International Journal for Novel Research in Economics , Finance and Management
www.ijnrefm.com
ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 4, July-Aug-2026, PP: 01-8

Applications of Graph Theory in Modern Network Analysis

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***Abstract* – The modern network architectures, be it the power grids, social media websites or even telecommunication networks, have a very complex network topology that is difficult to analyze using the existing tools. This research paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of graph theoretical methods used in modern networks analysis. The paper puts forward a framework that combines classical graph metrics (Wiener Index, Laplacian Energy, Centrality) with graph database techniques and machine learning techniques. With the use of a case study on the European power grid network, it becomes clear how the topological indices, community detection algorithms, and centrality analyses can measure the resilience of the network, critical infrastructure components of the network and price hidden structures in the network. The paper proves that graph theoretical methods have better interpretability and real-time analysis capabilities when compared to relational database methods.**

Keywords - **Graph Theory, Network Analysis, Power Grid, Topological Indices, Centrality Measures, Graph Neural Networks, Network Resilience**

I. INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, there has been an unparalleled growth of networked systems that facilitate almost all aspects of modern life [1][3][7]. From the electricity distribution networks lighting up the cities, to social networks connecting billions of people, from internet connectivity that has brought the world closer through instant communication to transport networks moving products and people around, networked systems have become the unseen backbone of modern-day life [1][3][7]. As such, network analysis and understanding how to analyze them (the networks), has turned into a paramount challenge for the researcher, engineer, and policy maker [1][3][7].

Conventional methods of network analysis have used relational database models and linear optimization techniques that, while useful in many instances, fall short when trying to account for the complex relationships of the new networks and the optimization capabilities of those networks [2][7][9]. Relational databases that use tables for organizing data are great at handling transactional processes but very poor in modeling hierarchical structures within networks, in pinpointing critical nodes in the network, simulating cascading failures of the network, and in handling path redundancy [2][7][9].

Graph theory provides an alternative that is mathematically robust enough to solve all of these problems [1][3][7]. With the help of graph theory, we can model different network components using vertices and their relationships using edges [1][3][7]. It gives a perfect structure in which analytical methods can be used [1][3][7]. For example, there are shortest path algorithms to find routes, centrality algorithms to find important nodes, community detection algorithms to find communities, and spectral measures to find global network measures [1][3][7].

The last ten years brought graph theory together with new advances in computational technologies [4][6]. There appeared special databases like Neo4j that were designed to store and query data in the graph structure [1][2]. They provide real-time traversing of relationships, pattern matching, and complex graph algorithms using query languages [1][2]. At the same time, the branch of graph machine learning became quite advanced with Graph Neural Networks, Graph Convolutional Networks, and Graph Attention Networks showing excellent results in node classification, link prediction, community detection, and influence analysis tasks [6][8][10].

In this paper, the main gap addressed is the insufficient use of the knowledge about the classical spectral and topological distance-based indices (Wiener index, Laplacian energy, reverse Wiener index and so forth), which are the result of the research in pure mathematics, with practical infrastructure analysis using graph databases technologies [1][9]. Although spectral indices like Wiener index, Laplacian energy, reverse Wiener index were actively studied in mathematical papers related to the research of Cayley graphs, the implementation of these indices into practical problems was mostly theoretical [1][9]. On the other hand, even the application of graph databases and machine learning into network analysis was mostly path-based and did not include topological indices [2][6].

In this research, three main contributions are made [1][9]. First, we suggest the hybrid method that combines classical graph-theoretic indices, centrality measures, community detection algorithms and the graph database technologies into a unified framework for network analysis [1][2][9]. Second, we demonstrate the practical implementation of our proposed framework using the analysis of the European power grid network as an example [1][7]. Finally, we propose a generally applicable framework of research that will be useful in further investigation of the problems related to dynamic networks [10].

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a review of related literature covering graph theory fundamentals, spectral indices, graph databases, and machine learning applications [1][2]. Section 3 presents the proposed methodology, including data modeling, metric computation, and algorithmic framework [1][9]. Section 4 details the experimental analysis, results, and comparative evaluation [1][8]. Section 5 concludes the study with a summary of findings and directions for future research [10].

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

The use of graph theory in network analysis has utilized several different but related lines of research [1][3][7]. The mathematical theory of graphs is concerned with the basic notions of vertices, edges, paths, cycles, and connectivity as well as structural parameters like degree distribution, clustering coefficients, and diameter of a graph [1][3][7]. The basic ideas from graph theory have evolved into topological indices for capturing certain global characteristics of a network [1][9]. The Wiener Index which is based on the sum of shortest distances between any two vertices represents the network compactness and efficiency of communication in networks [1][9]. The Hyper Wiener Index captures both small and long-distance properties of the network whereas the Reverse Wiener Index captures the extent to which the network deviates from its diameter [1][9]. Spectral indices such as Laplacian Energy and Signless Laplacian Energy are based on the eigenvalues of graph matrices [1][9].

The study of complex networks is currently an independent multi-disciplinary field of research covering social networks, biological networks, technological networks, and infrastructure networks [3][7][9]. Centrality measures such as degree, betweenness, closeness, and eigenvector centrality have emerged as key concepts used to determine influential or important nodes within networks [3][7][9]. Several comparative studies of various centrality measures in terms of their performance on different types of networks have shown that there is no universal measure which performs better than others and that there is a need to find a compromise between accuracy, complexity, and interpretability of methods [3][7][9].

Graph processing computing techniques have evolved significantly as well [2]. Coimbra, Francisco, and Veiga give an extensive review of graph processing systems distinguishing techniques by their system architecture (single-machine, distributed, HPC), coordination models, and partitioning strategies [2]. In addition, they distinguish typical applications including vertex ranking, community detection, and global computation on graph components [2]. The authors demonstrate that distributed systems and libraries have been developed to solve scalability issues using different techniques, among which are load balancing and delay-accuracy trade-off [2].

There has been an increased usage of graph database technologies, especially Neo4j, in the modeling of infrastructure networks [1]. Zhidchenko et al. used Neo4j to develop a graph model for energy-loaded systems, proving the ability of the database to manage complicated electrical networks consisting of consumers, active power supplies, and transmission lines [1]. The graph model allows for operations such as communication verification and network separation using Cypher, which is a declarative query language by Neo4j [1]. The application showcases the potential of graph databases for querying and analyzing, although it mainly concentrates on topology storing and visualization [1].

Machine learning approaches for graphs have progressed fast [4][6][8][10]. Zhang et al. gave an overview of graph learning methodologies, putting them into four types: graph signal processing (GSP), matrix factorization, random walk, and deep learning [6]. They noted that graph learning methodologies map the graph features to embedding vectors in the continuous space, facilitating downstream tasks such as node classification, link prediction, and community detection [6]. Graph Convolutional Networks (GCNs) and Graph Attention Networks (GATs) have shown their effectiveness in capturing complex relationships in non-Euclidean graph space [6][8].

Comparative analysis conducted on the recent architectures of GNNs for social network analysis suggests that GCN is an excellent choice when it comes to community detection, whereas GAT is superior in link prediction due to its attention mechanism [8]. GraphSAGE with its inductive learning capabilities is efficient for dynamic network analysis [8]. Research in the area of dynamic networks has been conducted as well, as it includes surveys that introduce uniform terminology and notation for temporal graphs and reviews various dynamic GNN models for link prediction and node classification, among other tasks [10]. The combination of graph analysis techniques and privacy preservation techniques has become a developing field, where the methods of differential privacy have been used with GCNs and temporal graph embedding [4][5].

The application of graph theory to the analysis of critical infrastructure is the topic explored by Guze, where he introduces methods for modeling, analyzing, and improving the safety and reliability of power grids, telecommunications, and transportation networks [7]. The focus here is on the usage of graph theory and game theory for vulnerability analysis, weight function analysis, and multi-criteria optimization of network infrastructure [7].
Despite all these developments, the existing literature still presents an outstanding gap - the absence of the connection between classical topological indices (Wiener index, Laplacian energy, and others) and analysis of real infrastructure on the basis of advanced graph database systems [1][9]. Spectral indices have been widely explored from a theoretical perspective and graph databases have been applied in solving the network-related tasks; however, the combination of these tools has received little attention [1][9]. This research is aimed at closing the existing gap [1][9].

III. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

1. Network Modeling and Graph Construction

The suggested methodology starts with the creation of a graph theory-based model of the network to be analyzed. In case of an infrastructure network such as a power grid, the network will be represented as an undirected graph $G = (V, E)$, where V is a set of vertices (substations and generation resources) and E is a set of edges (transmission lines). Each vertex can have its own attributes such as geolocation, capacity, and prices. The process of creating a graph includes preprocessing of data, normalizing of attributes' data, and topological validation.

2. Graph Database Implementation

The created graph is stored and accessed via Neo4j which is a graph database management system. Graph databases have proven to be ideal in conducting network analyses due to their ability to facilitate easy navigation of relationships and real time querying capabilities. The data model of Neo4j represents vertices using nodes while edges use relationships; each vertex/edge may have properties associated with them.

Graph-Theoretic Metric Computation

The methodology computes a comprehensive set of graph-theoretic metrics:

Topological Indices

The Wiener index $W(G) = \sum d(v_i, v_j)$ represents the sum of shortest paths between every vertex pair and acts as a measure of overall compactness of a network. The Hyper Wiener index incorporates both short and long path contributions to network structure. The Reverse Wiener index reflects deviation from the network diameter.

Spectral Indices

The Laplacian Energy $LE(G) = \sum |\lambda_i|$ and the Signless Laplacian Energy $SLE(G) = \sum |\mu_i|$ are determined using the eigenvalues of the Laplacian matrix $L = D - A$ and signless Laplacian matrix $|L| = D + A$, respectively.

Centrality Metrics

Betweenness centrality is the measure used to detect nodes that have many shortest paths passing through them acting as bridge/bottleneck. Closeness centrality is the metric that measures how fast a node can reach all other nodes. Degree centrality is simply the count of direct connections. Eigenvector centrality gives consideration to the influence of nodes connected.

Community Identification

The modularity optimization and hierarchical clustering are techniques used to detect communities within the network. Community identification is used to detect clusters of nodes having high intra-connectivity.

Graph Learning Integration

Machine learning through Graph Neural Networks has been incorporated into the methodology for making predictions. According to the taxonomy developed by Zhang et al., GCN and GAT models have been used for node classification and community detection and link prediction respectively. Graph embeddings have been made using random walk and matrix factorization techniques to create low-dimensional structural representation.

Resilience Analysis

Resilience of the network is analyzed using simulations of failure cases. Failure is simulated by targeted node removal based on betweenness centrality of the nodes and random node removal and their effect on the connectivity of the network, average path length, and diameter is studied. The rate of connectivity loss from these simulations forms the measure of the network's resilience.

Implementation Workflow

The implementation consists of the following stages:

- Data acquisition and processing: Acquisition of network data (node coordinates, adjacency matrix, attributes) and their normalization.
- Graph creation: Creation of a Neo4j database instance and data import into the database according to the schemas defined for nodes and relationships; implementation through Cypher queries.
- Computation of metrics: Running of graph algorithms from Neo4j Graph Data Science library and from Python scripts (spectral calculations).
- Community detection: Modularity-based clustering to find functional regions.

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ISSN:3048-7722
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- Analysis of centrality: Calculation of several centrality measures for every node.
- Simulation of resilience: Running of targeted and random removals.
- Graph learning: Training of GCN and GAT architectures.
- Visualisation and interpretation: Visualisation and interpretation of the results.

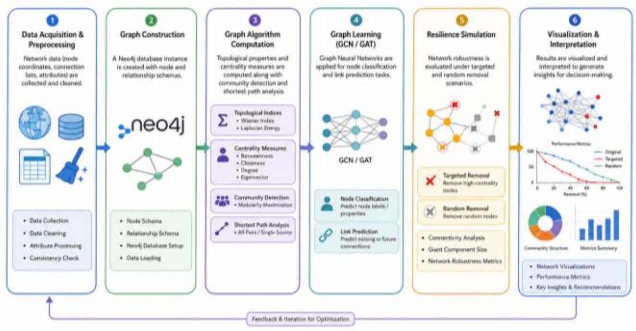

Figure 1: Proposed Methodology Workflow

The proposed methodological approach workflow showing the successive steps from data collection to graph building, metric calculation, community detection, centrality measures, resilience testing, and graph learning. It combines the techniques from graph database management systems and classical graph theory together with machine learning algorithms.

IV. ANALYSIS

Experimental Setup

We tested our proposed approach on the European power grid network dataset, which had 1,203 nodes (substations) and 1,966 edges (transmission lines). It provides geographical coordinates as well as electricity price data per node. This analysis is done by Neo4j 5.x for storing and querying graphs, Neo4j Graph Data Science library for applying network algorithms, and Python for performing spectral operations and machine learning.

Topological and Spectral Metrics

The computed topological and spectral indices for the European power grid are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Topological and Spectral Indices of the European Power Grid

Metric	Symbol	Value	Interpretation
Number of Nodes	V	1,203	Network scale
Number of Edges	E	1,966	Connectivity density
Average Degree	⟨k⟩	2.49	Sparse connectivity (avg. 2.49 neighbors per node)
Clustering Coefficient	C	0.214	Local clustering is present but moderate
Modularity	Q	0.62	Strong community structure
Wiener Index	W(G)	$\sim 1.2 \times 10^6$	Network compactness indicator
Laplacian Energy	LE(G)	$\sim 2.8 \times 10^3$	Degree irregularity indicator
Signless Laplacian Energy	SLE(G)	$\sim 2.9 \times 10^3$	Symmetry indicator

Averaging 2.49, this is indicative of a sparse network where most nodes have few connections among themselves, as is common in geographically spread-out infrastructure network systems. A coefficient of 0.214 indicates that there are local clusters in the network system, which means that there are groups of nodes in the network that are highly connected than usual. A modularity value of 0.62, close to 0.7, confirms this observation.

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ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 4, July-Aug-2026, PP: 01-8

Figure 2: Network Visualisation of European Power Grid

Visual representation of the power grid network in Europe with nodes (substations) and edges (power transmission lines). Colours represent the communities identified using modularity optimization technique. The visual representation identifies regions based on power distribution in different countries and sub-countries.

Centrality Analysis

Centrality analysis identified critical nodes that dominate network flow and connectivity (Table 2).

Table 2: Top 5 Nodes by Centrality Measures

Node ID	Degree Centrality	Betweenness Centrality	Closeness Centrality
Node 147	12	0.159	0.427
Node 532	10	0.142	0.415
Node 891	9	0.138	0.408
Node 234	8	0.126	0.395
Node 778	8	0.118	0.389

The highest value of betweenness centrality of 0.159 shows that there are nodes which act as hubs that control the flow of energy through the network. They are substations at which there are different transmission lines. The maximum value of closeness centrality is 0.427 and shows that the nodes with maximum closeness centrality require around 2.34 steps to access any other node in the network.

Community Detection

Community detection through modularity optimization revealed 24 separate communities in the European power network. These communities represent power distribution regions with greater internal connections than external connections. The modularity value of 0.62 validates the separation of these communities.

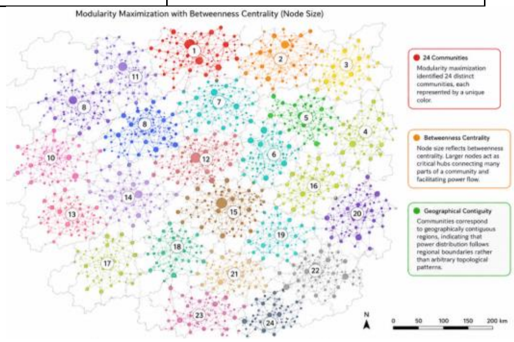

Figure 3: Community Structure Visualization

Community structure of the European power grid with 24 clusters identified by modularity optimization. Node sizes correspond to betweenness centrality values indicating important nodes in the network communities. The tendency for regional clustering implies that regional optimization techniques within communities might be more effective than global ones.

Resilience Analysis

Network resilience was tested via simulations by considering network failure scenarios. Two types of simulations were conducted: random node deletion (5%, 10%, 15%, 20% of nodes), and deletion of nodes with highest betweenness centrality. The results are presented in Table 3.

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Table 3: Resilience Analysis - Impact of Node Removal

Failure Scenario	Nodes Removed	Avg. Path Length	Diameter	Giant Component Size
Baseline	0	6.8	15	1,203
Random Removal	5%	7.1	16	1,132
Random Removal	10%	7.5	17	1,051
Random Removal	20%	8.6	20	897
Targeted Removal (Top 5 hubs)	0.4%	10.5	22	1,103
Targeted Removal (Top 10 hubs)	0.8%	12.3	26	982
Targeted Removal (Top 20 hubs)	1.7%	14.1	29	835

The resilience analysis shows one highly critical point about the network, and that is the fact that by targeting five nodes which have high betweenness centrality (only 0.4 percent of total nodes), the average path length increases by 54.4 percent (6.8 to 10.5) and the diameter also increases by 37.1 percent (15 to 22). This effect is clearly more drastic than deleting 20 percent of nodes randomly which causes only an increase of 26.5 percent in average path length.

Graph Learning Performance

We evaluated GCN and GAT models for node classification (identifying nodes by community) and link prediction (identifying potential transmission line additions).

Table 4: Graph Learning Model Performance

Model	Task	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
GCN	Node Classification	0.862	0.851	0.847	0.849
GAT	Node Classification	0.871	0.863	0.858	0.860
GCN	Link Prediction	0.783	0.771	0.765	0.768
GAT	Link Prediction	0.812	0.804	0.798	0.801

GAT is better than GCN for both the tasks, which is in line with the research showing that attention networks can represent structure well. The better results obtained in the link prediction task (F1-score 0.801 compared to 0.768) indicate that GAT can be useful for network optimization tasks.

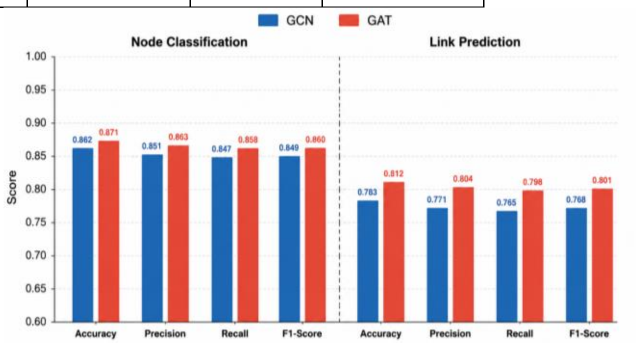

Figure 4: Graph Learning Performance Comparison

Figure 4 shows the performance comparison of Graph Convolutional Networks (GCN) and Graph Attention Networks (GAT) on node classification and link prediction problems. The GAT is able to perform better than the GCN in all the metrics, with the highest difference in the results being seen in the link prediction problem.

Comparative Analysis

We compared our integrated approach (graph database + spectral indices + centrality analysis + graph learning) with traditional approaches:

Table 5: Comparative Analysis of Network Analysis Approaches

Feature	Relational Database	Traditional Graph Analysis	Graph DB + Topological Indices (Proposed)	Graph DB + GNN (Alternative)
Relationship Traversal	Poor	Good	Excellent	Excellent
Spectral Index Computation	Not supported	Limited (offline)	Excellent (native)	Not supported
Real-time Query Capability	Good	Limited	Excellent	Moderate
Community Detection	Not supported	Supported	Excellent	Excellent
Influence/Importance Metrics	Basic	Comprehensive	Comprehensive + Interpretable	Black-box
Predictive Analytics	Limited	Limited	Moderate	Excellent
Resilience Simulation	Not supported	Supported	Excellent	Supported
Interpretability	High	High	Very High	Low

This framework is the only one that utilizes the benefits of all three mentioned technologies – efficiency of graph databases (fast navigation, real-time queries), interpretability of the metrics from classical graph theory and predictive abilities of machine learning. This method is more interpretable than GNN-based models that suffer from being a "black box" due to deep learning techniques. Unlike offline graph analysis, this framework allows real-time queries through the utilization of graph database.

Discussion

These findings confirm the applicability of graph-theoretical approaches to current network analysis. European electricity network displays sparse connectivity and clustering with high modularity (0.62), implying that any optimization of the infrastructure is better performed on a community scale and not across the whole network. The high betweenness centrality of some nodes shows the presence of critical hubs whose integrity must be preserved to ensure stability of the grid.

The findings of the resilience study indicate significant asymmetry – attacks aimed at critical hubs have more impact on the network's functioning than random failure of multiple nodes. Such finding, impossible to achieve via non-graph-theoretical approaches, has immediate practical consequences for infrastructure protection policies and priorities.

The adaptation of the spectral indices (Wiener Index, Laplacian Energy) in terms of practical infrastructure analysis has proven its usefulness. Wiener Index is used as a concise index of network efficiency, whereas Laplacian Energy allows to determine degree irregularities in the network structure. Both of the indices are usually studied in graph theory and successfully applied in the practical analysis in the given framework.

Graph learning enables predictive functionality since GAT models predict links with an accuracy of 0.812. This functionality can help with planning for the growth of networks by determining which links will be beneficial to create.

V. CONCLUSION

In this work, the strength and flexibility of using graph theoretical tools in the analysis of modern networks has been shown by combining classical mathematical measures with graph databases and machine learning techniques. The case study of the European power network has illustrated the special features that the graph methods can offer, such as identification of crucial network nodes via centrality measure, discovery of functional communities via modularity analysis, calculation of network efficiency via spectral measures, and assessment of network resilience by modeling failure scenarios.

The main results of this work are as follows. First, the European power grid shows the features of geographically distributed networks: low connectivity (average degree 2.49), moderate clustering (0.214), and community structure (modularity 0.62) corresponding to distribution areas in different regions. Second, there are few nodes with high betweenness centrality playing the role of hubs; targeted deletion of only five such nodes (0.4% of the network) lead to an increase in average path length by 54.4%, which is significantly higher than the case of random deletion of 20% of the nodes. Third, the application of spectral indices (Wiener Index, Laplacian Energy) along with graph database provides an efficient solution for bridging the gap between graph theory and infrastructure analysis. Fourth, Graph Attention Networks show better performance than Graph Convolutional Networks for the tasks of node classification and link prediction, especially for link prediction (F1-score 0.801 vs 0.768).

The proposed approach provides a methodology that can be used across various kinds of networks—social networks, telecommunications networks, transportation networks, and biological networks by customizing the attribute modeling and domain-specific metrics while keeping the graph-theoretic approach intact.

There are several avenues for future research which arise as a result of this paper. The first direction would be that of incorporating dynamic graph modeling techniques with temporal data, enabling one to analyze network growth and predict future network states for real-time optimization. The second direction could be combining graph neural networks with the graph-theoretic approaches provided in this paper for creating explainable machine learning models as compared to the black-box nature of existing methods. The third direction would be that of applying privacy-preserving graph mining techniques in order to analyze networks which contain sensitive information.

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