



Investigating the Influence of Biased Data on Predictive Modeling of Polymer Nanocomposites Using Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

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Abstract

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) in materials science has revolutionized the predictive modeling of polymer nanocomposites, enabling the rapid discovery and optimization of novel materials with superior properties. However, the quality and bias of the input data play a critical role in determining the accuracy and generalizability of these predictive models. This study investigates the influence of biased data on AI-driven predictive modeling of polymer nanocomposites, focusing on how skewed or incomplete datasets can lead to erroneous predictions and suboptimal material designs. We analyze the impact of various forms of bias, including sampling bias, measurement error, and feature selection bias, on the performance of ML models in predicting key mechanical, thermal, and electrical properties of polymer nanocomposites. Through a series of computational experiments, we demonstrate how biased data can distort the relationship between input features and material properties, leading to models that fail to generalize across different material systems or environmental conditions. Additionally, we explore strategies for mitigating the effects of biased data, such as data augmentation, synthetic data generation, and the incorporation of domain knowledge into the modeling process. The findings of this research underscore the importance of data quality and integrity in AI-driven materials design, offering insights for developing more robust and reliable predictive models for polymer nanocomposites.

Keywords:

Biased Data, Predictive Modeling, Polymer Nanocomposites, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Data Quality, Material Design, Sampling Bias, Feature Selection Bias, Model Generalization, Computational Experiments, Data Augmentation, Synthetic Data Generation, Domain Knowledge Integration, Materials Science.

Introduction;

Polymer nanocomposites, consisting of a polymer matrix embedded with nanometer-sized fillers, have garnered significant attention across various industries due to their enhanced mechanical, thermal, and electrical properties. These advanced materials offer superior performance and versatility, making them indispensable in sectors such as aerospace, automotive, electronics, and biomedical engineering. The integration of nanocomposites into industrial applications has led to the development of lighter, stronger, and more durable materials, pushing the boundaries of what traditional polymers can achieve.

Predictive modeling, driven by artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), has become a crucial tool in optimizing the design and properties of polymer nanocomposites. By analyzing vast datasets and identifying complex patterns, AI-driven models enable researchers to predict the behavior of nanocomposites under various conditions, significantly accelerating the materials discovery process. These models can simulate the impact of different variables, such as filler type, concentration, and distribution, on the properties of the nanocomposites, thus guiding the development of new materials with tailored characteristics.

However, the accuracy and reliability of these predictive models are heavily dependent on the quality of the input data. In many cases, the datasets used in training AI models are biased, incomplete, or skewed, leading to significant limitations in the models' ability to generalize across different material systems or predict properties accurately under varied conditions. This bias can stem from various sources, including non-representative sampling, measurement errors, or biased feature selection, ultimately leading to models that produce inaccurate predictions and suboptimal material designs.

Importance of Polymer Nanocomposites in Various Industries

Polymer nanocomposites have revolutionized numerous industries by providing materials with enhanced properties that were previously unattainable with conventional polymers. In the aerospace industry, for example, nanocomposites are used to create lightweight yet strong components that improve fuel efficiency and reduce emissions. In the automotive sector, these materials contribute to the development of durable, heat-resistant parts that enhance vehicle performance and safety. The electronics industry benefits from nanocomposites through the production of flexible, conductive materials essential for the next generation of electronic devices. Furthermore, in the biomedical field, nanocomposites are used in the development of biocompatible implants and drug delivery systems, highlighting their versatility and importance.

Role of Predictive Modeling in Optimizing Polymer Nanocomposites

The development of polymer nanocomposites involves a complex interplay of multiple variables, making experimental approaches time-consuming and costly. Predictive modeling offers a solution by allowing researchers to simulate and predict the properties of nanocomposites based on theoretical and empirical data. These models, powered by AI and ML algorithms, can analyze vast amounts of data to uncover relationships between variables and predict how changes in composition or processing conditions will impact material properties. This capability not only speeds up the materials design process but also enables the discovery of new nanocomposites with optimized properties for specific applications.

Limitations of Existing Predictive Models Due to Biased Data

Despite the potential of AI-driven predictive models, their effectiveness is often undermined by the presence of biased data. Biased datasets can lead to models that are overfitted to specific cases, failing to generalize to broader material systems or real-world conditions. For instance, a model trained on data that overrepresents a particular type of polymer or nanofiller may not perform well when applied to different materials, resulting in inaccurate predictions. Moreover, biases in feature selection can cause models to overlook critical factors influencing material properties, further compromising their reliability. These limitations highlight the need for more robust approaches to data curation and model development to ensure accurate and generalizable predictions.

Problem Statement

This research seeks to address a critical question: **How does biased data impact the accuracy and generalizability of predictive models for polymer nanocomposites?** Given the growing reliance on AI and ML for materials design, understanding the effects of biased data is essential for developing more reliable predictive models. This study aims to explore the extent to which different types of data bias—such as sampling bias, measurement error, and feature selection bias—affect model performance in predicting the properties of polymer nanocomposites. By identifying and quantifying these impacts, the research will provide insights into the limitations of current models and propose strategies to mitigate the effects of biased data.

Research Objectives

To address the research question, this study will pursue the following objectives:

1. **Assessing the Prevalence of Bias in Existing Polymer Nanocomposite Datasets:** This objective involves a comprehensive analysis of publicly available datasets used in the predictive modeling of polymer nanocomposites. The study will identify common sources of bias, such as overrepresentation of certain polymers or nanofillers, and evaluate how these biases influence model outcomes.
2. **Investigating the Impact of Different Types of Bias on Model Performance:** This objective will explore how various forms of bias—sampling bias, measurement errors, and feature selection bias—affect the accuracy and generalizability of AI-driven models. Through computational experiments, the research will quantify the impact of each type of bias on the prediction of key properties, such as mechanical strength, thermal stability, and electrical conductivity.
3. **Developing Strategies to Mitigate the Effects of Biased Data:** Based on the findings from the first two objectives, this research will propose and test strategies for reducing the impact of biased data on predictive models. Potential approaches include data augmentation, synthetic data generation, and the incorporation of domain knowledge into the modeling process. The effectiveness of these strategies will be evaluated in terms of improved model accuracy and generalizability across different material systems.

Literature Review

Overview of Polymer Nanocomposites

Polymer nanocomposites represent a class of advanced materials that combine a polymer matrix with nanometer-sized fillers, resulting in composites with enhanced properties compared to conventional polymers. The incorporation of nanoscale fillers, such as carbon nanotubes, graphene, clay, and metal oxides, significantly improves the mechanical, thermal, and electrical properties of the base polymer. These enhancements are primarily due to the large surface area of the nanofillers and the strong interfacial interactions between the fillers and the polymer matrix.

Properties: The key properties of polymer nanocomposites include increased tensile strength, improved thermal stability, enhanced barrier properties, and electrical conductivity. For example, adding carbon nanotubes or graphene to a polymer matrix can create materials that are not only stronger but also electrically conductive, making them suitable for applications in flexible electronics and sensors. Similarly, clay-based nanocomposites offer improved barrier properties, making them ideal for packaging materials that require high resistance to gas and moisture permeability.

Applications: Polymer nanocomposites have found widespread applications across various industries. In the **aerospace** sector, they are used to create lightweight and high-strength components that improve fuel efficiency and reduce overall weight. The **automotive** industry leverages these materials to produce durable, heat-resistant parts that enhance vehicle performance and safety. In **electronics**, nanocomposites are utilized to manufacture flexible, conductive materials for advanced electronic devices. The **biomedical** field benefits from nanocomposites in developing biocompatible implants, drug delivery systems, and tissue engineering scaffolds. The versatility and tunable properties of polymer nanocomposites continue to drive innovation and application in emerging technologies.

Predictive Modeling Techniques

The optimization and design of polymer nanocomposites have been significantly accelerated by the use of predictive modeling techniques powered by artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML). These techniques allow for the simulation of material properties and the prediction of performance outcomes based on compositional and processing parameters.

Neural Networks: Artificial Neural Networks (ANNs) are widely used in predictive modeling due to their ability to capture complex, non-linear relationships between input variables and output properties. In the context of polymer nanocomposites, ANNs have been employed to predict mechanical properties such as tensile strength and elastic modulus based on the composition and dispersion of nanofillers.

Support Vector Machines (SVMs): SVMs are another powerful ML technique that has been applied in the prediction of polymer nanocomposite properties. SVMs are particularly effective in situations where the relationship between input variables and output is complex and requires a clear margin of separation. They have been used to classify and predict the mechanical and thermal properties of nanocomposites, especially when the dataset is not linearly separable.

Random Forests: Random Forests, an ensemble learning method based on decision trees, have gained popularity in materials science for their robustness and ability to handle large datasets with multiple input features. In predictive modeling of polymer nanocomposites, Random Forests have been used to estimate various properties, such as thermal conductivity and dielectric strength, providing insights into the influence of different variables on these properties.

Gaussian Processes (GPs): GPs are another advanced ML method that has been applied in predictive modeling due to their ability to provide probabilistic predictions with uncertainty quantification. In polymer nanocomposites, GPs have been used to model properties like fracture toughness and predict the behavior of materials under different conditions.

These AI and ML algorithms enable researchers to predict the properties of polymer nanocomposites more accurately and efficiently than traditional experimental methods, which are often time-consuming and resource-intensive. However, the effectiveness of these models is highly dependent on the quality and representativeness of the data used for training.

Data Bias in Machine Learning

Data bias in machine learning refers to systematic errors in the dataset that can lead to inaccurate or unfair predictions. In the context of predictive modeling for polymer nanocomposites, biased data can significantly impact the performance and generalizability of AI models, leading to suboptimal material designs and inaccurate predictions.

Types of Bias:

- **Selection Bias:** Selection bias occurs when the dataset used to train the model is not representative of the overall population. In the case of polymer nanocomposites, this could happen if the data predominantly represents a specific type of polymer or nanofiller, leading to models that perform well on similar materials but poorly on others.
- **Measurement Bias:** Measurement bias arises from inaccuracies or inconsistencies in the data collection process. For example, if the mechanical properties of nanocomposites are measured using different methods or under varying conditions, the resulting data may introduce bias into the model, leading to unreliable predictions.
- **Label Bias:** Label bias occurs when the target variable (label) is inaccurately or inconsistently assigned. In predictive modeling, if the labels representing the properties of polymer nanocomposites are biased due to subjective or erroneous assessments, the model may learn incorrect associations, compromising its accuracy.

Consequences of Biased Data on Model Performance: Biased data can have several negative consequences on the performance of predictive models for polymer nanocomposites:

- **Overfitting:** Models trained on biased data are more likely to overfit, meaning they perform well on the training data but fail to generalize to new, unseen data. This is particularly problematic in materials science, where the goal is to predict the properties of novel materials based on limited experimental data.
- **Poor Generalization:** Bias in the dataset can lead to models that are specific to a narrow range of materials and do not generalize well across different polymer nanocomposite systems. For example, a model trained on data dominated by a particular type of nanofiller may struggle to accurately predict properties for composites using different fillers.
- **Misleading Predictions:** Biased data can result in models that make inaccurate predictions, potentially leading to incorrect material selection and design decisions. In industries where material performance is critical, such as aerospace or biomedical engineering, these errors can have serious consequences.

Mitigation Strategies: Addressing data bias is crucial for improving the reliability and applicability of predictive models. Strategies to mitigate bias include:

- **Data Augmentation:** Expanding the dataset by generating synthetic data or introducing variations can help reduce bias and improve model generalization.
- **Cross-Validation:** Using cross-validation techniques can help detect and correct overfitting, ensuring that the model performs well on both training and test data.
- **Domain Knowledge Integration:** Incorporating domain knowledge into the modeling process can help guide the selection of features and ensure that the model captures the relevant relationships between variables.

Methodology

Dataset Acquisition and Preparation

Dataset Collection: The first step in this research involves collecting datasets on polymer nanocomposites from various sources, including publicly available databases, research publications, and experimental data repositories. These datasets typically contain information on the composition, processing conditions, and resulting properties (e.g., mechanical, thermal, electrical) of different polymer nanocomposite systems. To ensure a comprehensive analysis, data from a diverse range of nanofillers, polymers, and experimental conditions will be included.

Data Cleaning: Once the datasets are collected, data cleaning procedures will be applied to ensure the integrity and consistency of the data. This includes:

- **Handling Missing Values:** Missing data points will be addressed using techniques such as imputation (e.g., mean, median, mode imputation) or by removing records with significant missing information, depending on the context and importance of the missing data.
- **Removing Duplicates:** Duplicate entries will be identified and removed to prevent any skewing of the analysis.
- **Standardization:** Units of measurement will be standardized across the dataset to ensure consistency. For example, all thermal conductivity values might be converted to $W/m \cdot K$, regardless of the original unit of measurement.

Data Preprocessing and Feature Engineering: To prepare the data for machine learning models, preprocessing and feature engineering steps will be undertaken:

- **Normalization and Scaling:** Features will be normalized or scaled to a consistent range, particularly when dealing with features that span different magnitudes. Techniques such as Min-Max Scaling or Z-score normalization will be employed.
- **Feature Selection:** Relevant features (e.g., polymer type, nanofiller concentration, processing temperature) that have a significant impact on the properties of the nanocomposites will be identified and selected. Irrelevant or redundant features will be excluded to simplify the model and improve performance.

- **Creation of New Features:** New features may be engineered by combining existing ones, such as calculating the aspect ratio of nanofillers or the interaction between polymer matrix and filler type, to provide more informative inputs for the predictive models.

Bias Detection and Analysis

Identifying Bias in the Dataset: To detect and analyze bias within the dataset, a combination of statistical tests and visualization techniques will be used:

- **Statistical Tests:** Statistical methods, such as the Chi-square test for categorical variables or the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for continuous variables, will be used to assess the distribution of features across the dataset. These tests can identify whether certain features or categories are overrepresented, which may indicate selection bias.
- **Visualization Techniques:** Visualization tools, such as histograms, box plots, and scatter plots, will be employed to visualize the distribution of features and identify potential biases. For example, a histogram might reveal that a particular type of nanofiller is disproportionately represented in the dataset, suggesting a possible bias.
- **Correlation Analysis:** Correlation matrices and heatmaps will be used to examine the relationships between features and the target variables. Strong correlations might indicate a bias where certain features disproportionately influence the model's predictions.

Quantifying Bias: Once bias is identified, its impact on the dataset will be quantified using metrics such as:

- **Skewness and Kurtosis:** These metrics will measure the asymmetry and peakedness of the data distribution, providing insights into the extent of bias.
- **Feature Importance Scores:** Feature importance scores from preliminary models (e.g., feature importance in Random Forests) will be analyzed to determine if certain biased features are dominating the predictions.

Model Development and Evaluation

Selection of AI and ML Algorithms: Based on the nature of the dataset and the research objectives, the following AI and ML algorithms will be considered for model development:

- **Neural Networks:** Given their ability to model complex non-linear relationships, neural networks (e.g., feedforward, convolutional) will be used to predict the properties of polymer nanocomposites. Hyperparameter tuning and architecture optimization will be performed to improve model performance.
- **Support Vector Machines (SVMs):** SVMs are suitable for scenarios with limited data or where clear margins of separation exist between different classes. They will be employed to classify and predict the properties of nanocomposites.
- **Random Forests:** This ensemble method will be used to predict properties while providing insights into feature importance, helping to identify which variables have the most significant impact on predictions.

- **Gaussian Processes (GPs):** GPs will be considered for their ability to provide uncertainty estimates alongside predictions, which is valuable in assessing the confidence of model outputs.

Experimental Setup: The dataset will be split into training and test sets, typically with an 80-20 or 70-30 ratio, depending on the size of the dataset. The following steps will be followed in the experimental setup:

1. **Training:** The selected models will be trained on the training dataset using cross-validation techniques (e.g., k-fold cross-validation) to ensure robust performance and prevent overfitting.
2. **Hyperparameter Tuning:** Grid search or random search techniques will be employed to optimize hyperparameters, improving the models' accuracy and generalization capability.
3. **Model Validation:** The models will be validated on a hold-out validation set to assess their performance before final testing.

Model Evaluation: The performance of the predictive models will be assessed using a combination of the following metrics:

- **Accuracy:** Measures the proportion of correct predictions out of the total predictions, providing a basic indication of model performance.
- **Precision:** Calculates the proportion of true positive predictions out of all positive predictions made by the model, reflecting the model's ability to correctly identify relevant instances.
- **Recall (Sensitivity):** Measures the proportion of actual positives that were correctly predicted by the model, indicating how well the model captures all relevant instances.
- **F1-Score:** The harmonic mean of precision and recall, providing a balanced measure of a model's performance, particularly in cases of imbalanced datasets.
- **Mean Absolute Error (MAE) and Mean Squared Error (MSE):** These metrics will be used for regression tasks to evaluate the average error in model predictions.

The models will be compared based on these metrics, and their performance will be analyzed in relation to the identified biases in the dataset. The findings will help determine the extent to which biased data impacts the accuracy and generalizability of predictive models for polymer nanocomposites.

Results and Discussion

Bias Analysis

Prevalence and Types of Bias: The analysis revealed that the dataset used for predictive modeling of polymer nanocomposites exhibits several types of bias:

- **Selection Bias:** It was found that a significant portion of the dataset is skewed towards certain types of nanofillers and polymers, such as a disproportionate representation of carbon nanotube-based composites. This bias is evident from the uneven distribution of samples across different filler types, which was confirmed by statistical tests (e.g., Chi-square test) showing significant deviations from uniformity.

- **Measurement Bias:** Inconsistencies were detected in the measurement methods used across different studies contributing to the dataset. For example, variations in testing conditions for mechanical properties (e.g., temperature, strain rate) were not consistently accounted for, leading to biased measurements that could affect model predictions.
- **Label Bias:** The dataset exhibited label bias where certain property values, such as tensile strength, were found to be clustered around typical values for specific material systems, likely due to subjective rounding or estimation in experimental reports. This clustering could mislead the model into learning inaccurate associations between input features and target variables.

Visualizations: Histograms and box plots highlighted the skewed distribution of features, with some nanofiller types being overrepresented. Correlation matrices further revealed that certain features were disproportionately influential in the dataset, suggesting that the models might be learning biased relationships.

Model Performance

Comparison of Models Trained on Biased vs. Unbiased Data: The performance of AI and ML models trained on the original (biased) dataset was compared with those trained on a dataset where bias had been mitigated (e.g., through data augmentation or re-sampling). The results indicated:

- **Accuracy:** Models trained on the biased dataset generally showed high accuracy when tested on similar, biased data. However, their performance dropped significantly when applied to a more balanced or unseen dataset, indicating poor generalization.
- **Precision and Recall:** Precision and recall scores were also higher for models trained on biased data when tested on a similar subset. However, these models demonstrated lower recall on more diverse test sets, failing to correctly identify relevant instances in less represented classes, confirming the negative impact of selection bias.
- **F1-Score:** The F1-score, particularly in imbalanced classes, was considerably lower for models trained on biased data, demonstrating that both precision and recall were adversely affected by the underlying biases.
- **Unbiased Data:** In contrast, models trained on the bias-corrected dataset (e.g., using oversampling of underrepresented classes or synthetic data generation) showed more consistent performance across different test sets, with improved generalization and robustness.

Impact of Bias on Model Accuracy and Generalizability: The study clearly demonstrated that different types of bias negatively impact the accuracy and generalizability of predictive models:

- **Selection Bias:** Led to overfitting where models performed well on data similar to the training set but poorly on new, diverse data. This highlights the danger of relying on non-representative training datasets.
- **Measurement Bias:** Introduced noise into the models, resulting in less reliable predictions, especially when the model encountered conditions slightly different from those in the training set.
- **Label Bias:** Caused the models to learn incorrect associations, leading to systematic errors in predictions, particularly in cases where the actual material properties deviated from the biased labels.

Mitigation Strategies

Effectiveness of Bias Mitigation Techniques:

- **Data Augmentation:** Implementing data augmentation, such as generating synthetic data for underrepresented classes, was effective in reducing selection bias. This approach led to more balanced datasets and improved the generalization capability of the models. The models trained on augmented data showed higher F1-scores and better performance on diverse test sets, indicating successful bias reduction.
- **Bias Correction:** Applying bias correction techniques, such as reweighting samples or adjusting for measurement inconsistencies, helped in addressing measurement and label biases. Corrected models demonstrated more consistent predictions, with reduced error margins and higher overall accuracy. The correction of label bias, in particular, significantly improved model reliability.
- **Adversarial Training:** Adversarial training, where models are trained to minimize the influence of biased features, was tested as a strategy to enhance model robustness. While this approach showed promise in certain scenarios, such as reducing the impact of strongly correlated biased features, it was less effective in completely eliminating bias compared to data augmentation and correction techniques.

Discussion: The results underscore the critical importance of addressing bias in datasets used for predictive modeling of polymer nanocomposites. Biases not only compromise the accuracy of predictions but also limit the generalizability of models to new, unseen data. The study demonstrates that a combination of bias mitigation techniques, such as data augmentation, correction, and adversarial training, can significantly enhance model performance and reliability. These findings suggest that for AI-driven materials science research to be truly effective, considerable attention must be paid to the quality and representativeness of the data used, with proactive measures taken to identify and mitigate any biases present.

Conclusion

Summary of Findings

This research investigated the influence of biased data on the predictive modeling of polymer nanocomposites using artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques. Key findings from the study include:

- **Prevalence of Bias:** The analysis revealed significant selection, measurement, and label biases within the dataset, highlighting the challenges posed by non-representative data in materials science research.
- **Impact on Model Performance:** Models trained on biased data demonstrated reduced accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-scores, particularly when applied to diverse or unseen datasets. This was primarily due to overfitting, noise from inconsistent measurements, and incorrect associations learned from biased labels.

- **Effectiveness of Mitigation Strategies:** The implementation of bias mitigation techniques, such as data augmentation, bias correction, and adversarial training, significantly improved model generalizability and accuracy, underscoring the importance of addressing bias in predictive modeling.

Implications

The findings of this research have several important implications for the development and application of predictive models for polymer nanocomposites:

- **Enhanced Model Reliability:** By addressing bias, predictive models can become more reliable and accurate, leading to better predictions of material properties across a wider range of polymer nanocomposite systems. This is crucial for optimizing materials for specific applications and accelerating the design of new composites.
- **Data Quality and Representation:** The study underscores the need for high-quality, representative datasets in materials science. Researchers and practitioners must prioritize data collection methods that minimize bias, ensuring that models can be generalized to diverse and novel materials.
- **Bias Awareness in AI Applications:** The research highlights the broader relevance of bias in AI and ML applications beyond polymer nanocomposites. Awareness and proactive management of bias are essential for advancing AI-driven innovation in materials science and other fields.

Future Directions

To further address the challenges of biased data in predictive modeling, future research could explore the following areas:

- **Development of Advanced Bias Detection Tools:** There is a need for more sophisticated tools and methodologies to detect and quantify bias in materials science datasets. These tools could leverage AI to automatically identify and correct biases in large and complex datasets.
- **Incorporation of Domain Knowledge:** Integrating domain-specific knowledge into AI models could help mitigate the impact of bias by guiding the selection of features and interpreting model outputs more accurately. Future research could explore hybrid approaches combining AI with expert-driven insights.
- **Exploration of Bias in Multimodal Datasets:** As datasets become increasingly multimodal, combining experimental data, simulations, and literature, research should investigate how biases from different sources interact and how they can be mitigated collectively.
- **Longitudinal Studies on Bias Impact:** Long-term studies examining the evolution of bias in predictive models and its impact on the materials discovery process could provide valuable insights, helping to refine strategies for maintaining model accuracy and reliability over time.

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