Enhancing Bulk Cargo Unloading Efficiency through AI: FuzzyLogic Application

Thasiru Kandamby[1], P.T.Ranil S. Sugathadasa[1] , Buddhi A. Weerasinghe[1,2]
[1]*Department of Transport Management & Logistics Engineering, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka*
[2]*Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands*
kandambytd.19@uom.lk, ranils@uom.lk
weerasinghe@essb.eur.nl

ABSTRACT - The efficiency of bulk cargo vessel unloading processes is a pivotal determinant of the overall economic and logistical performance of maritime transport systems. The optimization of these processes directly influences the throughput of shipping operations and the effective use of port infrastructure. Traditional unloading methodologies, which heavily rely on manual coordination and staticoperational protocols, often struggle to meet the dynamic demands of modern maritime trade. This study develops and assesses an artificial intelligence (AI) and fuzzy logic-based model to optimize bulk cargo unloading for Handymax Carriers, which are equipped with 5 hatches and 4 cranes. Traditional manual methods present inefficiencies that this technology aims to mitigate by improving crane allocation and adapting dynamically to operational conditions. The research demonstrates that the AI-enhanced approachsignificantly reduces unloading times and operational costs, showcasing substantial improvements over conventional strategies. Through a series of simulations, complemented by real-world application and testing, this research illustrates the capabilities and benefits of AI-human collaboration in maritime logistics. The findings suggest that the integration of AI can significantly boost operational efficiency, improve safety outcomes by reducing human error, and enhance the overall allocation of resources. This approach not only contributes to the technological advancement in the field of maritime logistics but also sets a foundation for future developments in intelligent transport systems where human expertise and AI solutions are intertwined for superior performance and decision-making.

Keywords: Bulk Ports, Fuzzy Logic, AI-Human Collaboration, Maritime Logistics, Operational Efficiency

1. INTRODUCTION

The introduction highlights the critical role of efficient bulk cargo unloading in maritime logistics, particularly for Handymax carriers, which face unique challenges due to their crane's utilization. Traditional methods often fail to address the dynamic nature of port operations, leading to inefficiencies such as extended docking times and higher costs [1]. This study introduces a novel approach using Artificial Intelligence (AI) and fuzzy logic to optimize crane and hatch operations on Handymax carriers. AI provides solutions for the complexities in crane allocation and cargo handling, while fuzzy logic effectively manages variability and imprecision in operational parameters [2],[3].

Historically, bulk ports have struggled with suboptimal resource allocation and sequencing, significantly affecting efficiency. Previous studies have highlighted the need for advanced programming and optimization techniques in handling crane allocation [4]. Integrating AI and fuzzy logic into port operations promises to transform traditional methods by enabling intelligent decision-making and improving responsiveness to operational dynamics [5]. This research focuses on the specific needs of Handymax carriers, proposing a model that enhances crane and hatch operations, contributing to broader maritime logistics efficiency and offering scalable solutions for other vessel types and contexts.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In bulk cargo unloading, the selection of cranes for different hatches is primarily determined by the operational handlers based on their experience. These handlers assess the cargo in each hatch and use their expertise to decide which crane to deploy, aiming for efficient and effective unloading. The movement and side change of cranes are guided by the handler's familiarity with the cargo quantity. However, this approach can lead to suboptimal unloading times, potentially causing delays due to the reliance on human judgment and experience.

The study aimed to develop a robust fuzzy logic model that leverages real-time operational data to optimizecrane and hatch operations on Handymax carriers. Fuzzy logic was chosen for its strengths in addressing uncertainties and enabling real-time adaptation to dynamic port conditions, which aligns closely with the complexities of maritime logistics.

2.1 Model Development

The AI-driven fuzzy logic model for optimizing Handymax carriers' unloading processes uses operational data, such as cargo volume across five hatches, each with five priority levels: Very High, High, Medium, Low, and Very Low. This categorization enables dynamic management of cargo volumes. The model considers 3125 possible cargo level combinations across the hatches, generating specific rules for crane allocation.

For example, if all hatches have a Very High cargo level, cranes might be allocated accordingly: C1 at Hatch 1, C2 at Hatch 2, etc. To streamline operations, the model prioritizes certain hatches, such as Hatches 1 and 5, over others to optimize resource deployment. These rules are integrated into a fuzzy logic controller that dynamically adapts crane allocations based on real-time cargo levels, addressing operational uncertainties like sudden changes in volume or priority shifts. By focusing resources on critical points, the system enhances overall efficiency. This approach effectively manages the complexities of maritime logistics operations, allowing the model to make real-time adjustments, maintain high throughput, and reduce delays in cargo handling.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The chart below illustrates the model's performance in terms of crane 1 allocation efficiency over quantityof hatches, showing how dynamic adjustments lead to optimal cranes utilization and shorter unloading times.

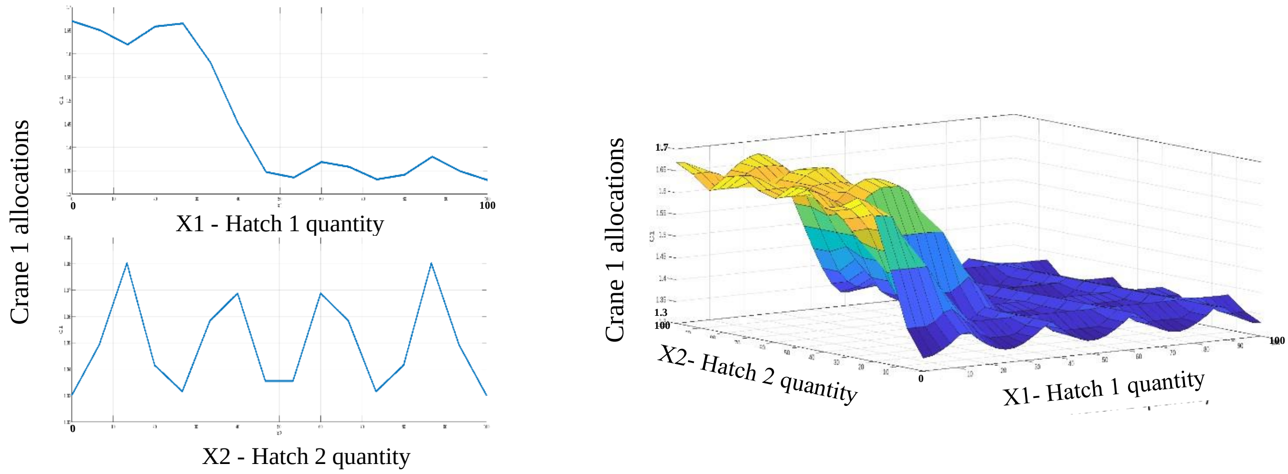

Figure 1. Crane allocation over quantity

The AI-driven fuzzy logic model has significantly improved the efficiency of unloading operations for Handymax carriers at bulk ports. Extensive testing in simulated environments showed notable reductions in unloading time, enhancing port throughput and reducing ship turnaround times. The model optimizes crane usage by dynamically allocating resources based on real-time data, preventing bottlenecks and minimizing crane idle times.

Future research could focus on integrating predictive analytics for anticipating cargo loads and extending the model to other vessel types and ports to explore scalability and adaptability. The implementation also indirectly benefits the environment by reducing vessel idling times and emissions. The model's adaptability to real-time changes and its ability to handle uncertainties ensure high efficiency and swift responses to operational disruptions, supporting environmental sustainability and operational excellence in maritime logistics.

4. CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates the significant benefits of integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) and fuzzy logic in optimizing unloading operations for Handymax carriers, leading to notable improvements in operational efficiency and adaptability. The successful application of these technologies highlights their potential to transform bulk cargo handling and suggests a promising future for their broader use in the maritime industry. AI and fuzzy logic's adaptability indicates their potential scalability and effectiveness across different vessel types and maritime logistics segments. Future research should focus on incorporating advanced AI techniques like machine learning and predictive analytics to enhance decision-making processes further. Additionally, integrating IoT devices to enrich real-time data inputs could improve the precision and effectiveness of operational strategies.

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