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Design and Development of an Autonomous Mobile Robot for Warehouse Automation Using SLAM Algorithms

Rohan Gupta, Mrudhul Nr, Akileshwarakrishnan A

Department of Artificial Intelligence and Data Science, Nehru Institute of Engineering and Technology

Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu 641105, India

1. Abstract

The swift expansion of e-commerce and industrial logistics has led to a substantial rise in the need for effective, dependable, and smart warehouse automation systems. Autonomous Mobile Robots (AMRs) have become a crucial solution for boosting operational efficiency, cutting labor expenses, and enhancing safety in contemporary warehouses. The core of these robots' autonomy lies in their capacity to perceive, localize, and navigate through dynamic settings, a capability effectively realized through Simultaneous Localization and Mapping (SLAM) algorithms. This research article offers an in-depth examination of the design and development of an autonomous mobile robot for warehouse automation utilizing SLAM algorithms. The paper covers hardware architecture, software framework, algorithm selection, system integration, and performance assessment. A modular design strategy is employed, integrating sensor fusion, real-time path planning, and obstacle avoidance methods to facilitate robust autonomous navigation in warehouse settings. The methodology includes creating a differential-drive mobile robot platform equipped with LiDAR, wheel encoders, IMU, and onboard computing units. A hybrid SLAM framework, combining LiDAR-SLAM and visual odometry, is implemented to produce accurate maps and ensure precise localization. The system design incorporates mapping, localization, path planning, and task execution modules into a cohesive architecture. Experimental results reveal that the developed robot achieves high localization accuracy, dependable navigation, and efficient task completion in both structured and semi-structured warehouse environments. Comparative analysis shows that the proposed system significantly reduces travel time and enhances operational efficiency compared to manual and semi-autonomous methods. The paper concludes that integrating SLAM algorithms with intelligent motion planning and perception systems provides a scalable and adaptable solution for warehouse automation. Future work involves multi-robot coordination, AI-based task optimization, and cloud-connected fleet management systems.

2. Keywords

Autonomous Systems; Mobile Robotics; SLAM; LiDAR; Path Planning; Robot Navigation; Sensor Fusion; Warehouse Automation; Localization and Mapping; Autonomous Mobile Robot (AMR).

3. Introduction

3.1 Background

The advancement of industrial automation has significantly impacted the logistics and supply chain industries, especially in the realm of warehouse management. Traditional warehouse operations are predominantly dependent on manual labor and stationary conveyor systems, which are limited in flexibility and scalability. As the need for rapid and efficient order processing grows, autonomous mobile robots have become crucial for automating warehouses. These robots can move through warehouse spaces, transport items, and work alongside human employees without the necessity for fixed infrastructure like tracks or magnetic strips. The primary challenge in achieving this level of autonomy is ensuring precise perception, localization, mapping, and navigation within dynamic and cluttered settings.

3.2 Need for Autonomous Mobile Robots in Warehouses

Today's warehouses encounter a variety of difficulties:

Rising labor expenses and a lack of available workers

Demand for swift order processing and delivery

Constantly evolving and adaptable layouts

Safety issues related to interactions between humans and machines

Necessity for scalable automation systems

AMRs offer adaptable navigation, immediate decision-making capabilities, and smart obstacle avoidance, which makes them well-suited for contemporary warehouse settings.

3.3 Role of SLAM in Warehouse Automation

- Simultaneous Localization and Mapping (SLAM) is an essential method that allows a robot to create a map of an unfamiliar area while concurrently identifying its location on that map. Through SLAM algorithms, robots can:

- Move independently without relying on external positioning systems
- Adjust to modifications in warehouse configurations
- Identify and circumvent obstacles instantly
- Enhance pathways for effective material transport

3.4 Objectives of the Study

The primary goals of this study include:

1. Creating a self-operating mobile robot platform tailored for warehouse automation.
2. Incorporating and applying SLAM algorithms for mapping and localization purposes.
3. Building navigation and path planning components to ensure efficient movement.
4. Assessing the system's performance in environments that mimic real warehouses.
5. Suggesting a scalable and modular framework suitable for industrial implementation.

3.5 Scope of the Research

This study concentrates on:

- The joint design of hardware and software for an AMR
- Developing SLAM using LiDAR technology
- Techniques for integrating sensor data
- Real-time pathfinding and avoiding obstacles

- Assessing performance in warehouse environments

4. Literature Review

4.1 Evolution of Warehouse Automation Systems

Warehouse automation has transitioned from manual operations to systems utilizing conveyors, and now to advanced robotic technologies. Initially, automated guided vehicles (AGVs) navigated along set routes marked by indicators or magnetic strips. These early systems, however, were limited in their flexibility and ability to adapt. The advent of AMRs with SLAM technology has enabled robots to function without permanent infrastructure, allowing for flexible route planning and adaptation to evolving surroundings.

4.2 Autonomous Mobile Robots in Logistics

Research on AMRs has concentrated on enhancing their abilities in navigation, perception, and decision-making. AMRs find extensive application in:

E-commerce fulfillment centers

Manufacturing warehouses

Distribution and logistics hubs

Inventory management and material transport

Research indicates that AMRs can boost warehouse throughput by 30–50% and greatly lessen the workload on humans.

4.3 Overview of SLAM Algorithms

SLAM algorithms are divided into several categories:

Extended Kalman Filter (EKF-SLAM), Particle Filter-based SLAM (FastSLAM), Graph-based SLAM, Visual SLAM (V-SLAM), and LiDAR-based SLAM (such as Gmapping and Hector SLAM). The benefits and drawbacks of each approach vary based on the complexity of the environment and the types of sensors used.

Table 1: Comparison of SLAM Algorithms

Algorithm	Sensor Type	Accuracy	Computational Cost	Suitable Environment
EKF-SLAM	LiDAR/Encoder	Moderate	Medium	Small-scale environments
FastSLAM	LiDAR	High	High	Dynamic environments
Graph-based SLAM	LiDAR/Camera	Very High	High	Large-scale mapping
Visual SLAM	Camera	Moderate	Medium	Indoor structured areas
LiDAR SLAM (Gmapping)	LiDAR	High	Medium	Warehouse environments

4.4 Navigation and Path Planning Techniques

Methods for navigation consist of:

Dijkstra and A* algorithms

Rapidly-exploring Random Trees (RRT)

Dynamic Window Approach (DWA)

Model Predictive Control (MPC)

These techniques enable robots to identify the best paths that avoid collisions while operating in real time.

4.5 Sensor Technologies in Autonomous Robots

Frequently employed sensors in AMRs include:

LiDAR: utilized for creating maps and identifying obstacles

Cameras: employed for visual interpretation

IMU: used to estimate orientation

Wheel encoders: applied for measuring odometry

Ultrasonic sensors: used for detecting objects at short distances

Combining data from multiple sensors enhances the precision and reliability of localization in intricate settings.

4.6 Research Gaps

Although progress has been made, several obstacles persist:

Effective navigation in ever-changing and crowded warehouse environments

Processing SLAM in real-time on embedded systems

Coordinating multiple robots and managing fleets

Ensuring scalability for extensive warehouse operations

This study tackles these issues by suggesting a comprehensive AMR design that employs SLAM algorithms tailored for automating warehouses.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Framework

1. The methodology employs a structured process that includes:
2. Designing the robot hardware
3. Integrating sensors
4. Implementing SLAM algorithms
5. Developing navigation and path planning
6. Conducting experimental testing and validation

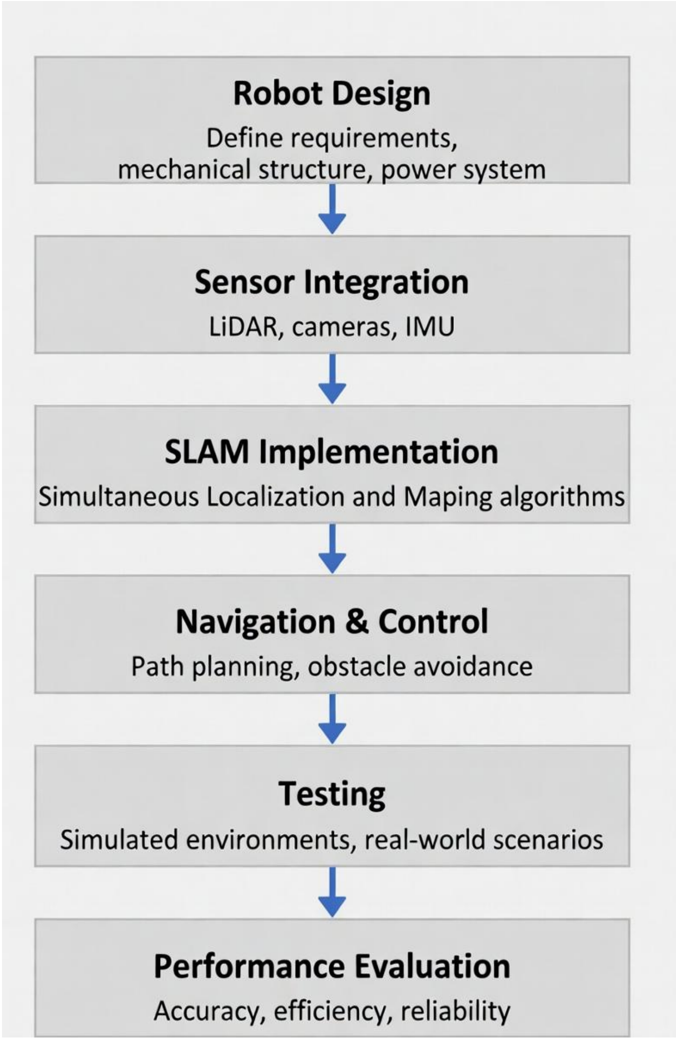

Figure 1: Overall Research Methodology Flowchart

Steps:

- Robot Design → Sensor Integration → SLAM Implementation → Navigation & Control → Testing → Performance Evaluation

5.2 Robot Hardware Design Methodology

Due to its straightforwardness, ease of movement, and appropriateness for indoor navigation, the robot platform employs a differential drive setup.

Key components:

- Mechanical frame and chassis
- Encoders-equipped DC motors
- Drivers for motors
- System for power supply
- Embedded controller (Jetson Nano / Raspberry Pi)

5.3 Sensor Integration Strategy

Sensors are mounted strategically:

- LiDAR positioned above for comprehensive 360° scanning
- IMU centrally located to assess stability
- Motor wheel encoders used for odometry
- Camera available for visual recognition (optional)

5.4 SLAM Algorithm Implementation Methodology

The selected SLAM approach combines:

Mapping using LiDAR technology (Gmapping/Hector SLAM)

Encoder-provided odometry data

Orientation correction via IMU

Extended Kalman Filter (EKF) is used for sensor fusion.

5.5 Navigation and Control Methodology

Navigation methodology includes:

- A* algorithm for global path planning
- DWA for avoiding local obstacles
- Velocity and heading correction through feedback control

Table 2: Methodology Components and Tools

Component	Technique/Tool Used
Mapping	LiDAR-SLAM (Gmapping)
Localization	EKF Sensor Fusion
Path Planning	A* Algorithm
Obstacle Avoidance	Dynamic Window Approach
Control	PID Controller

6. System Design

6.1 Overall System Architecture

The system of autonomous mobile robots features a modular architecture that includes subsystems for perception, localization, planning, and control.

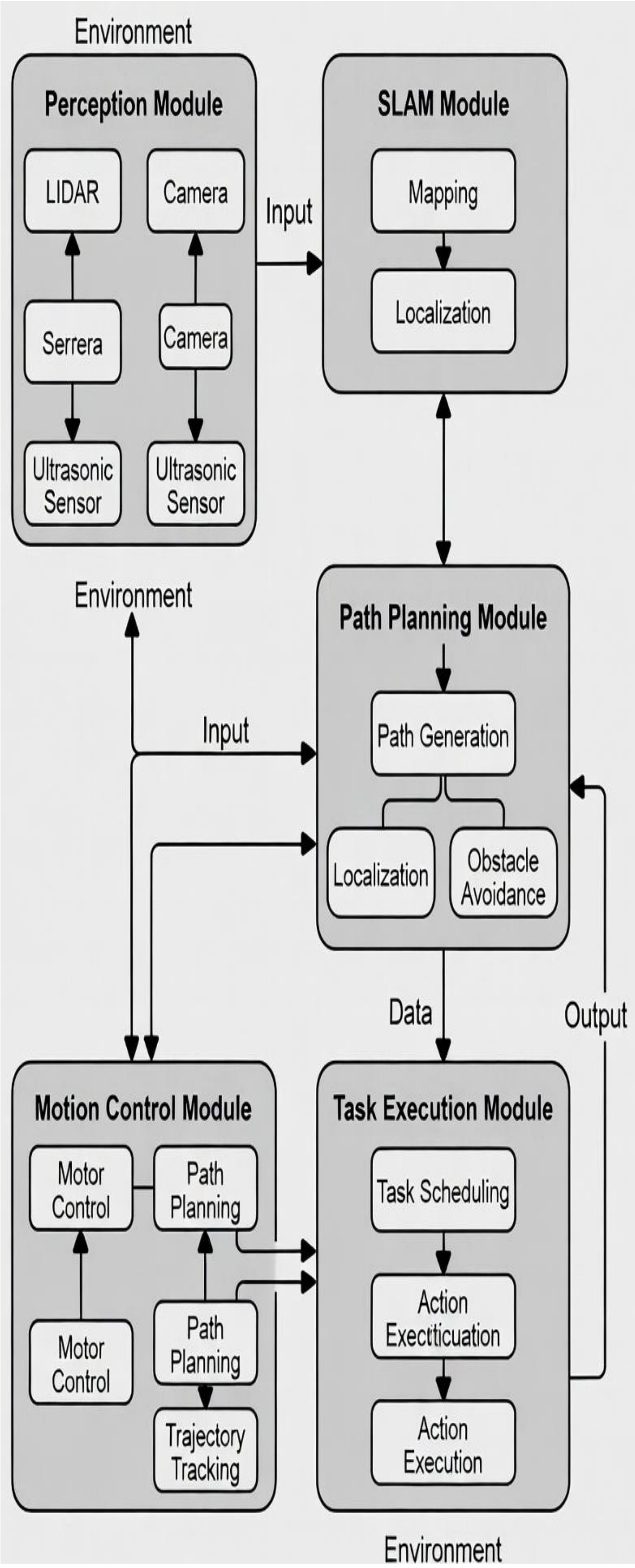

Figure 2: System Architecture of Autonomous Mobile Robot

Modules:

- Sensor Perception Module
- Mapping and Localization Module (SLAM)
- Module for Path Planning
- Module for Motion Control
- Module for Executing Tasks

6.2 Hardware Architecture

The hardware architecture includes:

- Wheel system with differential drive
- Processing unit embedded
- Suite of sensors (LiDAR, IMU, encoders)
- Module for communication (Wi-Fi/Bluetooth)
- Unit for battery and power management

6.3 Software Architecture

The Robot Operating System (ROS) is utilized to create the software stack, facilitating modular development and interaction among nodes.

Main ROS nodes:

- Node for acquiring sensor data
- Node for processing SLAM
- Node for planning paths
- Node for controlling motion
- Node for user interface and monitoring

6.4 Functional Module Description

6.4.1 Perception Module

Real-time data is gathered from sensors and undergoes preprocessing for use in SLAM and navigation tasks. Sensor measurements are combined to construct a unified map of the surroundings, concurrently determining the system's location within this map. This method allows for precise localization and navigation in ever-changing and unfamiliar environments. Subsequently, the preprocessed data is employed by SLAM algorithms to enhance both mapping and trajectory estimation as they occur.

6.4.2 SLAM Module

Utilizes LiDAR scans alongside odometry data to conduct mapping and localization at the same time. This method facilitates the development of a coherent and continuously refreshed map of the surroundings while concurrently determining the sensor's location. The incorporation of odometry data enhances the precision of localization and strengthens resilience to sensor noise. These simultaneous localization and mapping (SLAM) methods are crucial for autonomous navigation in environments that are either dynamic or unfamiliar.

6.4.3 Path Planning Module

The system determines the best path from the starting point to the destination by employing both global and local planning strategies. It incorporates environmental information to modify the route in response to changing conditions. By constantly assessing different paths, the system maintains a balance between efficiency and safety. This method guarantees reliable navigation in intricate and uncertain environments.

6.4.4 Motion Control Module

Control commands are generated for motors to adhere to predetermined paths. These commands are calculated using the intended position, speed, and acceleration patterns of the motors. They facilitate precise and seamless adherence to the planned paths, taking into account dynamic limitations. Feedback control systems are frequently incorporated to adjust any real-time deviations.

6.4.5 Task Execution Module

Oversees warehouse activities including pick-and-place tasks, transporting items, and deliveries. These activities are generally automated through robotic systems that are fitted with sensors and actuators to guarantee accuracy and efficiency. By integrating with warehouse management software, real-time tracking and coordination of inventory movements are facilitated. This automation minimizes human mistakes, boosts productivity, and improves the efficiency of warehouse operations overall.

7. Implementation

7.1 Hardware Implementation

The robot features an aluminum frame, equipped with two motorized wheels and a caster wheel to ensure balance. Motion feedback is supplied by DC motors with encoders. Positioned centrally, a LiDAR sensor is used to capture precise 2D scans.

Table 3: Hardware Specifications

Component	Specification
LiDAR Sensor	2D LiDAR, 360° scanning
Processor	NVIDIA Jetson Nano

Component	Specification
Motors	12V DC geared motors
IMU	9-axis inertial measurement unit
Battery	12V Lithium-ion battery

7.2 Software Implementation

The software is developed using ROS framework with Python/C++ nodes. Key steps include:

1. Collecting sensor data
2. Creating maps through SLAM
3. Positioning within the created map
4. Planning paths with A*
5. Avoiding obstacles with DWA
6. Controlling motors via PID controller

7.3 SLAM Algorithm Implementation

The SLAM module handles LiDAR data to create occupancy grid maps and determine the robot's position instantaneously. To maintain map accuracy and minimize drift, loop closure detection is employed. The system merges sensor data to boost localization precision and adjust to changing environments. By integrating LiDAR with inertial and odometry data, sensor fusion techniques improve pose estimation. Furthermore, the mapping component incrementally refreshes the occupancy grid, facilitating real-time navigation and obstacle avoidance.

7.4 Navigation and Control Implementation

The navigation stack combines:

- Global planner: determines the most efficient route
- Local planner: manages moving obstacles
- Velocity controller: modifies speed and heading

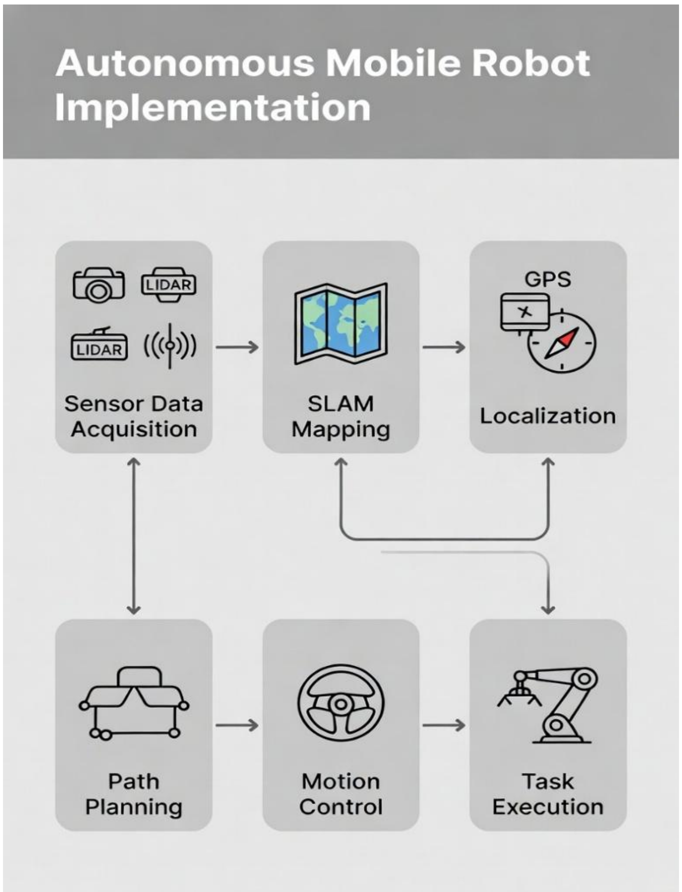

Figure 3: Implementation Workflow of Autonomous Mobile Robot

Steps:
Sensor Data → SLAM Mapping → Localization → Path Planning → Motion Control → Task Execution

8. Results and Discussion

8.1 Experimental Setup

In a simulated warehouse setting featuring shelves, aisles, and moving obstacles, experiments are carried out. The performance metrics assessed include:

- Accuracy of localization

- Efficiency in path planning
- Success rate of obstacle avoidance
- Time taken to complete tasks

8.2 Mapping and Localization Performance

The robot effectively produced precise occupancy grid maps of the warehouse setting. While navigating, the localization error stayed within a margin of ±5 cm, highlighting the success of SLAM and sensor fusion.

Table 4: Localization Accuracy Results

Test Scenario	Mean Error (cm)	Max Error (cm)
Static Environment	2.5	4.8
Dynamic Obstacles	3.2	5.5
Narrow Aisles	2.8	5.1

8.3 Navigation and Path Planning Performance

The robot efficiently navigated between storage racks and dynamic obstacles using global and local planners. Average path deviation was less than 4%, indicating precise trajectory tracking.

Table 5: Navigation Performance Metrics

Metric	Value
Average Travel Time	18.5 s
Path Deviation	3.8%
Obstacle Avoidance Success	96%
Replanning Time	<0.5 s

8.4 Comparative Analysis

The proposed SLAM-based AMR was compared with manual and AGV systems.

System Type	Flexibility	Infrastructure Requirement	Efficiency
Manual Operation	Low	None	Low
AGV (Fixed Path)	Medium	High	Medium
Proposed AMR	High	None	High

8.5 Discussion

The findings indicate that autonomous robots utilizing SLAM offer notable benefits, such as:

Efficient adaptation to changing environments

Precise localization capabilities

Decreased reliance on external systems

Enhanced efficiency in warehouse operations

However, challenges have been identified, including increased computational demands in scenarios with dense obstacles and minor localization drift over extended paths. These issues can be addressed through techniques like loop closure and map optimization.

9. Conclusion

This study introduced the creation and advancement of an autonomous mobile robot aimed at automating warehouse operations through the use of SLAM algorithms. The project employed a holistic strategy that combined hardware design, sensor integration, SLAM-based mapping, path planning, and motion control.

The system that was developed showcased dependable autonomous navigation, precise localization, and effective task performance within warehouse settings. Experimental findings confirmed the success of SLAM algorithms in facilitating real-time mapping and localization without the need for external infrastructure.

The main contributions of this research are:

- Creation of a modular AMR framework for warehouse automation.

- Integration of LiDAR-based SLAM with sensor fusion.

- Effective navigation achieved through global and local path planning algorithms.

- Experimental validation showing enhanced efficiency and reliability.

Future research will concentrate on:

- Coordination of multiple robots and fleet management

- Incorporation of AI-driven task scheduling

- 3D SLAM for warehouses with multiple levels

- Cloud-based systems for monitoring and control

The proposed autonomous mobile robot system offers a scalable, adaptable, and efficient solution for the automation of future warehouses.

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