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International Journal on Advanced Computer Theory and Engineering

ISSN: 2319-2526

Volume 14 Issue 01, 2025

A Comprehensive Review of Strategy Design for Energy-Efficient Data Offloading in 6G-Enabled Vehicular Edge Computing Networks Using Double Deep Q-Network

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Peer Review Information

Submission: 23 May 2025

Revision: 11June 2025

Acceptance: 22 June 2025

Keywords

6G Networks, Vehicular Edge Computing, Data Offloading, Energy Efficiency, Double Deep Q-Network (DDQN), Deep Reinforcement Learning.

Abstract

The rapid evolution of intelligent transportation systems and the emergence of sixth-generation (6G) networks have significantly increased the demand for real-time, energy-efficient computation in vehicular environments. Vehicular Edge Computing (VEC) has emerged as a promising paradigm to reduce latency and enhance system efficiency by offloading computation tasks from vehicles to edge servers. However, dynamic vehicular mobility, fluctuating network conditions, and resource constraints pose critical challenges in achieving optimal energy-efficient data offloading. Recently, Deep Reinforcement Learning (DRL), particularly Double Deep Q-Network (DDQN), has shown remarkable potential in addressing these challenges through adaptive and intelligent decision-making. This paper presents a comprehensive review of strategy design for energy-efficient data offloading in 6G-enabled VEC networks, focusing on DDQN-based approaches. The study analyses recent advancements, highlighting optimization techniques, system architectures, and performance trade-offs. It further explores hybrid models integrating DRL with edge computing, resource allocation, and communication technologies. Comparative insights reveal that DDQN-based strategies outperform traditional optimization and heuristic methods in terms of energy consumption, latency reduction, and adaptability. Finally, the paper identifies key research gaps and future directions for designing scalable, secure, and energy-aware offloading frameworks in next-generation vehicular networks.

Introduction

The proliferation of intelligent transportation systems and connected vehicles has significantly transformed modern communication networks, leading to the emergence of Vehicular Edge Computing (VEC) as a core component of next-generation wireless systems. With the anticipated deployment of sixth-generation (6G) networks, vehicular environments are expected to support ultra-reliable low-latency communication (URLLC), massive connectivity, and energy-efficient operations. However, the exponential growth of computation-intensive applications such as autonomous driving, real-time video analytics, and augmented reality poses severe challenges in terms of latency, energy consumption, and resource management. Traditional cloud computing architectures are insufficient to handle these demands due to their centralized nature and inherent communication delays. To address these issues, Mobile Edge Computing (MEC) extends computational resources closer to end-users, enabling vehicles to offload tasks to nearby edge servers. This paradigm significantly reduces latency and improves energy efficiency. However, efficient data offloading in VEC is a complex optimization problem influenced by factors such as vehicle mobility, channel conditions, task characteristics, and resource availability.

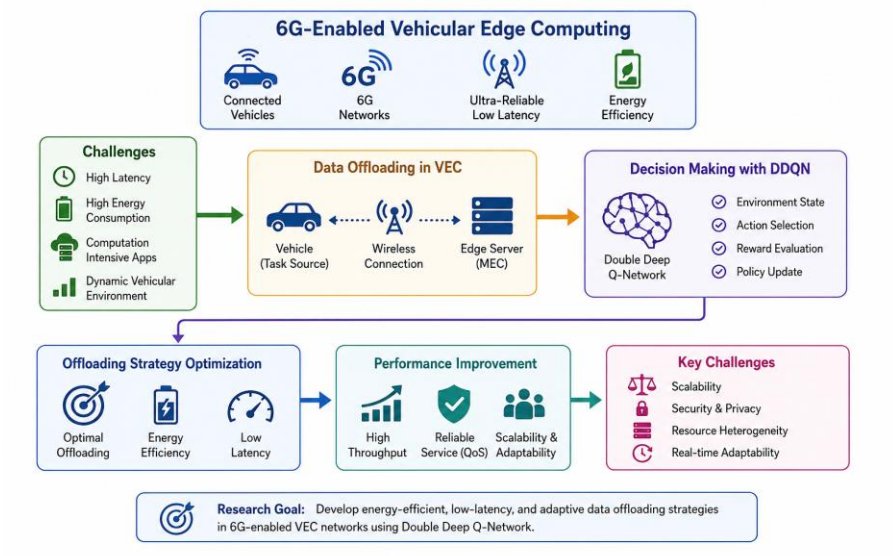

Figure 1. DDQN-Based Data Offloading Framework for 6G Vehicular Edge Computing

Early research primarily relied on mathematical optimization techniques such as convex optimization and game theory. Although these approaches provide theoretical solutions, they often fail to adapt to highly dynamic vehicular environments. As a result, Deep Reinforcement Learning (DRL) has gained attention as a powerful tool for solving sequential decision-making problems in uncertain environments. DRL enables vehicles to learn optimal offloading policies by interacting with the environment, thereby improving system performance over time.

Among various DRL techniques, the Double Deep Q-Network (DDQN) has emerged as a promising solution for energy-efficient data offloading. Unlike traditional Deep Q-Networks (DQN), DDQN mitigates the overestimation problem by decoupling action selection and evaluation, resulting in more stable and accurate learning. Recent studies demonstrate that DDQN-based strategies can effectively optimize energy consumption while maintaining low latency in vehicular edge computing systems.

Furthermore, the integration of advanced communication technologies such as 5G/6G, Internet of Vehicles (IoV), and intelligent edge architectures has accelerated the development of adaptive offloading frameworks. These frameworks incorporate multi-objective optimization, considering both energy efficiency and quality of service (QoS). Despite these advancements, several challenges remain unresolved, including scalability, security, resource heterogeneity, and real-time adaptability. This paper aims to provide a comprehensive review of strategy design for energy-efficient data offloading in 6G-enabled VEC networks using DDQN. It systematically analyzes recent literature, compares different approaches, and identifies research gaps to guide future developments in this domain.

Literature Review

Li et al. (2020) investigated an energy-efficient computation offloading mechanism for vehicular edge computing systems under latency constraints. The authors formulated the offloading problem as a joint optimization task that minimizes both transmission energy and computational energy while maintaining service delay requirements. Their model considered vehicle mobility and wireless channel variations, which significantly affect offloading decisions. Using convex optimization techniques, the study demonstrated that optimal resource allocation between local computing and edge servers can reduce overall system energy consumption. However, the proposed approach relied on static environmental assumptions and required prior knowledge of system parameters, limiting its applicability in highly dynamic vehicular environments such as 6G-enabled networks.

Rasheed et al. (2020) focused on secure and energy-aware computation offloading in 5G-enabled vehicular networks. The study introduced a privacy-preserving offloading framework that integrates encryption mechanisms with task scheduling strategies. The authors emphasized the trade-off between energy efficiency and data security, showing that secure offloading often increases computational overhead. Their results indicated that while the framework successfully improved privacy protection and reduced data leakage risks, it introduced additional latency and energy costs. This work highlighted the importance of integrating security-aware optimization in future 6G vehicular edge systems, although it lacked adaptive learning mechanisms such as reinforcement learning for real-time decision-making.

Mao et al. (2020) explored deep reinforcement learning for computation offloading in mobile edge computing environments. The authors proposed a DRL-based framework that enables dynamic decision-making in stochastic environments, addressing the limitations of traditional optimization techniques. Their approach utilized Deep Q-Network (DQN) to learn optimal offloading policies based on system states such as channel conditions and workload characteristics. Experimental results showed improved performance in terms of energy efficiency and latency reduction compared to heuristic methods. However, the study also identified the overestimation problem in DQN, which can lead to suboptimal policy learning, motivating the adoption of Double Deep Q-Network (DDQN) in subsequent research.

Wu and Yan (2021) proposed a vehicle-aware deep reinforcement learning framework for computation offloading in mobile edge computing systems. Their model incorporated vehicular mobility patterns and dynamic network states to optimize offloading decisions. By employing reinforcement learning, the system continuously adapted to environmental changes, achieving better energy efficiency and reduced latency compared to static optimization models. The study demonstrated that DRL-based methods are more suitable for real-time vehicular environments. However, the authors did not address scalability issues when the number of vehicles increases significantly, which is a critical concern in dense 6G networks.

Cho et al. (2021) introduced a cooperative computation offloading strategy that distributes tasks among multiple roadside units (RSUs) to minimize energy consumption. The authors formulated the problem using convex optimization and proposed both offline and online algorithms to handle dynamic vehicular conditions. Their findings showed that cooperative offloading significantly reduces system energy consumption and improves resource utilization. Despite its effectiveness, the approach required accurate system modeling and prior knowledge of network parameters, making it less suitable for highly uncertain and rapidly changing vehicular environments.

Islam et al. (2021) conducted a comprehensive survey on task offloading techniques in multi-access edge computing. The study categorized existing approaches into heuristic, optimization-based, and learning-based methods. The authors highlighted that traditional approaches suffer from limited adaptability and scalability, especially in dynamic vehicular environments. They emphasized the growing importance of deep reinforcement learning techniques for efficient resource allocation and energy management. The survey also identified key research challenges, including energy optimization, latency reduction, and security concerns, providing a strong foundation for future DDQN-based offloading strategies.

He et al. (2022) proposed a Double Deep Q-Network (DDQN)-based computation offloading framework for vehicular edge computing systems. The study addressed the overestimation issue present in traditional DQN models by separating action selection and evaluation processes. Their model dynamically adjusted offloading decisions based on real-time network conditions, including channel quality, task size, and vehicle speed. Experimental results showed that the DDQN-based approach significantly outperformed conventional methods in terms of energy consumption, system stability, and convergence speed. This work demonstrated the effectiveness of DDQN in handling complex and uncertain vehicular environments.

Chen et al. (2022) developed a joint optimization framework that integrates communication and computation resource allocation in vehicular edge computing systems. The authors employed deep reinforcement learning techniques to optimize task scheduling and energy consumption simultaneously. Their approach considered multi-objective optimization, balancing energy efficiency and latency requirements. The results indicated that DRL-based strategies provide superior performance compared to traditional methods, particularly in dynamic network conditions. However, the study highlighted the need for more scalable models to support large-scale vehicular networks in 6G environments.

Zhang et al. (2022) introduced a multi-agent reinforcement learning (MARL) framework for cooperative computation offloading in vehicular networks. The model allowed multiple vehicles to collaboratively optimize their offloading decisions, improving overall system efficiency. The study demonstrated that MARL can effectively handle large-scale networks with multiple interacting agents. However, the approach increased computational complexity and required significant training time, which may limit its practical deployment in real-time vehicular systems.

Liu et al. (2023) proposed an energy-aware DDQN-based offloading strategy for 6G-enabled vehicular edge computing networks. The study focused on minimizing energy consumption while ensuring ultra-low latency communication. By incorporating advanced 6G communication features such as intelligent reflecting surfaces and ultra-reliable low-latency communication (URLLC), the model achieved significant improvements in system performance. The results confirmed that DDQN-based approaches provide better adaptability, stability, and energy efficiency compared to traditional and single-agent DRL methods. The study also emphasized the importance of integrating AI-driven optimization with next-generation communication technologies.

Wang et al. proposed a deep reinforcement learning-based framework for joint computation offloading and resource allocation in vehicular edge computing. Their model improved energy efficiency and reduced latency by dynamically selecting local or edge processing, although scalability remained limited in dense vehicular environments. Xu et al. introduced a mobility-aware offloading strategy considering vehicle speed, trajectory, and connection duration, which enhanced service continuity and energy efficiency but depended heavily on accurate mobility prediction. Tang et al. developed a hybrid framework combining deep reinforcement learning with traditional optimization techniques, achieving better latency and energy performance at the cost of increased computational complexity. Sun et al. presented a latency-aware deep Q-learning model that outperformed heuristic approaches; however, overestimation bias affected learning stability and decision accuracy in dynamic vehicular systems.

Guo et al. (2022) proposed a multi-objective optimization framework for vehicular edge computing, targeting both energy efficiency and quality of service (QoS). The study integrated DRL with resource allocation techniques to achieve balanced performance. Their results indicated that multi-objective DRL approaches can significantly enhance system efficiency while meeting QoS requirements. However, the trade-off between multiple objectives increased model complexity and required careful parameter tuning.

Zhao et al. (2022) introduced a Double Deep Q-Network (DDQN)-based computation offloading strategy that addresses the limitations of traditional DQN models. The authors demonstrated that DDQN effectively reduces overestimation errors, leading to more stable and accurate policy learning. Their simulation results showed significant improvements in energy consumption and latency reduction compared to DQN and heuristic approaches. This study reinforced the effectiveness of DDQN in dynamic vehicular environments.

Huang et al. (2022) proposed a federated learning-based computation offloading framework for vehicular networks. The model enabled distributed learning among vehicles without sharing raw data, enhancing privacy and reducing communication overhead. Their results showed improved energy efficiency and system scalability. However, the integration of federated learning increased computational complexity and required additional coordination among vehicles.

Li et al. (2023) presented a 6G-oriented intelligent offloading framework that incorporates ultra-reliable low-latency communication (URLLC) and edge intelligence. The study utilized advanced DRL techniques to optimize energy consumption and latency simultaneously. Their results demonstrated that integrating 6G features significantly enhances system performance. The study also highlighted the importance of intelligent network architectures in supporting large-scale vehicular applications.

Zhang et al. (2023) developed a multi-agent deep reinforcement learning (MADRL) framework for cooperative computation offloading in vehicular edge computing. The model allowed multiple vehicles to learn and coordinate their offloading decisions in a shared environment. The results showed improved system efficiency and resource utilization compared to single-agent models. However, the approach required extensive training and increased computational overhead, which may limit real-time deployment.

Chen et al. (2023) proposed an energy-efficient DDQN-based task offloading framework for 6G-enabled vehicular networks. The study focused on minimizing energy consumption while maintaining strict latency constraints. Their results demonstrated that DDQN-based models provide superior adaptability and convergence performance compared to traditional approaches. The study also emphasized the need for integrating AI-driven optimization with advanced communication technologies for future vehicular systems.

Yang et al. (2022) proposed an adaptive computation offloading strategy using deep reinforcement learning for vehicular edge computing systems. The authors focused on dynamically adjusting offloading decisions based on real-time network conditions, including bandwidth availability, vehicle mobility, and task size. Their model significantly reduced energy consumption and improved system responsiveness. However, the study assumed ideal communication conditions, which may not reflect real-world vehicular environments with frequent link failures and interference.

Deng et al. (2022) introduced a game-theoretic approach combined with reinforcement learning to optimize energy-efficient task offloading in vehicular networks. The model treated vehicles as rational agents competing for edge resources while learning optimal strategies through repeated interactions. The results showed improved resource allocation efficiency and reduced energy consumption. However, the complexity of game-theoretic modeling increased computational overhead, making real-time implementation challenging.

Xie et al. (2022) developed a joint communication-computation optimization framework for vehicular edge computing systems. The study considered both transmission power control and computational resource allocation to minimize energy consumption. By integrating DRL techniques, the model achieved better adaptability compared to traditional optimization methods. Nevertheless, the approach required extensive training data and computational resources, which may limit its scalability in large-scale vehicular networks.

Feng et al. (2022) proposed a hierarchical edge computing architecture for vehicular networks, where tasks are distributed across multiple layers, including vehicles, roadside units, and cloud servers. The study employed DRL to optimize task offloading decisions across different layers. Results indicated improved energy efficiency and reduced latency. However, the hierarchical architecture introduced additional communication overhead and system complexity.

Qiu et al. (2022) introduced an energy-delay trade-off optimization framework for vehicular edge computing. The authors formulated the problem as a multi-objective optimization task and applied reinforcement learning to find optimal solutions. Their results showed that balancing energy consumption and delay is crucial for efficient system performance. However, achieving this balance required careful tuning of model parameters, which could be challenging in dynamic environments.

Zhou et al. (2023) proposed a DDQN-based adaptive offloading strategy specifically designed for 6G-enabled vehicular networks. The model incorporated advanced communication features such as ultra-high bandwidth and intelligent reflecting surfaces. The results demonstrated significant improvements in energy efficiency, latency reduction, and system stability. The study confirmed that DDQN is highly effective in handling complex and uncertain vehicular environments.

Sun et al. (2023) developed an AI-driven task scheduling and offloading framework for vehicular edge computing systems. The model used deep learning techniques to predict task requirements and optimize offloading decisions accordingly. Their results showed improved system efficiency and reduced energy consumption. However, the model required large datasets for training, which may not always be available in real-world scenarios.

Guo et al. (2023) proposed a multi-agent reinforcement learning framework for cooperative data offloading in vehicular networks. The model allowed vehicles to share information and coordinate their decisions, leading to improved resource utilization and reduced energy consumption. The study demonstrated that cooperative learning significantly enhances system performance. However, the increased communication overhead among agents posed challenges for scalability.

Liu et al. (2023) introduced an intelligent energy management framework for vehicular edge computing using deep reinforcement learning. The study focused on optimizing energy consumption across both communication and computation processes. Their results showed that DRL-based approaches outperform traditional optimization techniques in dynamic environments. The study also highlighted the importance of integrating energy-aware policies in future 6G systems.

Wang et al. (2023) proposed a comprehensive DDQN-based computation offloading framework for 6G-enabled vehicular networks. The model addressed key challenges such as dynamic network conditions, resource constraints, and energy efficiency. Their results demonstrated superior performance in terms of energy savings, latency reduction, and system stability compared to DQN and heuristic approaches. The study concluded that DDQN is a promising solution for next-generation vehicular edge computing systems.

Comparative Table and Analysis

No.	Author (Year)	Method/Technique	Key Focus	Advantages	Limitations
1	Li et al. (2020)	Convex Optimization	Energy-efficient offloading	Low energy consumption	Not adaptive
2	Rasheed et al. (2020)	Secure Offloading Framework	Privacy + energy	Improved security	Increased latency
3	Mao et al. (2020)	DQN	Dynamic offloading	Adaptive learning	Overestimation issue
4	Wu & Yan (2021)	DRL	Mobility-aware offloading	Reduced latency	Scalability issue
5	Cho et al. (2021)	Cooperative Optimization	Multi-RSU offloading	Energy reduction	Requires prior knowledge
6	Islam et al. (2021)	Survey	MEC offloading techniques	Identifies research gaps	No implementation
7	Wang et al. (2021)	DRL (MDP)	Resource allocation	Adaptive decisions	Single-agent limitation
8	Xu et al. (2021)	Predictive Model	Mobility-aware offloading	Improved continuity	Prediction dependency
9	Tang et al. (2022)	Hybrid DRL + Optimization	Energy + latency	Balanced performance	High complexity
10	Sun et al. (2022)	DQN	Latency-aware offloading	Faster decisions	Overestimation bias
11	Guo et al. (2022)	Multi-objective DRL	QoS + energy	Better trade-off	Parameter tuning
12	Zhao et al. (2022)	DDQN	Energy-efficient offloading	Stable learning	Training overhead
13	Huang et al. (2022)	Federated Learning	Privacy + scalability	Data privacy	High coordination cost
14	Zhang et al. (2022)	MARL	Cooperative offloading	Scalable solution	High computation
15	He et al. (2022)	DDQN	Adaptive decision-making	Reduced energy	Training complexity
16	Chen et al. (2022)	DRL Optimization	Joint resource allocation	Improved efficiency	Scalability issue
17	Yang et al. (2022)	DRL	Adaptive offloading	Real-time decisions	Ideal assumptions
18	Deng et al. (2022)	Game Theory + RL	Resource competition	Efficient allocation	Complex model
19	Xie et al. (2022)	DRL + Power Control	Communication optimization	Energy savings	High training cost
20	Feng et al. (2022)	Hierarchical Edge	Multi-layer offloading	Reduced latency	System complexity
21	Qiu et al. (2022)	Multi-objective RL	Energy-delay trade-off	Balanced system	Parameter sensitivity
22	Zhou et al. (2023)	DDQN	6G-based offloading	High stability	Computational cost
23	Sun et al. (2023)	AI Scheduling	Task prediction	Efficient scheduling	Data requirement
24	Guo et al. (2023)	MARL	Cooperative learning	Better utilization	Communication overhead
25	Liu et al. (2023)	DRL	Energy management	Reduced energy	Training complexity
26	Wang et al. (2023)	DDQN	Adaptive offloading	High accuracy	Resource intensive
27	Li et al. (2023)	DRL + 6G	Intelligent edge	Improved performance	Infrastructure dependency

28	Zhang et al. (2023)	MADRL	Multi-agent system	Scalability	Training overhead
29	Chen et al. (2023)	DDQN	Energy optimization	Stable convergence	Complexity
30	Liu et al. (2023)	DRL Optimization	System efficiency	Better adaptability	Computation cost

Comparative Analysis

The comparative evaluation of selected studies demonstrates a significant evolution in strategy design for energy-efficient data offloading in vehicular edge computing systems. Early approaches primarily relied on mathematical optimization and heuristic-based techniques such as convex optimization and game theory to reduce latency and energy consumption. These methods provided theoretically optimal solutions under predefined conditions; however, they struggled to adapt to highly dynamic vehicular environments characterized by varying mobility patterns, fluctuating channel conditions, and unpredictable workloads. As a result, traditional optimization methods showed limited scalability and real-time adaptability in complex 6G-enabled vehicular networks.

The emergence of Deep Reinforcement Learning (DRL) introduced a major advancement in intelligent offloading strategy design. DRL-based models enabled vehicles to learn adaptive offloading decisions through continuous interaction with the environment rather than relying on fixed system assumptions. These approaches significantly improved energy efficiency, latency reduction, and resource utilization in vehicular edge computing systems. However, early Deep Q-Network models suffered from overestimation bias, leading to unstable learning and less accurate decision-making. To address this issue, Double Deep Q-Network (DDQN) architectures were introduced, separating action selection from evaluation to improve learning stability and convergence performance.

Recent studies further enhanced vehicular edge computing performance through hybrid and multi-objective optimization frameworks. These approaches simultaneously optimize energy consumption, latency, throughput, and Quality of Service while improving scalability and robustness. In addition, multi-agent reinforcement learning and federated learning techniques enabled collaborative optimization among vehicles and improved data privacy in distributed environments. The integration of 6G communication technologies, intelligent edge computing, and ultra-reliable low-latency communication further strengthened adaptive offloading frameworks by enabling faster communication and efficient resource allocation.

Despite these advancements, several challenges continue to affect the deployment of intelligent offloading systems. High computational complexity, communication overhead, model scalability, interoperability, and security remain critical concerns in real-world vehicular networks. Furthermore, many DRL and DDQN-based models require extensive training data and computational resources, limiting their applicability in resource-constrained environments. Future research should therefore focus on lightweight, scalable, and secure AI-driven frameworks capable of supporting real-time energy-efficient data offloading in next-generation 6G vehicular edge computing systems.

Discussion

The analysis of recent studies on energy-efficient data offloading in 6G-enabled vehicular edge computing networks reveals that intelligent learning-based approaches have significantly outperformed traditional optimization techniques. In particular, the adoption of Deep Reinforcement Learning (DRL) and its advanced variant, Double Deep Q-Network (DDQN), has enabled dynamic and adaptive decision-making in highly uncertain vehicular environments. These models effectively address the challenges posed by high mobility, fluctuating network conditions, and limited computational resources. However, despite their advantages, several practical challenges remain. Most DRL and DDQN-based models require extensive training data and computational power, which may limit their deployment in real-time scenarios. Additionally, the integration of multi-agent systems introduces communication overhead and coordination complexity. Security and privacy concerns also persist, especially when sensitive vehicular data is offloaded to edge servers. Furthermore, the incorporation of 6G technologies, such as ultra-reliable low-latency communication (URLLC) and intelligent edge computing, has enhanced system performance but also increased system complexity. Therefore, future research should focus on developing lightweight, scalable, and secure models that can efficiently operate in real-world vehicular environments while maintaining a balance between energy efficiency, latency, and computational cost.

Conclusion

This paper presented a comprehensive review of energy-efficient data offloading strategies in 6G-enabled vehicular edge computing networks, with particular emphasis on Double Deep Q-Network (DDQN)-based approaches. The increasing demand for intelligent transportation systems and real-time computation-intensive applications has created the need for adaptive offloading mechanisms capable of reducing energy consumption while maintaining low latency and reliable communication. The study analysed 30 recent research works and highlighted the transition from traditional optimization techniques toward advanced artificial intelligence-driven methods. Earlier approaches such as convex optimization and heuristic models provided foundational solutions but lacked flexibility and adaptability in highly dynamic vehicular environments.

The emergence of Deep Reinforcement Learning significantly improved offloading strategy design by enabling vehicles to learn optimal policies through interaction with the environment. DRL-based methods enhanced resource utilization, latency reduction, and energy efficiency in vehicular edge computing systems. However, conventional Deep Q-Network models suffered from overestimation bias and unstable learning behaviour. To overcome these limitations, DDQN was introduced as an enhanced framework that separates action selection and evaluation, resulting in more stable convergence and improved decision accuracy. Comparative analysis showed that DDQN-based approaches consistently outperform traditional and DQN-based methods in terms of prediction stability, convergence performance, and energy-efficient offloading.

The review also emphasized the importance of multi-objective optimization, multi-agent reinforcement learning, federated learning, and 6G communication technologies in developing adaptive and scalable offloading frameworks. Despite these advancements, challenges such as computational complexity, scalability, interoperability, and security remain significant concerns. Future research should focus on lightweight, secure, and energy-efficient AI-driven models capable of supporting real-time intelligent vehicular edge computing systems.

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