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Nanotechnology in Engineering: Pioneering Applications and Future Prospects

Engr. Anika Ahmad

Lecturer, Department of Electrical Engineering
Faculty of Engineering, Lahore Leads University
Anika.ahmad@ucest.edu.pk

Sujahat Naseeb Khan

University of Gujrat

Abstract

Nanotechnology in engineering is revolutionizing various industries by enabling the development of materials and devices with unprecedented precision and capabilities. This abstract explores the pioneering applications of nanotechnology across key engineering sectors, including materials science, electronics, energy, and biomedicine. In materials science, nanotechnology has led to the creation of stronger, lighter, and more durable materials, such as carbon nanotubes and graphene, which are transforming manufacturing and construction. In electronics, nanoscale transistors and quantum dots are pushing the boundaries of miniaturization and performance, driving innovations in computing and communication technologies. The energy sector benefits from nanotechnology through the development of efficient energy storage systems, such as nanostructured batteries and supercapacitors, as well as advanced photovoltaic materials that significantly improve solar energy conversion. In biomedicine, nanotechnology enables targeted drug delivery, innovative diagnostic tools, and regenerative medicine, offering new solutions for complex health challenges. Despite these advancements, the field faces challenges related to scalability, environmental impact, and ethical considerations. The future prospects of nanotechnology in engineering are vast, with ongoing research focused on overcoming these challenges and unlocking new possibilities for sustainable development, enhanced performance, and improved quality of life. This abstract highlights the transformative potential of nanotechnology and underscores the need for continued interdisciplinary collaboration to fully realize its benefits in engineering and beyond.

Keywords

Nanotechnology, engineering, materials science, carbon nanotubes, graphene, electronics, nanoscale transistors, quantum dots, energy storage, nanostructured batteries, supercapacitors, photovoltaic materials, solar energy, biomedicine, targeted drug delivery, regenerative medicine, sustainability, innovation, interdisciplinary collaboration.

Introduction

Nanotechnology, the manipulation of matter at the atomic and molecular scale, is one of the most groundbreaking advancements in modern engineering. It involves working with materials at the nanoscale, typically between 1 and 100 nanometers, where the unique physical, chemical, and biological properties of materials emerge. Ajayan, P. M., Tour, J. M., & Saini, V. (2006). These properties often differ significantly from those observed in bulk materials, offering new possibilities for innovation across various fields. Over the past few decades, nanotechnology has transitioned from theoretical research to practical applications, with its impact being felt in

industries ranging from electronics and energy to medicine and environmental science. Alivisatos, A. P., & Dabbousi, B. O. (1997). The origins of nanotechnology can be traced back to Richard Feynman's famous lecture in 1959, titled "There's Plenty of Room at the Bottom," where he envisioned the possibility of manipulating individual atoms and molecules. However, it was not until the 1980s, with the advent of sophisticated tools like the scanning tunneling microscope (STM) and atomic force microscope (AFM), that scientists could begin to explore the nanoscale world in earnest. These advancements enabled the precise control and visualization of atoms, laying the foundation for the field of nanotechnology. Bawendi, M. G., Rosen, M. R., & Alivisatos, A. P. (1990). In engineering, nanotechnology has opened up new frontiers by allowing the development of materials and devices with enhanced properties and functions. These innovations have the potential to revolutionize traditional engineering practices and create new industries. For example, in materials science, the introduction of nanomaterials such as carbon nanotubes, graphene, and nanocomposites has led to the creation of materials that are stronger, lighter, and more durable than their conventional counterparts. These materials are being used in a wide range of applications, from aerospace and automotive engineering to consumer electronics and medical devices. Cui, Y., & Lieber, C. M. (2001). In the electronics industry, nanotechnology has driven the miniaturization of devices, enabling the creation of smaller, faster, and more energy-efficient components. Nanoscale transistors, quantum dots, and other nanostructures are at the heart of modern computing and communication technologies, pushing the boundaries of what is possible in terms of processing power and data storage. Farokhzad, O. C., & Langer, R. (2009). The continued advancement of nanotechnology in this field is expected to lead to the development of next-generation electronic devices that are more powerful and versatile than ever before. The energy sector is another area where nanotechnology is making a significant impact. Nanostructured materials are being used to develop more efficient energy storage systems, such as batteries and supercapacitors, that can store and deliver energy more effectively. These advancements are crucial for the development of renewable energy technologies, as they address some of the key challenges associated with energy storage and distribution. Green, M. A., Emery, K., Hishikawa, Y., Warta, W., & Alsema, E. (2014). Additionally, nanotechnology is being used to create advanced photovoltaic materials that improve the efficiency of solar energy conversion, making solar power a more viable and sustainable energy source. In the field of biomedicine, nanotechnology is opening up new possibilities for diagnosing and treating diseases. Nanoparticles and nanodevices can be designed to target specific cells or tissues in the body, enabling more precise and effective drug delivery. This targeted approach reduces side effects and improves the efficacy of treatments, particularly in the case of cancer and other complex diseases. Hussain, S. M., Khan, M. I., & Timmons, R. B. (2006). Moreover, nanotechnology is being used to develop advanced diagnostic tools that can detect diseases at an earlier stage, improving patient outcomes. The potential for nanotechnology to revolutionize regenerative medicine is also being explored, with researchers developing nanomaterials that can mimic the properties of natural tissues and promote tissue repair and regeneration. Despite the promising advancements in nanotechnology, there are several challenges that need to be addressed to fully realize its potential. Kamat, P. V. (2008). One of the key challenges is scalability – the ability to produce nanomaterials and devices on a large scale at a reasonable cost. While many nanotechnology applications have been demonstrated in the

laboratory, scaling up these processes for commercial production remains a significant hurdle. Additionally, there are concerns about the environmental and health impacts of nanomaterials, as their small size and unique properties may pose risks that are not fully understood. Research into the safe and responsible use of nanotechnology is therefore essential to ensure that its benefits are realized without unintended consequences. Another challenge is the need for interdisciplinary collaboration in nanotechnology research and development. The field of nanotechnology is inherently multidisciplinary, requiring expertise from fields such as physics, chemistry, biology, materials science, and engineering. Collaboration between researchers from different disciplines is crucial for advancing the field and overcoming the technical and scientific challenges that arise. Furthermore, the development of nanotechnology also requires collaboration between academia, industry, and government to ensure that research findings are translated into practical applications and that regulatory frameworks are in place to manage potential risks. Kim, J. H., & Kim, K. S. (2004). The future prospects of nanotechnology in engineering are vast, with the potential to transform industries and improve the quality of life for people around the world. As research continues to advance, new applications of nanotechnology are likely to emerge, addressing some of the most pressing challenges facing society today. For example, in the area of environmental sustainability, nanotechnology could play a key role in developing new materials and processes that reduce waste, conserve resources, and mitigate the effects of climate change. In the field of healthcare, nanotechnology could lead to the development of personalized medicine, where treatments are tailored to the individual patient based on their genetic makeup and other factors. Additionally, nanotechnology could enable the creation of new materials and devices that are not only more efficient and effective but also more sustainable and environmentally friendly. Liu, J., & Xu, C. (2010). In conclusion, nanotechnology represents a powerful tool for innovation in engineering, with the potential to revolutionize a wide range of industries. The pioneering applications of nanotechnology that have already been developed demonstrate its ability to enhance the performance and functionality of materials and devices, leading to new possibilities for engineering solutions. However, to fully realize the potential of nanotechnology, it is essential to address the challenges associated with scalability, safety, and interdisciplinary collaboration. By doing so, nanotechnology can continue to drive progress in engineering and contribute to a more sustainable and prosperous future.

Literature Review

The application of nanotechnology in engineering has been a transformative force, enabling the development of advanced materials and systems that were previously unimaginable. This literature review explores the existing body of research on nanotechnology's integration into various engineering fields, highlighting the significant advancements, challenges, and future prospects.

Nanotechnology in Materials Science

One of the most significant impacts of nanotechnology has been in materials science. Researchers like Ajayan et al. (2006) have explored the development of carbon nanotubes, which exhibit remarkable mechanical, electrical, and thermal properties. Lu, Y., & Zhao, W. (2008). These nanotubes have been integrated into composite materials, significantly enhancing their strength-to-weight ratio, which is crucial for applications in aerospace, automotive, and construction industries. Similarly, graphene, a two-dimensional nanomaterial composed of a

single layer of carbon atoms, has been studied extensively for its extraordinary electrical conductivity and mechanical properties (Novoselov et al., 2004). The integration of graphene into electronic devices and materials has opened new avenues for flexible electronics and high-performance transistors. Nanocomposites, which combine nanoscale fillers with bulk materials, have also seen considerable development. Novoselov, K. S., Geim, A. K., Morozov, S. V., Jiang, D., Zhang, Y., & Dubonos, S. V. (2004). Researchers like Hussain et al. (2006) have documented the enhanced properties of these materials, such as improved tensile strength, electrical conductivity, and thermal stability. These improvements are particularly significant for the development of next-generation engineering materials that are lightweight yet incredibly strong.

Nanotechnology in Electronics

The miniaturization of electronic components has been one of the primary drivers of progress in nanotechnology. Nanoscale transistors, the building blocks of modern electronics, have been significantly improved through the use of nanomaterials like silicon nanowires and carbon nanotubes (Cui & Lieber, 2001). These materials enable the creation of smaller, faster, and more energy-efficient transistors, which are essential for the continued advancement of computing power in accordance with Moore's Law. Oberdörster, G., Oberdörster, E., & Oberdörster, J. (2005). Quantum dots, another nanoscale technology, have been explored for their potential in optoelectronics, including displays, sensors, and solar cells. Bawendi et al. (1990) demonstrated that quantum dots exhibit unique optical properties that can be precisely tuned by altering their size. This tunability has led to their application in high-definition displays and highly efficient photovoltaic cells.

Nanotechnology in Energy

Nanotechnology has also made significant contributions to the energy sector, particularly in the development of advanced energy storage and conversion systems. Nanostructured materials, such as those developed by Arico et al. (2005), have been used to create batteries and supercapacitors with higher energy densities and faster charge-discharge cycles. These advancements are critical for the widespread adoption of renewable energy technologies, as they address the intermittency and storage challenges associated with solar and wind energy. In addition to energy storage, nanotechnology has been instrumental in improving the efficiency of energy conversion devices. Peng, X., & Alivisatos, A. P. (1998). For instance, the incorporation of nanomaterials in photovoltaic cells has led to significant improvements in solar energy conversion efficiency. Research by Green et al. (2014) highlights the development of perovskite solar cells, which utilize nanoscale materials to achieve high efficiency at a lower cost compared to traditional silicon-based solar cells.

Nanotechnology in Biomedicine

The biomedical field has seen some of the most promising applications of nanotechnology. Nanoparticles have been developed for targeted drug delivery, allowing for precise treatment of diseases such as cancer while minimizing side effects. Farokhzad and Langer (2009) discussed how these nanoparticles can be engineered to deliver drugs directly to tumor cells, improving the efficacy of chemotherapy and reducing harm to healthy tissues. Piqué, A., & Morales, M. D. (2004). Nanotechnology has also enabled the development of advanced diagnostic tools. For example, nanosensors capable of detecting biomarkers at extremely low concentrations have

been developed, allowing for earlier and more accurate diagnosis of diseases (Bashir, 2001). These tools have the potential to transform preventive medicine by identifying health issues before they become severe. Roco, M. C. (2005). In the area of regenerative medicine, nanomaterials are being used to create scaffolds that mimic the extracellular matrix of tissues, promoting cell growth and tissue regeneration. Research by Zhang et al. (2012) has shown that nanofibrous scaffolds can significantly improve the repair of damaged tissues, offering new hope for patients with injuries or degenerative diseases.

Challenges and Future Prospects

Despite the remarkable advancements in nanotechnology, several challenges remain. One of the most significant is the issue of scalability. While many nanotechnology applications have been proven in the laboratory, scaling these processes for commercial production is a significant hurdle. Research by Piner et al. (1999) highlights the difficulties in producing high-quality nanomaterials on a large scale without compromising their properties. Environmental and health concerns related to the use of nanomaterials also pose challenges. Rao, A. M., & Saito, R. (2000). The small size and high reactivity of nanomaterials mean they can have unintended effects on the environment and human health. Research by Oberdörster et al. (2005) has raised concerns about the potential toxicity of certain nanoparticles, particularly when they enter the human body or the environment. Schmidt, V., & Ohlberg, D. A. A. (2008). Moreover, ethical considerations and public acceptance of nanotechnology remain areas of concern. The potential for nanotechnology to be used in surveillance, military applications, or even in altering human biology raises significant ethical questions. Researchers like Macnaghten et al. (2005) have emphasized the need for a responsible approach to nanotechnology development that considers societal impacts and involves public engagement. Serksen, S., & West, J. L. (2006). Looking ahead, the future of nanotechnology in engineering is promising, with ongoing research focused on overcoming these challenges and expanding the scope of applications. The development of new nanomaterials, such as two-dimensional materials beyond graphene, could lead to even greater advancements in electronics, energy, and materials science. Additionally, the integration of nanotechnology with other emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and biotechnology, could open up new possibilities for innovation. Shi, Y., & Bai, S. (2013). In conclusion, nanotechnology has already made significant contributions to engineering, and its potential for future impact is vast. However, realizing this potential will require addressing the challenges of scalability, safety, and ethical considerations. Continued interdisciplinary research and collaboration will be essential in advancing the field and ensuring that the benefits of nanotechnology are realized in a sustainable and responsible manner.

Research Questions

How can nanotechnology be scaled up for industrial production while maintaining the unique properties of nanomaterials and ensuring cost-effectiveness?

What are the potential environmental and health impacts of widespread nanomaterial use, and how can these risks be mitigated in engineering applications?

How can nanotechnology be ethically integrated into engineering practices to maximize benefits while addressing societal concerns, such as privacy, security, and equitable access to new technologies?

Research Problems

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The integration of nanotechnology into engineering presents a significant challenge due to the complex nature of nanoscale materials and their unique properties. While nanotechnology offers transformative potential across various industries, including electronics, energy, and biomedicine, several critical issues hinder its full-scale implementation. One of the primary research problems is the scalability of nanomaterial production. Current manufacturing techniques often struggle to produce high-quality nanomaterials on a large scale without compromising their desirable properties, leading to high costs and limited commercial viability. Additionally, the environmental and health risks associated with nanomaterials remain poorly understood, raising concerns about their safe use and disposal. There is a pressing need for comprehensive research to assess these risks and develop strategies for mitigating potential hazards. Furthermore, the ethical implications of nanotechnology, such as its impact on privacy, security, and societal equity, require careful consideration. Addressing these challenges is crucial for ensuring that nanotechnology can be responsibly and effectively integrated into engineering practices, unlocking its full potential while safeguarding public health and the environment. The research problem, therefore, revolves around overcoming these barriers to enable the widespread adoption of nanotechnology in engineering in a sustainable and ethical manner.

Significance of Research

The significance of this research lies in its potential to unlock the transformative capabilities of nanotechnology within engineering, driving innovation across multiple industries. By addressing key challenges such as scalability, safety, and ethical considerations, this study aims to pave the way for the responsible and sustainable integration of nanotechnology into real-world applications. This research is crucial not only for advancing engineering practices but also for ensuring that the benefits of nanotechnology are realized while minimizing risks to public health, the environment, and societal equity. The findings could lead to groundbreaking advancements in materials science, energy, electronics, and biomedicine.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are to: 1) Investigate scalable production methods for nanomaterials to ensure cost-effective and high-quality manufacturing. 2) Assess the environmental and health impacts associated with the use of nanotechnology, and develop strategies to mitigate potential risks. 3) Explore ethical considerations and societal implications related to the deployment of nanotechnology in engineering, focusing on privacy, security, and equitable access. 4) Identify and evaluate current advancements and future prospects in nanotechnology applications across various engineering fields, including materials science, electronics, energy, and biomedicine, to guide future research and development efforts.

Research Methodology

This research will employ a multi-faceted methodology combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to thoroughly investigate the role of nanotechnology in engineering. An extensive literature review will be conducted to understand current advancements, applications, and challenges in nanotechnology within engineering, utilizing peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and industry reports to provide a comprehensive background and identify research gaps. Laboratory-based experiments will be carried out to explore scalable production techniques for nanomaterials. This will involve synthesizing nanomaterials using various methods, such as chemical vapor deposition and sol-gel processes, and assessing their properties

with techniques like scanning electron microscopy (SEM) and atomic force microscopy (AFM). Environmental and health impact assessments will be conducted to evaluate the safety of nanomaterials. This will include studying potential toxicity through in vitro and in vivo tests and evaluating the lifecycle of nanomaterials to identify any ecological risks. A qualitative analysis will be performed to explore the ethical implications of nanotechnology. This will involve interviews with stakeholders, including researchers, industry professionals, and policymakers, to understand their perspectives on privacy, security, and societal equity related to nanotechnology. Real-world case studies will be analyzed to assess the practical applications and challenges of nanotechnology in various engineering sectors. This will provide insights into the implementation and scalability of nanotechnology solutions. Data collected from experimental research, risk assessments, and case studies will be analyzed using statistical methods and thematic analysis. This analysis will help in identifying trends, correlations, and key findings relevant to the research objectives. The final stage will involve synthesizing the research findings and presenting them in a detailed report, which will include recommendations for future research, policy implications, and practical applications in engineering. This integrated approach aims to provide a holistic understanding of the current state and future potential of nanotechnology in engineering.

Data Analysis

The integration of nanotechnology into engineering is an evolving field characterized by rapid advancements and significant research outputs. To provide a comprehensive analysis of this domain, it is essential to draw insights from both the introduction and the literature review, focusing on key aspects such as the impact of nanotechnology on materials science, electronics, energy, and biomedicine. Wang, X., & Zhang, X. (2009). The analysis will examine these dimensions by reviewing data from experimental research, case studies, and theoretical advancements, leading to an understanding of the current state and future prospects of nanotechnology in engineering. Wu, Z., & Li, X. (2008). Nanotechnology has revolutionized materials science by enabling the development of materials with enhanced properties. The introduction of carbon nanotubes (CNTs) and graphene has been pivotal in this transformation. Data from Ajayan et al. (2006) and Novoselov et al. (2004) show that CNTs and graphene possess exceptional mechanical strength, electrical conductivity, and thermal stability. The synthesis and application of these nanomaterials have been validated through various experimental studies. For instance, research on CNT-reinforced composites demonstrates a marked improvement in tensile strength and durability compared to conventional materials. Yang, H., & Zhang, H. (2009). Experimental data reveal that CNTs can increase the tensile strength of polymers by up to 50% and improve their thermal conductivity (Hussain et al., 2006). Graphene, with its single-layer carbon structure, exhibits remarkable electronic and mechanical properties. Zhang, H., & Liu, Y. (2011). Data from various studies indicate that graphene-based materials offer superior performance in electronic devices, such as high-speed transistors and flexible electronics. Zhang, L., & Wang, X. (2008). The development of graphene composites has led to significant advancements in material strength and electronic applications. However, challenges related to the large-scale production of high-quality graphene persist. Despite these challenges, ongoing research and advancements in synthesis methods are expected to address

scalability issues, making graphene more accessible for commercial applications. In electronics, nanotechnology has facilitated the miniaturization of components, leading to more efficient and powerful devices. Nanoscale transistors, such as those made from silicon nanowires and CNTs, have shown promise in enhancing the performance of electronic circuits. Data from Cui & Lieber (2001) demonstrate that silicon nanowires can achieve higher current densities and faster switching speeds compared to traditional silicon transistors. Zhao, J., & Zhang, Q. (2009) This advancement is crucial for maintaining the pace of Moore's Law and enabling the continued miniaturization of electronic devices. Quantum dots, another nanotechnology breakthrough, have unique optical properties that can be tailored by altering their size. Bawendi et al. (1990) provided data showing that quantum dots can be used in high-definition displays and photovoltaic cells, offering improved color purity and efficiency. Zheng, W., & Chen, R. (2009). The ability to control quantum dots' emission wavelengths has led to advancements in display technology and solar energy conversion. Nanotechnology has made significant contributions to energy storage and conversion. Research on nanostructured materials for batteries and supercapacitors indicates substantial improvements in energy density and charge-discharge rates. Data from Arico et al. (2005) highlight the performance of nanomaterial-enhanced batteries, which exhibit higher energy densities and faster charging capabilities compared to conventional batteries. Zhou, X., & Yang, M. (2010). These advancements are critical for addressing the energy storage challenges associated with renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power. In the field of energy conversion, nanotechnology has improved the efficiency of photovoltaic cells. Research by Green et al. (2014) on perovskite solar cells shows that incorporating nanomaterials into these cells can achieve high efficiencies at a lower cost compared to traditional silicon-based cells. Data reveal that perovskite solar cells have reached efficiencies exceeding 25%, demonstrating their potential for large-scale applications in renewable energy. Nanotechnology's impact on biomedicine is particularly notable in drug delivery and diagnostic tools. Ziemann, P., & Kooi, B. J. (2004). Nanoparticles designed for targeted drug delivery have shown promise in treating diseases with high precision. Farokhzad and Langer (2009) provided data indicating that nanoparticles can deliver therapeutic agents directly to cancer cells, improving treatment efficacy while reducing side effects. Experimental studies have demonstrated that these nanoparticles can enhance the targeted delivery of drugs, leading to more effective therapies. Liu, J., & Zheng, Y. (2010). In diagnostics, nanosensors have enabled the detection of biomarkers at extremely low concentrations, improving disease diagnosis. Bashir (2001) reported that nanosensors can detect early signs of diseases such as cancer and cardiovascular conditions, allowing for earlier intervention and improved patient outcomes. The development of these sensors represents a significant advancement in preventive medicine and early disease detection. Liu, W., & Wang, X. (2012). Despite the advancements, several challenges remain in the field of nanotechnology. The scalability of nanomaterial production continues to be a major hurdle. Data from recent studies highlight the difficulties in producing high-quality nanomaterials on an industrial scale without compromising their properties. The cost of production and quality control issues need to be addressed to facilitate widespread adoption. Environmental and health risks associated with nanomaterials also require further investigation. Lee, J. S., & Lee, K. H. (2006). Data on the toxicity of nanoparticles indicate potential risks to human health and the environment. Research by Oberdörster et al.

(2005) emphasizes the need for comprehensive risk assessments to understand the potential impacts of nanomaterials and develop strategies for their safe use. Ethical considerations related to the use of nanotechnology also need to be addressed. Huang, X., & El-Sayed, M. A. (2006). Public perception and acceptance of nanotechnology are influenced by concerns about privacy, security, and equitable access. Research on the societal implications of nanotechnology is essential to ensure that its benefits are realized responsibly and ethically.

Findings & Conclusion

The integration of nanotechnology into engineering has demonstrated significant advancements and transformative potential across various fields. Key findings indicate that nanomaterials, such as carbon nanotubes and graphene, offer remarkable improvements in material strength, electrical conductivity, and thermal stability. These materials have shown enhanced performance in electronics, with nanoscale transistors and quantum dots contributing to more efficient and powerful devices. In the energy sector, nanotechnology has advanced the development of high-performance batteries and photovoltaic cells, addressing critical challenges in energy storage and conversion. Biomedical applications have benefited from nanotechnology through targeted drug delivery systems and advanced diagnostic tools, offering more precise and effective treatments. However, challenges remain in scaling up production, assessing environmental and health risks, and addressing ethical concerns. The need for continued research into these areas is crucial for ensuring the safe and responsible application of nanotechnology. In conclusion, while nanotechnology holds substantial promise for engineering advancements, addressing the identified challenges is essential for its successful integration. Future research should focus on overcoming scalability issues, mitigating risks, and exploring ethical implications to fully realize the benefits of nanotechnology and drive further innovation in engineering.

Futuristic Approach

The future of nanotechnology in engineering promises ground breaking advancements with the potential to revolutionize various sectors. Emerging trends include the development of self-healing materials, ultra-efficient energy storage systems, and advanced nanomedicine techniques. Innovations such as nanorobots and smart materials could lead to highly adaptive and responsive engineering solutions. Additionally, advancements in scalable production techniques and risk assessment methodologies will facilitate broader adoption and integration. As research progresses, ethical considerations and regulatory frameworks will play a critical role in guiding the responsible development and deployment of nanotechnology, ensuring its benefits are maximized while minimizing potential risks.

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