Transforming Orthodontics: Exploring Evolution and Applications of Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract—The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology, fueled by the increasing availability of extensive datasets, enhanced computing power, and the development of sophisticated algorithms, has led to its widespread integration into various aspects of daily life. AI is making significant inroads in dentistry, particularly in specialties such as orthodontics, prosthodontics, oral and maxillofacial surgery, and periodontics, where it has begun to transform traditional practices. This comprehensive review synthesizes the current literature to explore the application of AI in orthodontics. The focus is primarily on utilizing AI for image-based diagnostic tasks, including the analysis of radiographic and optical images, while addressing the potential applications, benefits, and inherent limitations of AI for non-image-based tasks within the field. AI demonstrates considerable efficacy in image-based diagnostics within orthodontics, significantly enhancing the accuracy and efficiency of the analyses. However, the application of AI to non-image-based tasks is hindered by several challenges, including the scarcity of quantitative data, the inherent complexity of oral health conditions, and the substantial computational power required to process intricate 3D data. Over the past few decades, orthodontics has undergone profound transformations driven by AI-influenced advancements, such as the development of aesthetically improved treatment alternatives, the seamless integration of digital workflows, and the emergence of cutting-edge imaging techniques. These advancements underscore the potential of AI to revolutionize orthodontic care further, offering innovative solutions that enhance both patient outcomes and clinical practices, while paving the way for future developments in the field.

Keywords-Artificial intelligence; dentistry; machine learning; neural network; orthodontics.

Manuscript received 10 Jun. 2024; revised 18 Jan. 2025; accepted 10 Mar. 2025. Date of publication 30 Apr. 2025. IJASEIT is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License.



I. INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) has been applied in many industries, including robotics, automotive, and financial analysis. Its influence has also extended to health industries, such as medicine and dentistry. In these fields, AI plays diverse roles, encompassing medical and dental imaging diagnostics, predictive analytics, drug development, smart devices, healthcare monitoring, and intelligent virtual assistants. AI applications can significantly reduce the workload of both dentists and clinicians. AI's capabilities are gaining insights from diverse information sources, known as multimodal data, to diagnose conditions rather than depending on conventional single-source information for specific diseases. Crucial to the success of these endeavors are the concurrent evolution of computing capacity (hardware), expansive databases (input datasets), and algorithmic advancements (software). As these components progress, the prospects for AI integration into health science have become increasingly promising. Numerous ongoing studies and implemented practices have explored AI applications in dentistry, including diagnosis, treatment planning, treatment outcome prediction, and disease prognosis estimation.

This study aims to advance our knowledge of the following domains:

- To encapsulate strides used in AI research in orthodontics.
- To address the constraints inherent in the development of AI in orthodontics.

Malocclusion refers to the misalignment of teeth that occurs when the jaws of the lower and upper arches are brought together [1]. This can cause discomfort and, in some cases, even speech impediments or breathing difficulties. The main goal of dental treatment for this condition is to align the teeth according to specific empirical guidelines. These guidelines are crucial to achieving balanced occlusion and patient compliance, ultimately leading to the success of orthodontic treatment.

Diagnosis of malocclusion requires considerable effort, including clinical examination, dental impressions and models, photographic analysis, radiographic analysis, patient history, and measurement of occlusal relationships, such as cephalometric evaluation. Orthodontic treatment planning traditionally depends on the individual experience and preferences of the orthodontist. Given the uniqueness of each patient and orthodontist, treatment decisions can be subjective. Due to the complexity of diagnosis and clinicians' preferences, developing a treatment plan and predicting treatment outcomes as standards is challenging.

Therefore, AI's potential use is particularly useful for standardizing orthodontic treatment planning and predicting treatment outcomes. AI can significantly enhance communication between patients and dentists, fostering a clear understanding of the impact of orthodontic interventions. Similar to other fields, the widespread use of AI in dentistry is becoming increasingly widespread. AI applications are categorized into diagnosis, decision-making, treatment planning, and treatment outcome prediction. Utilizing AI ultimately reduces the burden on dental professionals. As a result, there has been significant growth in orthodontics that utilizes computer programs to facilitate decision-making processes. Fig. 1 shows the areas of AI in orthodontics used in this study.

Accurate diagnosis	 Facial analysis, cephalometric and photographic measurements, growth estimation Intraoral analysis, severity of crowding, overjet, overbite, transverse relationship, occlusal relationship (Class I, Class II, Class II div I or div II, Class III)
Treatment planning	 Treatment planning and simulation Appliance fabrication Appliance delivery
Prognosis estimation	 An estimation of success versus failure based on a database of previously treated failed and successful cases

Fig. 1 AI applications in orthodontics.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The electronic literature search encompassed databases such as Web of Science, Scopus, IEEE Xplore, Cochrane, and MEDLINE/PubMed, spanning September 2013 to September 2023. This meticulous approach ensured the review was grounded in current data. Articles that concentrated on the AI of orthodontics were selected. Inclusion was confined to publications that incorporated Machine Learning (ML) evaluation outcomes such as accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, etc.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. AI in Diagnosis

Accurate orthodontic diagnosis relies on information gathered from patients. These data encompass an elaborate catalog of patient issues. Data crucial for orthodontic diagnosis can be sourced from interviews, either written or verbal, thorough clinical assessments, and a detailed review of patient records, which include dental molds, X-rays, and diagnostic images [2].

AI is an optimal diagnostic tool that showcases its utility (as outlined in Table I) in assessing the need for orthodontic diagnosis and skeletal classification. For example, the study of mandibular morphology prediction in skeletal tissue, as illustrated in Fig. 2, has been proposed as an automated learning approach. Choi et al. [3] applied two layers (one hidden layer) of ANN to diagnose orthognathic surgery with a success rate of 0.96. In addition to locating various cephalometric landmarks and facilitating classification, AI systems have been used in orthodontic treatment planning. Choi et al. [3] introduced an AI model designed to assess the necessity of surgical intervention using lateral cephalometric radiographs. A significant portion of orthodontic applications is centered on identifying landmarks and formulating treatment plans. These processes are labor-intensive for orthodontists.



Fig. 2 An example of the mandibular variables used for the prediction of automated learning techniques

Study/Year	Data type and size	Algorithms	Accuracy and other performances				
Diagnosis of Orthognathic	12 measurement values of the	ANN	Accuracy:0. 96 (diagnosis of surgery/non-surgery				
Surgery/ 2019 [3]	lateral cephalogram and 6		decision), 0. 91 (detailed diagnosis of surgery type				
	additional indexes/ 316		and extraction decision)				
Cephalometric analysis/	Lateral cephalograms /2075	Deep neural	Accuracy:0. 8843				
2020 [4]		networks					
Identification of	Lateral cephalometric radiograph	YOLOV3	Accuracy:0.96–0.98				
cephalometric landmarks/ 2023 [5]	images / 400						
	AP cephalometric radiograph						
	images / 163						
Diagnosis of TMJOA/	CBCT images/ 2737	YOLO	Accuracy: > 0.95				
2023 [6]	ç						
Cephalometric analysis /	Lateral cephalograms / 85	AI	Accuracy: > 0.90				
2023 [7]							

TABLE I AI APPLICATIONS IN DIAGNOSIS

A completely automated web-based system has been proposed for cephalometric analysis [4]. This system harnesses the power of deep learning to replace the traditional manual marking process, effectively identifying 23 cephalometric landmarks essential for orthodontic and craniomaxillofacial surgical cases, with a classification rate of 0.8843. The performance of this web-based tool was analyzed using 23 ground truths as illustrated in Fig. 3. This technology employs a stacked hourglass network and is meticulously crafted using a diverse dataset of lateral cephalograms obtained from various medical institutions. Training is conducted using 2D cephalometric data, and the resultant web-based application allows users to rectify predicted landmarks as needed, despite the low classification rate compared to a previous study [3].





Fig. 3 The examples of 23 ground truth cephalometric landmark positions for cephalometric analysis from three devices (a), (b), and (c) [4]

In addition to its application in predicting extraction for orthodontic purposes, AI has been used to locate cephalometric landmarks. Zhao et al. demonstrated a Deep Learning (DL) algorithm that accurately identifies 19 radiograph cephalometric landmarks, as illustrated in Fig. 4 [5]. This study utilized the You-Only-Look-Once (YOLOv3) deep learning algorithm. The findings show that YOLOv3 has a performance success detection rate of up to 0.96 accuracy for anterior-posterior (AP) cephalograms and more than 0.98 for lateral cephalograms.



Fig. 4 The 19 lateral landmarks for detection [5]

Another study introduced an automated diagnosis of temporomandibular joint osteoarthritis (TMJOA) using a deep neural network (DNN) of YOLO [6]. YOLO is a deep learning framework used in this study for object detection. The developed system was used on 2737 cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT) images, with an average accuracy of more than 0.95. According to the author, this study has high potential for assisting clinicians in diagnosing TMJOA. Using AI approaches, Bao et al. [7] proposed an automated system for analyzing lateral cephalometric radiographs of 85 CBCT images. The diagnostic performance of the proposed system was more than 0.90 in distinguishing the classes of cephalograms.

B. AI in Treatment

In addition to AI diagnostics, the implementation of AI has surfaced as a revolutionary influence across multiple domains, including treatment planning. This section provides an overview of AI applications in treatment planning and prognostication of treatment outcomes (as outlined in Table 2). One notable application involves simulating alterations in the visual aspect of facial photographs pre- and post-treatment. AI algorithms significantly enhance the visualization of orthodontic treatment impacts, skeletal configurations, and anatomical reference points in lateral cephalograms [8]. This technology is pivotal in improving communication between dental practitioners and their patients. AI can assist in creating personalized treatment plans for patients, including orthodontic treatment, prosthodontics, and oral and maxillofacial surgery.

AI APPLICATIONS IN TREATMENT						
Study/Year	Data type and size	Algorithms	Accuracy and other performances			
Tooth extraction determination/ 2010 [9]	23 indices / 200	ANN	Accuracy: 0.8			
Assessing the needs for orthodontic treatment /2018 [13]	Data about oral conditions in the field of orthodontics / 1000	Bayesian network	Accuracy: 0.96 AUC: 0.91 Sensitivity: 0.95 Specificity: 1.00			
Tooth segmentation / 2021 [14]	Dental models from intraoral scanner/ 2000	CNN	Accuracy: 0.980-0.986, F1: 0.942			
Tooth and alveolar bone segmentation / 2022 [15]	Cone-beam CT (CBCT) images /4938	CNN	Accuracy: 0.915 (tooth) and 0.93 (alveolar bone)			
Tooth landmark/axis detection/2022 [16]	Intra-oral scanned data and the CBCT data/ 3084	Deep neural networks	Average errors: 0.37 mm (tooth landmarks); 3.33° (axis			
			detection)			

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Over a decade ago, AI technologies have shown impressive achievements in treatment planning in orthodontics, which hold immense potential to significantly improve the quality of care required for orthodontic patients while optimizing treatment outcomes. For instance, an ANN model was proposed to assess extraction requirements based on lateral cephalometric radiographs [9]. The proposed ANN model utilized 23 backpropagation neuron layers to train 180 images and 20 images to test the network. The backpropagation method aims to minimize/optimize the overall loss by propagating the error gradient of each layer from the output layer back to the input layer [10]. A perfect score for training and an overall 0.80 accuracy were recorded for testing. Therefore, an accuracy of 0.80 was decided for extraction treatment to solve malocclusion cases rather than nonextraction treatment for 11- and 15-year-old patients. It appears that the network overfits the training data, resulting in low accuracy of the testing data and ultimately leading to an underfitting problem. This constraint may stem from the insufficient amount of data being utilized. Nevertheless, an accuracy of 0.80 can be accepted in most image classification scores [11], [12].

A clinical decision support system (graphical user interface) was proposed by utilizing input data related to orthodontics on a Bayesian network for clinical/practitioner assessment [13]. The developed system was tested for 15 variables, according to the need for orthodontic treatment. The evaluated

performance was in contrast with the assessment from two orthodontists, indicating a high need for orthodontic treatment for the patient. With excellent accuracy, the area under the curve (AUC), sensitivity, and specificity were 0.96, 0.91, 0.95, and a perfect score for specificity.

The considerations of orthodontic treatment in previous research, including tooth extraction/non-extraction or orthognathic surgery, appear to have subsequent effects on socio-psychological factors, particularly facial aesthetics. Understanding the adequacy of treatment planning is crucial to ensuring its suitability in predicting facial alterations. Therefore, an AI-based system was developed to predict morphological facial soft tissues, particularly after orthodontic treatment (tooth extraction) and orthognathic surgery [11]. Two deep learning algorithms were employed: System E and System S, with only two dense layers and one dropout layer. On average, this study was evaluated on system error of <1 mm 0.81 (0.98 [E] and 0.54 [S]) and system error of <2 mm (1.00 for both systems). These findings have significant potential for clinical applications in system settings.

A fundamental task in orthodontic treatment planning involves segmenting and categorizing teeth. AI has been used to achieve these objectives by analysing a range of data sources, such as radiographs and full-arch 3D digital optical scans, to detect various dental abnormalities, as shown in Fig. 5 [14].



Fig. 5 The examples of the teeth abnormalities (a) missing teeth, (b) additional braces, (c) blurred boundary signals between incisors and the gum, and (d) crowding teeth [14]

Cui et al. proposed various AI approaches to automate tooth segmentation on digital models acquired through 3D intraoral scanners and CBCT images in Fig. 6 [15], [16]. Beyond tooth segmentation, their algorithms were extended to the segmentation of the alveolar bone, showing an efficiency surpassing that of radiologists (with a speed advantage of 500 times). The study also asserted the algorithm's efficacy in handling complex cases with varying dental irregularities.



Fig. 6 Other examples of the teeth abnormalities with metal artifacts (a, b), missing teeth (c, d), misalignment (e, f), and regular teeth (g, h) [15]

Meanwhile, a novel deep learning framework was proposed to detect tooth landmarks and axes using multi-scale feature extraction with abstractions [16]. The proposed deep learning method for abstraction efficiently captures general patterns in a specific learning capability [17], [18], [19]. This work has successfully provided an efficient approach to automatically detect tooth landmarks and axes with an accuracy of 0.9955 accuracy compared with other convolutional networks within an appropriate training time.

C. AI in Prognosis Estimation

In this section, we aim to elucidate the pivotal contributions of AI in prognosis estimation within orthodontics, as listed in Table 3, to assist orthodontists in predicting and assessing the outcomes of orthodontic treatment for individual patients. For example, a prognosis prediction model was proposed to predict unexpected treatment results involving tooth extractions and accurately understand the factors influencing the model's choice to recommend extractions [20]. The developed model employing a template-matching technique was then compared with the decisions made by orthodontic experts, achieving a high accuracy rate of 0.904. This indicates that tooth extraction was advised with an accuracy of 0.904. The authors modified the model [21] and obtained an accuracy of 0.86, which is relatively low compared to the previous model. The template-matching technique involves a sliding window, as performed by CNNs, to capture patterns and features in information processing [22], [23], [24], [25].

In the same year, another system was proposed using a feature wrapping method with a sequential forward search (SFS) algorithm and a support vector machine (SVM) to predict Class III malocclusion [26]. SFS is a feature selection method to improve the classification accuracy [27]. This method predicted that the classification rate of 0.972 was slightly better than discriminant analysis (0.91) and higher than that reported in previous studies [20], [21]. Regardless of the lack of comprehensive current research, particularly the implementation of AI in prognosis estimation, the developed system's performance has shown an impressive classification rate.

D. Challenges of AI in Orthodontics

A rigorous overview of existing comprehensive studies of AI in various facets of healthcare has marked a transformative leap towards precision and efficiency. In orthodontics, AI is poised to revolutionize traditional paradigms, offering promising avenues for precise diagnosis, tailored treatment planning, and accurate prognosis estimation. However, this potential is met by several challenges that require careful consideration.

TABLE III			
AI APPLICATIONS IN PROGNOSIS ESTIMATION			

The performance of these algorithms can be affected by factors such as image quality, landmark variability, and occlusion. For example, the challenges in detecting tooth landmarks and axes in digital orthodontics include the fact that most tooth landmarks and axes do not correspond to any sharp geometry on the given tooth model and that the inconspicuous characteristics of the tooth surface make it difficult to fully detect all landmarks and axes [16]. The effective treatment of malocclusion, a prevalent concern in orthodontics, is contingent upon the accurate localization of landmarks and axes. Notably, prevailing AI algorithms have yet to integrate facial analysis fully into their algorithms, which is essential for determining the impact of orthodontic dental movements on facial aesthetics [28], [29], [30]. Additionally, AI ignores the existence of oral diseases and cannot consider the impact of functional problems on treatment. Another challenge is that discrepancies between the accounts presented at professional conferences regarding the public health impacts of such interventions and the corresponding reports featured in scientific journals may exist. Within the clinical and scientific communities, there is an underlying sense of apprehension and pressure regarding the potential legal implications of disclosing the exposure of the damage caused by these alleged corrections.

The successful implementation of AI in orthodontics requires large-scale, high-quality datasets to train algorithms effectively [31], [32], [33]. This can pose challenges, especially in rare or complex cases within the field. Moreover, the models require expert decision-making capabilities to interpret, validate, and test results, ensuring their accuracy and reliability. The lack of standardization in the variables used to construct prediction models across studies may present difficulties for healthcare providers and potentially lead to inconsistent results. Subsequently, integrating AI into orthognathic surgery requires significant investments in technology and training. In addition, ethical and legal concerns, such as patient privacy, data security, and liability, must be considered when employing AI in orthodontics [8], [32], [34], [35].

Although AI provides precise and accurate diagnoses, it cannot replace the empathic human expertise essential in inpatient care and the judgment of healthcare professionals. Therefore, its function is to complement and enhance clinicians' skills. It may also be highly beneficial for general dental practitioners interested in orthodontics to utilize AI to assist their decisions, as they are not as extensively trained as specialist orthodontists. Thus, it is imperative to meticulously assess the advantages and risks of incorporating AI into orthodontics, striking a balance between human touch in orthodontics and orthognathic surgery, to develop guidelines and standards for its use. AI models have not yet been widely adopted globally in orthodontics, underscoring the need for further research to enhance their performance and accuracy, especially in prognosis estimation applications.

IV. CONCLUSION

This article offers an in-depth review of AI's applications in orthodontics. The evolution of AI algorithms and enhancements in computational capabilities have contributed to increased efficiency, precision, and dependability in orthodontic treatment. The central aim of incorporating AI into orthodontics is to increase the precision and accuracy of dental practitioners' endeavors.

This study highlights the crucial role of AI in orthodontics for precise diagnosis, strategic treatment planning, and accurate prognosis. AI empowers orthodontists in decisionmaking to improve patient outcomes by harnessing datadriven insights and computational methods. This advanced technology enhances the quality of care, increases treatment efficiency, and reduces time consumption.

Furthermore, this article enumerates various AI applications pertinent to orthodontics, encompassing decision-making processes related to tooth extraction, facial

analysis, bone segmentation, and anticipating orthognathic surgery outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This work was supported in part by the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF) grant funded by Korean Government (MSIT) under Grant RS-2023-00250496, and in part by the National Research and Development Program through the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF) funded by Ministry of Science and ICT under Grant RS-2020-NR047143, and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM DD-2023-006).

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