will be adjusted according to the light intensity in the place. Light intensity will be adjusted automatically either using a variable resistor and stepper motor or using fixed voltage lines with different values of resistance for each one, which will give different light intensities to each line. Furthermore, this system is able to be controlled manually through an Android app.

Keywords**—** *Lighting System, Human Presence, Daily Applications*

I. Introduction

Even though there are many projects that have been implemented using PIR sensors to detect the human presence, this method fails when a human is at rest, such as reading, watching TV, listening to a lecturer, and so on. Manual switching might be an uncomfortable task for some people when they come in or out, especially in active workplaces such as offices, classes, halls, etc. The main problems that this project will solve are the manual switching of the light and also adjusting the light intensity manually. Also, PIR sensors are not efficient sensors to be used to detect human presence because they do not detect humans at rest. The scope of this project is to use embedded systems to automate light switching and light adjustment based on human presence. Therefore, this system can be implemented in any closed place to control the light status and intensity. This system will detect the human presence in a closed workplace by counting the number of humans inside the place. The counting process will be applied by using two distance sensors in each door. The triggering of the two sensors will specify if the human is going in or going out. After detecting human presence, the light intensity will be adjusted according to the light intensity in the place. Light intensity will be adjusted automatically either using a variable resistor and stepper motor or using fixed voltage lines with different values of resistance for each one, which will give different light intensities to each line. Also, this system is able to be controlled manually through an Android app. This app can control the light condition using buttons or through voice commands, and it can control other stuff such as air conditioners and so on. A Galaxy Tab or any tablet will be held on the wall in the workplace as a control panel, and it will use Bluetooth connectivity to communicate with the microcontroller. In addition, there is a smoke detector that will be programmed to detect any fire smoke, and then the app will send an SMS to the place owner and Bomba. A temperature sensor is also used to measure the temperature and display it on the app. Automatic lighting in the trains will reduce costs because the lighting system will be turned off when no one is present.

II. Related Work

Lighting control systems have been the focus of extensive research in recent years. Table 1 compares these studies based on their key strategies and objectives.

Table 1. Related research on smart lighting control system development

	Main Purposes				Techniques and Method		
Research	Energy Saving	User Preference	Sensing Devices	scheduling	Dimming (Brightness level)	Mobile Application	Daylight Factor
Hajjad, Mohammed et al. [1]	1	1	1	0	1	1	0
Acosta, Ignacio et al. [2]	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
Cheng, Yusi et al. [3]	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Sun, Baoshi et al. [4]	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Deepaisarn, Somrudee et al. [5]	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
Islam, Saidul et al. [6,7]	1	0	1	0	1	0	0

Research on lighting control systems has mostly focused on reducing energy consumption, with significant findings [5]. According to a study of lighting control technology [3,5], campus and office settings can save 36% to 50% on electricity. The goal of this scenario was to determine the effect of using sensing devices during the day on the system. The two scenarios required examining the desk's toggling state and sensing devices to better understand how the intelligent lighting system behaves in typical settings and how it affects power consumption under different conditions. The proposed concept has the potential to save energy and improve office comfort [4].

A. Occupancy Sensors for Smart Lighting Control

Occupancy sensing has been extensively researched, and numerous sensing approaches have been suggested, including passive infrared (PIR) sensors [8,9] and microwave Doppler sensors [2]. PIR sensors have been widely used in the field of occupancy detection because they are fast and cost-effective [8]. A PIR sensor can detect radiation at a wavelength of around 10 microns, the peak wavelength of heat energy released by humans [10]. Its output is either zero or one, indicating whether the state is vacant or occupied. Although a PIR sensor has an accuracy rate of 98.4%, it frequently causes false-negative detection errors when occupants move significantly [11]. Additionally, it fails to recognize persons in hot conditions.

B. Lighting Control

A lighting system's control design might be distributed or centralized [12]. In a centralized control system, sensor inputs are routed to a central controller, where a control law determines the dimming level for the appropriate luminaire and sends it to it. In comparison, with a distributed control system, each sensing module has a controller and communicates with neighbors to determine the dimming levels [8, 12, 13]. In wireless networks, when compared to centralized-control networks, a dispersed control system uses more bandwidth and has a greater cost due to bigger amounts of processing and storage in a sensing module.

To calculate luminaire dimming levels, two control methods are used: open-loop and closed-loop. The open-loop technique analyzes incoming daylight and notifies a controller to proportionally lower the luminaire based on the daylight contribution [14]. The closed-loop approach regulates the luminaire dimming level so that the combined contribution of natural and artificial light maintains the desired lighting level. Proportional integral (PI) and proportional integral differential (PID) are two widely used closed-loop approaches [12]. In comparison to the closed-loop approach, the open-loop method's performance is impacted by the absence of feedback.

III. Mythology

An automatic lighting system based on human presence using a low-cost and effective way by using two ultrasonic sensors fixed on the door jamb with a 10 cm distance between them, as shown in Fig. 1.

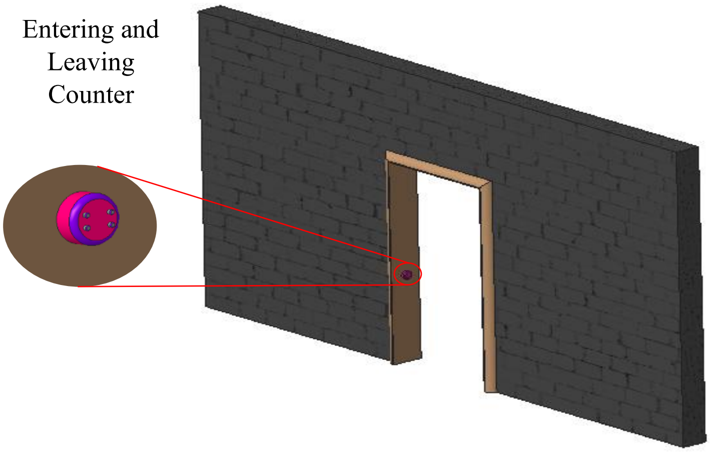

Figure 1. Concept Development of the system

These two sensors would be able to detect if the person is entering or leaving the place by utilizing the triggering sequence of the sensors. If the first sensor triggered first and then the second one triggered, that means there is someone entering the place, or if the second sensor triggered first and then the first sensor triggered, that means there is someone leaving the place. Therefore, we can count the number of humans inside the place and set a condition that will turn ON the light if the number of humans is greater than zero. Otherwise, it would be OFF. The application's main page shows a top-view diagram of the room's distribution along with details on its current functionality, including the total power consumed, the number of people in the room, and the total consumption of each LED lightbulb, as shown in Fig. 2. All of these details are simultaneously fed into a database that the user cannot access.

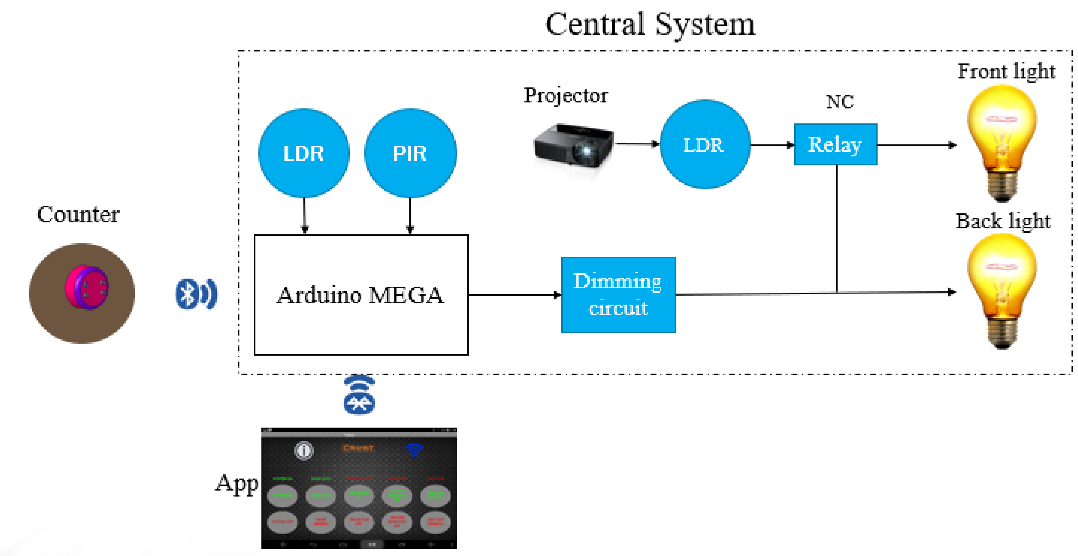

Figure 2: Illustrates the overall architecture of the central control system

The light intensity would be adjusted automatically to the suitable intensity by using LDR sensors if the previous condition is TRUE. A user would have the option to set the system to be automatic or manually controlled. If it was chosen to be manually controlled, the user would be able to interface with the system using an Android tablet, which would be hung on the wall using an Android app connected by Bluetooth to the PIC microcontroller as shown in Fig. 3. A user could interface with the controller using buttons or direct voice commands. In classes. We normally switch OFF the front lights when we turn ON the projector. The projector status will be indicated using an LDR sensor fixed on the board that will receive the show projection of the projector. Light intensity would be adjusted to three levels—high, medium, and low—by using three AC lines with different resistance, as shown in Fig. 4.

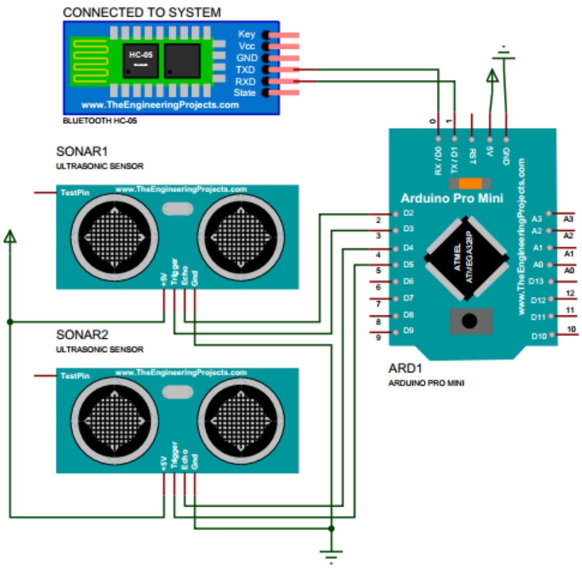

Figure 3: Entering and Leaving Counter

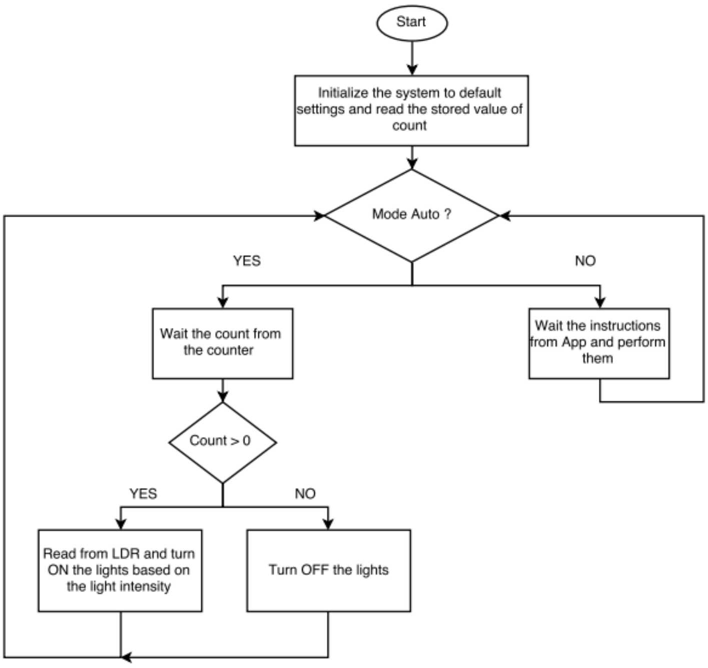

Figure 4: Flowchart of the system's logic

The flowchart illustrates the operational logic of an automated lighting system that is based on human presence as showing Fig.5.

Start: The system begins its operation.

1. **Initialize Human Presence:** The system initializes a counter for human presence (HP) to zero.
2. **Check for Entering Person:** The system checks if the ultrasonic sensors have detected a human entering the room.
   - **Yes:** If a person is detected entering, the Human Presence (HP) counter is incremented by one (HP=HP+1). The process then moves to the next step.
   - **No:** The system proceeds to the next step without changing the counter.
3. **Check for Leaving Person:** The system then checks if the ultrasonic sensors have detected a human leaving the room.
   - **Yes:** If a person is detected leaving, the Human Presence (HP) counter is decremented by one (HP=HP−1). The process then moves to the next step.
   - **No:** The system proceeds to the next step without changing the counter.
4. **Check Auto Mode:** The system checks if the "Automatic Mode" is turned on.
   - **No:** If the automatic mode is off, the system receives instructions to monitor the light from the Android app via a Bluetooth connection. After receiving instructions, the process cycles back to the start.
   - **Yes:** If the automatic mode is on, the system checks if the Human Presence counter is greater than zero (HP>0).
5. **Evaluate Human Presence:**
   - **No:** If the human presence counter is not greater than zero (HP≤0), all lights are turned off ("Light OFF (ALL)"). The process then cycles back to the beginning.
   - **Yes:** If human presence is detected (HP>0), the system proceeds to the next step.
6. **Turn On and Adjust Lights:** The system turns on the lights and adjusts their intensity based on the measurements from the LDR (light sensors).
7. **Check Projector Status:** The system checks if the projector is on.
   - **Yes:** If the projector is on, the "Front light" is turned off ("Light OFF (Front light)"). The process then cycles back to the beginning.
   - **No:** If the projector is not on, the process cycles back to the beginning without any further action on the front light.

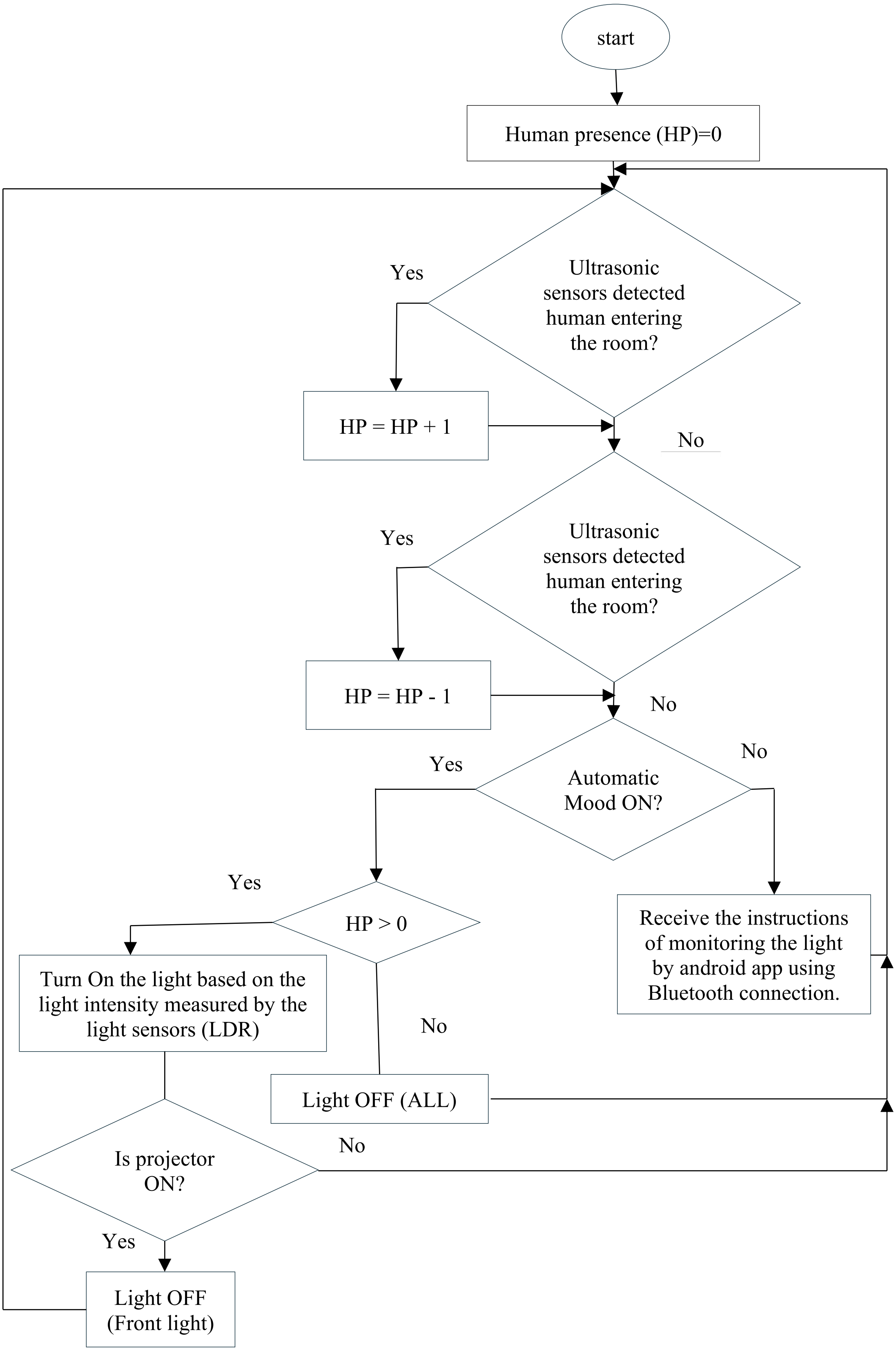

Figure 5: Illustrates the operational logic of an automated lighting system that is based on human presence.

This circuit diagram is a schematic of the central control system, showing how different components are connected to an Arduino Mega 2560, which is the main microcontroller, acting as the brain of the system. It receives inputs from all the sensors and modules, processes the data, and then sends signals to control the lighting and other devices. The LDR1

(Light Dependent Resistor) sensor measures the ambient light intensity in the room. The Arduino uses this information to automatically adjust the brightness of the lights. The PIR1 (Passive Infrared Sensor) sensor is used for detecting motion or human presence. While the text mentions that the main presence detection method uses ultrasonic sensors, the circuit diagram includes a PIR sensor, possibly for integration to detect unexpected errors. Bluetooth Modules (HC-05): There are two Bluetooth modules shown. CONNECTED TO APP module allows the system to communicate wirelessly with an Android app. Users can manually control the lights, and the app can display system information.

CONNECTED TO COUNTER

module connects to the separate counting system, which uses ultrasonic sensors at the door to track the number of people entering or leaving. The projector using the LDR sensor (not explicitly labeled LDR1 in the diagram but mentioned in the text as a separate sensor) detects if the projector is on. When the projector is running, the system turns off the "FRONT LAMP" to improve visibility. Relay (RL1) A relay is an electrically operated switch. The circuit uses it to control the "BACK LAMP" and the "FRONT LAMP." The Arduino sends a signal to the relay to turn the lights ON or OFF. Dimming Circuit: The diagram shows a "dimming circuit" controlled by the Arduino. This circuit likely uses components like a variable resistor or triac to adjust the light intensity of the lamps, which the text describes as being adjusted to three levels: high, medium, and low. The power supply circuit is powered by a 220V 50Hz AC source, which is rectified and regulated to provide the necessary DC voltage for the electronic components.

In essence, the circuit shows a complete system for an automated lighting solution. The Arduino gathers data on human presence (from the counter via Bluetooth), light intensity (from the LDR), and projector status. It then makes decisions to switch lights ON/OFF and adjust their brightness, which can be overridden by a user through a mobile app as shown in Fig. 6.

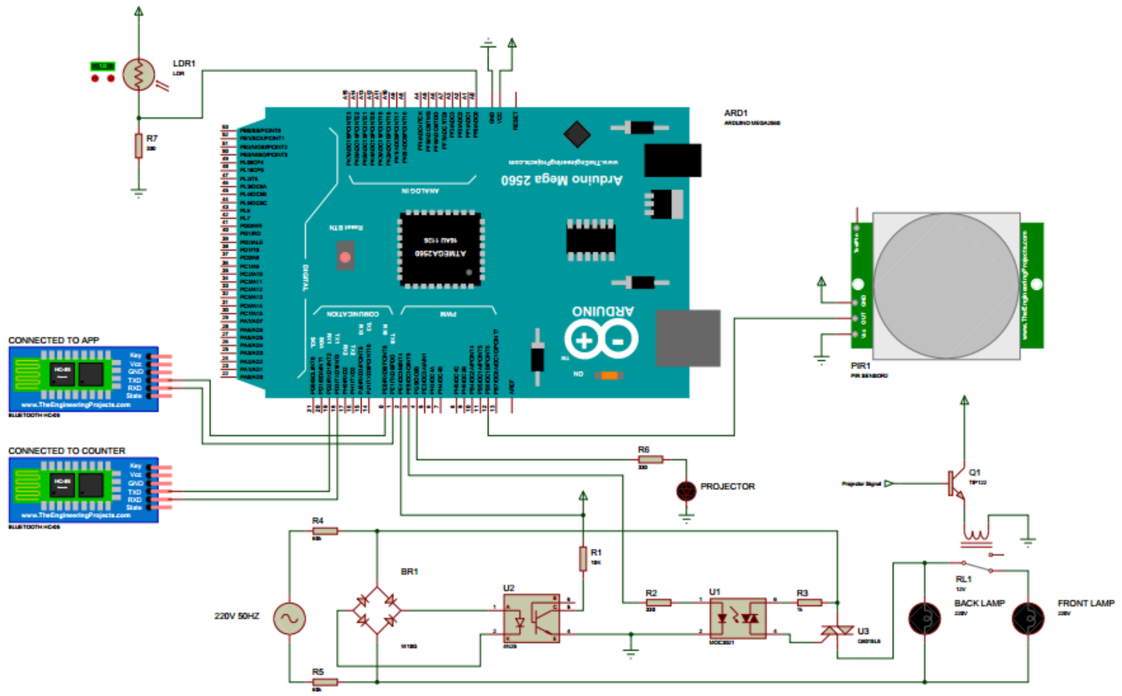

Figure 6: Circuit diagram of the central system

IV. Results and Discussion

The system has two situations for the smart lighting system. In the first situation, which is when people are present, the smart lighting is ON. This happens by using two ultrasonic sensors at the door that both sense the presence of a human at the same time. As you can see in Fig. 1. In the second situation of the hall system at night, which is usually from after midnight until sunrise. In this case, the hall lighting will turn OFF if there are no people.

movement. The state of lighting depends on the ultrasonic sensors that were placed at the door of the hall.

In summary, this project has succeeded in developing a system for monitoring hall lighting and saving electrical consumption. Our project implemented a smart lighting monitoring system to overcome the shortcomings of traditional street lighting systems. It also aims to reduce monthly electricity consumption and detect potential problems with individual hall lights. One of the problems that was solved was the erratic behavior of hall lights when there were no people around. The safety of pedestrians entering the hall is the most important topic that has been presented. Our investigation also focused on finding solutions to problems associated with random and intermittent manual watering of plants.

V. Conclusion

This system delivers high performance in real-world applications, offering a robust solution for automated control. The issue of system freezing has been effectively resolved by integrating a robust counter mechanism that ensures continuous, reliable operation. The primary benefit is significant energy reduction, achieved by automatically controlling and adjusting light intensity based on occupancy. Furthermore, the system is designed for scalability and ease of installation, allowing control of multiple rooms simply by adding more counter units. The system's reliable operation is guaranteed by an accurate people-counting function, which is intelligently integrated with a Passive Infrared (PIR) sensor to detect discrepancies and ensure high performance while simultaneously identifying and alerting operators to any unexpected errors.

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Predictive Modeling for University Major Selection: An AI-Driven Solution Using Arab Graduate Data

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Received: 12/08/2025
Revised: 26/09/2025
Accepted: 27/09/2025

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Predictive Modeling for University Major Selection: An AI-Driven Solution Using Arab Graduate Data

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Abstract— Choosing an appropriate university major is crucial for students' academic and career success. This study presents an AI-driven recommendation system using supervised machine learning, specifically the Random Forest algorithm, to support major selection based on academic performance (GPA, entrance exam scores) and labor market relevance (major-specific employment rates). The system was trained on 1000 student records from the "Arab University Graduate Data Set" and received 97% accuracy, with employment rate and GPAs appearing as the most effective predictions. Unlike previous studies focused on developed countries, this research emphasizes AI ability in the environment with limited resources, such as Yemeni universities. It provides a scalable solution to coordinate educational alternatives with labor market needs. Future work will integrate personal interests and socio-economic factors to increase privatization.

Keywords— AI in education, Random Forest, major selection, Yemen, labor market alignment

I. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies change the field of education by reducing how to contact teaching and learning. One of the most promising applications of AI in the region is the use of intelligent recommendations, which provides personal educational guidance to the students. These systems analyze historical data, student performance measurements, and employment trends to offer informed and optimized academic recommendations (Dascalu et al., 2016). Compared to traditional counseling methods, AI-operated systems help reduce dependence on subjective or potentially biased advice by applying advanced machine learning techniques (Elewa et al., 2025; Alsayed et al., 2021; Tarus et al., 2018). This study aligns with career guidance and educational psychology theories, emphasizing the role of structured feedback, interest alignment, and labor market information in influencing students' major selection. Integrating these frameworks strengthens the rationale for using AI-driven recommendation systems in higher education contexts.

In particular, the AI Forest (RF) algorithm has gained popularity for its high accuracy and capability in processing complex data. Student interaction improves, the learning experience is enriched, and educational achievement is affected positively by the evolution and storage in the environment of higher education (D'Mello et al., 2012; Iqbal et al., 2022). In the broad scope of AI, the main branches include machine learning, natural language processing, robotics, and specialist systems. Of these, machine learning, and especially the random forest (RF), got an algorithm for its high accuracy and capacity in the treatment of complex data structures (Zayed et al., 2022). RF has proved effective in future modeling scenarios, which helps students' educational alternatives to develop requirements for the labor market and thus support the more promising career paths after graduation (Alnomay et al., 2024).

Despite this progress, most of AI's research and applications in the Education Council are concentrated in developed countries, where students usually benefit from well-established career guidance resources. On the other hand, in countries such as Yemen, access to structured counseling is limited or nonexistent, leading to a more difficult process of choosing and uncertainty for an academic head. There is a noticeable interval in the literature that examines AI's role in making educational decisions among students at Yemeni universities. This study is designed to fill that difference by developing an AI-manga recommendation system to fit the local educational environment.

Selecting a university major is an important decision that has implications for the students' educational progress and permanent implications for their professional future. However, many high school pupils—especially in development areas—face challenges in creating educational alternatives. These difficulties often come from the limited understanding of education and labor market requirements, social and family pressure, and external influences (Alghamdi et al., 2019; Ayman AlAhmar, 2012). As a result, students are often dependent on informal or unpleasant sources such as peers or online platforms, which may not match their suitability or long-term career goals (Zayed et al., 2022). Statistical findings have shown that many students continue to meet academic and professional difficulties despite receiving support from their families, as the choice often fails to reflect their interests or abilities (Naser et al., 2008).

Therefore, this research aims to design and evaluate the AI-based recommendation system that supports high school candidates in choosing large companies at the university that are compatible with their educational results, personal preferences, and labor market needs. This student tries to measure the accuracy and reliability of random forest algorithms in distributing educational recommendations to fit the profile. The research questions are:

1. What are the most important factors that affect the decision of high school students when choosing a university major?
2. How effective is the random forest algorithm in predicting the most appropriate university major for individual students?

The findings from this study provide valuable insights to students, teachers, and decision makers for higher education. The proposed AI-driven recommendation system reflects the ability to increase educational advice for students' convenience by improving the quality of individual guidance and by reducing students' dropout rate through better alignment of larger fit and data-driven decisions (Alsayed et al., 2021; Hammoudi Halat et al., 2023). This solution is of particular importance to Yemeni universities, where limited access to professional career consultation often causes students to experience a disconnect between their chosen educational paths and their desired careers. By systematically adapting student competence to labor market requirements, the system can serve as a strategic intervention to simultaneously promote educational results and contribute to national economic development.

II. Literature Review

The choice of a suitable university major is one of the most important decisions in the student's educational journey, with intensive implications for both educational results and probability of long-term career. This important point of view traditionally depends on consultation methods that are naturally limited by their subjective nature, lack of personalization, and diverse student population (Tarus et al., 2018) of effectively limited scale-defect ability.

In recent years, the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) technologies has launched a new era with data-driven academic advice, providing transformative solutions for these longstanding challenges (Dascalu et al., 2016). A growing body of research demonstrates that AI-powered recommendation systems can process vast amounts of historical academic data, detailed student profiles, and current labor market trends to generate highly personalized guidance that far surpasses conventional approaches in both accuracy and effectiveness (Alshaikh et al., 2021). Among the various machine learning algorithms used in this domain, the Random Forest (RF) technology is particularly promising due to the strong handling of the complex educational dataset and its superiority in predicted functions (Alsayed et al., 2021).

Many comparative studies have shown the exceptional performance of RF, with Zayed et al. (2022) reporting 97.7% accuracy in major selection predictions, significantly outperforming alternative methods such as decision trees and support vector machines. The efficiency of these systems has been further improved through new hybrid methods that add many ML techniques, as evidenced by Batmaz et al. (2019), who successfully integrated collaborative filtering with content-based methods to achieve notable improvements in recommendation quality. Correspondingly, Siswipraptini et al. (2024) developed a sophisticated Naive Bayes-based system that incorporated comprehensive job market data, resulting in 83% user satisfaction rates among IT students, while Kim and Lim (2023) demonstrated the particular value of hybrid models for non-ICT student populations.In addition to its uses in the most important sample, AI has shown remarkable potential across various facets of educational support, including the early identification of at-risk students through advanced Educational Data Mining (EDM) techniques that analyze patterns in academic performance (Tripathi et al., 2024), the development of personality-aware support systems that address student well-being (Demong et al., 2023), and the creation of personalized learning recommendation systems that adapt to individual needs (Cheng, 2024).

Despite these important advances, the current research scenario reveals many important limitations that this study wants to address. The overwhelming majority of existing studies focus on developed countries with a well-established counseling infrastructure (Hammoudi Halat et al., 2023), leaving environments such as Yemen-like atmospheres seriously underrepresented in the literature. In addition, current models often fail adequately to account for essential relevant factors, including socio-economic inequalities, regional diversity in labor market demands, and the ability for algorithm bias in recommendations (Kamal et al., 2024). This study represents a comprehensive response to these limitations through the development of an advanced RF-based recommendation system that is specifically designed for the Yemeni academic reference. Our innovative approach systematically integrates several important dimensions, with detailed academic performance indicators, real-time labor market analysis, and many important dimensions, including strong bias-shaman strategies.

By addressing these interconnected factors within an integrated structure, our solution provides a significant advancement on both traditional advice and existing AI approaches (Tang et al., 2024), especially for the unique challenges and opportunities present in developing educational systems. The design of the system involves a lesson from the extensive AI in education literature while starting novel optimization to ensure relevance and effectiveness in the resource-transactions environment, eventually aiming to bridge the continuous difference between educational planning and labor market realities in the Yemeni context.

III. Methodology

This study uses a quantitative research method when using machine learning techniques to analyze historical student data and labor market practice. The primary goal is to develop an AI-manual recommendation system that predicts the most suitable head for high school students based on academic results and employment results of graduates. The functioning includes several stages, including data collection, preprocessing, feature engineering, model training, and evaluation, so that the accuracy and efficiency of the system can be ensured.

A. Data description

The dataset used in this study, titled "Arab Universities Graduate Dataset," contains records for 1,000 students, as summarized in Table 1. This includes a comprehensive category of educational and employment-related characteristics such as high school GPA, entrance exam score, graduation GPA, employment status, and employment status after graduation. These features were carefully chosen due to the leading selection of the university and their possible impact on long-term career results. To ensure that the data supports strong machine learning analysis, all the features were numerically structured. For example, categorical values such as gender and high school type were encoded numerically (e.g., Male = 1, Female = 0; Scientific = 1, Literary = 0). This transformation allows the model to interpret patterns and correlations effectively. The dataset was further refined by emphasizing indicators of academic performance while incorporating labor market trends. This dual-focus approach enables the recommendation system to offer data-driven guidance to high school students, ensuring that their educational strengths are aligned with future career prospects. Table 2 highlights the key features utilized in constructing the model, serving as the foundation for the predictive analysis and recommendation process. dataset, highlighting the factors considered in the construction of the recommended model.

Table 1: Dataset description

Variable	**Value**
Total student	1000
No of Undergraduate majors	4
Number of male students	540
Number of female students	460
Number of employed graduates	490
Number of unemployed graduates	510
High school type distribution	620 Scientific, 380 Literary

Table 2: Dataset Feature

Feature	**Type**
Student gender	Categorical (Male = 1, Female = 0)
High school GPA	Numerical
High school type	Categorical (Literary = 0, Scientific = 1)
Entrance exam score	Numerical
Undergraduate GPA	Numerical (1 = employed, 0 = not employed)
Employment status after graduation	Categorical
Undergraduate major	Categorical (MED = 0, ENG = 1, CS = 2, BA = 3)
Average undergraduate GPA for the major	Numerical
Employment rate for the major after graduation	Numerical

Feature selection relied on the Random Forest model's built-in feature-importance scores. After initial expert screening of the available variables, we trained a preliminary RF model and ranked features according to their mean decrease in Gini impurity.
Variables with negligible contribution were dropped, leaving high school GPA, entrance exam score, undergraduate GPA, and major-specific employment rate as the most informative predictors.

B. Data Preprocessing
This phase included analysis and preparation of data sets for analysis and implementation of machine learning using different preprocessing techniques supported by the Python library. Originally, the lack of pricing was addressed to ensure the stability and quality of data in the field-related fields, and it was accepted that some graduates were not employed. The range of variables was then converted into numerical form, which was converted to numerical form to make them compatible with machine learning algorithms used to predict large companies from the university in question. The function technique was used to improve model accuracy by obtaining meaningful variables based on existing data. To adapt the model performance, all numerical properties were standardized to zero and standard deviations of one. Finally, the dataset, including 1000 items, was divided into training and test kits using the 80:30 partition, so that 200 samples were reserved for testing to ensure a correct assessment of 800 samples for training and future indicative capacity on the model.

To assess model generality, 200 student records from a different Yemeni university were set aside as an independent validation set. When applied to unknown data, this step guarantees that the Random Forest suggestions maintain their strength.

C. Model Implementation
For major classification, we used a Random Forest (RF) algorithm for best practice in educational recommended systems (Alsayed et al., 2021; Zayed et al., 2022). The RF approach was chosen for its proven efficiency in handling mixed data types and providing an interpretable functionality, which corresponds to our study goals. The main benefits of our implementation include: Strong performance with educational data sets that have both numerical and categorical properties and the natural handling of convenience interactions in educational records are important for general recommendations to prevent common things in the underlying mechanism. An independent validation set of 200 student records from a different Yemeni university was also used to evaluate the generalization of the model, which ensures the strength of predictions beyond the training data set.
Model architecture and optimization method have been expanded in our previous work (Author et al., Year), where we demonstrated their superior performance compared to alternative machine learning approaches for academic advising tasks. In the current study, we focus specifically on applying this validated approach to the Yemeni higher

education context with particular attention to local labor market dynamics and institutional characteristics.

Benchmark Models

To assess whether Random Forest was the most appropriate algorithm, we also trained XGBoost and Support Vector Machine (SVM) classifiers on the same preprocessed dataset using comparable hyperparameter tuning.

IV. Results and Discussion

A. Model performance

As shown in Table 3, the performance for the random forest model used in this study presents a detailed summary of metrics. The model gained a high accuracy of 0.97, which reflects its strong future power and reliability in guiding students to suitable large educational companies. Additionally, the model had a precision of 0.97, a recall of 0.98, and an F1-score of 0.97, indicating balanced performance in different majors. The strength of the model in handling the imbalance of both macro and weighted averages confirms the ability to normalize in various students' profiles. These results show that the model was effectively trained and is capable of making data-driven recommendations. As a result, it can be regarded as a reliable decision-making tool to help students in upper secondary schools in choosing suitable universities by their educational results and future career capacity.

Table 3: Model Performance Metrics

ML Model	Metric	Value
Random Forest	Precision	0.97
	Recall	0.98
	F1-Score	0.97

In order to evaluate whether the random forest was actually the most appropriate algorithm, two additional classifications, XGBoost and Support Vector Machine (SVM), were trained and tested on the same advanced data set.

Random forest gained the highest accuracy (97%), and improved XGBoost (96%), and SVM (92%), which confirmed its better future performance for classifying the university major classification.

B. Confusion Matrix

The classification capability of the Random Forest model was further investigated through confusion matrices for each university major, as shown in Figure 1. These matrices break down the model’s predictions into True Positives (TP), True Negatives (TN), False Positives (FP), and False Negatives (FN), which provides a detailed view of the separate educational disciplines.

In Figure 1(a) for the Medical (MED) major, the model gained high accuracy with 39 true positives (20%) and 156 true negatives (78%), while only 5 students were confused as false positives (2%). Importantly, no false negatives were recorded, indicating the model successfully identified all actual MED students without underprediction. For the Engineering (ENG) major in Figure 1(b), the classifier demonstrated perfect performance, recording 50 true positives (25%) and 150 true negatives (75%), with zero false positives and false negatives, which highlights its precision and reliability in this category. The results for Computer Science (CS), displayed in Figure 1(c), showed a slight decline in accuracy. While the model correctly identified 54 true positives (27%) and 141 true negatives (70%), it did produce 5 false negatives (2%), suggesting a few students suitable for CS were not detected. However, the absence of false positives reflects consistent model precision. In Figure 1(d), which illustrates the Business Administration (BA) major, the model maintained strong performance, achieving 52 true positives (26%) and 148 true negatives (74%), again with no false positives or false negatives.

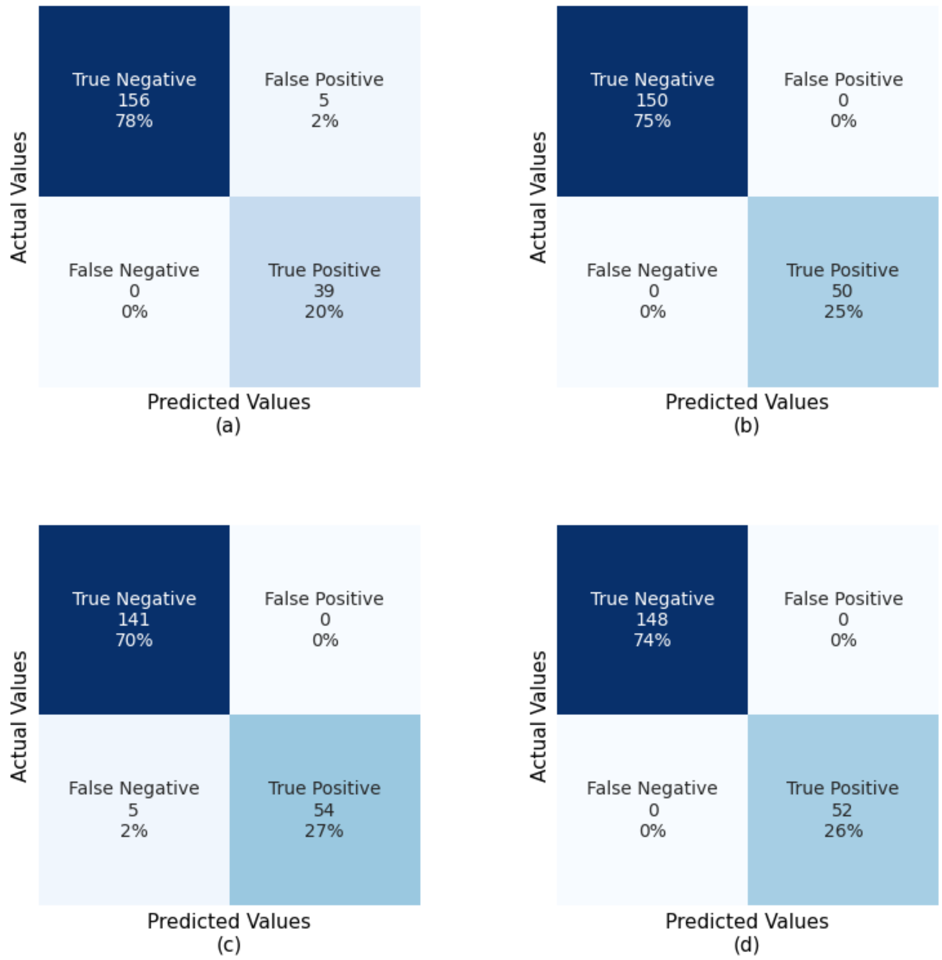

Figure 1: Confusion matrices for Random Forest predictions across majors: (a) MED, (b) ENG, (c) CS, (d) BA.

Overall, these confusion matrices reinforce the model's high reliability and minimal error rate across all majors. The only minor deviation appeared in the CS category due to a small number of missed classifications. This could be due to profile similarities with other majors. Despite this, the model consistently delivers accurate, data-driven recommendations for university major selection.

Table 4 presents the overall confusion matrix for the Random Forest classifier, summarizing its performance across all classes in binary format. The table shows that the model correctly identified 95% of the actual negative cases as true negatives (TN = 95), while only 5% were incorrectly classified as false positives (FP = 5). On the other hand, it accurately predicted 99% of the actual positive cases as true positives (TP = 99), with just 1% misclassified as false negatives (FN = 1).

This distribution of values indicates a highly accurate classifier, with exceptionally low misclassification rates in both positive and negative predictions. The balance between true positives and true negatives reflects the model's robustness and its ability to generalize well across the full dataset, supporting its use as a reliable decision-support tool for academic major recommendations.

Table 4: Confusion matrix of the Random Rorest classifier

	Predicted (0)	**Predicted (1)**
Actually (0)	TN = 95 (0.95)	FP = 5 (0.05)
Actually (1)	FN = 1 (0.01)	TP = 99 (0.99)

C. Employment Trends and Their Role in Major Recommendation

To gain deeper insights into the relationship between academic majors and labor market outcomes, the employment rates associated with each university major were analyzed. As illustrated in Figure 2, the distribution of employment rates across the four primary fields - Business Administration (BA), Computer Science (CS), Engineering (ENG), and Medicine (MED)- reveals notable variation. Business administration major display the highest employment rate at 52%, indicating a strong alignment with current market demands. Conversely, the CS, ENG, and MED majors each show lower employment rates of 48%.

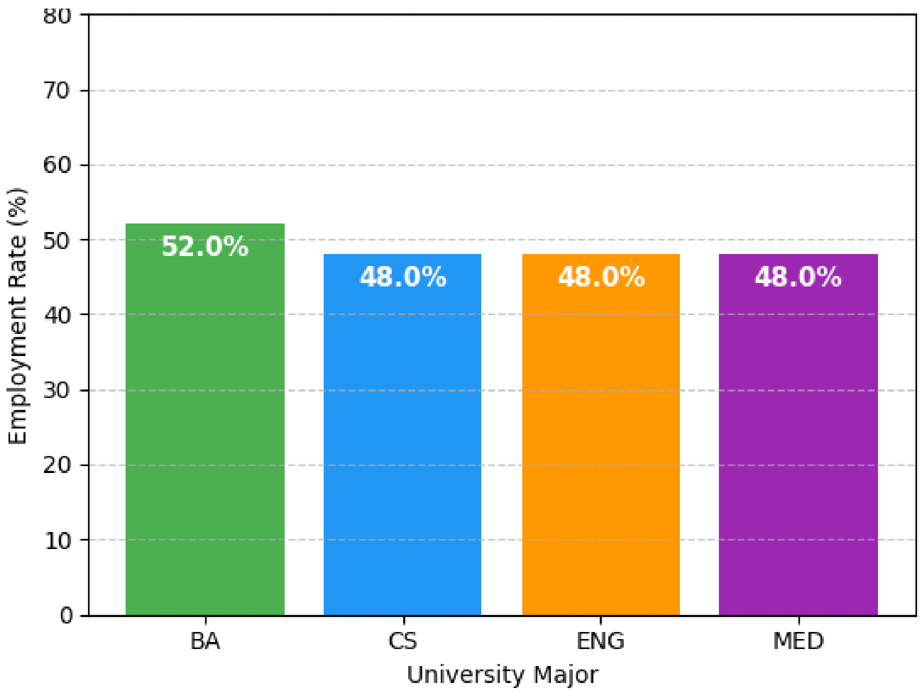

Figure 2: Employment Rate Distribution by University Major

While the difference may appear modest, such variations can play an important role in the intelligent recommendation system, especially when the decision-making process prioritizes the possibilities of employment.

Employment Trend Analysis Enhancement:
Despite the analysis of the employment rate between majors, the data set limits cannot capture the fluctuations in the real-time labor market. Future work should be integrated to better match longitudinal labor market data that develops employment trends. Including updates and regional employment data will increase the model's prediction accuracy and ensure that the recommendations are relevant in the dynamic economic environment.
These findings emphasize the importance of incorporating the degree of employment as a main feature of the model to increase the relevance and privatization of major recommendations based on real opportunities. By integrating labor market insights into an AI-driven system, the recommendation engine can more efficiently guide students toward majors that not only match their academic profile but also maximize their employability prospects after graduation.

V. Conclusion

The selection of an appropriate university is an important decision that significantly affects the student's educational journey and future career paths, especially in educational contexts where the structured education councils are limited, for example, in Yemen. This study introduced an AI-driven recommendation system based on the Random Forest algorithm to help graduates in higher secondary schools choose majors that were aligned with their educational power, interests, and labor market requirements. The model obtained a high prediction accuracy of 97, outperforming XGBoost (94%) and SVM (92%), confirming its superior predictive performance for university-major classification, using major predictions such as high school GPA and entrance exam scores, showing its strong ability to match students with appropriate academic fields. The system provides a scalable and practical solution for an under-resourced educational environment by reducing dependence on subjective advice and improving alignment between the selected areas of students and the selected areas of study. Its implementation may reduce the dropout rate, improve student satisfaction, and increase employment, which can lead to better educational consequences and labor market integration.

Limitations:
Despite the promising results, the study accepts certain limitations, including small, region-specific data sets, dynamic labor market indicators, and the absence of socioeconomic and psychological variables. This factor can affect the external validity of the model.

Future work
Future research should expand the dataset to incorporate more different demographic groups and more areas to increase the external validity of AI-operated recommendations. Longitudinal labor market analysis should be integrated to better capture employment trends. In addition, hybrid recommended models that include students' personal interests, career ambitions, and socioeconomic factors should be developed for more personal guidance. Future implementation should also consider moral aspects, ensure justice, and reduce prejudice. Overall, this research provides scalable AI-controlled academic guidance tools that face challenges in development areas and establish a basis for intelligent education systems that effectively bridge the difference between education and labor market needs and support socio-economic development.

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Core Requirements for Developing a Successful BIM Execution Plan in Yemen: A Quantitative Study

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Received: 19/08/2025
Revised: 12/09/2025
Accepted: 13/09/2025

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Core Requirements for Developing a Successful BIM Execution Plan in Yemen: A Quantitative Study

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***Abstract*—** Building Information Modelling (BIM) is a disruptive technology that has the ability to greatly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of construction projects. However, its implementation in impoverished nations like Yemen is hampered by significant barriers, most notably a lack of a defined and contextualised implementation plan. This study fills a major need by identifying and prioritising the key elements for creating a successful BIM Execution Plan (BEP) specific to the Yemeni environment. A structured questionnaire was distributed to a targeted sample of 56 specialists, including academics (30.4%), project managers (23.2%), and consultants/engineers (46.4%).Because of the scarcity of professionals with prior experience in the technology, the snowball sampling technique was used to pick the sample. The study indicated that BIM adoption in Yemen remains in its early stages. It successfully identified 10 major implementation needs and analysed their possibility, with experts citing defining BIM objectives, forming the implementation team and defining BIM utilisation as the most crucial precondition for effective adoption. This study provides a tested, prioritised checklist that will serve as a core roadmap for Yemeni construction enterprises. By concentrating on these critical first steps, businesses may streamline the implementation process and efficiently overcome the initial barriers to BIM adoption.

***Keywords*—** Building Information Modeling (BIM), BIM Execution Plan (BEP), Quantitative Analysis, Implementation Requirements, Yemen Construction Industry (YCI).

I. INTRODUCTION

The global architectural, engineering, and construction (AEC) sector is undergoing a significant digital change[1, 2], with Building Information Modeling (BIM) leading the way[3]. As a process centered on the creation and management of an intelligent information model, BIM has demonstrated its ability to alleviate many of the industry's chronic ailments, such as poor coordination and design errors, which frequently jeopardize project success during the critical planning and design stages[4] . However, the move from prospective benefits to real achievements is not automatic; it requires a systematic and strategic implementation.

The BIM Execution Plan (BEP) is the foundation of all successful BIM implementations [5]. The BEP is far more than just a technical document; Rather, it represents best practices for effective information management. It acts as the project's strategic constitution, including the objectives, responsibilities, and techniques for implementing BIM. It defines the scope of BIM use, establishes information exchange standards, explains needed deliverables, and outlines methods for cooperation, quality control, standardization, and information flow, among other best practices. This avoids the pandemonium that can result from uncoordinated digital activities[6-11]. Without a strong BEP, BIM adoption efforts sometimes deteriorate into unorganized, inefficient procedures that fail to meet their promises[12, 13].

This study is thus based on the assumption that a successful BEP is the direct result of meeting a set of defined basic conditions. This research attempts to bridge the practical gap by defining and analyzing the fundamental elements for building a successful BIM Execution Plan, suited to the specific difficulties and opportunities within the Yemeni construction sector

The scholarly debate on BIM in Yemen, however sparse, paints a clear image of an industry at a crossroads. Foundational early investigations, such as [14]successfully diagnosed the initial landscape, revealing low awareness levels and major barriers to BIM deployment. This emphasis on barriers and influential factors was expanded upon by Al-[15]), strengthening a knowledge of the challenges confronting the Yemeni building industry. The discourse also extended to identifying Critical Success Factors (CSFs) for implementing modern technologies like BIM in the Yemeni context[16, 17].

While these studies were useful in determining the "why" and "why not" of BIM adoption, they have mostly remained diagnostic in nature. However, the landscape is changing; with professionals becoming more aware of the importance of BIM, the emergence of specialized training centers, and preliminary adoption initiatives by non-governmental organizations but in a much unorganized way , the question has shifted from "should we adopt BIM?" to "how do we begin?" This leaves a significant void in the literature on the "how-to" of implementation. There is a distinct absence of research that systematically identifies and prioritizes the basic and prerequisite elements required to construct a successful BIM Execution Plan tailored to the Yemeni setting.

As a result, this study aims to transform the research paradigm from problem identification to solution development. It seeks to close this essential gap by pursuing two primary objectives. First, to evaluate the current state of BIM usage within the Yemeni construction sector to establish an empirical baseline. Second, building on this understanding, to identify and evaluate the key requirements for establishing a successful BIM Execution Plan. By doing so, this research intends to deliver the first empirically confirmed, expert-based roadmap of fundamental needs, allowing local enterprises to take their first systematic and confident steps towards BIM adoption.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Building Information Modeling (BIM)

BIM is a set of interacting policies, processes and technologies generating a methodology to manage the essential building design and project data in digital format throughout the building's life-cycle[18-21] also supports the concept of integrated project delivery, which is a novel project delivery approach to integrate people, systems, and business structures and practices into a collaborative process to reduce waste and optimize efficiency through all phases of the project life cycle[21, 22] . Although the roots of BIM can be traced back to the parametric modeling research conducted in the USA and Europe in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Architecture, Engineering, and Construction (AEC) industry practically started to implement it in projects from the mid-2000s. During the last seven years, the term BIM has gone from being a buzzword to the centerpiece of AEC technology [23]. In summary, Building Information Modeling (BIM) is an advanced digital technology that enables the creation of three-dimensional models of buildings and structures with the integration of all associated information[20, 24-27] , thereby facilitating more efficient and effective planning, design, implementation, and operation[28, 29] .

B. BIM Execution Planning .

According to [5], a BIM Execution Plan (BEP) is the foundation for successfully integrating BIM into project delivery. This document serves as a strategic guide, outlining the project's general BIM vision and giving actionable specifics for the team. It is intended to be a live document, starting in the early stages and subject to ongoing changes and revisions as the project grows and new team members join.
The BEP includes key components such as defining the scope of BIM use, specifying the workflow for specific jobs, detailing information exchange protocols, and outlining the supporting infrastructure. The process of creating a complete BEP is sometimes split down into five steps, as seen in Figure II-2.

Figure 1 : The BIM Project Execution Planning Procedure

The creation of a BEP brings tremendous value by reducing uncertainty and thereby lowering project risk [5]. A case study from Taiwan reveals that a BEP created for Facilities Management (FM) was a highly effective management strategy. The researchers highlighted a dual benefit: not only does it streamline maintenance activities, but it also enables BIM to support the building's whole lifecycle[30]. This clearly underlines the need for building administrative tools such as the BEP to amplify the benefits of BIM.
It is critical to distinguish between two main types of BIM Execution Plans: prescriptive and descriptive. A prescriptive BEP[31, 32], as defined by, is one that orders or requires the required usage of specified implementation features, which is often enforced by the project owner. In contrast, a descriptive BEP acts as an informative guide, depicting or illustrating the recommended steps to take.
This distinction is especially pertinent to the current state of the Yemeni building industry. Given the lack of a national BIM mandate and the fact that contractual agreements frequently only require the usage of individual[14], fragmented BIM applications such as collision detection or 3D modeling the concept of a comprehensive, owner-enforced prescriptive BEP is essentially irrelevant. As a result, the current conversation in Yemen focuses on the development of descriptive BEPs. The fundamental requirement is for plans that clearly specify the methods, standards, and workflows needed to properly carry out a limited and contractually defined BIM scope.

BIM Implementation Requirements

The global attempt to standardize Building Information Modeling (BIM) adoption has prompted various countries to produce implementation guidelines, sometimes as a result of government incentives or nongovernmental activities. One distinguishing feature of these publications is the lack of a single, universal method to implementation; each guideline is tailored to its own national or regional setting. Examples of relevant recommendations include the AEC (UK) BIM Technology Protocol, the American Building Information Modeling Execution Planning Guide, and the French Good Practices for BIM Collection, among others

Despite their diversity, a thorough examination of these core criteria reveals a set of recurring, critical needs for effective BIM adoption. An important study[33] examined a variety of these texts and successfully synthesized their basic components into twelve fundamental needs. This list of universally recognized criteria is an excellent starting point for any firm embarking on its BIM journey According to the study, they were as follows:

Define Metrics: Establish measurable units to evaluate implementation processes and track improvements against traditional methods.

Define Goals: Determine desired proficiency levels and specific improvements to be achieved within a set timeframe.

Develop an Implementation Plan: Create a strategic roadmap that identifies current resources, outlines needs, and sets methodologies and deadlines to meet objectives.

Define BIM Uses: Select and prioritize BIM applications that offer the greatest return on effort and align with company objectives.

Develop an Implementation Plan: Determine desired proficiency levels and specific improvements to be achieved within a set timeframe.

Restructure IT Resources: Select and configure the necessary software, hardware, servers, and network infrastructure to support BIM workflows.

Provide Continuous Training: Implement an ongoing training and skills assessment program for all team members.

Define Implementation Support: Secure both managerial support from leadership and technical support for software and infrastructure.

Define a BIM Workflow: Design a customized workflow that suits the company's unique processes and defined BIM uses.

Define Internal Standards: Establish or update company standards, including templates, libraries, and naming conventions, to ensure consistency.

Start a Pilot Project: Execute a trial project to practically apply and validate all aspects of the implementation plan.

Check and Review the Plan: Periodically analyze progress and feedback to reprogram and refine the implementation strategy

It is important to distinguish between two different levels of requirements in the literature. While the current discussion focuses on the requirements for formulating an organizational framework for a BIM Execution Plan [5] which serves as broad, reference guidelines for the entire organization other studies have addressed a lower, more granular level. This research has identified the detailed operational requirements needed for a BEP at the individual project level. Among the studies that have addressed this detailed aspect are[8, 34].

These studies [8, 34] propose that a comprehensive BIM Execution Plan should be structured as a detailed roadmap, often initiated using a standardized Template to define the project's foundational parameters[35]. This begins with articulating the BIM Project Scope, its objectives, and the specific Roles and Responsibilities of each team member[36]. Building upon this foundation, the plan then delves into the procedural core, establishing a clear strategy for Collaboration and Communication and setting precise protocols for Information Exchange,[11] including file formats and process maps. [36]This is further detailed by specifying the technical Modeling Requirements, such as the Level of Development (LOD), alongside clear procedures for Model Management to govern how digital assets are handled and stored. The framework also explicitly defines the project's Deliverables and Documentation,[6] outlining what will be produced and on what schedule. To support these activities, the BEP must specify the necessary resources, including the IT Software and Hardware infrastructure and the Analysis Plan and Tools to be utilized[37]. Finally, to ensure its viability as a living document, the plan must include its own Update Procedures and explicitly state its Legally Binding Nature to clarify its contractual weight among all stakeholders[38].

It is worth noting that certain specialized studies have delved deeper into this operational aspect, breaking down the broad principles into a much larger number of granular requirements. However, given the existing state of the Yemeni building industry, an initial investigation of such deep detail may be impossible for two reasons. First, there is a significant variation in these extensive listings from one reference to the next, indicating a lack of agreement on a single framework. Second, the ranking of these objectives varies greatly, making it difficult to create a clear starting point.

As a result, this study intentionally focuses on extracting and defining the broad standards and core needs that have the most widespread agreement across the majority of literature and global recommendations. The goal is to create a clear, agreed-upon, and basic framework that can serve as a practical and dependable starting point for companies in Yemen, rather than overwhelming them with details that might be disputed or inapplicable at the current stage of technology development.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative research approach to identify and assess the prerequisites for creating a successful Building Information Modeling (BIM) Execution Plan (BEP) in Yemen's construction sector. The approach was designed in a multi-phase format to ensure that the findings are supported by a strong theoretical foundation as well as empirical data obtained from the practical knowledge of relevant industry specialists...

A. Research Approach

The investigation was carried out in two integrated phases, which are important to this paper. Phase One consisted of an exploratory literature review to lay the theoretical groundwork and create a preliminary list of BIM implementation needs based on worldwide guidelines and proven foundational works. Phase Two, the primary quantitative field study, used a descriptive-analytical survey approach. The primary goal of this phase was to experimentally validate and prioritize the stated criteria in the Yemeni context. The quantitative methodology was chosen because it allows for the collecting of numerical data from a specific sample of experts, allowing for a systematic study of the perceived relevance of various needs and the creation of a practical, scientifically backed guidance for the industry.

Population and Sample The study population consisted of experts from Yemen's Architecture, Engineering, and Construction (AEC) industry with theoretical or practical understanding of BIM. This comprised project managers, academicians, and managers of engineering offices. Because of the shortage of specialists and the lack of official listings to utilize as a sampling frame, a non-probability sampling method was required.

The Snowball Sampling strategy was chosen as the most effective way to reach this qualified and specialized group. An initial set of known experts was identified, and they were asked to propose other qualified professionals in their network. The total sample consisted of 56 people. Despite its small size, it was deemed enough for statistical analysis considering the specialized nature of the research issue and the logistical obstacles in the Yemeni environment.

B. Data Collection Instrument and Validation

The major data collection tool was a structured questionnaire that was carefully designed to fit with the research objectives. The instrument contained two major portions pertinent to this paper:

Section One: Participant Profile and Context: The purpose of this section was to collect necessary background information to develop a profile of the study sample. It includes biographical information such as job title and years of experience, as well as a critical contextual question designed to assess participants' self-reported levels of BIM usage in their current projects. This question offered an overview of the current state of BIM application in Yemen.

Section 2: Requirements for BIM Implementation: This core component, meant to answer the key research question, gave a list of prospective BIM implementation needs taken from [Please identify the main references from which the criteria were extracted]. Respondents were asked to assess the importance of these requirements.

To assure the instrument's quality, a comprehensive validation process was implemented. A team of academic specialists in project management from Sana'a and Ibb universities evaluated the questionnaire thoroughly to determine its content validity. These experts evaluated the items' clarity, relevance, and consistency, and their valuable feedback was used to improve the final instrument. Furthermore, a pilot study was carried out with a small, representative sample of participants (academics and project managers) to test the phrasing, flow, and time necessary to complete the questionnaire, resulting in minor final changes.

C. Data Collection and Analysis

Upon The verified questionnaire was translated to digital format with Google Forms. Over the course of six weeks, the link was sent to the targeted respondents via email and professional networking platforms.

Following collection, completed surveys were coded and entered into IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27) for analysis. The data analysis methods included:

Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies and percentages were used to describe the sample data and determine the level of agreement among experts on each suggested requirement.

The One-Sample T-Test was performed to examine the significance of the replies on the current level of BIM usage by comparing the mean response to a neutral value.

The analysis of frequencies and percentages enabled the ranking of requirements based on how frequently they were identified as 'necessary' or 'possible,' ultimately resulting in the identification of the most important requirements for developing a successful execution plan in Yemen, as well as the feasibility of their provision and adherence.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings obtained from the quantitative analysis of the 56 questionnaires completed by Yemeni construction industry experts. The results are presented in two main sections, corresponding to the study's primary objectives: first, an evaluation of the current level of BIM usage in Yemen, and second, an identification and analysis of the necessary and possible requirements for developing a successful BIM Execution Plan.

A. The level of BIM usage in the projects

The study's first goal was to create an empirical baseline for the present level of BIM utilization in Yemen. The findings unambiguously confirm the research's premise: BIM adoption in Yemen's construction sector is still in its early stages. When asked to rate the level of BIM usage in their projects on a five-point scale, participants gave an average score of 2.45 (SD=1.235). A one-sample T-test found that the mean is considerably lower than the theoretical midpoint of the scale ($t = -3.355$, $p < 0.01$), indicating a preference for limited or low application.

This empirical finding is highly consistent with the body of research on BIM adoption in developing nations and conflict-affected areas. For example, studies undertaken in similar environments, such as[39], found low levels of adoption, noting hurdles such as high initial costs, a lack of government assistance, and a paucity of experienced specialists. Our discovery that even a sample of BIM-aware specialists in Yemen indicate little utilization confirms the findings of previous diagnostic research on the Yemeni environment, such as[14], which revealed major hurdles to technology deployment.

As a result, this finding is more than just a descriptive statistic; it provides vital support for the study's core goal. It experimentally verifies that the difficulty in Yemen is not maximizing a mature technology, but rather overcoming the initial barriers to acceptance. The low utilization level highlights the critical need for a clear, context-specific deployment roadmap, which this study seeks to address by defining the fundamental elements for a successful BIM Execution Plan.

B. BIM Implementation in Projects

The second, and primary, objective of this study was to identify the key requirements for developing a successful BEP. The ten identified requirements were evaluated by experts, who classified them as either "necessary" or "possible". The following sections present these findings and discuss their implications.

https://doi.org/10.20428/jst.v30i11.3259

Table 1. Results of the T-test & arithmetic mean & relative weight for the level of BIM usage in the projects

No	Paragraph	Mean	Standard deviation	Relative %Weight	T Test	Sig level
1	What is the level of BIM usage in the projects you are working on?	2.45	1.235	49	-3.355	0.001*

C. Necessary Requirements for Implementing BIM Model

The results in Figure 1 provide a clear hierarchy of priorities as perceived by Yemeni experts. A detailed analysis reveals three distinct tiers of importance:

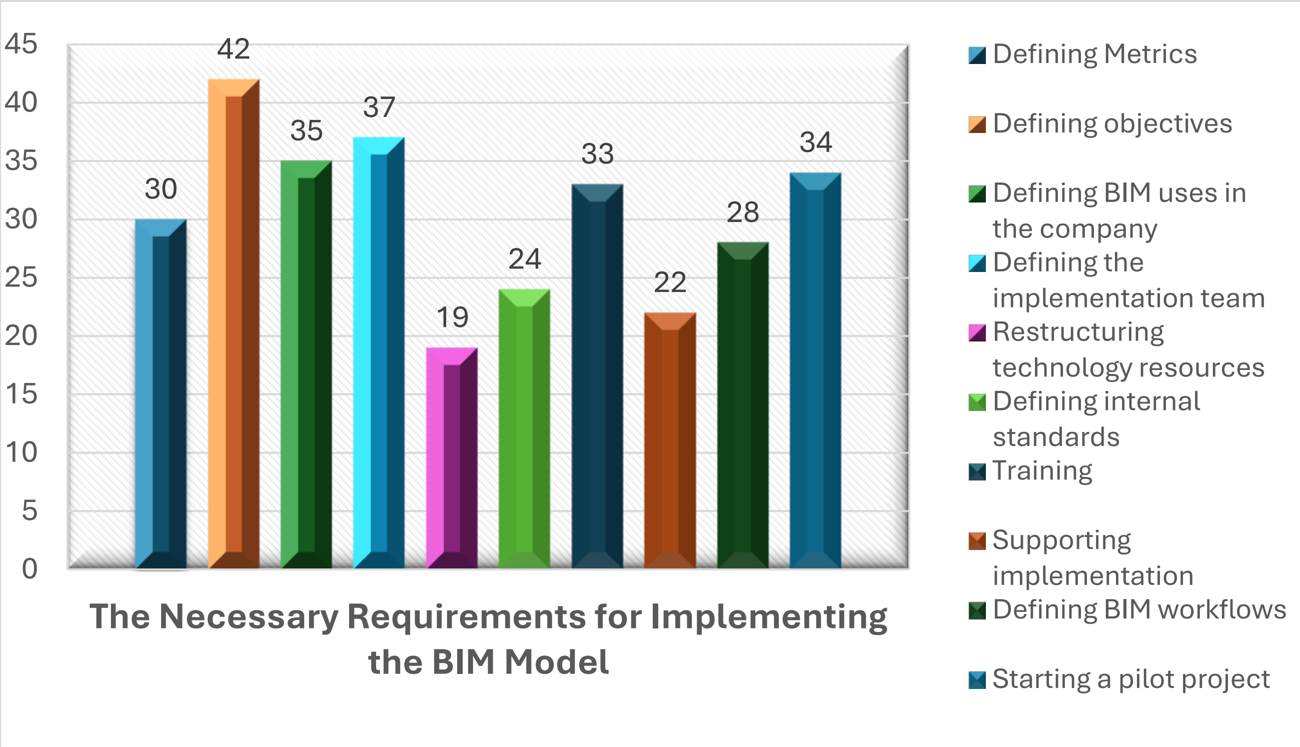

Figure 2. The Necessary Requirements for Implementing the BIM Model

The Strategic Tier (Top Priority): It is highly significant that the three most frequently cited requirements are purely strategic and organizational. "Defining objectives" emerged as the most critical requirement, with 13.82% of the responses. This was closely followed by "Defining the implementation team" (12.17%) and "Defining BIM uses in the company" (11.51%). This strong consensus underscores a crucial insight: for experts in Yemen, a successful BIM journey begins with strategy, vision, and people, not with technology. This aligns with established management literature which posits that a clear "why" (objectives) and "who" (team) must precede the "how" (process) and "what" (tools)[40].

The Procedural Tier (Middle Priority): The next set of requirements focuses on developing the processes and skills. "Starting a pilot project" (11.18%) and "Training" (10.86%) were ranked highly, indicating that after setting the strategy, the next logical steps are to test the plan on a small scale and equip the team with the necessary skills. This reflects a practical, hands-on approach to implementation, were theory is quickly put into practice. It should be noted that "Defining Metrics" also falls within this tier with a high ranking, serving as a crucial component for evaluating the success of the pilot project and the effectiveness of the training

The Technical and Support Tier (Lower Priority): Interestingly, the requirements perceived as least critical among the necessary items were related to technical infrastructure and support. "Restructuring technology resources" was ranked last, with only 6.25% of responses. This is a counter-intuitive but vital finding. While BIM is a technology-driven process, Yemeni experts appear to de-prioritize the immediate, large-scale investment in hardware and software. This could be attributed to several factors unique to the local context:

This de-prioritization of technology can be attributed to several interrelated factors rooted in the local context. Primarily, a strong sense of cost and risk aversion likely plays a significant role; the high capital investment required for BIM technology may lead firms to postpone this expenditure until the strategic and procedural framework has been proven effective through a small-scale pilot project. This cautious approach is complemented by a strategic focus that reflects a mature understanding of technology as merely an enabler, not a solution in itself. There is a clear recognition that without well-defined goals, standards, and workflows, even the most advanced software will fail to deliver its promised value. Finally, a potential lack of awareness may also contribute, as some participants may not fully grasp the demanding technical specifications and infrastructure required for complex BIM models, thus underestimating the importance of this requirement at the outset.[15, 17, 39]

D. Possible Requirements for Implementing BIM Model.

To add another layer of understanding to the implementation priorities, the study asked experts to identify requirements that they thought were "possible." This category distinguishes between non-negotiable core features and those that are crucial but allow for more flexibility. The analysis of this category reinforces the "strategy-first" hierarchy observed earlier.

"Defining objectives" was once again the top-ranked criteria (13.25%). Its dominance in both the "necessary" and "possible" categories solidifies its position as the fundamental foundation of any BIM initiative in Yemen. This dual emphasis implies that setting explicit goals is both a non-negotiable starting point and an ongoing, adaptive activity throughout the project's lifecycle.

Similarly, "Defining the implementation team" (11.14%) and "Training" (11.14%) retained their top priority. Their high prevalence in all categories emphasizes the idea that organizational preparation and human capital development are critical for resilient and successful implementation, a theme that is frequently repeated in change management literature. The data also revealed a more fair distribution of additional procedural needs, such as "Defining BIM uses" and "Defining BIM workflows" (both at 10.54%), implying that they are considered as an interconnected cluster of significant tasks to be carried out once the basic strategy is established[40]. It is also important to note that "Defining Metrics" was ranked highly within this cluster, reinforcing its role as a key procedural step

Crucially, and in line with past studies, "Restructuring technology resources" was ranked last (6.02%). This persistently low ranking supports the premise that Yemeni professionals see large capital investment in IT as a discretionary and potentially deferrable move rather than a necessary precondition. This risk-averse approach, which prioritizes low-cost strategic planning above high-cost technological overhauls, is a realistic response to the economic uncertainties of a developing context, according to studies on technology adoption obstacles. [15, 17, 39]

This study differs from previous research in its approach to defining requirements. The majority of the research has focused on evaluating documents to establish the "components" of a project-level BEP, but this study takes an expert-centric, empirical approach to identifying the "foundational requirements" for organizational preparation. Instead of comparing individual items, we compare the overall priorities. The emphasis on strategic and human-centric elements in our findings, in contrast to the technical details dominating component-based lists, demonstrates that our research does not contradict previous work, but rather complements it by addressing a more fundamental, preparatory stage that has previously been overlooked.

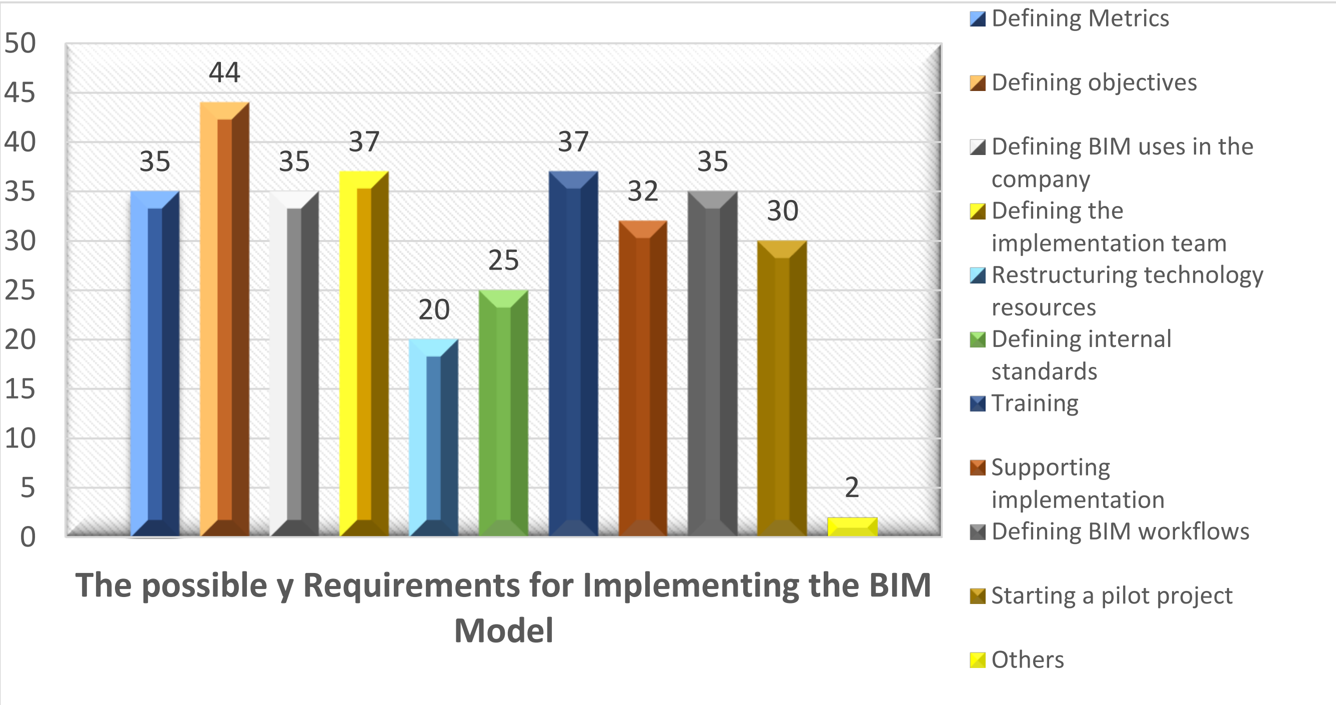

Figure 3. The possible Requirements for implementing the BIM Model

V. CONCLUSIONS

This research was designed to address the dual challenges of low BIM adoption and a lack of a defined implementation plan in the Yemeni construction sector. It had two main goals: first, to assess the current level of BIM utilization, and second, to prescribe a set of verified conditions for a successful BIM Execution Plan. The research has effectively met these objectives, providing not just data but a strategic interpretation that offers a clear path forward for local industry professionals

The findings validated the research's central premise: BIM usage in Yemen is still in its early stages, emphasizing the

crucial need for a guiding framework. In response, the study effectively identified and validated ten critical implementation criteria. The classification of these requirements into "necessary" and "possible" categories was useful because it revealed a distinct hierarchy of priorities that was specifically tailored to the local context.
The most notable contribution of this study is the identification of a definite "strategy-before-technology" approach among Yemeni professionals. The data clearly shows that core, non-negotiable needs are strategic and organizational, with defining objectives and forming the implementation team" continuously ranking as the most important. In contrast, the persistently low ranking of "restructuring IT resources" is a critical result. It reflects a pragmatic and risk-averse approach, with large capital investment in technology considered as a flexible, deferrable action that should only be undertaken once a sound strategic and procedural foundation has been established.

Recommendations

Finally, this study provides a strategic, risk-mitigating, and context-specific implementation model, rather than just a checklist. The hierarchical ranking of requirements represents a profound, experience-based logic, allowing businesses to lay a solid foundation by prioritizing low-cost, high-impact strategic needs before committing to resource-intensive operations. The primary recommendation for practitioners is to use this phased, strategy-first approach to reduce risk in their investments.
A pragmatic approach is recommended in light of the technological requirement's continually low ranking. Rather than making a large upfront expenditure, businesses can take advantage of the noticeable, albeit minor, shift in technical infrastructure available to practitioners. This could include emphasizing cloud-based collaboration platforms, maximizing the use of current technology, and, hence lowering the technological barrier.

Limitations and Future Research

The study's conclusions, while enlightening, should be examined in light of several limitations. The use of a non-probability snowball sample, while necessary for the context, means that the results reflect an expert opinion rather than being generalizable to the whole business. Furthermore, the results are based on the experts' self-reported perceptions. These constraints open up several important options for further research:
A thorough examination of the core components of a BEP, tailored to the specificities and contractual realities of the Yemeni market.
The creation of a national or industry-specific BIM guideline in Yemen to standardize processes.
research of the viability of incorporating BEP requirements into a standard Yemeni BIM contract template to achieve formal acceptance.
Longitudinal case studies to track the implementation of the proposed phased model and quantify its influence on project performance.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to all the academics, project managers, and industry professionals in Yemen who generously shared their time and expertise by participating in the questionnaire for this study. Their valuable insights form the foundation of this research.
Special thanks are also extended to the supervisors and colleagues at the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology, Taiz University, for their continuous support and guidance throughout this research project.

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