

Optimizing Power System Protection Using Machine Learning Techniques: A Review

Dickson, Peter Akpan¹

Department of Electrical Electronics Engineering,
University of Uyo, Nigeria
peterdickson.pgs.meng@uniuyo.edu.ng

Okpura, Nseobong²

Department of Electrical Electronics Engineering,
University of Uyo, Nigeria

Udofia, Kufre M³.

Department of Electrical Electronics Engineering,
University of Uyo, Nigeria).

Abstract— The reliability and resilience of the power system from generation, transmission and distribution value chain depends on the efficient operation of the protection system. When faults occur in the electricity network, it require an efficient protection system to isolate the faulty section of the network timeously, while the healthy section remain operational, such is the principle of discrimination or selectivity, sensitivity and speed, protection engineering terminology. International best practice in power protection engineering demands that the protection relay also act to safeguard both the network and the equipments connected to the network, thus ensuring safe, reliable and available electricity for the consumers. Various approach in protection system techniques have been practiced, from the mechanical relays, to the use of digital relays and smart metering in conjunction with supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) and phase measurement units (PMU) and the novel Artificial intelligence (AI). Accordingly, this paper presents a review on optimizing power system protection using machine learning techniques.

Keywords— Protection System, Artificial Intelligence, Smart Metering, Machine Learning, Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA)

1. Introduction

Power system protection ensures that faulty part of the system is disconnected from the healthy part to improve the resilience and stability of the network. Since the role of the power protection system is to disconnect in the event of fault, to prevent damage due to faults, prevent the fault from degrading the security and to protect the surrounding equipment, lives and properties from danger, the optimal operation of power system protection mechanism is

therefore very essential. Accordingly, this paper presents a review on optimizing power system protection using machine learning techniques.

Particularly, this paper reviewed new technology in power system protection relaying using machine learning algorithms (Fang and Zhang, 2019, Kumbhar et al. 2021 and Eslamian *et al.*, 2023), which is generally categorized into three categories namely, supervised learning, unsupervised learning and reinforcement learning. Supervised learning has main feature like labelled data, and it is task driven classification /regression algorithm which is suitable for diagnostic / prediction application, Unsupervised learning with main feature of unlabeled data, data driven, clustering/dimensionality reduction algorithm, is suitable for pattern/structure recognition. Reinforcement learning with main features such as reward/punishing mechanism, clustering/association algorithms is suitable for decision making processes (Aminifar *et al.* 2021). Fang and Zhang, 2019, Rajora *et al.* 2022 and Stock *et al.* 2022 described machine learning application in power system asset management, power distribution network and power system protection to be data eccentric, because it requires good data sources and good data support, as such, the effectiveness of power system protection could be achieved through machine learning algorithm. The large data source could be gotten from electronic smart sensor devices, smart meters where real-time data of current, voltage, switching status in the power system network could be obtained, analysed and sent to the power data support platform through communication network, after analysis it is imported into the machine learning algorithm as part of Artificial intelligence application needed to optimise the power system protection and control to reduce the frequency of system collapse and blackout due to the cascading faults from the electricity network (Uddin et al., 2022, Xiang, *et al.* 2023, Wang, 2020 and Ghani, 2019)

1.1 Significance of the research

Power system protection ensures that faulty part of the system is disconnected from the healthy part to improve the resilience and stability of the network. Since the role of the power protection system is to disconnect in the event of fault, to prevent damage due to faults, prevent the fault from degrading the security and to protect the surrounding equipments, lives and properties from danger, the optimal operation of power system protection mechanism is therefore very essential.

Notably, the paper is aimed at providing insight that can be used for optimizing power system protection to reduce electric power system collapse using machine learning algorithm (Ayalew et al., 2018 and Wang, 2020). As such, the paper review machine learning techniques which include supervised, unsupervised and reinforced learning techniques will relieve human intervention in the setting up of protection relays as machine learning algorithm will be used to provide the principle of speed, selectivity and discrimination in the protection functions. Also, machine learning approach will bring forth unprecedented opportunities for developing adaptive and reinforcing solutions for power system protection problems (Aminifar et al. 2021).

2. Review of Relevant Literatures

In the last 40 years artificial intelligence has impacted massively in the power sector, in operation and maintenance, generator protection, transmission line fault classification and location, distribution network protection and power system optimization, (Ayalew et al., 2018, Heymann et al., 2023) and one of the branches of AI is the machine learning techniques.

2.1 Practical application of Artificial intelligence / Machine learning in power system protection and control

According to Hu et al. (2023), in their introduction defined intelligence as advanced comprehension, a capacity to further the existing reasoning, demonstrative knowledge and learned decision-making. Machine can demonstrate intelligence similar to the natural human intelligence. These require adaptive development at various stages, such as cognition, manipulation, rationalization, communication, and reaction to any common transaction.

Artificial intelligence (AI): As defined by the author, is the simulation of human intelligence in machine that think and act like humans. A very effective AI application

requires many skill set such as cognition, manipulation, rationalization, communication and reaction to be incorporated into the scheme.

Machine learning: AI according to the author, utilizes machine learning and other related techniques such as heuristics to resolve real challenges. Computational tools that are needed to implement these skill sets are Search and Optimization, Artificial neural network, Fuzzy logic, probabilistic methods for uncertain reasoning, reinforcement learning, and other supervised and unsupervised learning method. Machine learning is a subfield of Artificial intelligence that enables the gathering and analysing volumes of data to extract representative feature based on appropriate training (learning) and develop an equation or algorithm for deriving useful information or action. Machine learning has been practiced within the power system industries for operation, workforce management, and planning for example in forecasting, optimization, scheduling and unit commitment, and currently in power system protection.

2.2 Learning by experience: According to Hu et al, (2023) and Osisanwo et al., (2017), the technique and algorithms that accomplishes learning by experience are broadly considered as machine learning methods. In learning by experience, machine learning techniques or algorithm process input data in order to perform classification, pattern recognition, clustering, regression tasks, and more, based on experience learned from the data.

A. Artificial Neural Networks (ANN): ANNs are at the forefront of machine learning as enablers to learning by experience.

Warren McCulloch and Walter Pitts laid the framework for artificial neural networks while Frank Rosenblatt created the Perceptron model (Osisanwo, et al., 2017) to replicate the human brain both in 1943 and 1957 respectively. Figure 1 shows the diagram of the commonly used model of artificial neuron and the description follows as shown in Figure 1(a) and (b). As shown in Figure 1a. An artificial neural network is a network of neurons consisting of an input layer which receives data from outside sources (data files, sensors, etc.), one or more hidden layers that process the data, and an output layer that provides one or more output data points based on the function of the network.

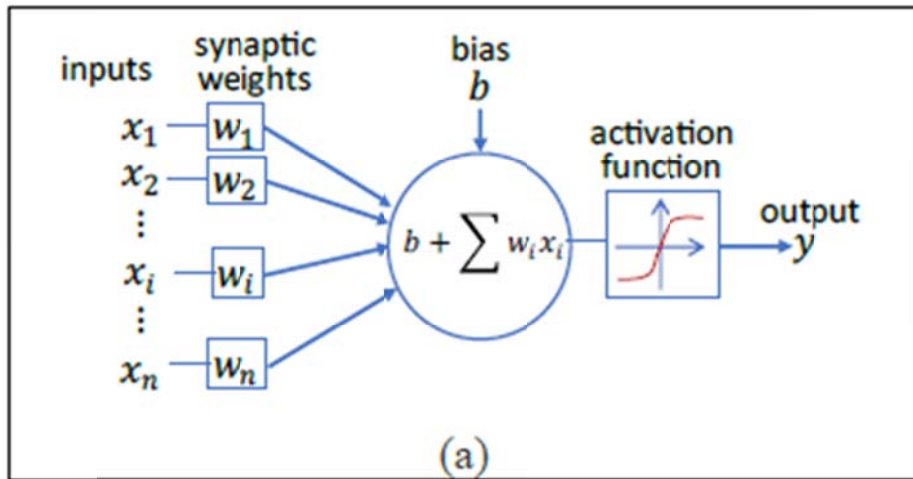


Figure 1a: Model of an artificial neuron
 Source: Hu et al., 2023

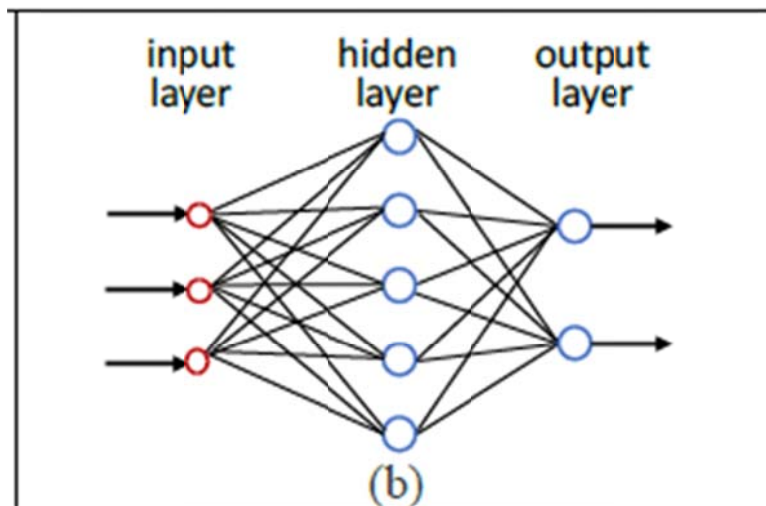


Figure 1b: Example of a feedforward neural network
 Source: Hu et al., 2023

The diagram in Figure 1b shows an example of a feedforward neural network. The weights of the neurons are adjusted considering the relationship between the inputs and the outputs as defined by the experience data. The different types of ANN architectures, among others are:

- i. Single layer feedforward architecture
- ii. Multiple layer feedforward architecture
- iii. Recurrent or feedback architecture
- iv. Mesh architecture.

Several approaches for training ANN are:-

Supervised learning: In this approach, data used for training are tagged by a human or are available as pairs of input and the corresponding expected outputs. Typically used for Classification and Regression application.

Unsupervised learning: It is self organizing to capture patterns in input data as neuronal predilections or probability densities. The three main domain of application of unsupervised learning are: - Clustering, Dimensionality reduction and Association rules learning.

Reinforced learning: As in a model-free Reinforced learning, the machine learned by interacting with the environment as an agent and is given a numerical performance score called reward, after performing the action as its guidance. This is popularly used in Robotics; it is used in situations where the environment is better known, such as playing chess. As in the case of Model-based Reinforced learning algorithm can model the environment to predict the outcomes of action before performing them and optimized iteratively from these predictions.

According to the author, the availability of the input data used to train the algorithm will be different for each application, sometimes the entire dataset is available from the beginning, however, the data that algorithm need will grow overtime. As a result, the learning by experience considers taken considers the data availability and is broken down into offline and online learning. When there is not enough data (experience) to perform offline learning, as discuss by the author, the focus is normally recognition of

types or classes (example Clustering) by learning online with the input data.

Offline learning: Is referred to batch learning techniques which generate the best ANN parameters by learning on the entire training dataset at once.

Online learning: Is a sequential learning in which data becomes available in a sequential order and is used to update the ANN weights at each step. Online learning is used where it is necessary for the algorithm to dynamically adapt to new patterns in the data (distribution shift) or when it is infeasible to learn from an entire dataset.

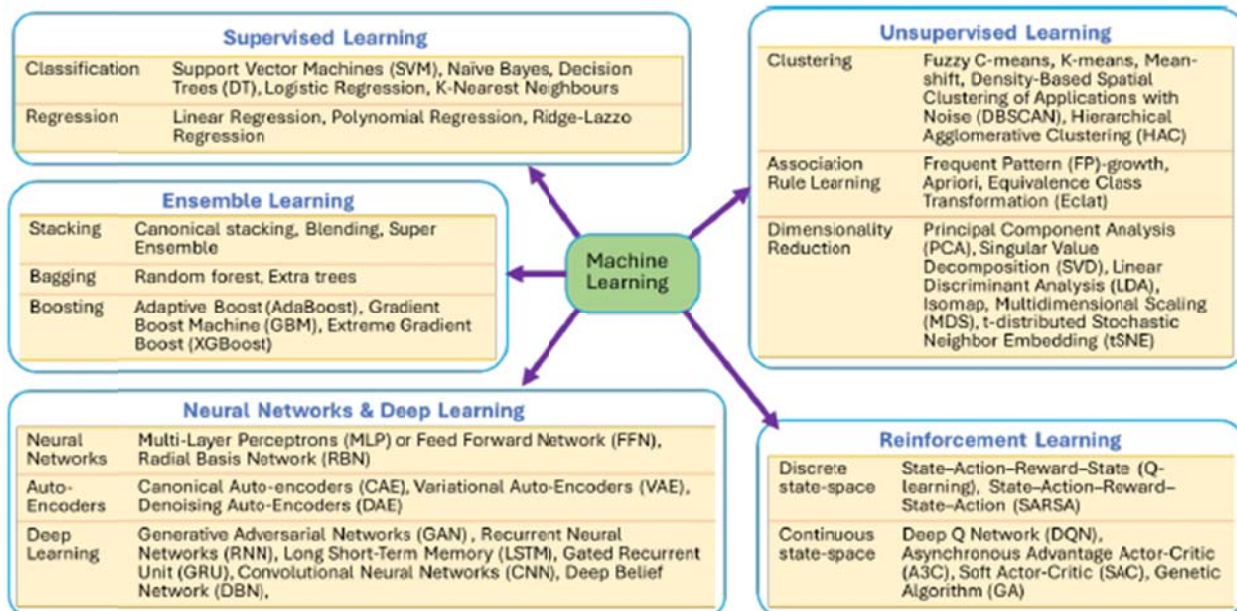


Figure 2: Types of Machine learning algorithm

Source: Hu et al., 2023

Hu et al., 2023 in his research stated that neural network architecture will normally be chosen based on the intended application and available data. The type size and number of layers within the network along with the

optimization strategy and loss equation being carefully chosen to allow the network to sufficiently map the input data to the application goal. Figure 2 demonstrates the various types of machine learning algorithm that can be explored.

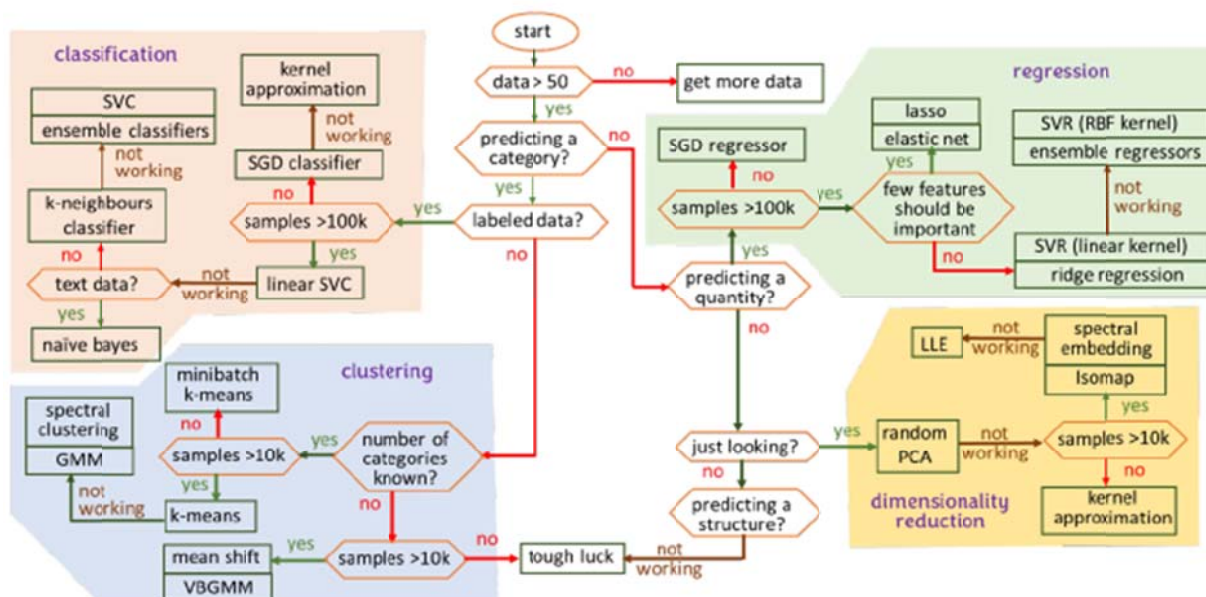


Figure 3: Scikit-Learn Algorithm Chat Sheet

Source: Hu et al., 2023

Learning by evolution: According to Hu et al., 2023, trial and error approaches have been a key part to human learning. Several techniques have been developed to imitate

this human skill and focus on an objective while using the experience to find a solution to a problem by mean of the evolution of a population. The population in the context of evolutionary learning refer to a set of potential solution to a

problem. For instance, the problem of finding setting of a non-directional overcurrent relay (ANSI 51), a solution could be a pair of values representing the pickup current and the time dial. The objective for application of device 51 to a transformer could be to get a reference operating time for the internal and external faults. Given the a range of short circuit current it is possible to evaluate the operating time function for potential solution for this individual in the population. Hu et al, 2023 explained in their research that learning by evolution algorithm applies random changes guided by Swarm intelligence, Colony behaviour, Physical / Chemical processes to find a group of solution (in this case settings) to meet the objective (the required operating time) or the best possible solution. Starting with an initial population (often randomly generated) evolution algorithms can find better solutions for complex problem by making variations in every population.

Hu et al., 2023 further described metaheuristic algorithms as set of techniques or algorithms applied to solve optimization and search problems. Some of the algorithms are:-

- Simulated Annealing
- Ants Colony
- Bees Colony
- Genetic Algorithms
- Differential Evolution
- Particle Swarm Optimization
- Harmony Search
- Bat Algorithm, and
- Taboo Search

The author concluded that the Metaheuristic are widely used to solve complex optimization problems with a single objective or multi-objectives focus and the capability of problem generalization.

Deep Learning: Deep learning, according to Hu et al., 2023 is a subfield of machine learning and its backbone is built on neural networks. The number of node layers or depth of a neural network differentiates a shallow neural network from a deep learning algorithm. Usually a deep neural network has more than three layers, these algorithms use multiple layers to progressively extract high level features from the raw input, with minimal human intervention. This kind of learning can be supervised, semi-supervised or unsupervised. According to Hu et al., 2023, the following traditional machine learning algorithm finds mapping between structured representation of data (specific data with predefined format) and an outcome that is often seen as a prediction. They includes:-

- Linear Regression
- Shallow neural network, and
- Decision Tree.

These traditional machine learning algorithms often fail to create good mappings between data and an outcome when the data is of unstructured or of complex nature

Conglomeration of different types of data that are stored in their native format) such as images, waveform, videos etc., and to tackle this problem, data scientists usually conducts data processing and feature engineering process to find data representations that are suitable for traditional machine learning of algorithms.

However, in deep learning, suitable representations of data (features) are found in a more automated way. They are able to understand concepts on their own and this is referred to as representation learning.

2.3 A systematic review of machine learning applications in the operation of smart distribution system.

Matijasevic et al., (2022) in a research on the application of machine learning techniques in the operation of smart distribution network with special emphasis on the system protection, resilience and reliability provided a review of various published literatures pointing to the novel approach of resolving challenges in the power system network using different machine learning algorithms and techniques.

According to the research by Matijasevic *et al.*, (2022), planning and operation of power system distribution networks are becoming more demanding, and to meet this demand, machine learning methods are emerging and it is increasingly being used in numerous analyses of the distribution network due to their ability to process large amount of data without needing any complex and time-consuming models. We now have smart distribution systems (SDS) with focus on the application of artificial intelligence / machine learning algorithm in resolving issues.

2.3.1 Research Methodology Adopted: Matijasevic *et al.*, (2022) presented a paper which was in the form of a review of several approaches on the application of machine learning algorithm for handling smart distribution power system network challenges.

According to Matijasevic *et al.*, (2022) the electricity network have been modernized into what is known as smart distribution network. Distribution networks are the main connection between the transmission networks and the most electricity customers and are the forefront for energy transition from the source to the user due to the dynamic nature. The Distribution System Operators (DSO) managed the distribution network and their related equipments, and since electric power cannot be massively stored, operation planning becomes imperative, making the DSO (and in other clime Distribution Service Provider, DSP) primarily responsible for the maintenance, system operation, retrofitting and more, in order to provide high quality services to the growing number of customers within the electricity networks.

Matijasevic et al., (2022) also confirmed that the distribution network planning has been known to be

“predict and provide” process and these process have been performed by the DSOs, and using the traditional distribution system, for instance, the DSOs relied on historical data and behavioural pattern, they could create good operational plans that never required real data and intensive real-time (RT) intensive operational activities.

Matijasevic *et al.*, (2022) also inferred that distribution networks were observable when the entire network could be monitored. Any grid could be ranked observable, if and only if, all system state, which includes, voltage magnitudes and angles, can be calculated for the given measurements and topology.

This paper by Matijasevic *et al.* (2022) SDS operators relies on high share installed smart meters capable of collecting and processing large number of data

which are important for the planning and operation of the SDSs. The necessity for real-time (RT) decision in the operation of the SDSs arose from the conglomerate of active customers at the heart of the SDS who have started implementing new solutions, which changes the power flow in the distribution network (Matijasevic *et al.*, 2022), all of this contributed to the objective of a smart distribution system network shown in Figure 4 and described a modernized electricity grid as one that uses information and communication technology to gather and act on data, such as statistics about the behaviour of suppliers and consumers in an automated fashion to improve reliability, efficiency, economics, and sustainability of the use of electricity (Matijasevic *et al.*, 2022).

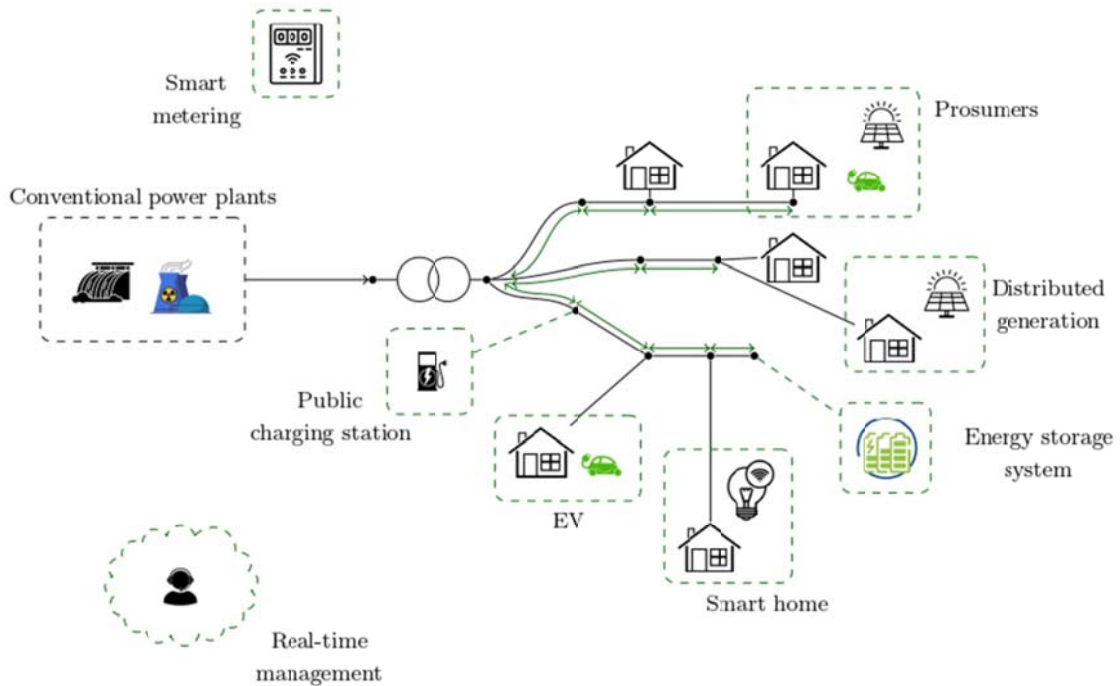


Figure 4: Development of a smart distribution system

Source: Matijasevic *et al.*, (2022)

2.3.2 Importance of machine learning-based algorithms

The introduction of newer technologies in electric power system has contributed to the complexity of the smart distribution system, leading to the change in the planning and operation paradigm. The flow of large data from smart meters encouraged the system operators to reinvent the wheel, by employing newer tools for real-time network management and monitoring to reduce system insecurity and instability. The traditional techniques have been abandoned as the newer tool provides high degree of accuracy within a very short time. This new tool is the machine learning algorithm. It has a set of input and output data and the algorithm finds a relationship between the data, thus ensuring the speed of data processing and the

indifference of the model to variation in the data, (Matijasevic *et al.*, 2022).

2.3.3 Machine learning applications in the (operational) planning of smart distribution system:

According to the authors, the application of machine learning algorithm includes forecasting. Forecasting, according to the authors the important component of forecasting is data, proper data selection improves forecasting models and give more accurate forecast.

Data processing schemes can be clustered into:-

- Decomposition,
- Feature selection and extraction,
- Noise cancelling,
- Residual error modelling, and
- Filter-based adjustment.

According to the authors, state-of-the-art metering infrastructure, such as, smart meters, plays a vital role in generating an enormous amount of data to support various operations in smart distribution system, like distributed energy management, generation forecasting and fault detection in the network.

A lot of data could be found in the public sphere to encourage energy forecasting research, highlighted below are six essential sources of data.

- i. ISO / RTO data: Data from Independent system operators and Regional transmission operators.
- ii. NWP and reanalysis data: Numerical Weather Prediction (NWP) data is generated by national weather centres: reanalysis data is a special instance of NWP data, which is a return of a weather model using a consistent of assimilation design.
- iii. Remote sensed data: gridded weather data obtained by remote sensing.
- iv. In-situ weather data: in-situ measurements of weather variables, comes from ground-based weather station.
- v. Smart meter projects: data gathered from smart meters, some of the frequently used data sources are Pecan Street, low carbon London.

- vi. Data published with ties to research papers (Matijasevic et al., 2022).

2.3.4 Protection

Matijasevic et al., (2022) stated that, the integration of many new technologies into the distribution networks while improving network conditions also create potential threat to the system itself. There are various security concerns such as cyberattacks, voltage instability, and PQ (power quality) disturbances. The authors also stated that the distribution network were protected with current sensing devices such as overcurrent relays, reclosers, and fuses. Their primary goal was to monitor current flow through the protected element and to generate signals to the circuit breaker when it is necessary for a trip.

The authors affirmed that to eliminate possible danger in the smart distribution system network, the ideal tool was the machine learning algorithm with smart meter that can display the future state of the network and thus enable a timely response to potential inconveniences.

The diagram in Figure 5 detailed various methods and techniques of the machine learning algorithm that have been in use as described by the authors.

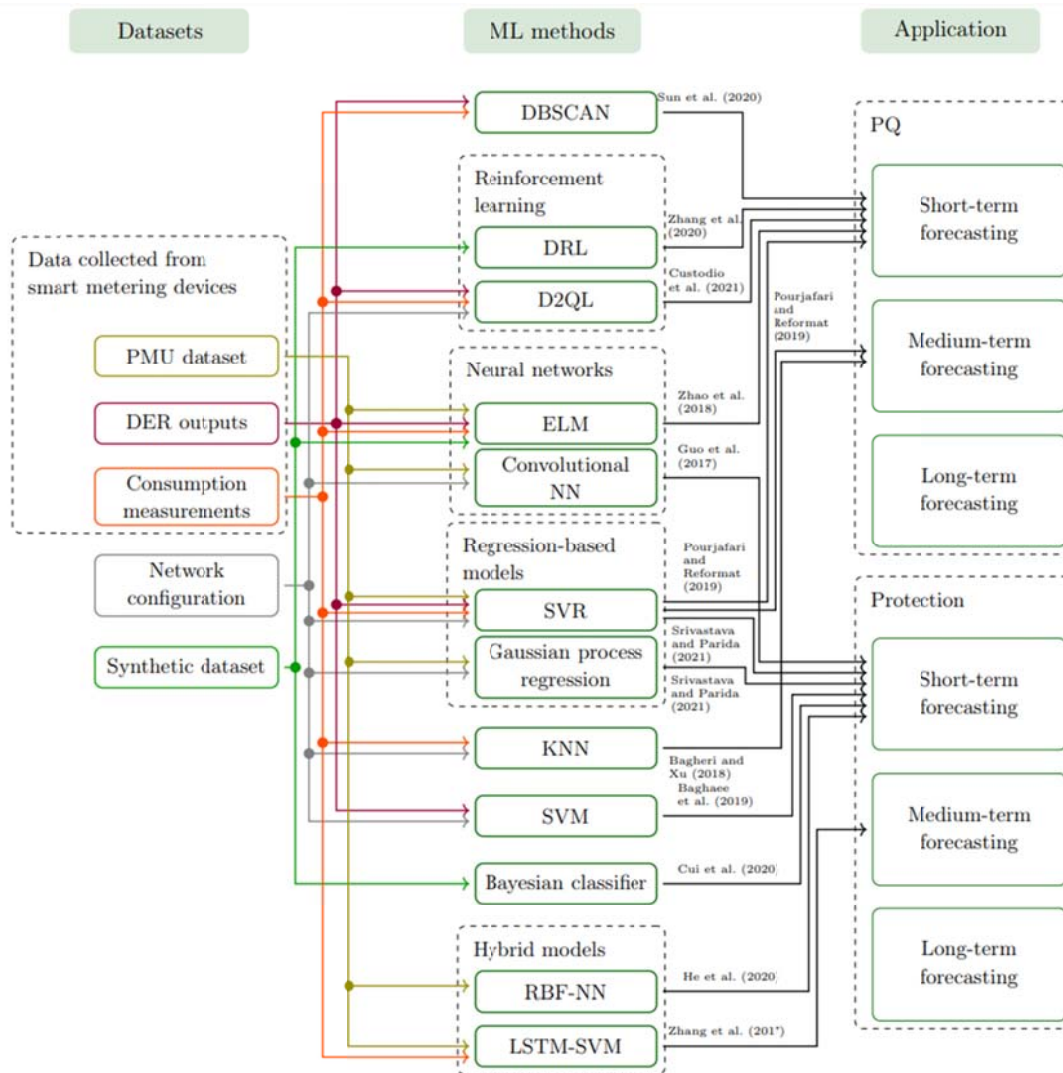


Figure 5: Machine learning methods for short, medium and long-term power quality and protection management

Source: Matijasevic *et al.*, (2022)

2.3.5 Major findings

The authors Matijasevic *et al.* (2022) in their research provided clue as to what machine learning algorithm could be applied to power system protection forecasting and by extension solutions to other challenges in the power system network using machine learning-based algorithm. Some are listed below:

Convolutional Neural Networks: Machine learning algorithm used for short-term forecasting of the protection system for the electricity distribution network. It got its data from phasor measurement unit (PMU) dataset and from consumption measurements.

Support Vector Regression (SVR): Machine learning algorithm used for short-term protection forecasting for the electricity distribution network. Data sources are distributed energy sources (DER), phasor measuring unit (PMU), consumption measurement, and network configuration.

Gaussians Process Regression: Used for short-term protection forecasting and obtain its data from phasor

measurement unit (PMU) dataset and from network configuration.

Support Vector Machine: SVM was shown also to be applicable for short-term protection forecasting and the source of its data are from distributed energy sources (DES) and from network configuration.

Our findings during the literature review was that the majority of the machine learning algorithm according the research work of the authors were for short-term protection forecasting and non-was used for long-term system protection forecasting, this may be due to the unpredictable event that hovers around the electricity network making every protection approach to be short lived.

2.3.6 Research Gap: Since machine learning algorithm is new and very wide, it was expected that the author would discuss how these different algorithms are applied to achieve power system protection.

3.0 CONCLUSION

The above review of literatures and research work done by several authors in this paper provide a basis for adopting machine learning techniques to build algorithm that can facilitate optimal applications for power system protection. The papers under review demonstrated different approach that machine learning can be employed for transmission line protection through fault identification, classification and prediction to mitigate the occurrences of system collapse due to faults in the transmission lines.

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