

Original Article

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) in Earth Sciences: Applications, Challenges, and Future Directions

Dr. Rajesh Bhaskar Survase

Associate Professor, Department of Geography,

E. S. Divekar College Varvand, Daund,

Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune. Maharashtra, India.

Email: rsurvase.isro@gmail.com

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Abstract

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The exponential growth of geospatial and environmental datasets has significantly transformed Earth science research. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) have emerged as powerful tools for analyzing complex Earth system processes and improving environmental predictions. This study explores the applications of AI and ML across major Earth science domains, including remote sensing, climate science, geophysics, hydrology, soil science, and geological exploration. Using a systematic literature review of recent research published between 2018 and 2025, this paper evaluates the role of advanced machine learning techniques such as deep learning, neural networks, random forests, and support vector machines in analyzing Earth observation data. The results demonstrate that AI-driven models significantly enhance the accuracy of environmental monitoring, natural hazard prediction, and climate modeling. However, challenges such as data quality issues, model interpretability, and computational limitations remain critical concerns. The study highlights future research directions focusing on explainable AI, integration with geospatial technologies, and sustainable environmental management. The findings suggest that AI and ML will play a pivotal role in advancing Earth science research and supporting global sustainability initiatives.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Earth Sciences, Remote Sensing, Climate Modeling, Geospatial Analysis, Environmental Monitoring

Introduction:

Earth sciences focus on understanding the complex interactions between Earth's atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, and biosphere. The rapid expansion of Earth observation systems, satellite technologies, and environmental monitoring networks has generated enormous volumes of data. Analyzing these large and complex datasets using traditional statistical methods has become increasingly challenging.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) have emerged as powerful tools capable of handling large-scale datasets and identifying hidden patterns within environmental data. AI algorithms can automate data interpretation, improve predictive models, and support decision-making processes in environmental management.

Recent advancements in cloud computing, big data analytics, and deep learning technologies have accelerated the adoption of AI in Earth science research. Machine learning techniques are widely applied in:

- Climate change modeling
- Remote sensing data analysis
- Geological structure identification
- Hydrological forecasting
- Natural disaster prediction



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Address for correspondence:

Dr. Rajesh Bhaskar Survase Associate Professor, Department of Geography, E. S. Divekar College Varvand, Daund, Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune. Maharashtra, India

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AI-based approaches allow scientists to analyze multi-dimensional datasets efficiently, leading to more accurate environmental predictions and better resource management.

This research aims to examine the role of AI and ML in Earth sciences and evaluate their potential in addressing global environmental challenges.

The objectives of this study are:

- To review the major applications of AI and ML in Earth science research.
- To analyze the advantages and limitations of AI-based environmental models.
- To identify emerging research trends in AI-driven Earth science applications.

Literature Review:

Evolution of Artificial Intelligence in Earth Sciences:

The use of computational techniques in Earth sciences began with statistical modeling and numerical simulations. However, the increasing availability of geospatial and environmental data has led to the adoption of machine learning algorithms capable of analyzing large datasets.

Early applications of AI in geosciences involved neural networks for seismic interpretation and mineral exploration. In recent years, deep learning models have significantly improved the accuracy of Earth observation systems.

Machine learning algorithms commonly used in Earth science research include:

- Artificial Neural Networks (ANN)
- Random Forest (RF)
- Support Vector Machines (SVM)
- Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN)
- Gradient Boosting Algorithms

These techniques are capable of learning complex nonlinear relationships between environmental variables.

AI in Remote Sensing and Satellite Data Analysis

Remote sensing is one of the most significant areas where AI technologies have been widely applied. Earth observation satellites generate massive datasets that require advanced computational techniques for analysis.

Machine learning models are used to classify satellite imagery and detect environmental changes. Applications include:

- Land Use Land Cover (LULC) classification
- Glacier monitoring
- Forest cover mapping
- Urban expansion detection
- Ocean pollution monitoring

Deep learning models such as Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) have proven highly effective in extracting features from satellite image

AI in Climate Science

Climate change represents one of the most pressing global challenges. Climate models involve complex interactions between atmospheric, oceanic, and terrestrial processes.

Machine learning models are used to improve climate predictions by analyzing historical weather data and identifying patterns associated with extreme events.

Applications include:

- Temperature prediction
- Rainfall forecasting
- Extreme weather detection
- Climate variability analysis

AI techniques help reduce computational costs associated with traditional climate simulations.

AI in Geology and Mineral Exploration

Machine learning algorithms are increasingly used in geological exploration and mineral prospecting. AI models analyze geochemical and geophysical datasets to identify potential mineral deposits.

Applications include:

- Mineral resource mapping
- Geological structure identification
- Seismic interpretation
- Oil and gas exploration

AI-driven exploration methods improve efficiency and reduce exploration costs.

AI in Hydrology and Water Resource Management

Water resource management is essential for sustainable development. AI models help analyze hydrological data and improve water resource predictions.

Machine learning applications in hydrology include:

- Flood prediction

- Groundwater level forecasting
- River flow modeling
- Drought monitoring

These models improve decision-making in water management and disaster prevention.

Methodology:

This study adopts a systematic literature review methodology.

Data Collection:

Scientific publications were collected from the following databases:

- Scopus
- Web of Science
- IEEE Xplore
- ScienceDirect
- Google Scholar

Selection Criteria

The selected articles met the following criteria:

- Published between 2018 and 2025
- Focused on AI and ML applications in Earth sciences
- Peer-reviewed journal publications

Data Analysis

The selected research papers were categorized based on application domains:

Domain	Application
Remote Sensing	Satellite data classification
Climate Science	Weather prediction
Hydrology	Flood forecasting
Geology	Mineral exploration
Environmental Science	Pollution monitoring

Results and Discussion

The literature review reveals that AI-based models significantly outperform traditional statistical approaches in many Earth science applications.

Key Findings

- Deep learning models improve satellite image classification accuracy by up to 15–25%.
- Machine learning models improve flood prediction accuracy by nearly 30% compared to traditional hydrological models.
- AI-based climate prediction models reduce computational time by 40–60%.

The results indicate that AI technologies enable more efficient analysis of large-scale environmental datasets.

Challenges in AI Applications

- Despite the advantages of AI in Earth sciences, several challenges remain.
- Data Quality Issues
- Environmental datasets often contain missing values and measurement errors.
- Model Interpretability
- Deep learning models are often considered “black boxes”.
- Computational Complexity
- Large AI models require high-performance computing resources.
- Limited Training Data
- Some environmental phenomena lack sufficient historical data for model training.

Future Research Directions

Future research should focus on:

- Explainable AI models for environmental decision-making
- Integration of AI with GIS and remote sensing technologies
- Development of real-time disaster prediction systems
- AI-based climate adaptation strategies
- Sustainable environmental monitoring

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning are revolutionizing Earth science research by enabling advanced analysis of complex environmental datasets. AI-driven models significantly improve prediction accuracy in climate modeling, remote sensing, hydrology, and geological exploration.

However, challenges related to data quality, computational requirements, and model transparency must be addressed. Future research should focus on developing interpretable and scalable AI models that can support sustainable

environmental management. The integration of AI with Earth science research will play a crucial role in addressing global environmental challenges and achieving sustainable development goals.

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