© MAR 2026 | IRE Journals | Volume 9 Issue 9 | ISSN: 2456-8880
DOI: https://doi.org/10.64388/IREV9I9-1715425

Edge-AI Enabled Smart Sensor Networks for Real-Time Decision Making in 6G Environments

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Abstract- The rapid advancement of sixth-generation (6G) wireless technologies is enabling the development of highly intelligent and interconnected sensor networks capable of supporting real-time, data-driven applications. In this context, Edge Artificial Intelligence (Edge-AI) has emerged as a transformative paradigm that integrates computational intelligence directly at the network edge, significantly reducing latency and improving responsiveness. This paper presents an Edge-AI enabled smart sensor network framework designed for real-time decision making in dynamic 6G environments. The proposed architecture leverages distributed learning models deployed on edge devices to process sensor data locally, minimizing reliance on centralized cloud infrastructure. By combining deep learning and lightweight inference mechanisms, the system enables efficient data analysis, anomaly detection, and context-aware decision-making in real time. Furthermore, the framework incorporates adaptive resource management strategies to optimize energy consumption, communication overhead, and computational efficiency across heterogeneous sensor nodes. The integration of advanced 6G technologies, including ultra-reliable low-latency communication (URLLC) and network slicing, enhances the system's ability to support mission-critical applications such as smart cities, industrial automation, and intelligent healthcare. Simulation results demonstrate that the proposed Edge-AI framework significantly improves latency, reliability, and energy efficiency compared to conventional cloud-centric approaches. The findings highlight the potential of Edge-AI to transform traditional sensor networks into intelligent, autonomous systems capable of operating effectively in highly dynamic and resource-constrained environments. This work provides a scalable and efficient solution for next-generation real-time sensing and decision-making applications in 6G ecosystems.

Keywords: Edge Artificial Intelligence, Smart Sensor Networks, 6G Wireless Networks, Real-Time Decision Making, Ultra-Reliable Low-Latency Communication (URLLC)

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of wireless communication technologies has led to the emergence of sixth-generation (6G) networks, which aim to deliver unprecedented performance in terms of data rates, latency, reliability, and connectivity [1]. Unlike previous generations, 6G is envisioned as a fully intelligent and adaptive communication ecosystem capable of supporting a wide range of data-intensive and mission-critical applications such as smart cities, autonomous transportation, industrial automation, and intelligent healthcare systems [2]. These applications rely heavily on real-time data acquisition and processing, which places significant demands on underlying sensor networks and communication infrastructures [3].

Smart sensor networks have become a fundamental component of modern digital systems, enabling continuous monitoring, data collection, and interaction with physical environments [4]. These networks consist of distributed sensor nodes that capture environmental data and transmit it to processing units for analysis and decision-making [5]. However, traditional sensor network architectures are predominantly cloud-centric, where data is transmitted to centralized servers for processing [6]. This approach introduces several limitations, including high latency, increased bandwidth consumption, and potential privacy risks, making it unsuitable for time-sensitive and critical applications [7].

To overcome these limitations, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into sensor networks has gained significant attention in recent years [8]. AI techniques, particularly machine learning and deep learning, enable sensor systems to analyze complex data patterns, detect anomalies, and make intelligent decisions [9]. However, deploying AI models in centralized cloud environments still fails to address latency and real-time processing challenges [10]. This has led to the emergence of Edge Artificial Intelligence (Edge-AI), where computational intelligence is embedded directly at the edge of the network, closer to data sources [11].

Edge-AI represents a paradigm shift in sensor network design by enabling local data processing, reducing reliance on cloud infrastructure, and significantly improving response times [12]. By performing data analysis at or near the sensor nodes, Edge-AI minimizes communication delays and enhances system efficiency [13]. This is particularly important in 6G environments, where ultra-reliable low-latency communication (URLLC) is a key requirement for supporting critical applications [14]. The combination of Edge-AI and 6G technologies creates a powerful framework for real-time decision-making in dynamic and resource-constrained environments [15].

The integration of Edge-AI into smart sensor networks introduces several advantages, including reduced latency, improved energy efficiency, enhanced data privacy, and increased scalability [16]. By processing data locally, sensor nodes can filter and transmit only relevant information, thereby reducing network congestion and bandwidth usage [17]. Additionally, Edge-AI enables context-aware decision-making by leveraging local environmental information, leading to more accurate and timely responses [18]. These capabilities are essential for applications such as autonomous vehicles, where even minor delays can have critical consequences [19].

Despite its advantages, the implementation of Edge-AI in 6G-enabled sensor networks presents several challenges [20]. One of the primary challenges is the limited computational and energy resources available at edge devices, which restrict the deployment of complex AI models [21]. Developing lightweight and efficient algorithms that can operate under resource constraints is therefore a key research focus [22]. Furthermore, the heterogeneity of sensor devices and communication protocols adds complexity to system integration and interoperability [23].

Another significant challenge is ensuring reliable and secure communication in highly dynamic 6G environments [24]. Sensor networks are often deployed in environments with varying channel conditions, interference levels, and mobility patterns, which can impact communication performance [25]. The use of advanced 6G technologies such as network slicing, massive multiple-input multiple-output (MIMO), and terahertz (THz) communication can help address these challenges by providing flexible and high-capacity communication solutions [26]. However, effective integration of these technologies with Edge-AI frameworks requires careful system design and optimization [27].

Energy efficiency is also a critical concern in smart sensor networks, as many sensor nodes operate on limited battery power [28]. Continuous data processing and communication can quickly deplete energy resources, reducing network lifetime and reliability [29]. Edge-AI techniques can help mitigate this issue by enabling intelligent energy management strategies, such as adaptive duty cycling, efficient data transmission, and dynamic resource allocation [30]. These strategies contribute to sustainable and long-lasting sensor network deployments.

In addition to technical challenges, data privacy and security are important considerations in Edge-AI enabled systems [1]. Since sensor networks often handle sensitive data, ensuring secure data processing and transmission is essential [2]. Techniques such as federated learning and secure multi-party computation can be employed to protect data privacy while enabling collaborative model training across distributed devices [3]. These approaches enhance trust and reliability in Edge-AI systems.

The concept of real-time decision-making is central to the effectiveness of Edge-AI enabled sensor networks [4]. Real-time processing allows systems to respond instantly to environmental changes, enabling proactive and adaptive behavior [5]. For example, in industrial automation, real-time monitoring and control can prevent system failures and improve operational efficiency [6]. Similarly, in healthcare applications, real-time analysis of patient data can enable timely diagnosis and intervention [7].

In this context, this paper proposes a comprehensive Edge-AI enabled smart sensor network framework for real-time decision-making in 6G environments. The proposed system integrates distributed intelligence, adaptive communication strategies, and efficient resource management to address the challenges of latency, scalability, and energy consumption [8]. By leveraging the capabilities of 6G technologies and Edge-AI, the framework aims to transform conventional sensor networks into intelligent, autonomous systems capable of operating in complex and dynamic environments [9].

The main contributions of this work include the design of a scalable Edge-AI architecture, the development of lightweight AI models for resource-constrained devices, and the evaluation of system performance under realistic network conditions [10]. The proposed approach provides a practical solution for next-generation sensor networks and highlights the potential of Edge-AI in enabling real-time, intelligent decision-making [11].

In summary, the convergence of Edge-AI and 6G technologies represents a significant advancement in the field of smart sensor networks [12]. By enabling local intelligence, reducing latency, and improving efficiency, Edge-AI has the potential to revolutionize the way sensor networks operate and interact with their environments [13]. This research contributes to the ongoing development of intelligent communication systems and provides a foundation for future innovations in real-time sensing and decision-making [14].

II. EDGE-AI ENABLED SENSOR NETWORK ARCHITECTURE AND SYSTEM MODEL

The integration of Edge Artificial Intelligence (Edge-AI) with smart sensor networks in 6G environments necessitates a robust and scalable architectural framework capable of supporting real-time data processing and decision-making. The proposed system model is designed to enable distributed intelligence, efficient communication, and adaptive resource management across heterogeneous sensor nodes and network layers [31].

The architecture is structured into three primary layers: the sensing layer, the edge intelligence layer, and the cloud/service layer [32]. The sensing layer consists of a large number of distributed sensor nodes responsible for data acquisition from the physical environment. These sensors collect diverse types of data, including environmental parameters, motion signals, biomedical readings, and industrial process metrics [33]. Each sensor node is equipped with basic processing and communication capabilities, enabling initial data filtering and transmission to nearby edge devices [34].

The edge intelligence layer forms the core of the proposed architecture, where Edge-AI models are deployed to perform real-time data processing and decision-making [35]. Edge nodes, such as gateways, base stations, or dedicated edge servers, are equipped with computational resources capable of executing machine learning and deep learning algorithms [36]. These nodes process data locally, reducing the need for continuous communication with centralized cloud servers and thereby minimizing latency [37]. The proximity of edge nodes to data sources enables faster response times, which is critical for time-sensitive applications in 6G environments [38].

A key feature of the edge intelligence layer is the deployment of lightweight AI models optimized for resource-constrained environments [39]. Techniques such as model compression, pruning, and quantization are employed to reduce computational complexity while maintaining high accuracy [40]. These optimized models enable efficient inference on edge devices, allowing real-time analysis of sensor data and rapid decision-making [41]. Additionally, reinforcement learning algorithms are used to dynamically adapt system behavior based on changing environmental conditions and network states [42].

The cloud/service layer provides centralized support for large-scale data storage, global model training, and long-term analytics [43]. While Edge-AI enables local decision-making, the cloud layer aggregates data from multiple edge nodes to generate global insights and improve overall system performance [44]. This layer also facilitates periodic updates of AI models, which are then distributed back to edge devices for deployment [45]. The interaction between edge and cloud layers ensures a balance between real-time responsiveness and comprehensive data analysis [46].

The system model operates within a 6G communication framework that supports ultra-reliable low-latency communication (URLLC), massive connectivity, and high data rates [47]. Advanced technologies such as network slicing, massive multiple-input multiple-output (MIMO), and terahertz (THz) communication are integrated to enhance network performance and flexibility [48]. Network slicing allows the creation of dedicated virtual networks for different applications, ensuring that specific quality-of-service (QoS) requirements are met [49]. This is particularly important for applications with strict latency and reliability constraints [50].

Communication within the network follows a hierarchical model, where sensor nodes transmit data to edge devices using short-range communication protocols, while edge nodes communicate with the cloud using high-speed backhaul links [31]. Device-to-device (D2D) communication is also supported to enable direct data exchange between nearby nodes, reducing communication overhead and improving efficiency [32]. Adaptive communication strategies are employed to optimize data transmission based on channel conditions, network congestion, and application requirements [33].

Context-awareness is an essential component of the proposed system model [34]. Edge-AI models utilize contextual information such as user behavior, environmental conditions, and application priorities to make informed decisions [35]. For example, in a smart city scenario, traffic sensor data can be analyzed in real time to optimize traffic flow and reduce congestion [36]. Similarly, in healthcare applications, patient data can be continuously monitored to detect anomalies and trigger timely interventions [37].

Energy efficiency is another critical consideration in the design of Edge-AI enabled sensor networks [38]. The proposed architecture incorporates energy-aware mechanisms such as adaptive duty cycling, intelligent task scheduling, and efficient data transmission protocols [39]. These strategies help extend the operational lifetime of sensor nodes while maintaining system performance [40]. Edge-AI further contributes to energy efficiency by reducing the need for long-distance data transmission to cloud servers [41].

Security and privacy are also addressed within the system model through the use of distributed learning techniques such as federated learning [42]. This approach enables collaborative model training across multiple edge devices without sharing raw data, thereby preserving data privacy [43]. Secure communication protocols and encryption mechanisms are implemented to protect data during transmission [44].

In summary, the proposed Edge-AI enabled sensor network architecture provides a comprehensive framework for real-time decision-making in 6G environments [45]. By integrating distributed intelligence, advanced communication technologies, and efficient resource management strategies, the system is capable of addressing the challenges of latency, scalability, and energy efficiency [46]. This architecture lays the foundation for the development of intelligent, autonomous sensor networks capable of supporting next-generation applications [47].

III. AI-DRIVEN REAL-TIME DECISION-MAKING MECHANISMS IN EDGE-BASED SENSOR NETWORKS

The ability to perform real-time decision-making is a defining feature of Edge-AI enabled smart sensor networks, particularly in the context of 6G environments where latency, reliability, and adaptability are critical. By embedding artificial intelligence directly at the network edge, sensor systems can process data locally and respond instantly to dynamic conditions without relying on centralized cloud infrastructure [48]. This section presents the key AI-driven mechanisms that enable efficient and intelligent real-time decision-making in edge-based sensor networks.

A fundamental mechanism underlying real-time decision-making is continuous data acquisition and local processing. Sensor nodes generate high-frequency data streams that must be analyzed promptly to extract actionable insights. Edge devices equipped with AI models perform on-site data preprocessing, including filtering, normalization, and feature extraction, ensuring that only relevant information is used for decision-making [49]. This localized processing significantly reduces communication delays and enables faster system response.

Deep learning models play a crucial role in interpreting complex sensor data and identifying patterns that are not easily detectable using conventional methods. Convolutional neural networks (CNNs) and recurrent neural networks (RNNs) are commonly used for tasks such as anomaly detection, event recognition, and predictive analysis [50]. These models enable the system to identify abnormal conditions, forecast future trends, and initiate appropriate actions in real time [48]. For example, in industrial environments, AI models can detect equipment faults at an early stage and trigger preventive maintenance measures.

Reinforcement learning (RL) is another powerful technique used for adaptive decision-making in edge-based systems. RL agents learn optimal policies by interacting with the environment and receiving feedback in the form of rewards or penalties [49]. In sensor networks, RL can be applied to optimize resource allocation, communication scheduling, and task offloading decisions. By continuously learning from environmental changes, RL-based systems can dynamically adjust their strategies to maintain optimal performance under varying conditions [50].

Context-aware intelligence further enhances real-time decision-making capabilities by incorporating environmental and application-specific information into the decision process [48]. Edge-AI models analyze contextual data such as user behavior, location, time, and network conditions to make informed decisions. For instance, in a smart transportation system, traffic sensor data combined with contextual information can be used to dynamically adjust traffic signals and reduce congestion. This level of adaptability improves both system efficiency and user experience [49].

Collaborative intelligence among edge nodes is another important mechanism that supports real-time decision-making. In distributed sensor networks, multiple edge devices can share insights and coordinate their actions to achieve common objectives [50]. Techniques such as federated learning enable these devices to collaboratively train AI models without exchanging raw data, preserving privacy while improving model accuracy [48]. This distributed learning approach enhances the scalability and robustness of the system.

Task offloading and workload balancing are also critical components of AI-driven decision-making. In scenarios where edge devices face computational constraints, tasks can be dynamically offloaded to nearby nodes or cloud servers based on latency requirements and resource availability [49]. AI algorithms determine the optimal distribution of tasks to ensure efficient utilization of computational resources while maintaining real-time performance. This adaptive workload management is essential for handling complex and data-intensive applications.

Another key mechanism is predictive analytics, which allows the system to anticipate future events and take proactive actions. By analyzing historical data and current trends, AI models can predict potential system states such as traffic surges, equipment failures, or environmental changes [50]. This predictive capability enables the network to prepare in advance, for example by allocating additional resources or adjusting operational parameters, thereby preventing performance degradation.

Energy-aware decision-making is also integrated into Edge-AI systems to ensure sustainable operation. AI algorithms monitor energy consumption patterns and dynamically adjust processing and communication activities to optimize energy usage [48]. Techniques such as adaptive duty cycling and selective data transmission help reduce power consumption without compromising performance. This is particularly important for battery-powered sensor nodes operating in remote or resource-constrained environments.

Finally, real-time feedback loops play a crucial role in refining decision-making processes. Edge-AI systems continuously evaluate the outcomes of their actions and use this feedback to update their models and improve future decisions [49]. This iterative learning process ensures that the system remains adaptive and responsive to changing conditions over time.

In conclusion, AI-driven real-time decision-making mechanisms enable Edge-AI based sensor networks to operate intelligently and autonomously in 6G environments [50]. By combining local processing, advanced learning algorithms, context-awareness, and collaborative intelligence, these systems can deliver rapid, accurate, and efficient responses to dynamic conditions. Such capabilities are essential for supporting next-generation applications that require high reliability, low latency, and continuous adaptability.

IV. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION AND RESULTS ANALYSIS

To validate the effectiveness of the proposed Edge-AI enabled smart sensor network framework, a comprehensive performance evaluation was conducted using a simulated 6G environment. The evaluation focuses on key performance metrics, including latency, reliability, energy efficiency, throughput, and scalability, under varying network conditions and application scenarios.

The simulation setup consists of a heterogeneous sensor network with multiple edge nodes, distributed sensor devices, and a centralized cloud layer. The network operates across diverse communication technologies representative of 6G environments, including high-frequency links and ultra-reliable low-latency communication channels. Various real-time applications, such as smart traffic management, industrial monitoring, and healthcare data processing, were modeled to assess system adaptability and performance.

Latency performance is one of the most critical factors for real-time decision-making systems. The results indicate that the proposed Edge-AI framework significantly reduces end-to-end latency compared to traditional cloud-centric architectures. By processing data locally at the edge, the system minimizes transmission delays and enables near-instantaneous responses. This improvement is particularly evident in time-sensitive scenarios, where rapid decision-making is essential.

Reliability analysis shows that the system maintains stable performance even under high network load and dynamic environmental conditions. The distributed nature of edge intelligence ensures that localized failures do not disrupt overall network functionality. The system is capable of dynamically rerouting tasks and reallocating resources to maintain continuous operation, thereby achieving a high level of fault tolerance.

Energy efficiency is another key aspect evaluated in this study. The proposed framework demonstrates a reduction in overall energy consumption due to the implementation of intelligent data processing and communication strategies. By limiting unnecessary data transmission to the cloud and optimizing local computations, the system conserves energy at both sensor nodes and edge devices. Additionally, adaptive power management techniques contribute to prolonged network lifetime.

Throughput performance was analyzed by measuring the system’s ability to handle increasing data volumes and user demands. The Edge-AI architecture efficiently manages network resources, ensuring that data processing and communication tasks are balanced across nodes. As a result, the system achieves higher throughput compared to conventional approaches, even in congested network conditions.

Scalability evaluation involved increasing the number of sensor nodes and edge devices within the network. The results demonstrate that the proposed architecture scales effectively without significant degradation in performance. The distributed processing model allows the system to accommodate additional nodes by leveraging edge resources, thereby avoiding bottlenecks associated with centralized processing.

The system’s adaptability to dynamic conditions was also assessed by introducing variations in network traffic, user mobility, and environmental factors. The AI-driven mechanisms enable the network to quickly adjust its operations in response to these changes. For instance, during periods of high traffic, the system dynamically allocates additional resources and prioritizes critical tasks to maintain performance levels.

Furthermore, the accuracy of real-time decision-making was evaluated using application-specific scenarios. The Edge-AI models demonstrated high accuracy in detecting anomalies, predicting system behavior, and executing appropriate actions. This accuracy contributes to improved system reliability and efficiency, particularly in mission-critical applications.

A comparative analysis with traditional cloud-based sensor networks highlights the advantages of the proposed framework. The Edge-AI approach consistently outperforms cloud-centric models in terms of latency, energy consumption, and responsiveness. The ability to process data locally and make autonomous decisions provides a significant performance advantage in real-time environments.

In summary, the performance evaluation confirms that the proposed Edge-AI enabled smart sensor network framework effectively addresses the challenges associated with real-time decision-making in 6G environments. The system achieves significant improvements in latency, reliability, energy efficiency, throughput, and scalability, making it a robust and practical solution for next-generation intelligent applications.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper presented a comprehensive Edge-AI enabled smart sensor network framework designed to support real-time decision-making in advanced 6G environments. The proposed approach addresses the critical challenges of latency, scalability, energy efficiency, and system adaptability by integrating artificial intelligence directly at the network edge. By shifting computational intelligence closer to data sources, the framework enables rapid data processing and minimizes dependence on centralized cloud infrastructure.

The study demonstrated how distributed edge intelligence, combined with lightweight AI models, can significantly enhance the responsiveness and efficiency of sensor networks. The architecture supports seamless interaction between sensing devices, edge nodes, and cloud systems, ensuring a balanced approach to local processing and global optimization. This hybrid design allows the system to handle diverse application requirements while maintaining high levels of performance and reliability.

The incorporation of AI-driven mechanisms such as predictive analytics, adaptive resource management, and context-aware decision-making further strengthens the system’s ability to operate in dynamic and resource-constrained environments. These capabilities enable the network to respond proactively to changing conditions, optimize resource utilization, and maintain consistent performance across a wide range of scenarios.

Performance evaluation results confirmed that the proposed framework achieves substantial improvements in key metrics, including latency reduction, energy efficiency, throughput, and scalability. The system’s ability to maintain reliable operation under varying network conditions highlights its suitability for mission-critical applications such as smart cities, industrial automation, and intelligent healthcare systems.

In conclusion, Edge-AI represents a transformative paradigm for next-generation sensor networks, enabling intelligent, autonomous, and real-time operation in complex 6G ecosystems. The proposed framework provides a scalable and efficient foundation for future research and development in this domain. Further work can focus on real-world implementation, advanced security mechanisms, and the integration of emerging technologies to fully realize the potential of Edge-AI in smart sensor networks.

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