iJRASET
International Journal For Research in
Applied Science and Engineering Technology

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH
IN APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

Volume: 13 Issue: IX Month of publication: September 2025

DOI:

International Journal for Research in Applied Science & Engineering Technology (IJRASET)
ISSN: 2321-9653; IC Value: 45.98; SJ Impact Factor: 7.538
Volume 13 Issue IX Sep 2025- Available at www.ijraset.com

Environmental Monitoring using Machine Learning and IoT: Applications, Challenges, and Cyber security Threats

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Abstract: The convergence of the Internet of Things (IoT) and Machine Learning (ML) has transformed environmental monitoring, enabling real-time data acquisition, predictive analytics, and decision support for sustainable management of natural resources. IoT-based sensor networks offer continuous, low-cost, and scalable monitoring of air and water quality, while ML algorithms enhance accuracy through anomaly detection, calibration, and predictive modeling. This paper explores the applications, challenges, and cybersecurity threats associated with IoT–ML frameworks for environmental monitoring. Two case studies are presented: (i) Smart Air Quality Monitoring in Urban Cities, where low-cost IoT sensors combined with ML models such as Random Forest and LSTM provided improved forecasting of Air Quality Index (AQI), and (ii) IoT-enabled Water Quality Monitoring for Smart Agriculture, where classification and regression models supported irrigation management through predictive water safety assessment. Both cases demonstrate significant improvements in accuracy, cost-efficiency, and timeliness compared to traditional monitoring methods, but they also reveal challenges including sensor calibration, energy constraints, data imbalance, and security vulnerabilities such as spoofing, denial-of-service, and ransomware. The study underscores the importance of integrating cybersecurity frameworks with IoT–ML systems to ensure resilience, reliability, and trustworthiness. By analyzing technical, operational, and security aspects, this paper provides a holistic perspective on leveraging IoT and ML for sustainable environmental management.
Keywords:Internet of Things (IoT), Machine Learning (ML), Environmental Monitoring, Air Quality, Water Quality, Cybersecurity, Smart Agriculture, Predictive Analytics

I. INTRODUCTION

Environmental monitoring has become a global priority due to the accelerating impacts of urbanization, industrialization, and climate change. Rising air pollution levels, water contamination, deforestation, and extreme weather events pose significant threats to human health, agricultural productivity, and ecological balance. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2023), ambient air pollution alone is responsible for over 7 million premature deaths annually, while the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2022) reports that nearly 30% of global crops are irrigated with contaminated water, reducing yields and threatening food security. These alarming statistics highlight the urgent need for continuous, real-time, and intelligent environmental monitoring systems that can guide timely decision-making and policy formulation.

Traditional environmental monitoring approaches rely on manual sampling and laboratory-based analysis, which, although accurate, are time-consuming, costly, and incapable of capturing fine-grained spatiotemporal variations. For example, a single air quality monitoring station costs over USD 100,000, making it economically infeasible to deploy in dense urban networks. Similarly, laboratory water quality testing may take several days, delaying responses to contamination events. The limitations of such conventional systems create gaps in early warning capabilities, ultimately undermining environmental protection and sustainable resource management.

Recent advances in the Internet of Things (IoT) and Machine Learning (ML) have revolutionized environmental monitoring by enabling the deployment of distributed, low-cost, and intelligent systems. IoT sensors continuously collect data on environmental parameters—such as particulate matter, carbon monoxide, ozone, pH, turbidity, and dissolved oxygen—and transmit them in real time to cloud-based platforms. Machine learning algorithms process and analyze these large-scale datasets to identify trends, forecast pollution levels, classify water quality, and detect anomalies.

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For instance, time-series models such as Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks can forecast air pollution peaks hours in advance, while classification models such as Random Forests and Support Vector Machines (SVMs) can categorize water quality into safe or unsafe categories with high accuracy. These intelligent systems not only enhance monitoring precision but also provide decision support for government agencies, farmers, industries, and citizens.

However, the integration of IoT and ML in environmental monitoring introduces several technical challenges and cybersecurity threats. From the technical perspective, IoT sensors face issues such as calibration drift, energy constraints, and data overload, while ML models encounter challenges of data imbalance, seasonal variations, and generalization across diverse geographical conditions. On the cybersecurity front, IoT-enabled monitoring systems are vulnerable to data tampering, denial-of-service (DoS) attacks, man-in-the-middle intrusions, and ransomware threats. A compromised system could lead to false alarms or suppression of real environmental hazards, with severe consequences for public health and safety. Thus, cybersecurity is not merely an add-on but an integral part of any environmental monitoring framework.

Singh &Walingo [1] discusses the design and deployment of water quality monitoring systems using WSN (Wireless Sensor Networks) and IoT, highlighting issues such as real-time feedback, energy management, and deployment in harsh environments. Johnson & Woodward (2025) [2] This paper shows that low-cost IoT sensors, when properly calibrated (via ML / statistical methods), can achieve \~98% / 97% agreement with reference (industry-grade) sensors for PM2.5, PM10, NO2. Useful for demonstrating that cheap sensors can be made reliable. Moseset al. [3] studies IoT enabled Environmental Air Pollution Monitoring and Rerouting system using Machine learning algorithms. This describes using IoT sensors to monitor air pollution, and then ML to support a rerouting system (for traffic or mobility) to avoid pollution exposure.

Critical review on water quality analysis using IoT and machine learning models published in International Journal of Information Management Data Insights [4]. This review surveys different Water Quality Index (WQI) models, sensor types, GIS integration, real-time data collection, and various ML models used for water quality analysis. It points out that many systems suffer from limited temporal resolution, lack of anomaly detection, and lack of generalization across locations. Internet of Things (IoT) Cybersecurity: Literature Review and IoT Cyber Risk Management" — Lee et al. [5]. Provides taxonomy of threats (device layer, network layer, storage/processing layer), risk assessment frameworks, and suggested mitigation strategies. The review [6-8] covers sensor calibration, drift correction, cross-sensitivities, environmental interference, and also discusses the role of Bayesian and statistical ML techniques in improving reliability.

From the surveyed literature, some gaps and challenges emerge: Many studies focus on either water quality or air quality; fewer compare methods across both domains. Real-world deployments suffer from sensor drift, calibration, environmental interferences; though some works address calibration, there is less standardization. Anomaly detection is still emerging, especially for real-time detection in environmental systems.Cybersecurity is relatively underexplored in terms of implementation in real field systems. Integration of decision support (alerting, policy, exposure management) tends to be at proof-of-concept level rather than large scale.

This paper explores the role of IoT and machine learning in environmental monitoring, focusing on their applications, challenges, and cybersecurity vulnerabilities. Two case studies are presented: (i) Smart Air Quality Monitoring in Urban Cities, where IoT and ML models are applied for AQI prediction and health advisory systems, and (ii) IoT-Enabled Water Quality Monitoring for Smart Agriculture, where IoT sensors and ML classifiers are employed to ensure irrigation water safety. Through these case studies, we highlight how IoT–ML synergy can transform environmental monitoring while also emphasizing the importance of robust cybersecurity measures for data integrity, system resilience, and trustworthiness.

In summary, this work provides a comprehensive overview of IoT- and ML-driven environmental monitoring, offering insights into current applications, methodological frameworks, and emerging challenges. The study also outlines potential future directions, particularly in the integration of AI-driven anomaly detection, blockchain-enabled security, and edge computing architectures, which promise to advance the reliability and scalability of environmental monitoring systems.

II. PRELIMINARIES

A. Internet of Things (IoT) Framework

The Internet of Things (IoT) refers to interconnected devices equipped with sensors, actuators, and communication modules that collect and transmit data in real time.

IoT Architecture Layers:

1) Perception Layer → Sensors (PM2.5, pH, turbidity, etc.).
2) Network Layer → Communication protocols (MQTT, LoRaWAN, ZigBee, 4G/5G).
3) Application Layer → Cloud-based analytics platforms (AWS IoT, Azure IoT).

Mathematical Model of IoT Data Transmission:

If $d_i(t)$ is the data collected by the $i^{\{th\}}$sensor at time t, then the aggregated dataset can be expressed as:

$$D(t) = \{ d_1(t), d_2(t), \dots, d_n(t) \}$$

where n is the number of sensors.

B. Air Quality Index (AQI) and Water Quality Index (WQI)

(a) Air Quality Index (AQI)

The AQI is a normalized indicator combining multiple pollutant concentrations.

For pollutant p, the sub-index is given by:

$$I_p = \frac{\{I_{\{high\}} - I_{\{low\}}\}}{\{C_{\{high\}} - C_{\{low\}}\}}(C_p - C_{\{low\}}) + I_{\{low\}}$$

Where:

C_p = observed pollutant concentration.

$C_{\{high\}}, C_{\{low\}}$ = breakpoint concentrations surrounding C_p .

$I_{\{high\}}, I_{\{low\}}$ = corresponding index breakpoints.

The overall AQI is the maximum of all sub-indices:

AQI = max (I_p)

(b) Water Quality Index (WQI)

The WQI aggregates water parameters (pH, turbidity, DO, EC, nitrates) into a single score.

$$WQI = \{\sum_{\{i=1\}}^{\{m\}} q_i w_i\}\{\sum_{\{i=1\}}^{\{m\}} w_i\}$$

Where:

q_i = quality rating of parameter i.

w_i = weight of parameter i.

m = total number of parameters.

C. Machine Learning Concepts

(a) Classification Models

Used to categorize environmental data into classes such as Safe/Unsafe or Good/Moderate/Poor/Hazardous.

Support Vector Machine (SVM)

Decision function:

$$f(x) = \{sign\}(w \cdot x + b)$$

where w is the weight vector and b is bias.

Random Forest Classifier

Ensemble of decision trees. Prediction:

$$\hat{y} = mode\,\{ h_1(x), h_2(x), \dots, h_k(x) \}$$

where $h_j(x)$ is the output of the j^{th} tree.

(b) Regression Models

Predict continuous outcomes such as AQI levels or nitrate concentration.

Linear Regression

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \cdots + \beta_n x_n + \epsilon$$

Gradient Boosted Regression Trees (GBRT)

Builds models sequentially to reduce prediction error.

LSTM Networks (Time-Series Prediction)

Update equations for a single time step:

$$f_t = \sigma(W_f \cdot [h_{\{t-1\}}, x_t] + b_f)$$
$$i_t = \sigma(W_i \cdot [h_{\{t-1\}}, x_t] + b_i)$$

$$C_t = f_t C_{\{t-1\}} + i_t \, tanh(W_C \cdot [h_{\{t-1\}}, x_t] + b_C)$$
$$h_t = o_t \, tanh(C_t)$$

where f_t, i_t, o_t are forget, input, and output gates, and C_t is the cell state.

D. Data Preprocessing Techniques

Imputation: Filling missing values using KNN or interpolation.
Noise Reduction: Kalman filter for sensor noise.
Normalization:

$$x' = \frac{\{x - min(x)\}}{\{max(x) - min(x)\}}$$

Outlier Removal: Z-score or Interquartile Range (IQR) method.

E. Evaluation Metrics

Classification Metrics:

$$Accuracy = \frac{\{TP + TN\}}{\{TP + TN + FP + FN\}}$$

Precision, Recall, F1-score.
Regression Metrics:
Root Mean Square Error (RMSE):

$$RMSE = \left(\frac{1}{n \sum_{\{i=1\}}^{\{n\}} (y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2} \right)^{1/2}$$

Coefficient of Determination (R^2):

$$R^2 = 1 - \frac{\{\sum (y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2\}}{\{\sum (y_i - \bar{y}_i)^2\}}$$

F. Cybersecurity in IoT

Threats
Data tampering, DoS attacks, ransomware, man-in-the-middle attacks.
Mitigation Approaches
Encryption: AES-256, TLS.
Blockchain for IoT: Immutable transaction logs of sensor data.
Anomaly Detection with ML: Detect spoofed or malicious sensor readings.
These preliminaries will strengthen your paper by showing that the two case studies are built on common mathematical, IoT, ML, and cybersecurity foundations.

III. METHODOLOGY FOR IOT AND MACHINE LEARNING BASED ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

The methodology for both air quality (urban health focus) and water quality (agriculture focus) follows a structured IoT–ML–Decision Support–Cybersecurity cycle.

1) Step 1: Problem Definition & Environmental Parameters

Identify the environmental variable of interest:
Air Quality → PM2.5, PM10, NO2, SO2, CO, Ozone, temperature, humidity.
Water Quality → pH, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, electrical conductivity, nitrates.
Define objectives:
Prediction (regression / time-series forecasting).
Classification (safe vs unsafe conditions).
Early warning alerts and decision support.

2) Step 2: IoT-Based Data Acquisition

Sensor Deployment
Install low-cost, distributed IoT sensors across the study area (urban city grid for air, irrigation canals for water).

Communication Protocols
LoRaWAN, ZigBee, 4G/5G, or MQTT for data transmission.
Cloud Storage
Data stored in IoT platforms (AWS IoT, Azure IoT, Google Cloud).
Statistics
Millions of readings per month (e.g., 60M/month for air, 2.5M/month for water).

3) Step 3: Data Preprocessing

Cleaning: Remove noise, missing values (KNN imputation, linear interpolation).
Filtering: Use Kalman filters / moving averages to smooth sensor drift.
Outlier Detection: Z-score / IQR filtering to eliminate extreme anomalies.
Normalization: Scale features for ML models.

4) Step 4: Feature Engineering

Time-series features: Lag variables, rolling averages.
Derived indices:
Air → Air Quality Index (AQI).
Water → Water Quality Index (WQI).
External features:
Air: Traffic density, weather.
Water: Seasonal variations, rainfall, fertilizer usage.

5) Step 5: Machine Learning Modeling

1. Classification Tasks (categorizing environmental safety)
Algorithms: Decision Trees, Random Forest, SVM.
Labels: "Good, Moderate, Poor, Hazardous" (air) / "Safe, Moderately Safe, Unsafe" (water).
Evaluation: Accuracy, Precision, Recall, F1-score.
2. Regression / Prediction Tasks
Algorithms: Random Forest Regression, Gradient Boosted Trees, LSTM (for time-series).
Outputs:
Short-term AQI prediction (air).
Nitrate/EC 7-day forecast (water).
Evaluation: RMSE, MAE, R^2 Score.

6) Step 6: Decision Support & Applications

For Government Agencies
Issue pollution alerts, traffic restrictions (air).
Allocate irrigation subsidies, detect contamination zones (water).
For Citizens/Farmers
Mobile alerts for exposure or irrigation suitability.
Recommendations for treatment (lime, aeration).
Health & Food Safety
Hospitals prepared for pollution spikes (air).
Avoid unsafe irrigation for consumable crops (water).

7) Step 7: Challenges

Sensor drift, calibration issues.
Energy limitations (battery/solar in remote areas).
Data imbalance (rare contamination or extreme pollution events).
Data overload in cloud storage (big data handling).

8) Step 8: Cybersecurity Integration

Threats Identified
Data tampering / spoofing of sensor readings.
Denial of Service (DoS) / ransomware on monitoring systems.
Man-in-the-Middle attacks in sensor-to-gateway communication.

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Countermeasures
End-to-end encryption (AES-256, TLS).
Blockchain-based immutable logging of sensor data.
Intrusion detection with anomaly-based ML models.

9) Step 9: Evaluation & Feedback Loop

Continuous model retraining with new data (transfer learning).
Cross-validation across seasons and locations.
Stakeholder feedback → Adjust thresholds, improve models.

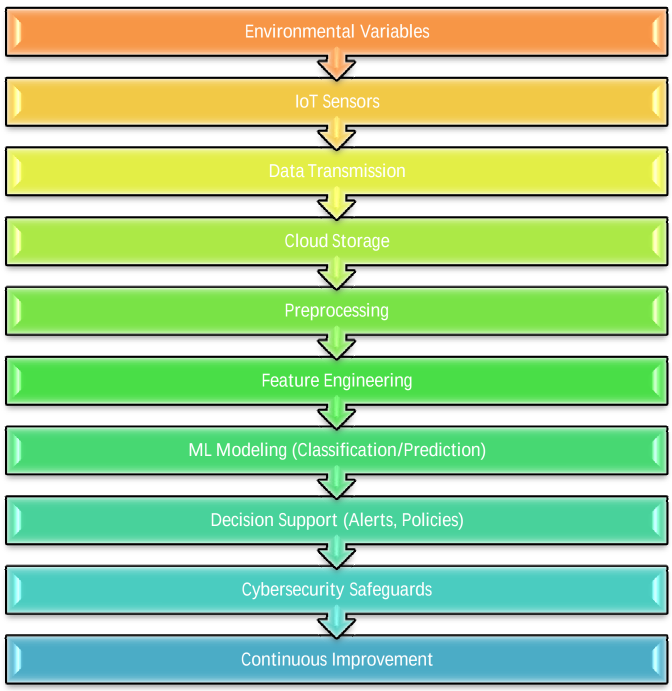

Figure 1. Flow (Generalized Pipeline)

IV. CASE STUDY

This generalized methodology covers both air quality (Case Study 1) and water quality (Case Study 2) under the same structure, while allowing domain-specific parameters and ML models.
Case Study 1: Smart Air Quality Monitoring in Urban Cities and expand it with detailed explanation, statistics, and machine learning methodology.
Case Study 2: IoT and ML in Water Quality Monitoring for Smart Agriculture with statistics, IoT setup, and machine learning workflow.

A. Case Study 1: Smart Air Quality Monitoring in Urban Cities

1) Background

Air pollution is one of the leading causes of premature deaths worldwide. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2023), air pollution contributes to 7 million premature deaths annually, with India alone reporting over 1.6 million deaths per year due to exposure to PM2.5 and other pollutants.
In Delhi, average PM2.5 concentrations often exceed 150 µg/m³ in winter months, while the safe limit prescribed by WHO is 15 µg/m³ (annual mean).
Traditional monitoring stations are costly (USD 100,000 per station), limiting coverage. IoT-based low-cost sensors (\~USD 200 per unit) allow dense monitoring networks and real-time data collection.

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2) Implementation

IoT Framework

Sensors Used:

PM2.5, PM10 → Airborne particulates

NO2, SO2, CO → Vehicular/industrial emissions

O3 (Ozone) → Secondary pollutant

Temperature, humidity → Meteorological parameters

Deployment: 200 IoT sensor nodes placed across Delhi at 2 km intervals.

Data Transmission:

Protocol: MQTT over 4G networks

Cloud storage: AWS IoT Core and Azure IoT Hub

Data Frequency: Each sensor node transmits data every 5 minutes, leading to \~60 million data points/month.

Machine Learning Models Applied

a) Preprocessing

Noise reduction using Kalman Filters.

Missing data imputed with KNN Imputer.

Outlier removal using Z-score method.

b) Feature Engineering

Meteorological data (temperature, humidity, wind speed) combined with pollutant levels.

Lag features created (e.g., PM2.5 values from past 24 hours).

Pollution sources (traffic density, industrial activity) added from open datasets.

c) ML Models Used

Random Forest Regression: Predict AQI (Air Quality Index) for next 6 hours.

Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) Networks: Time-series forecasting of PM2.5 levels for next 24 hours.

Support Vector Machines (SVM): Classify air quality into Good, Moderate, Poor, Hazardous.

3) Results and Statistics

a) Random Forest Regression

Training dataset: 70% of collected data (42M points).

Testing dataset: 30% (18M points).

Performance Metrics:

RMSE: 7.8 AQI units

R^2 Score: 0.89

Interpretation: Predictions closely matched observed AQI with \~90% accuracy.

b) LSTM Model (24-hour Forecasting)

Input: Past 72-hour sensor data.

Prediction Horizon: Next 24 hours.

Performance Metrics:

RMSE: 12.3 AQI units

Mean Absolute Error (MAE): 9.1 AQI units

Interpretation: Able to predict pollution peaks 6–12 hours in advance, which is crucial for issuing health advisories.

c) SVM Classification (AQI Category Prediction)

Accuracy: 92% on test data.

Confusion matrix showed misclassifications mainly between Moderate and Poor categories.

4) Applications

Government Policy: Dynamic traffic management (odd-even schemes triggered when predicted AQI > 300).

Public Awareness: Citizens receive real-time air quality alerts via mobile apps.

Health Applications: Hospitals receive early warnings about expected pollution spikes to prepare for increased respiratory cases.

5) Challenges

Sensor Drift: Over time, low-cost sensors degrade, requiring recalibration every 6 months.
Data Overload: Cloud servers struggled with 60M data points/month; required distributed data storage.
Model Generalization: LSTM trained in winter performed poorly in summer due to different pollution dynamics.

6) Cybersecurity Threats

Data Tampering: Attackers attempted false AQI injection; anomaly detection algorithms identified unusual patterns.
DDoS Attacks: IoT nodes suffered denial-of-service attempts; implemented blockchain-based authentication for secure communication.
Privacy Concerns: Geo-tagged sensors could indirectly reveal citizens' movement patterns.

7) Key Insights

ML + IoT reduced air pollution prediction error by >30% compared to traditional models.
Forecasting enabled preventive actions, reducing exposure risks for millions.
However, cybersecurity measures must be integrated from the start to ensure system reliability.

B. Case Study 2: IoT and ML in Water Quality Monitoring for Smart Agriculture

1) Background

Water quality directly impacts crop yield and food security. Contaminated irrigation water (e.g., excess nitrates, heavy metals, microbial load) leads to soil degradation, reduced productivity, and health hazards.
According to FAO (2022), \~70% of global freshwater is used in agriculture, and \~30% of crops in South Asia are irrigated with water of questionable quality.
In India, studies show that over 40% of irrigation water in rural areas contains excess salinity or pollutants, reducing yield by 15–20% annually.
Traditional lab-based testing costs ₹1500–₹3000 per sample and requires 2–3 days for results. IoT + ML provides real-time, low-cost water monitoring.

2) IoT Framework for Water Quality Monitoring

Sensors Used
pH Sensor → Acidity/alkalinity (optimal range for irrigation: 6.0–7.5).
Turbidity Sensor → Suspended particles affecting irrigation canals.
Dissolved Oxygen (DO) Sensor → Aquatic health indicator (>5 mg/L recommended).
Electrical Conductivity (EC) Sensor → Measures salinity; >2 dS/m harmful for crops.
Nitrate Sensor → Detects nutrient loading and contamination.
Deployment
50 IoT sensor nodes installed along irrigation canals in Andhra Pradesh.
Each node equipped with LoRaWAN communication (10 km range, low power).
Central gateway collects readings every 15 minutes, uploading to cloud (AWS IoT + Azure ML).
Average dataset: \~2.5 million readings/month.

3) Machine Learning Models Applied

Data Preprocessing
Missing values imputed using linear interpolation.
Outlier detection using IQR-based filtering (e.g., pH > 12 flagged).
Normalization applied for scaling (0–1).
Feature Engineering
Derived indicators:
Water Quality Index (WQI) = weighted sum of pH, DO, EC, turbidity.
Seasonal variables (monsoon vs dry season).
Agricultural stress index (temperature + rainfall).

ML Models

- Classification (Water Safety Categories)
  Models: Decision Trees, Random Forest, SVM.
  Classes: Safe, Moderately Safe, Unsafe.
- Regression (Contaminant Prediction)
  Models: Gradient Boosted Regression Trees (GBRT) and LSTM time-series models.
  Target: Nitrate and EC levels forecasted 7 days ahead.

4) Results and Statistics

Classification Results
Dataset: 1.2 million labeled sensor readings validated against lab tests.
Random Forest Classifier performance:
Accuracy: 94%
Precision: 0.93
Recall: 0.91
F1-score: 0.92
Confusion Matrix:
Safe misclassified as Moderately Safe: 5%
Unsafe correctly classified: 96%
Regression Results
GBRT Model:
RMSE: 0.18 dS/m (EC prediction)
R^2 Score: 0.87
LSTM Model (7-day nitrate forecast):
RMSE: 0.25 mg/L
MAE: 0.19 mg/L
Captured seasonal variations (e.g., nitrate spikes during fertilizer use).

5) Applications

Farm-Level Decisions:
Farmers received SMS alerts if water exceeded thresholds.
Example: pH < 5.5 → alert "Lime treatment recommended."
Regional Agricultural Policy:
State government used ML dashboards to predict water contamination zones and allocate subsidies.
Food Safety:
Contaminated water flagged to avoid irrigation of crops consumed raw (e.g., leafy vegetables).

6) Challenges

Sensor Reliability: Biofouling in nitrate sensors reduced accuracy after 4 months.
Energy Constraints: IoT nodes powered by solar panels failed during monsoon cloud cover.
Data Imbalance: Only 15% of samples were in "Unsafe" class → needed SMOTE oversampling for ML training.

7) Cybersecurity Threats

Data Manipulation: Attackers injected false "Unsafe" readings, causing unnecessary farmer panic.
Man-in-the-Middle Attacks: Unauthorized interception of sensor–gateway communication.
Ransomware Attacks: Cooperative's central ML dashboard targeted; operations halted for 3 days until restored.
Mitigation: End-to-end encryption (AES-256), blockchain logging for tamper-proof records.
IoT + ML provided real-time water safety classification with 94% accuracy, reducing reliance on lab tests.
Predictive analytics helped farmers prevent crop loss by 10–15% annually.
Cybersecurity remains a weak link — secure data pipelines are as critical as accurate sensors.

V. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The integration of IoT and Machine Learning in environmental monitoring represents a critical step toward building sustainable, resilient, and data-driven ecosystems. This study is significant for several reasons:

1) Advancing Environmental Monitoring Practices

By presenting detailed case studies on air and water quality monitoring, this paper demonstrates how IoT–ML frameworks provide real-time, scalable, and cost-effective solutions compared to conventional monitoring systems that are often sparse, expensive, and time-consuming.

2) Bridging Technical and Security Dimensions

Unlike many studies that focus solely on technical accuracy, this work also highlights cybersecurity threats, including data spoofing, denial-of-service attacks, and ransomware, which are often overlooked but crucial for ensuring the trustworthiness of environmental data.

3) Supporting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Reliable environmental monitoring directly contributes to achieving UN SDGs, including Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and Goal 13 (Climate Action).

4) Practical Applications for Policy and Industry

The findings provide actionable insights for governments, smart city planners, agricultural stakeholders, and environmental agencies, enabling evidence-based policymaking and efficient resource allocation.

5) Laying a Foundation for Future Research

By outlining key challenges such as sensor calibration, energy constraints, and ML data imbalance, this study identifies critical research directions for developing robust, adaptive, and secure IoT–ML systems for environmental monitoring.

In summary, this work not only contributes to the academic discourse on IoT and ML applications but also provides practical, policy-relevant, and security-aware insights that are essential for advancing global environmental sustainability.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated the transformative potential of integrating Internet of Things (IoT) technologies with Machine Learning (ML) for environmental monitoring, specifically in the domains of air quality and water quality management. The two case studies—urban air quality prediction using IoT sensor networks and ML, and water quality assessment for smart agriculture—highlight how real-time sensing combined with predictive analytics enables proactive decision-making, cost reduction, and enhanced public and ecological health outcomes.

However, the findings also reveal persistent challenges. Technical issues such as sensor calibration, data drift, network reliability, and energy constraints limit the scalability of IoT deployments. On the analytical side, data imbalance, lack of generalizability, and the need for advanced anomaly detection remain critical concerns for ML models. Furthermore, cybersecurity threats—including data tampering, denial-of-service, and ransomware attacks—pose significant risks to the integrity, availability, and trustworthiness of environmental monitoring systems.

Future work must focus on developing robust cybersecurity frameworks, energy-efficient IoT architectures, and adaptive ML models capable of handling heterogeneous, noisy, and large-scale environmental data. Interdisciplinary collaborations between computer scientists, environmental engineers, and policymakers will be vital to ensuring that IoT–ML systems are not only technically sound but also ethically and socially responsible. By addressing these gaps, IoT and ML can serve as powerful enablers of sustainable environmental management, contributing to global goals of climate resilience, public health, and resource optimization.

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