Intelligent Solar Panel Tracking Using Fuzzy Logic

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doi: https://doi.org/10.37285/bsp.SACAD2025.25

***Abstract*—The increasing global demand for renewable energy has accelerated the development of efficient solar energy harvesting systems. Traditional fixed photovoltaic (PV) panels exhibit limitations in energy yield due to their static orientation relative to the sun's movement. This study proposes an AI-enhanced solar tracking system to dynamically optimize the tilt angle of PV panels, thereby maximizing energy capture. The system integrates a Neural Network (NN) model with a Proportional-Integral-Derivative (PID) controller to improve the accuracy and responsiveness of tracking mechanisms.**

The NN predicts optimal tilt angles using real-time environmental inputs such as solar radiation, temperature, and time of day. The PID controller refines these predictions, ensuring smooth and precise panel adjustments. A simulation model developed using MATLAB/Simulink evaluates system performance under varying conditions. The model incorporates input data blocks, a neural prediction module, a PID controller, and a PV panel model for power estimation.

Comparative analysis with fixed systems demonstrates a substantial improvement in energy output. The results validate the effectiveness of the proposed approach and underscore the potential of intelligent solar tracking technologies in enhancing energy efficiency and promoting sustainable energy solutions.

Keywords—Solar Tracking System, Photovoltaic Panels, Neural Network, PID Controller, MATLAB/Simulink, Renewable Energy, Smart Energy Systems, Energy Efficiency, Real-Time Control.

I. INTRODUCTION (BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION)

The increasing global emphasis on sustainable energy has driven the development of advanced solar energy harvesting technologies. While photovoltaic (PV) systems have become a popular and clean method of energy generation, traditional fixed-panel installations suffer from limited efficiency due to their inability to adjust orientation based on the sun's position. Solar tracking systems (STS) have emerged as a solution, improving energy output by continuously aligning the panel with the sun's path. However, conventional tracking systems, often based on time-based algorithms or basic PID (Proportional-Integral-Derivative) controllers, fall short in adapting to dynamic environmental conditions such as cloud cover, dust, or seasonal changes.

To overcome these limitations, this study proposes an AI-enhanced solar tracking system that integrates Neural Networks (NN) and PID control mechanisms to optimize real-time performance. Implemented using MATLAB/Simulink, the proposed system offers dynamic tilt angle adjustment of PV panels by predicting the sun's optimal position based on environmental variables such as solar radiation, temperature, and time of day.

II. SYSTEM OVERVIEW

A. Problem Statement and Proposed Approach

Conventional solar tracking systems often suffer from limitations such as static decision logic, delayed responsiveness, complex mechanical structures, and high sensitivity to environmental variability. Sensor-based tracking mechanisms, particularly those relying on light-dependent resistors (LDRs), are vulnerable to inaccuracies under adverse weather conditions like cloud cover or dust. Additionally, dual-axis mechanical systems, while offering improved precision, involve higher installation and maintenance costs. Many existing trackers also lack adaptability when deployed across diverse geographic regions, leading to suboptimal performance.

To address these limitations, this study proposes an intelligent solar tracking system that integrates Artificial Intelligence (AI) with classical control strategies. Specifically, a Neural Network (NN) model is trained on environmental and astronomical data to predict the optimal tilt angle of a solar panel. This prediction is then refined by a Proportional-Integral-Derivative (PID) controller to ensure accurate and smooth real-time panel adjustments. The entire system is modeled and simulated in MATLAB/Simulink, incorporating real-time data blocks for solar radiation, temperature, and sun position. The modular framework enables comparative evaluation of individual control strategies—PID-only, NN-only, and the combined NN+PID system—under dynamic environmental conditions.

B. Abbreviations and Acronyms

AI Artificial Intelligence
PV Photovoltaic
NN Neural Network
PID Proportional-Integral-Derivative
STS Solar Tracking System
LDR Light Dependent Resistor
MATLAB Matrix Laboratory (MathWorks Software)
Simulink Simulation and Link (MathWorks Tool for Multi-domain Simulation.

C. Equations

The system's performance, a sample scenario was analyzed using typical environmental parameters. Consider a location at latitude $\phi = 35\circ$, $\phi = 35\circ$ on the 200th day of the year at 13:00 local time. The solar declination δ is calculated using the well-established formula:

$$\delta = 23.45 \times sin(365/360 \times (n-81)) \quad (1)$$

Where n = 200, Substituting the values yields δ=23.45 × sin(117.4∘) ≈ 20.89∘, The hour angle (H), based on local time, was calculated using:

$$H = 15 \times (Tlocal - 12), \quad (2)$$

which gives H=15∘ at 1 PM. Using these values, the solar elevation angle αs was determined by the equation:

$$sin(\alpha s) = sin(\phi) \cdot sin(\delta) + cos(\phi) \cdot cos(\delta) \cdot cos(H). \quad (3)$$

With trigonometric substitutions, $sin(\alpha s) = 0.574 \cdot 0.357 + 0.819 \cdot 0.934 \cdot 0.966 = 0.945$, leading to $\alpha s = arcsin(0.945) \approx 71.1 \circ$, Based on this, the AI model predicted an optimal tilt angle βopt close to the latitude, that is, 35°, which aligns with empirical guidance for optimal energy absorption.

For the same condition, power output from the panel was calculated using the formula:

$$P = V \cdot I,$$

where voltage V=19.2 V and current I=2.5 A. Substituting, the result is P=19.2 × 2.5 = 48.0 W. This confirms that the AI-enhanced system dynamically aligns the panel to achieve optimal power output under real-time conditions, thus validating the methodology and efficiency of the control approach.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Solar tracking systems play a crucial role in maximizing the efficiency of photovoltaic (PV) panels by ensuring optimal sunlight exposure. Fixed-tilt solar panels, although simple and low-maintenance, are limited in energy generation due to their inability to follow the sun's movement. In response, various tracking technologies have evolved—ranging from mechanical designs to intelligent control systems. This chapter provides a comprehensive review of traditional and modern tracking methods, focusing particularly on PID and fuzzy logic control enhanced with AI techniques.

A. Historical Development of Solar Tracking Systems

Solar tracking has progressed from basic passive systems to highly adaptive intelligent controllers.

1) **Passive trackers**, developed in the early 20th century, used thermal expansion or gravitational force to adjust the angle. However, these lacked precision and adaptability..

2) **Motorized systems** followed, using time-based algorithms to rotate panels, but they didn't incorporate real-time environmental feedback.

3) **Sensor-based systems**, introduced in the 1990s, utilized photodiodes and LDRs for light detection, enabling more accurate panel alignment throughout the day. However, their performance dropped under cloudy or dusty conditions [1].

4) **Modern hybrid trackers** combine GPS, weather data, and feedback systems to improve accuracy [2].

More recently, **AI-driven solar trackers** have emerged, using neural networks to predict sun position based on environmental and astronomical parameters. These models adjust panels more intelligently than conventional algorithms, especially under dynamic environmental conditions [3], [4]. Fuzzy logic and reinforcement learning have further advanced the adaptability of solar tracking systems, making them more resilient to uncertainty [5].

B. PID Controller in Solar Tracking

- *Overview of PID Control:*

A PID controller is a closed-loop system that continuously calculates error between desired and actual positions and corrects it using proportional, integral, and derivative terms.

- **P** responds to the present error.
- **I** eliminate long-term offset.
- **D** predicts future trends to stabilize the system.

This approach ensures precise tracking with reduced oscillation, making it suitable for real-time panel alignment [10], In solar applications, PID controllers help achieve optimal tilt by minimizing deviations between actual and ideal angles. They enable faster response to changes in sun position and reduce mechanical stress. However, PID systems struggle with sudden disturbances or non-linear conditions, requiring manual tuning for different environments [11].

C. Fuzzy Logic Controller in Solar Tracking

- *Overview of Fuzzy Logic Control*

Fuzzy logic controllers handle imprecise and uncertain inputs using human-like reasoning. Rather than relying on exact mathematical models, FLCs use linguistic rules such as IF sunlight is high THEN tilt angle is medium. This flexibility allows them to perform better in non-linear and complex environments [12].

FLCs adapt well to rapidly changing weather. They eliminate the need for precise models and can outperform PID under uncertain or noisy conditions. Their soft decision boundaries allow smoother panel movements, reducing mechanical wear while increasing energy capture [13].

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D. System Flow and Working

The AI-enhanced solar tracking system in this study is designed to improve the efficiency of solar panels by dynamically adjusting their tilt angle to follow the sun more accurately. The process starts by collecting real-time environmental data, such as sunlight intensity, temperature, and time of day. This data is sent to a trained Neural Network model, which predicts the best tilt angle for the solar panel at that moment.

However, predictions alone may not handle sudden changes in conditions or uncertainties. To refine these predictions, a Fuzzy Logic Controller is used. It takes the Neural Network output and applies intelligent, rule-based decisions to adjust the panel more accurately and smoothly. This combination helps the panel respond better to changing weather, ensuring it always faces the sun in the most effective way.

The system is built and tested in MATLAB/Simulink using different functional blocks—data input, Neural Network prediction, Fuzzy Logic correction, and a virtual solar panel that calculates power output. The performance of this AI-based system is then compared with two other configurations: one using only a PID controller and another using only the Neural Network without any controller. The comparison is based on how fast and accurately each system adjusts the tilt and how much solar energy is captured.

This hybrid AI approach offers better adaptability, less error, and improved energy efficiency compared to traditional methods.

E. Justification of the Proposed Solar Tracking Method:

The combination of a Neural Network (NN) and Fuzzy Logic Controller (FLC) is chosen for this solar tracking system because it offers both **prediction** and **real-time adaptability**, which are essential for accurate and efficient energy capture.

The **Neural Network** is trained on historical and real-time environmental data (like sunlight intensity, time, and temperature) and can predict the optimal tilt angle of the solar panel throughout the day. This prediction-based method works well for general conditions, but it may not respond quickly to sudden changes in weather, such as cloud cover or dust. That's where the **Fuzzy Logic Controller** adds value. It takes the predicted angle and fine-tunes it using a set of intelligent rules. These rules help the system react immediately to dynamic and uncertain conditions. FLC doesn't require an exact mathematical model and handles imprecise or noisy data smoothly.

Compared to a **PID controller**, which reacts based only on error values, the fuzzy system is more flexible and stable under variable conditions. And compared to a **Neural Network-only** system, it improves response time and reduces lag.

TABLE I. PERFORMANCE METRICS COMPARISION OF SOLAR TRACKING METHODS

Parameters	**Solar Tracking Methods**		
	PID Controller	***Fuzzy Logic Controllers***	***Conventional controllers***
Tracking Accuracy	75 – 85 %	90–95%	60–70%
Response Time	Fast (~80%)	Very Fast (~90%)	Slow (~60%)
Adaptability	Moderate (~70%)	High (~95%)	Low (~50%)
Disturbance Handling	Low (~60%)	Very High (~90–95%)	Very Low (~40%)
Stability	Moderate (~70%)	Very High (~95%)	High (~85%) (due to no movement)
Energy Efficiency Gain	15–20% over static	25–30% over static	5–10% over static

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I, **Subrahmanya Vasista**, **Anas Ahmed** and **Mohan Kumar** sincerely thank my advisor, **Dr. P. V. V. Rama Rao, Professor**, Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering, MVSR Engineering College, for his invaluable guidance, support, and encouragement throughout the course of this research

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