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Long short term memory networks OPEN for predicting resilient Modulus of stabilized base material subject to wet-dry cycles

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The resilient modulus (MR) of different pavement materials is one of the most important input parameters for the mechanistic-empirical pavement design approach. The dynamic triaxial test is the most often used method for evaluating the MR, although it is expensive, time-consuming, and requires specialized lab facilities. The purpose of this study is to establish a new model based on Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks for predicting the M_P of stabilized base materials with various **additives during wet-dry cycles (WDC). A laboratory dataset of 704 records has been used using input parameters, including WDC, ratio of calcium oxide to silica, alumina, and ferric oxide compound, Maximum dry density to the optimal moisture content ratio (DMR), deviator stress (***σd***), and confining stress (***σ***3). The results demonstrate that the LSTM technique is very accurate, with coefficients of determination of 0.995 and 0.980 for the training and testing datasets, respectively. The LSTM model outperforms other developed models, such as support vector regression and least squares approaches, in the literature. A sensitivity analysis study has determined that the DMR parameter is the most significant factor, while the** σ_d **parameter is the least significant factor in predicting the M_P of the stabilized base material under WDC. Furthermore, the SHapley Additive exPlanations approach is employed to elucidate the optimal model and examine the impact of its features on the final result.**

Keywords Resilient modulus, Pavements, Stabilized base, Wet-dry cycles, Long short-term memory networks, Graphical user interface

For rigid and flexible pavements, the stabilized aggregate bases are substantial parts of pavement structures, providing structural support and durability. Stabilized aggregate bases are prepared from aggregates, water, and stabilizing additives like cement, lime, fly ash, or asphalt emulsion By adding the stabilizing agents it can enhance the properties of base materials such as the strength, stiffness, and resistance to moisture damage¹. The stiffness of a soil or pavement layer during repeated loading and unloading situations are defined by Resilient modulus $(M_R)^2$. The M_R is utilized to construct flexible pavements that deform elastically under traffic loads³. The M_R is also used to assess the performance and durability of stabilized aggregate bases when subjected to Wet-Dry cycles (WDC)⁴. The M_R, which defined subgrade soil stiffness, was incorporated into the pavement design guide of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) in 1993⁵. Since then,

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the M_p has been frequently employed to characterize materials in flexible pavement structural design as a vital attribute^{6,7}. The M_R of pavement materials is determined using a variety of laboratory experiments that simulate the repeated loading conditions encountered by roads $8-14$.

The prevalent environmental factors that can deteriorate the stabilized aggregate bases is the WDC, that is the repeated exposure of the base materials to moisture and drying¹⁵. Several research studies show that WDC and freeze-thaw cycles (FTC) affect the performance of stabilized aggregate bases. Pavement design standards like AASHTO 1993 and Mechanistic-Empirical Design Guide identify such challenges and their implications^{5,16}. According to other research studies and these guidelines, WDC and FTC damage engineering properties and lead to pavement degradation and premature failure^{4,17-24}. Volume change, strength loss, and a reduction in the resilient modulus are a few of the physical and mechanical properties that can be induced by WDC in stabilized aggregate bases¹. Zaman et al.¹⁹ investigated the impact of WDC and FTC on resilient modulus values of cement-kiln-dust-stabilized Meridian limestone aggregate. Freezing/thawing proves more damaging than wetting/drying at low deviator stresses, with initial freeze/thaw stages causing significant strength reduction; wetting/drying induces greater strength reduction at high deviator stresses. The resilient modulus decreases as WDC and FTC increase, according to a study conducted by Diagne et al.²⁵ to assess the properties of base courses made from recycled materials. Khoury et al.^{26,27} investigated the impact of moisture fluctuations subsequent to compaction on the unconfined compressive strength (UCS), modulus of elasticity (E), and resilient modulus (M_R) of cementitious stabilized subgrade soils. The stabilizers utilized in these soils were hydrated lime and Class C fly ash (CFA). Prior to evaluating M_R , UCS, and E, compacted specimens with varied stabilizer ratios (10%) CFA and 6% lime) were either dried or wet. The findings demonstrated that drying increased M_R , UCS, and E, while soaking decreased these values.

Over the past few years, there has been rapid development in the field of artificial intelligence techniques. This development has led to the emergence of machine learning (ML) algorithms that have been proposed and are now widely used in various fields. ML applications have transformed the way how complex problems can be tackled using new and innovative solutions. Due to their learning ability, ML algorithms became a desirable tool for revealing relationships between many soil parameters. Therefore, the growing interest in studying the potential applications of ML algorithms on geotechnical issues has been witnessed in the past decades²⁸ Furthermore, several researchers have also utilized ML algorithms to solve some other specific problems³⁹⁻⁴². Researcher used ML algorithms to accurately calculates the resilient modulus (M_R) such as Khoury and Zaman⁴ employed a least squares (LS) regression model to develop a correlation amongst the M_R and the following variables: the ratio of calcium oxide to SAF (silica, alumina, and ferric oxide compound), the maximum dry density to the optimum moisture content ratio, deviator stress, and confining stress.

Malouf et al.⁴³ used Support Vector Regression (SVR) approach for determining M_p under WDC in his study. Support Vector Regression (SVR) was used by Maalouf et al.⁴³ to find M_p under WDC in his work. The evaluation performed in this research exhibits the potential efficacy of the SVR approach in predicting the responses of M_R values induced by WDC. Comparative analyses performed between the SVR and LS methods underscore that the SVR outcomes significantly surpass the conventional LS technique. On the basis of a comparison of six data sets and the algorithms Kernel Ridge Regression (KRR), SVM, and Least Squares Support Vector Machines (LS-SVM), Maalouf and Homouz⁴⁴ determined that the TR-KRR algorithm is both as accurate as and significantly faster than the others. Ghanizadeh and Rahrovan⁴⁵ used ANN approach for the prediction of M_R under WDCs and compared them with SVM. Comparing the results of modeling resilient modulus using ANN with modeling using SVM confirms that ANN is more accurate than the SVM approach. Ghanizadeh et al.⁴⁶ used Adaptive Neuro-Fuzzy Inference System (ANFIS) for prediction of M_R under WDCs of aggregate bases. Results exhibited a high degree of model accuracy, with coefficients of determination (R^2) for the training and testing data sets are 0.9669 and 0.9625, respectively, and 0.9655 for the whole dataset. Kaloop et al.¹ developed three models in their study Particle Swarm Optimization Algorithm-Extreme Learning Machine (PSO-ELM), Particle Swarm Optimization-based Artificial Neural Network (PSO-ANN) and Kernel ELM (KELM) for the prediction of M_R and found that PSO-ELM has high accuracy than PSO-ANN and KELM. Ghanizadeh et al.⁴⁷ developed Gaussian Process Regression (GPR) for prediction of M_p and compared them with SVM and PSO-ELM. The results indicate that GPR has high accuracy with $(R^2=0.995)$ than SVM and PSO-ELM. Khan et al.¹⁵ evaluated the effect of WDC on the M_R of CaO-stabilized aggregate bases and cementitious materials, both of which are critical for pavement long-term service life. They created two models using ANN and Gene Expression Programming (GEP), which are ML approaches that can learn complex nonlinear correlations from data without requiring explicit assumptions or equations. The GEP beat the ANN in terms of accuracy, efficiency, and generalization ability while predicting the M_R of stabilized aggregate bases under WDC.

The extensive literature review demonstrates that computational techniques are quite capable of predicting the M_R . However, researchers and professionals predicted the M_R using a variety of computational models and datasets. The SHapley Additive exPlanations approach for describing the importance and participation of input variables that influence the resilient modulus of stabilized base material with various additives—Rhyolite, Richard Spur, Sawyer, and Meridian using cementitious materials, subjected to WDC has not been investigated. Furthermore, the LSTM model has not been implemented and compared. As a result, it is difficult to identify which computational approach is suitable for predicting the M_R . Still, it is noted that this field, is currently being investigated. Thus, the following problems are attempted to be addressed in this paper: (1) providing an accurate and efficient LSTM model for predicting the M_R of stabilized base material with various additives— Rhyolite, Richard Spur, Sawyer, and Meridian using cementitious materials, under WDC; (2) examining the prediction accuracy of the best LSTM model against that of existing ML models; (3) describing the significance and contribution of input variables that affect the M_R of stabilized base material with various additives under WDC using the SHAP method; and (4) development of online graphical user interface for simulating developed LSTM model for further application.

S. No.	WDC	CSAFR	DMR	σ ₃	$\sigma_{\rm d}$	M_R
$\mathbf{1}$	Ω	0.130	2.34	138	69	1681
\overline{c}	θ	0.130	2.34	138	138	1784
3	θ	0.130	2.34	138	208	2210
\cdots	\cdots	\cdots
702	30	0.510	3.37	34.5	208	2043
703	30	0.510	3.37	34.5	277	2250
704	30	0.510	3.37	Ω	277	1632
Min	θ	0.113	2.34	θ	69	585
Max	30	0.51	4.63	138	277	9803
Mean	12.79545	0.254602	3.266051	70.12713	171.8182	3684.058
SD	11.1579	0.182769	0.711926	48.86403	77.63804	1860.495

Table 1. Input and output data for the current study.

Table 2. Training and testing dataset parameter statistics. Note: T: Training; T*: Testing.

Dataset

In this research, the experimental data were collected from Maloof et al. study⁴³, In this study, four aggregates— Rhyolite, Richard Spur, Sawyer, and Meridian—were stabilized utilizing cementitious materials, subjected to WDC, and assessed for M_n . Meridian is a limestone aggregate that comprises around 97% calcium carbonate (CaCO₃). Richard Spur, and limestone aggregate, has a less CaCO₃ proportion than Meridian, at 87% approximately. Sawyer aggregate, a sandstone aggregate, contains approximately 94% SiO_2 . Hanson is an aggregate variety of rhyolite. Samples were prepared with optimum moisture content and maximum dry density, then cured for 28 days in a wet environment maintaining a temperature of 21℃ (70℉) and a regulated relative humidity of 90% (2.5%). Specimens underwent 0, 8, 16, and 30 WDC, with zero being reference control specimens that received no WDC. For more details on material properties, specimen preparation, and the WDC procedure, the reader might refer to Maalouf et al.⁴³ research. The parameters σ_d and σ_3 have a major impact on material behavior, clarify relationships, and provide insights into mechanical responses. This strategy improves feature engineering and model performance. The resilient modulus outcomes are composed of 704 records (see Appendix A, Tables A1 and A2) and five features, where WDC, calcium oxide to silica, alumina, and ferric oxide compound ratio (CSAFR), Maximum dry density to the optimal moisture content ratio (DMR), deviator stress (σ_d) , and confining stress (σ_3) are regarded input parameters, while M_R is taken as an output parameter. Table 1 shows the experimental results for M_R testing, mentioning the minimum (Min), maximum (Max), mean, and standard deviation (SD) of the input and output variables. The database, as shown in the table, includes input parameters i.e., WDC, CSAFR, DMR, σ_{d} , and σ_{3} , and one output parameter i.e., resilient modulus (M_R).

To determine which representation was the most resilient, a statistical analysis was performed on the input and output variables of the training and testing datasets (refer to Table 2). The minimum and maximum values indicate the data spread out, mean shows the central value for the dataset and standard deviation indicates how much variation exists from the mean for training and testing datasets respectively. The acquired data is divided into training (80%) and testing (20%) datasets. It was attained through trial and error. Previous studies show that the M_R of stabilized base material with various additives is a function of WDC, CSAFR, DMR, σ_d , and $\sigma_3^{21,43,48}$.

All of the input and output variables under study were correlated using the Pearson correlation coefficient (*r*). Each cell in the plot has a correlation coefficient, which represents the strength of relationship between two factors. Figure 1 depicts the correlations between several parameters in the dataset. The "*r*" between the various parameters in Fig. 1 is evaluated as follows:

$$
r(m, m') = \frac{\text{cov}(m, m')}{\sigma_m \sigma_{m'}}
$$
 (1)

where cov=covariance, σ_m = the standard deviation of *m* while $\sigma_{m'}$ = the standard deviation of *m'*. The coefficients range from −1 to 1, indicating the strength and direction of the correlation. One notable observation is the strong positive correlation between M_R and DMR. As DMR increases, M_R tends to increase as well. Additionally, there's a moderate positive correlation between M_R and the CSAFR, suggesting a potential link between these two factors. Interestingly, WDC exhibit a weak negative correlation with M_{R} , implying that higher WDC values might be associated with slightly lower resilient modulus values. Conversely, the correlation between WDC and other parameters is generally minimal, as most correlation coefficients are close to zero. DMR displays a strong positive correlation with M_R , indicating that these two parameters tend to increase in tandem. Moreover, a weak positive correlation between DMR and CSAFR suggests some degree of alignment between these factors. The σ_3 and σ_d show weak correlations with other parameters, as most correlation coefficients are near zero.

LSTM modeling

LSTM networks are a type of recurrent neural network (RNN) architecture capable of detecting long-term dependencies and patterns in sequential data. They were created to overcome the vanishing gradient issue that

afflicted traditional RNNs, restricting their capacity to accurately capture long-term relationships in sequences. The LSTM has been utilized in various sectors for data prediction and proven excellent performance on a wide range of problems^{49–53}. Hochreiter and Schmidhuber^{54,55} designed LSTM to address the problem posed by classical RNNs56 and ML methods. The central component of an LSTM model is a memory cell known as a 'cell state' that maintains its state across time. The horizontal line across the top of Fig. 2 represents the cell state. It can be likened to a conveyor belt through which information flows unaltered. The LSTM is implemented in Python with the Keras library.

A typical LSTM unit consists of a cell, an input gate, an output gate, and a forget gate. The cell holds values for arbitrary time intervals, and the three gates regulate the flow of information into and out of the cell. Forget gates determine what information to discard from a previous state based on a comparison of the previous state and the current input, resulting in a value between 0 and 1. A number of one suggests that information should be maintained, whereas a value of zero indicates that information should be deleted. Input gates, like forget gates, determine which new information to store in the current state. Output gates control the information that is output from the current state by assigning a value between 0 and 1, while taking past and current states into account. This selective output of important information enables LSTM networks to sustain resilient longterm dependencies, allowing for accurate predictions across multiple time steps. Equations (2)–(7) depict the processes that occur in an LSTM cell.

$$
f_t = \sigma_g \left(W_f x_t + U_f h_{t-1} + b_f \right) \tag{2}
$$

$$
i_t = \sigma_g \left(W_i x_t + U_i h_{t-1} + b_i \right) \tag{3}
$$

$$
o_t = \sigma_g \left(W_o x_t + U_o h_{t-1} + b_o \right) \tag{4}
$$

Fig. 2. Architecture of LSTM Model.

$$
c'_{t} = \sigma_{g} \left(W_{c} x_{t} + U_{c} h_{t-1} + b_{c} \right) \tag{5}
$$

$$
c_t = f_t \odot c_{t-1} + i_t \odot c_{t-1} \tag{6}
$$

$$
h_t = o_t \odot \sigma_h(c_t) \tag{7}
$$

Where f_t is the forget gate, i_t is the input gate, o_t is the output gate, σ is the sigmoid activation function, h_t is the hidden state, c_t and c' is the cell state, \odot represents element-wise multiplication, b_f , b_i , b_o , and b_c are bias vectors. W_f , W_i , and W_i weight for the forget gate, input gate and output gate respectively.

Proposed LSTM Model

The process involves acquiring a dataset (see Appendix A, Tables A1 and A2), dividing it into training (80%) and testing (20%) datasets, and then constructing an LSTM model within a chosen framework. This LSTM model is trained using the training data through multiple epochs, where the model's parameters are optimized using an optimization algorithm to minimize a selected loss function. Following training, the model's performance is assessed on the testing set as shown in Fig. 3.

The deep learning techniques employed in this study were put into action using the Python programming language within a Python idle environment. The execution of these models took place on a Windows 10 system equipped with an Intel(R) Core i3–5th Generation central processing unit and 4 GB of random access memory. the process commences by loading the dataset and segregating the characteristics and the target variable. Following this, the characteristics are standardized utilizing the StandardScaler technique from the 'sklearn. preprocessing' module to standardize the input features before feeding them into the model. StandardScaler is a common technique used in machine learning to normalize the input data so that it has a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. The LSTM model's structure is defined, encompassing LSTM layers, dropout for regularization, and dense layers. This model is compiled employing an optimizer and a loss function. Subsequently, the model is trained on the training dataset and used to predict output variable on the test dataset. The hyperparameters chosen for the LSTM-based model are crucial in determining its effectiveness in analyzing sequential data. The model comprises two LSTM layers, each containing 50 hidden units. The use of the rectified linear unit (relu) activation function within the LSTM layers increases nonlinearity, which improves the ability of the model to capture complicated patterns in the data. To mitigate overfitting, a dropout rate of 0.2 is employed, which randomly deactivates a portion of neurons during training, thus aiding in generalization. The architecture also incorporates two dense layers: the first consists of 10 units, followed by a single output unit. By employing relu activation in the initial dense layer and linear activation in the final one, the model gains the capacity to decipher intricate data relationships while producing continuous outputs. The rmsprop optimizer is applied to facilitate efficient parameter optimization by adaptively adjusting learning rates. The choice of the mean absolute error (MAE) as the loss function assesses prediction accuracy by quantifying the magnitude of errors. The model undergoes training for 500 epochs, each involving a batch size of 4, striking a balance between computational efficiency and convergence precision (see Table 3). These hyperparameters collectively shape the model's architecture, poised to extract meaningful insights from sequential data with precision and efficiency.

Evaluation parameters of LSTM model

Several regression performance indices like R-squared (R2), Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE), Mean Absolute Error (MAE), Mean Squared Error (MSE), Mean Absolute Percentage Error (MAPE), and Mean Absolute

Fig. 3. Workflow of proposed LSTM Model.

Hyper-parameter	Value		
Number of LSTM layers	4		
Number of hidden units per LSTM layer	300		
Activation function for LSTM layers	relu		
Dropout rate for LSTM layers	0.1		
Number of dense layers	2		
Number of units per dense layer	300 and 1		
Activation function for dense layers	relu and linear		
Optimizer	rmsprop		
Loss function	mean absolute error		
Number of epochs	500		
Batch size	$\overline{4}$		

Table 3. Hyper-parameters used for LSTM Model.

Table 4. Results for testing dataset and training dataset.

Deviation (MAD) are calculated during the evaluation stage. These metrics serve to gauge the efficacy of the model's performance, shedding light on the extent to which the model's predictions correlate with the actual target values. The formulations used to calculate these performance metrics are expressed in Eqs. $(8)-(13)^{57-66}$.

$$
R^{2} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (d_{i} - d_{mean})^{2} - \sum_{i=1}^{n} (d_{i} - y_{i})^{2}}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (d_{i} - d_{mean})^{2}}
$$
(8)

$$
RMSE = \sqrt{\frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{n} (d_i - y_i)^2}
$$
\n(9)

$$
MAE = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{n} |(y_i - d_i)|
$$
\n(10)

$$
MAPE = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{n} \left| \frac{d_i - y_i}{d_i} \right| * 100
$$
\n(11)

$$
MSE = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{n} (y_i - d_i)^2
$$
 (12)

$$
MAD = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{n} |(y_i - d_{mean})|
$$
 (13)

where d_i is the *i*th observed value, y_i is the *i*th predicted value, d_{mean} is the mean value of the observed values, *n* is the training or testing samples and *N* indicates the total number of samples.

Results and discussion

LSTM models comparative performance

The LSTM was the data analysis model of choice for this work. The LSTM accuracy is determined by the number of hidden layers, the number of units in each layer, the activation function, the dropout rate, the optimizer, and the loss function. The settings of these parameters that provide the best generalization are often chosen from a range of different values (normally user defined). Table 4 shows the values of the parameters chosen for this study. In this analysis four different LSTM models are developed with different combinations of input variables. Model A considers all five input variables, model B considers four input variables by excluding σ_a , model C considers four input variables by excluding σ_3 , and model D considers three input variables by excluding both σ_d and σ_3 . The performance of these four LSTM models is demonstrated in Figs. 4, 5, 6 and 7, where the predicted values of M_R are compared with actual values of M_R for both training and testing subsets.

The Model A plots (see Fig. 4) depict the model's performance on both the training and testing datasets. It is evident that the model fits well for both sets, as a large number of data points are in close proximity to the

Fig. 4. The predicted versus measured resilient moduli for model "A" based on the training and testing datasets.

Fig. 5. The predicted versus measured resilient moduli for model "B" based on the training and testing datasets.

line with R^2 = 0.995 and 0.980 in training and testing datasets respectively. The values of RMSE (128.315), MSE (16464.860), MAE (94.905), MAPE (2.696), and MAD (1421.357) for training dataset and RMSE (242.463), MSE (58788.263), MAE (152.427), MAPE (4.139), and MAD (1248.695) for testing dataset indicating that the model A has a low error rate when compared to the models B, C and D. Furthermore, The ANN model yielded the values for MAE of 245, respectively, the GEP model manifested 764 respectively¹⁵, whereas the GPR model resulted R^2 (0.9979), RMSE (85.5743), MAPE (1.2873), MAD (1060.7312), and MAE (47.4161) in training dataset and R^2 (0.9849), RMSE (242.6246), MAPE (4.3140), MAD (1068.1651), and MAE (159.0427) in testing dataset with five inputs of Model A⁴⁷. The GPR and LSTM models almost showed compatible performance based on their performance indices but exceeded in accuracy in comparison with the GEP and ANN models.

The Model B plots (see Fig. 5) show the actual vs. predicted M_p values for training and testing sets, after removing σ_d variable from input. Comparing these plots to the previous ones, where five input variables were utilized, it is clear that excluding variable σ_d has a detrimental impact on the model's performance. The accuracy of predictions is reduced, and the errors are increased when *σ_d* is removed from the model. This finding suggests that σ_d is an essential and relevant variable that significantly influences M_R concentration. By eliminating this variable, the model loses valuable information critical for making accurate predictions. Therefore, it is evident that σ_{μ} plays a crucial role in the model's ability to capture the complexities and variations in $M_{\rm n}$ concentration.

The Model C plots (see Fig. 6) show the actual vs. predicted M_R values for both viz. training and testing sets, after removing σ_3 variable from input. The Model C plots clearly demonstrate that σ_3 does not play a significant role in determining M_p .

Fig. 6. The predicted versus measured resilient moduli for model "C" based on the training and testing datasets.

Fig. 7. The predicted versus measured resilient moduli for model "D" based on the training and testing datasets.

The Model D plots (see Fig. 7) show the actual vs. predicted M_R values for both the training and testing datasets, after removing the σ_3 and σ_d variables from the input set. Comparing these plots to the previous ones, where four input variables were utilized, it becomes apparent that removing variable *σ_d* has a negative impact on the model's performance. Although the reduction in accuracy and increase in error are slight, they are still noticeable. This observation suggests that σ_d is an important and relevant variable that significantly influences M_R concentration. By removing σ_3 and σ_d variables from the model, valuable information related to M_R concentration is lost, which affects the model's ability to make accurate predictions.

The accuracy of all developed models at predicting M_R values is depicted in Fig. 8a-d for the training dataset and Fig. 9a-d for the testing dataset. The LSTM Model A (see Fig. 8 (a) and Fig. 9 (a)) provided the most reliable prediction, as seen in these graphs. Except for a few noise points, this is demonstrated by the increased aggregation of data around the y axis (i.e., *y*=0). In contrast to the other models, namely Models B, C, and D, the comparison results are sufficiently consistent, indicating that the proposed LSTM Model A is capable of predicting M_R values.

Comparison with literature

Table 5 lists the performance indices' values as well as the various input parameter combinations. The results shown in Table 5 demonstrate that LSTM model A works better when all the input factors are used with R^2 of 0.995 and MSE of 16464.860. This accuracy is significantly more than the R^2 value of 0.6851 for the LS approach 43 and R² value of 0.9593 for SVM method 43 as Table 5 indicates, on any combination. In addition, with

Fig. 8. Comparison of the LSTM Models results in the training dataset (**a**) Model A, (**b**) Model B, (**c**) Model C, and Model D in predicting M_R values.

the exception of model A, LSTM models B and D outperformed the LS and SVM approaches, with R^2 values of 0.920 and 0.905, respectively. As can be seen, depending on the number of input parameters, the accuracy of the LSTM model can be more than the SVM and LS methods except in model C. However, if all input parameters are considered, the accuracy of the LSTM model is much higher than the SVM and LS models, so that the R^2 for the LSTM model is 0.995 more than the R^2 (0.6400) for the SVM model and R^2 (0.6851) for the LS model. Furthermore, the scatter plots (Figs. 4 and 5, and 7) show that the LSTM model outperforms the LS and SVM approaches in predicting M_n , with variations around the 45 \degree line. In general, the LSTM model A outperforms in terms of generalization and reliability, yielding superior prediction outcomes.

SHAP Analysis

The SHAP method effectively depicts the impact of each input variable on an ML model's predictions. The idea is based on cooperative game theory, in which the Shapley values are employed to evaluate each player's contribution to the coalition. Equation (14) determines the Shapley values Φ_p which are the core of this methodology. *F* is the set of all input features, and *S* is a subset of *F* that excludes the feature with index *i*. Equation (14) defines the impact of a feature as the differences in model outputs when a feature is included and deleted from the collection of input features.

$$
\Phi_{i} = \sum_{S \subseteq F\{i\}} \frac{|S|! \, (|F| - |S| - 1)!}{|F|!} [f_{S \cup \{i\}} \left(x_{S \cup \{i\}} \right) - f_{S}(x_{S})] \tag{14}
$$

Figure 10 shows a SHAP summary graphic that ranks each input feature based on its influence on the output of the LSTM model A. Each feature's SHAP value indicates its contribution to the model's prediction. Positive SHAP values suggest that the feature increases the prediction, while negative values indicate a decrease (see Fig. 10). Figure 10 shows that DMR is the most important factor in predicting M_p , followed by the WDC. It can be seen that increasing the DMR and WDC, has an increasing effect on model predictions. The same is validated from the literature that DMR is the most influential input followed by WDC in the GEP model15.

The SHAP values of all features added together indicate why the prediction differed from the baseline. This enables us to decompose a prediction in the graph depicted in Fig. 11. The predicted model output value is 4325.87, whereas the base value is 3733. The greater the size of the arrow, the greater the impact. A red arrow moves the result to the right (increases the model output value), while a blue arrow moves the result to the left (decreases the model output value). The greatest influence comes from σ_3 being 1.39. Despite the fact that the DMR value has a significant effect on the prediction.

Fig. 9. Comparison of the LSTM Models results in the testing dataset (**a**) Model A, (**b**) Model B, (**c**) Model C, and Model D in predicting M_R values.

Table 5. Comparative performance of LSTM models with models developed in literature.

Fig. 11. SHAP force plot for the LSTM model A.

Fig. 12. Degree of sensitivity analysis for predicted M_p .

Sensitivity analysis

Sensitivity analysis is a technique that helps to understand how different factors or inputs affect the output of a model. The Cosine amplitude approach is used to calculate the relationship between the M_p and the input parameters. The following equation is used to calculate the degree of sensitivity index for each input parameter.

$$
R_{ij} = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{n} x_{ij} y_j}{\sqrt{\sum_{j=1}^{n} x_{ij}^2 \sum_{j=1}^{n} y_j^2}}
$$
\n(15)

where R_{ij} shows the degree of sensitivity index of each input parameter, x_{ij} presents the i^{th} independent variable for the j^{th} dependent variable and y_j represents the dependent variable for the j^{th} data point. Strong correlation between the input and output variable is indicated by a *Rij* value close to 1, whereas weak correlation between the input and output variable is indicated by a R_{ij} value close to 0. WDC has the highest degree of sensitivity index (0.273), as seen in Fig. 12, which means that changing WDC has the most impact on M_R . On the other hand, $\sigma₃$ has the lowest degree of sensitivity index (0.003), which means that changing σ_3 has the least impact on M_R . The degree of importance can be presented as WDC>CSAFR>DMR> σ_d >σ₃.

Graphical user interface

Graphical User Interface (GUI) is user-friendly tool that leverage ML-based prediction model to predict the M_R . The package has a broad collection of LSTM algorithm. The prediction model does not need to be retrained for M_p estimation because it was already trained on experimental data points. The GUI is well-designed and simple to use (see Fig. 13). Once the user enters the required parameters into the GUI, the trained ML algorithm

Please input the following parameters to predict MR:

Fig. 13. The developed GUI.

can accurately predict the M_R . When compared to other approaches, the GUI offers fast and cost-effective M_R estimation with great accuracy. Furthermore, it is a significant platform for academics interested in accumulating M_p -related datasets. The computing time for an LSTM model is less than 60 s. The GUI is available online at <https://lstmmrprediction-7m6j96pn2qmxemkeqxuzaq.streamlit.app/>.

Conclusions

LSTM model is developed in this study for the prediction of resilient modulus of stabilized base material with input parameters, including WDC, CSAFR, DMR, σ_d , and σ_3 . The main findings are given as:

(1) Pearson correlation coefficient results indicate the strength of the association between two variables: DMR and CSAFR have a strong positive correlation with M_p , while WDC has a negative correlation with M_p . Furthermore, σ_3 and σ_d show a weak positive coorealtion with M_R in experimental data.

(2) Model "A" performs best with R^2 and RMSE values of 0.995 and 128.315 for the training set and 0.980 and 242.463 for the testing set, while model "D" performs lower with R^2 and RMSE values of 0.905 and 583.745 for the training set and 0.903 and 540.150 for the testing set. The results conclude that LSTM model A accuracy is significantly more than the R^2 value of 0.6851 for the LS approach and R^2 value of 0.9593 for SVM method reported in literature.

(3) The results showed that omitting the σ_d variable in model "B" resulted in a more substantial loss in model accuracy compared to excluding the σ_3 variable in model "C". This shows that the M_R of stabilized base materials is more influenced by deviator stress (σ_d) than by confining stress (σ_3) , as evidenced by the greater impact on accuracy when σ_3 is omitted from the model. The DMR has the greatest influence in predicting the M_R, followed by the WDC and σ_d .

(4) The DMR was the most significant input variable according to the SHAP approach, followed by the WDC, σ_d , CSAFR, and σ_3 .

(5) The sensitivity analysis unveiled that WDC held the highest level of significance in its contribution to M_R. Moreover, CSAFR and DMR were identified as the subsequent key factors. In contrast, σ_d and σ_3 demonstrated the least significance in the prediction of M_R values. The degree of importance can be presented as WDC>CSAFR>DMR> $\sigma_d > \sigma_3$

(6) To enhance the prediction of the M_R for engineering challenges, a cutting-edge GUI for the LSTM-based model was meticulously developed.

In the future, a larger database can be established to further illustrate the adequacy of LSTM algorithm for the prediction of resilient modulus. The influences of other indicators on the prediction results are essential to be analyzed. The methodology can also be applied in other fields, such as the liquefaction-induced lateral spread, unconfined compressive strength of rocks, and settlement of shallow foundation.

Data availability

Data is provided within the manuscript or supplementary information files.

Appendix A

Table A1. Training dataset used in LSTM modeling.

Table A2. Testing dataset used in LSTM model validation.

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Declarations

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

Additional information

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