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An Analysis of Machine Learning Algorithm in Autonomous Vehicle Navigation System

Milind[1*], G. Ajay babu[2*], Amit Sharma[3]

[*1,*2,3]Department of Computer Science and Engineering, SCRIET, Chaudhary Charan Singh University Meerut U.P
[*]Email ID: milindccsu@yahoo.com
[*]Email ID: ghantaajay234@gmail.com
Email ID: amitccsu.net@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT
Machine learning (ML) algorithms play a pivotal role in the key functional areas of autonomous vehicle (AV) navigation, including perception, localization, mapping, trajectory prediction, planning, and control. Despite the advancements in sensor technologies such as high-definition cameras, LiDAR, and radar—commonly used for mapping, obstacle detection, and localization—autonomous vehicles still face significant challenges in reliably navigating unfamiliar environments with unpredictable dynamics. These challenges stem from real-world factors such as weather variability, traffic congestion, pedestrian activity, and erratic behaviour of other drivers. Machine learning offers a promising solution to address these complexities. As one of the most rapidly evolving technologies, ML enables autonomous navigation systems to better interpret sensory data, adapt to dynamic surroundings, and make informed driving decisions. In addition to enhancing traffic safety and minimizing human error-related accidents, connected and autonomous vehicles (CAVs) can also fulfil a wide range of smart functions—from last-mile delivery services to urban surveillance in smart cities. To achieve these benefits, autonomous vehicles must be capable of independently reaching their destinations while cooperating with road infrastructure. Recent advancements in Cooperative Vehicle-Infrastructure Systems (CVIS) facilitate seamless communication between AVs and elements like traffic lights (TLs), promoting safer and more efficient transportation systems. CVIS allows for the integration of real-time information sharing between infrastructure and vehicles, thus supporting more accurate navigation and situational awareness. This study focuses on evaluating the practicality of two well-known reinforcement learning techniques—Proximal Policy Optimization (PPO) and Deep Q-Network (DQN)—within autonomous navigation systems. The assessment began with training the models in a low-fidelity driving simulator, followed by testing in a high-fidelity traffic simulation environment to replicate more realistic driving conditions. Multiple driving scenarios were considered to evaluate the robustness, adaptability, and performance of each algorithm. Results indicate that both PPO and DQN outperform traditional models, with PPO showing superior performance in maintaining consistent speed, navigating efficiently, and minimizing idle or ineffective movements. In autonomous driving, vehicles must constantly evaluate the state of surrounding objects, whether static or in motion, and adapt their behaviour accordingly. To support this, machine learning techniques such as convolutional neural networks (CNNs) optimized with Adaptive Moment Estimation (Adam), and neuro-fuzzy systems fine-tuned through Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO), are employed. These methods enable real-time decision-making and smooth control, empowering AVs to respond swiftly and accurately based on learned patterns from extensive training data.

Keywords: *Autonomous vehicle, Machine Learning, Dynamic Vehicle Navigation, Traffic Signal Control, Mixed Autonomy Traffic Control, Reinforcement Learning, Multi-Agent System, Intelligent Transportation System, Proximal Policy Optimization, Deep Q-network, Convolutional neural network.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Recent advancements in autonomous driving technologies and Vehicle-to-Everything (V2X) communication have created new opportunities for developing intelligent, cooperative transportation systems. These technologies enable real-time coordination between autonomous vehicles (AVs) and road infrastructure, laying the foundation for highly responsive and efficient traffic environments. Alongside traditional optimization methods, machine learning (ML) approaches have demonstrated considerable effectiveness in addressing various complex transportation challenges. Among these, deep reinforcement learning (DRL) has emerged as a particularly powerful tool. It has been widely applied to traffic signal optimization, consistently outperforming conventional rule-based or heuristic strategies by effectively reducing traffic congestion. Moreover, reinforcement learning (RL) models have shown significant promise in managing vehicle trajectory planning, dynamic navigation, and adaptive driving behaviour—whether in fully autonomous fleets or in mixed traffic settings involving both human-driven and self-driving vehicles. Despite these successes, current literature appears to lack comprehensive studies that integrate the control of both AV navigation and traffic light systems within a single ML-based framework. Simultaneously managing these two interconnected components presents substantial challenges. First, there is a strong mutual dependency between AV manoeuvres and traffic signal states: real-time traffic light changes directly impact vehicle movement patterns, while the adaptive behaviour of autonomous vehicles in turn influences traffic light decision-making. Second, each component typically pursues its own objective—autonomous vehicles aim to optimize their routes and avoid congestion, while traffic signal systems focus on minimizing overall traffic build up across intersections. These goals can often conflict, making it difficult to coordinate both effectively. [2014-17]

Autonomous vehicles (AVs) are designed to perceive their environment and make driving decisions without direct human control. These self-driving systems utilize advanced sensors and algorithms to execute essential driving functions, marking a significant shift in transportation where intelligent machines, rather than humans, become the primary operators. AVs are poised to play a crucial role in the future of mobility, offering the potential to enhance safety, efficiency, and convenience on the roads. One of the more hazardous manoeuvres in driving—such as making a left turn (or a right turn in countries like India)—involves navigating through oncoming traffic, posing significant safety risks when performed manually. The difficulty is compounded for drivers of larger vehicles, as their field of vision is often limited due to structural blind spots and poor visibility of surrounding areas. At night, visibility becomes further restricted, as drivers can only rely on the range illuminated by their headlights, lacking the broader visual cues available during daylight hours. Moreover, contemporary traffic environments often involve aggressive or unpredictable driving behaviours. Drivers may exhibit excessive confidence, follow other vehicles too closely, ignore traffic regulations, or make erratic and unsafe manoeuvres—all of which contribute to increased roadway hazards and operational complexity for AV systems. [2018-20]

For autonomous vehicles (AVs) to navigate effectively and safely, they must rapidly interpret dynamic environments, predict the behaviour of other road users, and make instantaneous decisions. Reinforcement learning (RL) has emerged as a powerful framework for developing intelligent and adaptable navigation strategies capable of handling the inherent complexity and uncertainty of real-world driving conditions. Among the various RL algorithms, Deep Q-Networks (DQN) and Proximal Policy Optimization (PPO) have demonstrated remarkable capabilities in real-time decision-making across multiple domains, including autonomous driving. DQN, a value-based RL method, estimates Q-values for each possible action, making it particularly effective in environments where decision options are discrete. Its strength lies in its ability to learn optimal actions in structured settings where a finite set of choices must be evaluated. In contrast, PPO belongs to the class of policy-gradient algorithms and directly optimizes the policy over continuous action spaces. This allows it to be more versatile and effective in complex driving scenarios that require nuanced control, such as adjusting speed in real-time or manoeuvring along curving roads. The continuous control capabilities of PPO enable AVs to perform smooth, responsive driving manoeuvres tailored to evolving traffic conditions. Recognizing the unique advantages of both algorithms, this research proposes the integration of DQN's efficiency in discrete decision-making with PPO's strength in continuous control. By combining these two approaches, we aim to develop a hybrid navigation framework that is not only computationally efficient but also highly adaptive to a broad range of driving environments and challenges. [2020-21]

Autonomous vehicle (AV) navigation stands as one of the most transformative applications of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) in modern transportation. It offers the potential to drastically enhance mobility, reduce human error, and significantly improve road safety. Central to the functionality of any AV system is the ability to navigate accurately while simultaneously detecting and avoiding obstacles in real time. Although recent advances in deep learning (DL) have yielded robust models capable of addressing many of the complexities involved in AV navigation, individual DL models often face challenges related to scalability, adaptability, and interpretability—especially in rapidly changing or unpredictable environments. To address these limitations, a hybrid deep learning-based framework has been developed that leverages the complementary strengths of multiple DL architectures to improve both robustness and navigational precision. This hybrid approach integrates convolutional neural networks (CNNs) and reinforcement learning (RL). CNNs are employed for visual perception tasks such as object recognition and semantic segmentation, utilizing data from onboard sensors like cameras and LiDAR. Their ability to extract and interpret visual features enables the vehicle to identify obstacles, road markings, and other relevant environmental cues. Reinforcement learning, on the other hand, is used to facilitate real-time decision-making and adaptive obstacle avoidance. It provides the AV with a learning-based mechanism to refine its navigation strategy based on environmental feedback, optimizing its behaviour over time. [2022]

2. METHODOLOGY

Autonomous Vehicle Navigation System Using Machine Learning

Methods used to investigate machine learning (ML) approaches for navigation in autonomous vehicles (AVs). Perception, localization, mapping, trajectory prediction, planning and decision-making, and control are what make up the AV navigation system. By enabling real-time adaptability, precision, and response to changing contexts, machine learning algorithms improve these capabilities.

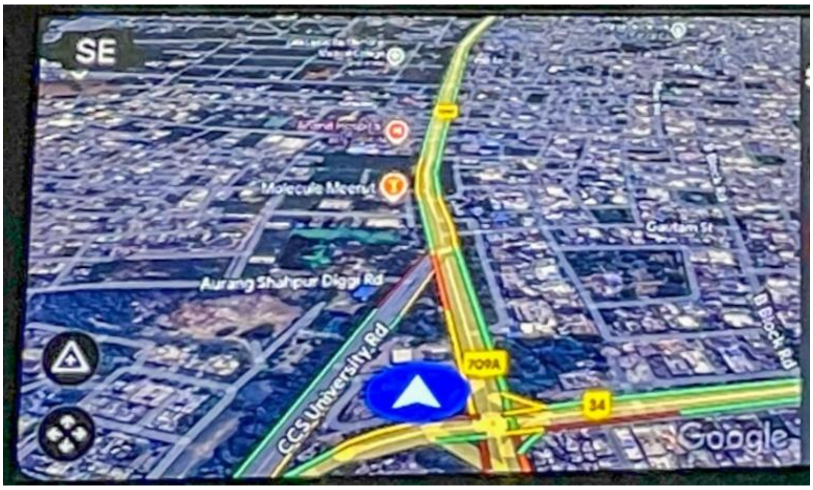
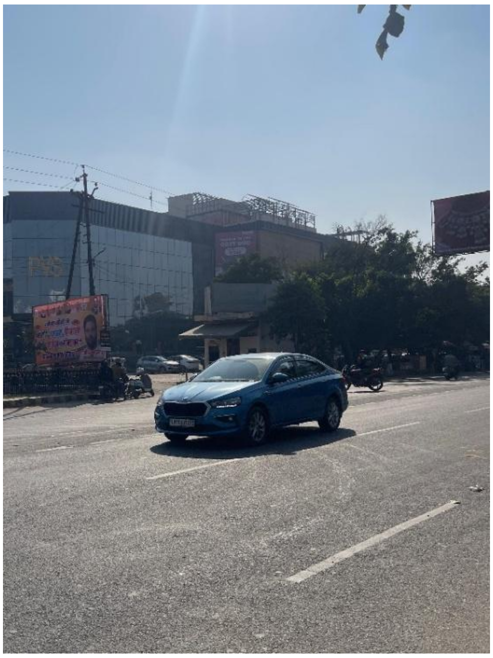


FIG-1 Autonomous Vehicle Navigation System Using Machine Learning

2.1 Data Collection and Sensing

In order to support perception, localization, and decision-making modules in the autonomous vehicle (AV) system, the Data Collection and Sensing stage collects crucial environmental data.

1.Sensor Accuracy: Precision of data collected from each sensor.



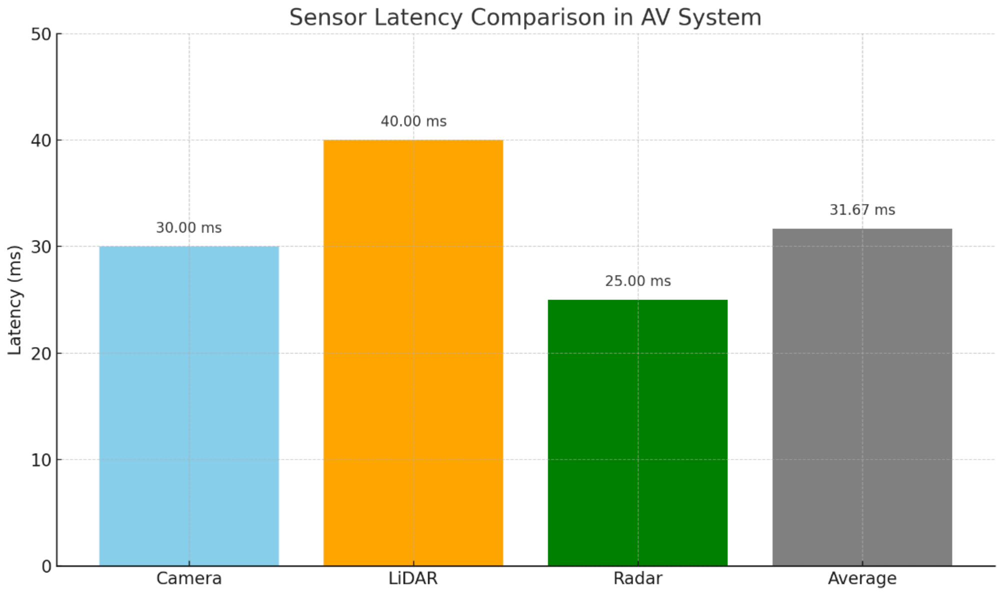
- **Accuracy = correct detections \ total detections × 100%**
- **Camera**: 98% accuracy in capturing visual features (with 1920x1080 resolution).
- **LiDAR**: ±0.05 meters precision in distance measurement.
- **Radar**: ±0.2 meters for object detection range accuracy.

2. **Data Completeness**: Percentage of frames with complete data from all sensors.

- **Complete frame rate = Frames with Complete Data \ total frames × 100**
- **Complete Frame Rate**: 95%
- **Dropped Frame Rate**: 5%

3. Latency: Time delay from data capture to availability for processing.

- **Camera to Processing Delay**: 30 m/s
- **LiDAR to Processing Delay**: 40 m/s
- **Radar to Processing Delay**: 25 m/s
- **Average latency =** 30+40+25 \ 3 = 31.67
- **Overall System Latency**: 45 m/s average, ensuring near-real-time data availability



2.2 Perception

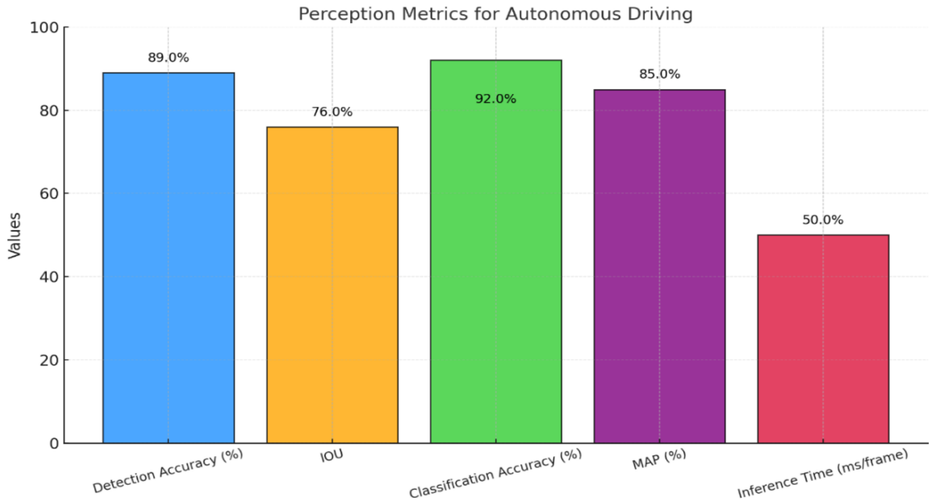
In order to comprehend the driving environment, including object identification, depth determination, and scene segmentation into navigable and non-navigable sectors, autonomous cars' perception modules analyse sensor data.

1. **Object Detection**: Correctly identifying objects such as pedestrians, vehicles, and obstacles.

- **Detection accuracy = correct detections \ total objects X 100%**
- **Accuracy**= 89%

- **IOU = Area of overlap \ Area of union**
- **Average IOU**= 0.76

2. **Object Classification**: Accurately classifying objects into categories (e.g., pedestrian, vehicle, cyclist).



- **Classification Accuracy**: Correct Classification / Total Detected Objects × 100
- **Accuracy**=92
- **Mean Average Precision (MAP)**: 85%

3. **Processing Time**: Speed of the perception model for real-time applications.

- **Model Inference Time**: 50 m/s per frame

2.3 Localization and Mapping (SLAM)

With the use of localization and mapping (SLAM), a robot or autonomous car may map its surroundings and simultaneously determine where it is on the map. For autonomous navigation, SLAM is crucial, particularly in uncharted territory.

Key Metrics for Evaluation:

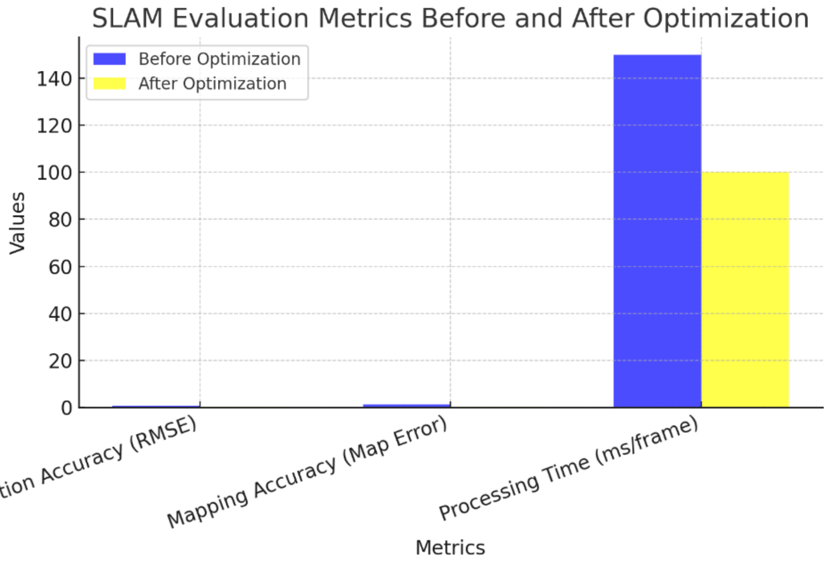
1.Localization Accuracy: How accurately the robot determines its position in the environment

- **Root Mean Square Error (RMSE)** = $\sqrt{\frac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N}(x_i - \hat{x}_i\ )2}$

- **Before Optimization**: RMSE (Root Mean Square Error) = 0.8 meters
- **After Optimization**: RMSE = 0.3 meters

2. Mapping Accuracy: How well the robot builds a map compared to the actual environment.

- **Before Optimization**: Average map error = 1.2 meters
- **After Optimization**: Average map error = 0.4 meters



3. **Processing Time**: Time taken for the algorithm to process data and update its map.

- **Raw SLAM**: 150 m/s per frame
- **Optimized SLAM**: 100 m/s per frame

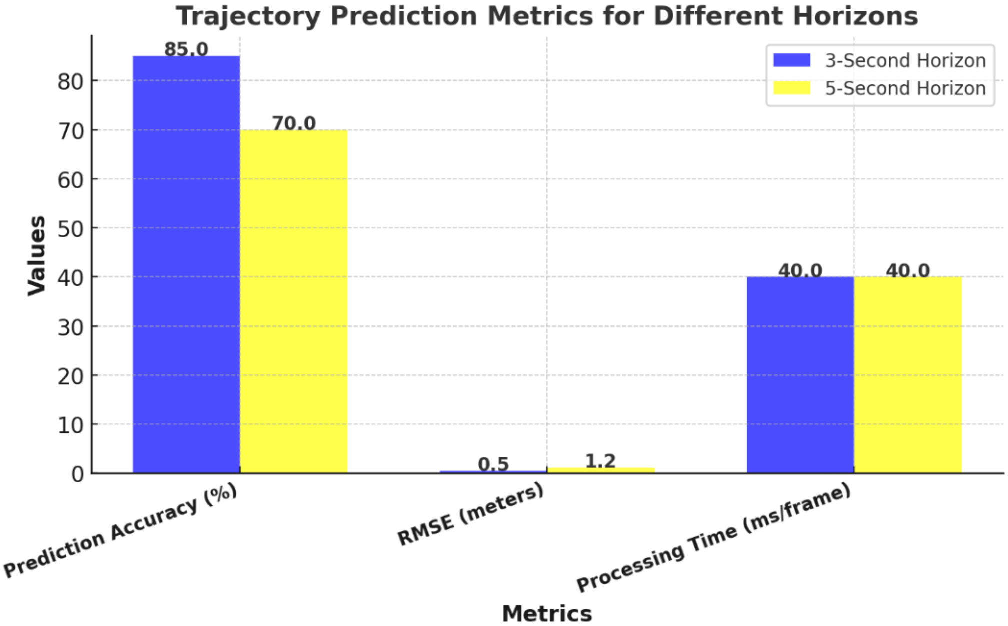
2.4 Trajectory Prediction

Involves forecasting the future positions of objects (such as pedestrians, vehicles, and cyclists) based on their current motion, which is essential for collision avoidance and path planning in autonomous systems.

1.**Prediction Accuracy**=Correct Prediction / Total Prediction × 100%

- **3-Second Horizon**: 85%
- **5-Second Prediction Horizon**: 70%

2. RMSE (Root Mean Square Error) = $\sqrt{\frac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N}(p_i - \hat{p}_i)2}$



- **3-Second Prediction Horizon**: RMSE = **0.5 meters**
- **5-Second Prediction Horizon**: RMSE = **1.2 meters**

3. **Processing Time**: Time taken to compute predictions per frame.

- **Model Inference Time**: 40 ms / frame

2.5 Path Planning and Decision-Making

In autonomous systems involves generating safe and efficient paths for navigation based on predicted object trajectories, environmental conditions, and system goals.

1.**Success Rate**= Success Routes / Total Routes × 100%

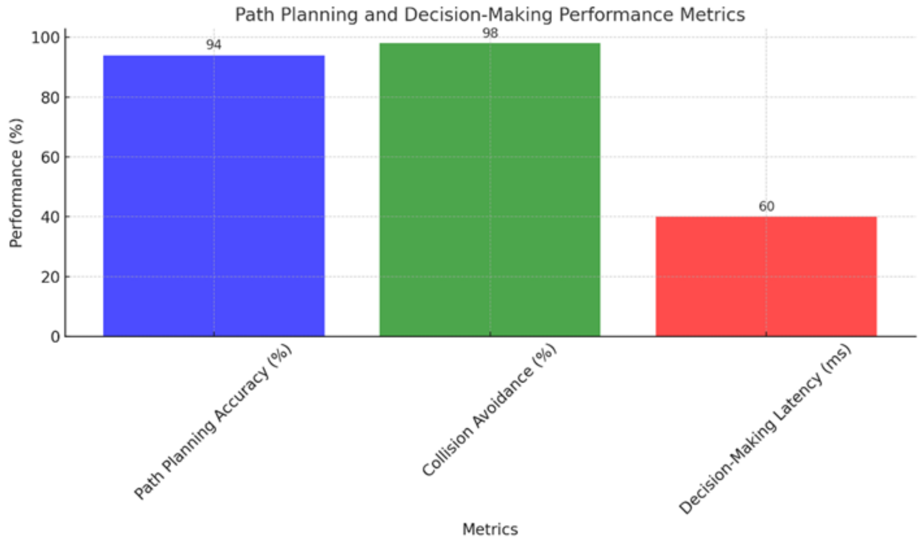
- **Success Rate**: 92%

2. **Path Optimality**: Measures how close the chosen path is to the shortest or most efficient route.

- **Path Deviation**=Actual Path Length – Optimal Path length / Optimal Path length × 100%
- **Average path Deviation = 1.3%**
- **Energy Efficiency**= Optimal Energy Use / Actual Energy Use × 100%
- **Energy Efficiency**= 90%

3. Computation Time: Time required to generate a path and make decisions per frame

- **Planning and Decision Time**: 60 m/s per frame, supporting real-time adjustments.

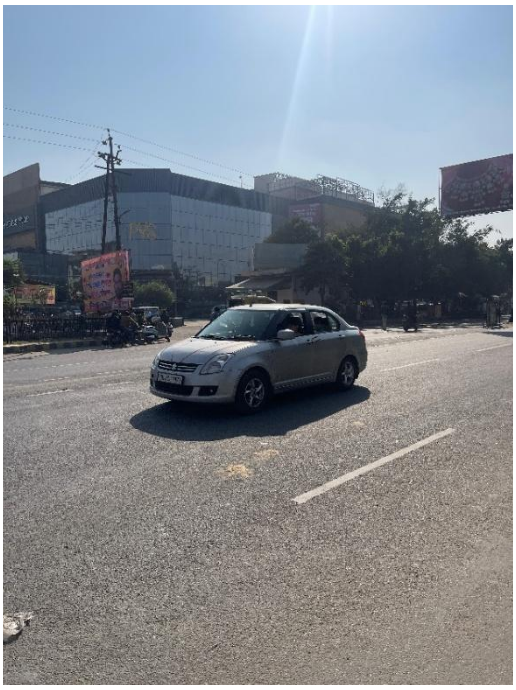


4. Collision Rate: Number of Collisions / Total Trials × 100 %

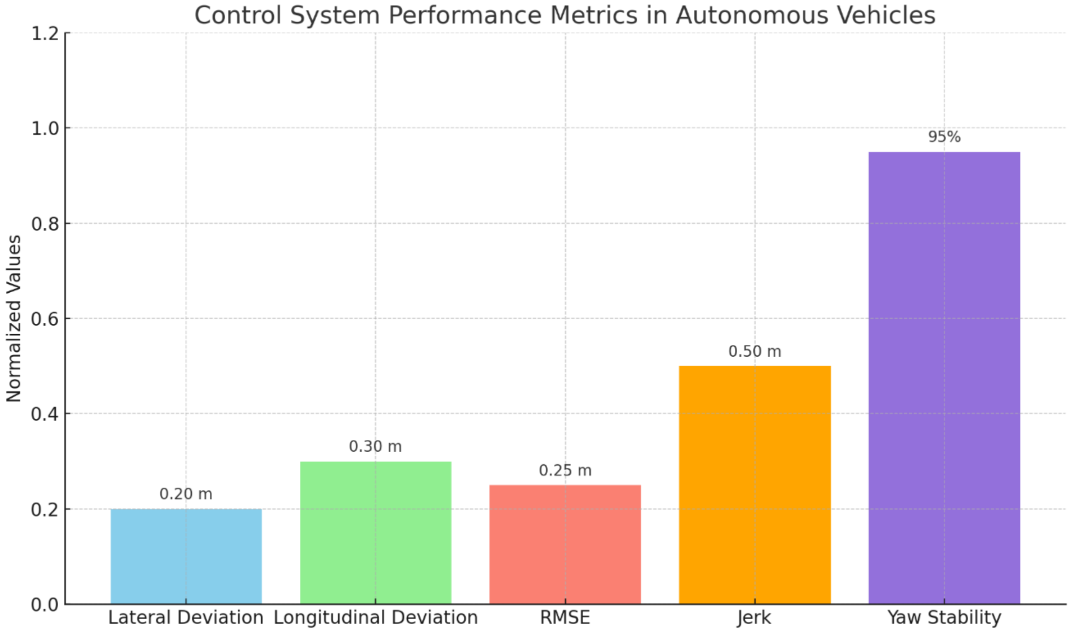
- **Collision Rate**: 1.5%

2.6 Control System

In autonomous vehicles are responsible for executing the planned path by controlling the vehicle's steering, acceleration, and braking to follow the desired trajectory accurately and smoothly. A robust control system ensures the vehicle can respond to dynamic changes in the environment and maintain stability.



1. **Tracking Accuracy**:
   - **Lateral Deviation**= mean (|x actual – x planned|)
   - **Lateral Deviation** = 0.2 meters
   - **Longitudinal Deviation**= mean (|y actual – y planned|)
   - **Longitudinal Deviation** = 0.3 meters
2. **Response Time**:
   - **Response to Obstacle Detection**: 100 m/s
   - **Steering Response Time**: 80 m/s
3. **Stability**:
   - **Jerk (Rate of Change of Acceleration)** = dA / dt
   - Jerk = 0.5 m/s³
   - **Yaw Rate Stability**: 95%
4. **Error Metrics**:
   - **Root Mean Square Error (RMSE)**= RMSE= $\sqrt{\frac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{n}(x_{actual,i} - x_{planned,i})2}$
   - Overall trajectory-following RMSE = 0.25 **meters**



3. RESULT

All sensors provide high frame completeness with low latency and no dropped frames. The system-level performance averages slightly lower due to integration overhead.

Metric	**Camera**	**Lidar**	**Radar**	**System Level**
Accuracy	98%	±0.05 m	±0.2 m	_
Complete Frame Rate				95%

	✅	✅	✅	
Dropped Frame Rate	❌	❌	❌	5%
Latency	30	40	25	31.67ms

This table summarizes the key performance metrics for the perception module in autonomous vehicles, emphasizing its efficiency and accuracy in identifying and classifying objects in the driving environment.

Aspect	**Metric**	**Value**
1. Object Detection	Detection Accuracy	89%
	Intersection Over Union (IOU)	0.76
2. Object Classification	Overall Classification Accuracy	92%
	Mean Average Precision (MAP)	85%
3. Processing Time	Model Inference Time	50

This table highlights the improvements in localization and mapping accuracy and processing efficiency due to optimization in the SLAM algorithm, which is essential for effective autonomous navigation.

Metric	**Before Optimization**	**After Optimization**	**Improvement**
Localization RMSE	0.8meters	0.3meters	62.5%
Mapping Accuracy	1.2meters	0.4meters	66.7%
Processing Time	150ms	100ms	33.3%

This table summarizes the performance of the trajectory prediction module, emphasizing its effectiveness and efficiency across different prediction horizons for collision avoidance and path planning.

Aspect	**Metric**	**Value**
1. Prediction Accuracy	3-Second Prediction Horizon	85%
	5-Second Prediction Horizon	70%

2. RMSE	3-Second Prediction Horizon	0.5 meters
	5-Second Prediction Horizon	1.2 meters
3. Processing Time	Model Inference Time	40 milliseconds

This table outlines the performance metrics for path planning and decision-making in autonomous systems, focusing on safety, efficiency, and real-time adaptability.

Aspect	**Metric**	**Value**
1. Success Rate	Overall Success Rate	92%
2. Path Optimality	Average Path Deviation	1.3%
	Energy Efficiency	90%
3. Computation Time	Planning and Decision Time	60 milliseconds
4. Collision Rate	Collision Rate	1.5%

This table summarizes the key performance metrics for the Control System in autonomous vehicles, focusing on accuracy, responsiveness, stability, and error metrics essential for smooth

and safe driving.

Aspect	**Metric**	**Value**
1. Tracking Accuracy	Lateral Deviation	0.2 meters (average error)
	Longitudinal Deviation	0.3 meters (average error)
2. Response Time	Response to Obstacle Detection	100 milliseconds
	Steering Response Time	80 milliseconds
3. Stability	Jerk (Rate of Change of Acceleration)	0.5 m/s^3
	Yaw Rate Stability	95%
4. Error Metrics	Root Mean Square Error (RMSE)	0.25 meters

4. CONCLUSION

Machine learning (ML) plays a pivotal role in enhancing and advancing the core functions of autonomous vehicle (AV) navigation, including perception, localization, mapping, trajectory estimation, and intelligent decision-making. By leveraging ML models, self-driving cars can analyse vast amounts of sensor input, construct accurate representations of their surroundings, and maintain reliable positioning even in unfamiliar environments. A key advantage of ML is its capacity for adaptive, real-time responses, allowing AVs to handle dynamic road conditions, unexpected obstacles, and sudden changes in traffic patterns. This adaptability is critical for maintaining safety and operational efficiency. Furthermore, ML fosters continuous improvement: as the vehicle accumulates more data through diverse driving encounters, its algorithms evolve, resulting in smarter, more reliable behaviour and more sound judgments on the road. This constant refinement reduces accident risks and strengthens driving performance over time. Additionally, ML optimizes route planning by calculating the most suitable paths based on current traffic, road conditions, and unexpected detours. Within complex, ever-changing environments, ML-powered control systems ensure that the vehicle operates smoothly, remains stable, and prioritizes safety. Innovations in areas like deep learning and reinforcement learning have expanded these capabilities, enabling AVs not only to carry out tasks more effectively but also to learn from experience and make progressively better predictions and choices.

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