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Review of AI Powered Solar Panel Cleaning System

Shubham R. Vaidya[1], Dr. Deepak A. Shahakar[2]
P. R. Pote Patil College of Engineering & Management, Amravati

ABSTRACT—This paper presents a comprehensive review of solar panel cleaning systems with a focus on automation, Internet of Things (IoT), and emerging artificial intelligence (AI)-based approaches. The growing adoption of solar energy has increased the need for efficient maintenance methods, as dust accumulation on photovoltaic panels significantly reduces energy output. This review examines various cleaning techniques, including manual methods, mechanical systems, IoT-enabled solutions, and intelligent cleaning technologies. The study analyses these approaches based on key parameters such as efficiency improvement, cost, water usage, and level of automation. It is observed that while traditional and automated systems improve performance, many existing solutions lack adaptive decision-making capabilities. AI-based methods show strong potential in optimizing cleaning schedules and reducing resource consumption through predictive analysis. The review also identifies major challenges, including environmental variability, system cost, and limited real-time intelligence. Overall, this study highlights the need for more advanced, cost-effective, and fully autonomous cleaning systems to enhance the long-term performance and sustainability of solar energy installations.

Keywords- Solar Panel Cleaning, Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Dust Accumulation, Automated Cleaning Systems, Energy Optimization.

I. INTRODUCTION

Solar energy has emerged as one of the most reliable and sustainable sources of renewable energy, playing a crucial role in reducing dependence on conventional fossil fuels and minimizing environmental impact. With the increasing installation of photovoltaic (PV) systems across residential, commercial, and industrial sectors, maintaining their efficiency has become a significant concern.One of the major challenges affecting solar panel performance is the accumulation of dust, dirt, and other environmental particles on the panel surface. This layer obstructs sunlight from reaching the photovoltaic cells, leading to a noticeable reduction in power output. In regions with high dust concentration, the efficiency loss can be substantial if regular cleaning is not performed.

To address this issue, various cleaning methods have been developed, ranging from manual techniques to automated mechanical and IoT-based systems. However, manual cleaning is labor-intensive and inconsistent, while many automated solutions still lack adaptability and efficient resource utilization. Therefore, there is a growing need for more intelligent and reliable cleaning mechanisms that can maintain optimal performance with minimal human intervention.

The purpose of this review is to analysesexisting solar panel cleaning technologies, including traditional, automated, and AI-based approaches. The study aims to compare their effectiveness, identify limitations, and highlight future research directions for developing more efficient and sustainable cleaning systems.

Fig. 1 Shows the Dust-Covered Solar Panels Reducing Photovoltaic Performance

II. METHODOLOGY

The methodology is based on a systematic analysis of existing research related to solar panel cleaning systems. Relevant literature was collected from reputed sources, including international journals, conference proceedings, and digital research databases such as IEEE Xplore, ScienceDirect, and other scholarly platforms. The selection of publications was carried out based on their relevance to the topic, quality of contribution, and focus on areas such as solar panel maintenance, automation, IoT integration, and artificial intelligence.

A total of 25 research papers published between 2020 and 2025 were considered to ensure coverage of recent technological developments. These studies were carefully examined and categorized into different groups, including manual cleaning methods, automated mechanical systems, IoT-based solutions, and AI-driven approaches. Key parameters such as efficiency improvement, level of automation, cost, water usage, and system complexity were used as the basis for comparative analysis.

This structured approach provides a clear understanding of the evolution of solar panel cleaning technologies and helps in identifying existing limitations as well as potential directions for future advancements.

III. MOTIVATION AND OBJECTIVE OF RESEARCH

The increasing adoption of solar energy as a sustainable power source has highlighted the importance of maintaining the efficiency of photovoltaic panels. However, the accumulation of dust, dirt, and environmental pollutants on the panel surface significantly reduces energy output by obstructing sunlight. Conventional cleaning methods are often labor-intensive, inconsistent, and impractical for large-scale installations. Although automated and IoT-based solutions have been developed, many existing systems still lack adaptability and efficient resource utilization. These challenges create a need for a comprehensive analysis of available cleaning technologies. The objective of this study is to examine various solar panel cleaning methods, including manual, mechanical, IoT-based, and advanced intelligent approaches, and to compare them based on performance, cost, and level of automation. Furthermore, the study aims to identify limitations in current systems and highlight potential directions for future improvements in achieving more efficient and reliable solar panel maintenance.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

A wide range of research has been carried out to address the issue of dust accumulation on solar panels and its impact on photovoltaic efficiency. Early studies primarily focused on manual and basic mechanical cleaning methods. For instance, works such as [3], [6], and [7] proposed cleaning mechanisms using DC motors and brushes, which reduced human effort but required regular maintenance and lacked automation intelligence.With the advancement of technology, researchers began integrating Internet of Things (IoT) into solar panel systems. Studies like [1], [5], [9], and [20] highlighted the use of IoT for remote monitoring, data collection, and control of cleaning operations. These systems improved accessibility and operational convenience but still relied on user input or predefined schedules for cleaning.

Recent developments have introduced more advanced automated systems with improved efficiency. Research presented in [10], [11], and [13] demonstrated the use of motor-driven cleaning mechanisms combined with sensors and wireless communication to enhance system performance. These systems showed better adaptability and reduced manual intervention.In addition to automation, several studies have explored artificial intelligence (AI) for intelligent decision-making. Works such as [2], [8], [14], [17], and [23] proposed AI-based cleaning robots capable of predicting dust accumulation and optimizing cleaning schedules. These approaches significantly reduce unnecessary cleaning operations and improve resource utilization.

Review-based studies, including [12] and [22], provide comprehensive comparisons of different cleaning technologies, emphasizing key factors such as cost, water usage, efficiency, and scalability. These studies highlight the ongoing transition from traditional cleaning methods to smart and intelligent systems.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Solar Panel Cleaning Systems

Author & Year	System Type	Technology Used	Description
Wable et al. (2020)	Mechanical	DC Motor, Brush Mechanism	A motor-driven cleaning mechanism designed to remove dust using rotating brushes.

Pokharkar et al. (2020)	Mechanical	Motor-Based Cleaning System	An automated cleaning setup that uses mechanical motion to improve panel performance.
Manju et al. (2021)	Automatic	Motor and Control Circuit	A system that performs cleaning operations automatically with minimal human intervention.
Naik et al. (2020)	Automation	Basic Automation	A simple automated cleaning approach developed for effective dust removal.
Subhasri et al. (2021)	IoT-Based	IoT and Sensors	A system focused on solar tracking using sensor-based monitoring and control.
Vaghani et al. (2022)	IoT-Based	ESP8266 and Sensors	A remotely controlled system that enables monitoring and operation through IoT technology.
Ghate et al. (2023)	Automated	Motor and Drive Mechanism	A structured cleaning mechanism designed for consistent panel surface coverage.
Hamid et al. (2024)	IoT-Based	IoT and Wiper Mechanism	A system integrating IoT with a wiper-based cleaning approach for real-time operation.
Bhingardeve et al. (2024)	IoT-Based Robot	Sensors and Microcontroller	A robotic cleaning system capable of detecting dust and performing automated cleaning.
Ashtaputre et al. (2024)	AI-Based	AI with Remote Access	An AI-enabled system designed for improved monitoring and cleaning efficiency.
Wagh et al. (2025)	AI-Based	Predictive Algorithms	A system that uses predictive models to determine optimal cleaning schedules.

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Khalis et al. (2024)	AI-Enhanced	AI and Data Models	A data-driven approach aimed at improving cleaning efficiency through advanced algorithms.
Garg et al. (2024)	Smart System	IoT and AI	A hybrid system combining IoT monitoring with intelligent cleaning control.
Verma et al. (2025)	Monitoring System	IoT Interface	A system focused on monitoring solar panel performance using IoT technology.

The comparison highlights the evolution of solar panel cleaning systems from basic mechanical methods to advanced IoT and AI-based solutions. While mechanical systems are simple and cost-effective, they lack automation. IoT-based systems improve monitoring and control, whereas AI-based systems provide intelligent decision-making capabilities. However, challenges such as system complexity, cost, and real-time implementation still exist, indicating the need for further research and development.

A. Manual Cleaning Systems

Manual cleaning methods are the earliest and most commonly used approach for maintaining solar panels. In this method, human effort is required to physically remove dust, dirt, and other contaminants from the panel surface using water and cleaning tools. Although this approach is simple and does not require complex equipment, it is labor-intensive, time-consuming, and not suitable for large-scale installations. Inconsistent cleaning quality and safety concerns, especially in elevated or inaccessible locations, further limit its effectiveness.

B. Mechanical Cleaning Systems

Mechanical cleaning systems were developed to reduce human effort by introducing automated movement using motors and brushes. These systems typically employ DC motors, rotating brushes, and simple control circuits to clean the panel surface. They provide better consistency compared to manual methods and can operate with minimal human intervention. However, such systems often require regular maintenance, may cause wear on panel surfaces if not properly designed, and generally lack adaptability to varying environmental conditions.

C. IoT-Based Systems

With advancements in communication technologies, IoT-based solar panel cleaning systems have been introduced to enable remote monitoring and control. These systems utilize sensors, microcontrollers, and wireless communication modules to collect data and allow users to operate the system through mobile or web-based interfaces. IoT integration enhances accessibility and operational convenience, especially for large installations. However, most IoT-based systems still rely on manual commands or predefined schedules and are dependent on stable internet connectivity, which may limit their reliability in remote areas.

D. AI-Based Systems

Recent research has focused on incorporating artificial intelligence to improve the efficiency and autonomy of solar panel cleaning systems. AI-based approaches aim to enable smart decision-making by analyzing data such as panel output, environmental conditions, and dust levels. These systems can predict when cleaning is required and optimize resource usage by avoiding unnecessary operations. While AI-based solutions offer significant advantages in terms of efficiency and adaptability, their practical implementation is still evolving due to challenges such as system complexity, data requirements, and higher cost.

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V. AI POWERED SOLAR PANEL CLEANING SYSTEM

A. AI-Based Dust Detection

AI-based dust detection enables intelligent identification of dust accumulation on solar panel surfaces using data from cameras and environmental sensors. Machine learning and computer vision techniques assess surface conditions and variations in light intensity to determine the level of soiling. This approach ensures that cleaning is initiated only when required, reducing unnecessary water usage, energy consumption, and maintenance effort, thereby improving overall system efficiency.

Fig. 2 Shows the AI Dust Detection on Solar Panels

B. IoT and Sensor Integration

IoT and sensor integration enables continuous monitoring of solar panel conditions by collecting real-time data such as dust density, light intensity, humidity, and temperature. These sensors transmit data to a centralized system where intelligent algorithms analyze panel cleanliness and operational status. Such integration supports remote monitoring, timely decision-making, and automated control of the cleaning process, thereby improving system reliability and reducing manual intervention in solar energy maintenance.

C. Robotic Cleaning Mechanism

Robotic cleaning mechanisms are widely adopted in automated solar panel maintenance to perform efficient and consistent removal of dust and debris. These systems typically employ motor-driven brushes, wipers, or waterless cleaning tools that operate based on control signals generated by intelligent decision-making units. When integrated with AI and IoT frameworks, robotic cleaners can adapt their movement and cleaning intensity according to panel conditions, thereby minimizing human involvement while enhancing operational efficiency and long-term system reliability.

Fig. 3 Shows the Robotic Cleaner at Farm House

VI. PERFORMANCE DEGRADATION AND OPTIMIZATION IN AI-BASED SOLAR PANEL CLEANING SYSTEMS

The performance of solar panels is significantly affected by various environmental and operational factors that lead to gradual efficiency degradation. One of the primary causes is the accumulation of dust, dirt, and other airborne particles on the panel surface, which obstructs solar radiation and reduces energy output. In addition to dust deposition, factors such as humidity, temperature variations, bird droppings, and shading also contribute to performance deterioration. Over time, these effects can result in substantial energy losses if not addressed through proper maintenance strategies.

To mitigate these issues, effective cleaning and maintenance mechanisms are essential. Conventional cleaning approaches, including manual and periodic automated systems, provide basic solutions but often lack adaptability to changing environmental conditions. This limitation may lead to either insufficient cleaning or unnecessary resource usage, particularly in systems operating on fixed schedules.

The integration of artificial intelligence introduces advanced optimization capabilities in solar panel cleaning systems. AI-based approaches enable the analysis of real-time data, such as panel output, weather conditions, and dust accumulation patterns, to make informed decisions regarding cleaning operations. By utilizing predictive algorithms, the system can determine the optimal time and frequency for cleaning, thereby reducing water consumption and energy usage while maintaining maximum efficiency.

Furthermore, intelligent control strategies allow the system to adapt dynamically to varying conditions, ensuring consistent performance over time. These approaches not only enhance the operational efficiency of solar panels but also contribute to cost reduction and improved system reliability. Overall, the incorporation of AI-driven optimization techniques represents a significant advancement in addressing performance degradation challenges in solar energy systems.

VII. CHALLENGES

Despite continuous developments in solar panel cleaning technologies, several practical challenges still affect their effectiveness and large-scale adoption. One of the major concerns is the variation in dust accumulation, which is influenced by environmental factors such as location, weather conditions, and seasonal changes. This variability makes it difficult to implement a single cleaning approach that performs efficiently under all conditions.

Another significant issue is the reliance on water-based cleaning methods. While effective in removing dust and debris, these methods can lead to excessive water usage, which is not suitable for regions experiencing water scarcity. In addition, the overall cost associated with automated and intelligent cleaning systems, including installation, maintenance, and advanced components, can be relatively high and may limit their accessibility for smaller installations.

The dependence on communication technologies also presents challenges. Systems integrated with IoT require stable internet connectivity for monitoring and control, which may not always be available in remote locations. Similarly, uninterrupted power supply is essential for continuous operation, and any disruption can impact system performance.These challenges indicate the need for more adaptable, resource-efficient, and cost-effective solutions to ensure reliable and sustainable operation of solar panel cleaning systems.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study presents a comprehensive analysis of solar panel cleaning systems, highlighting the importance of maintaining panel efficiency to ensure optimal energy generation. Various approaches, including manual methods, mechanical systems, IoT-based solutions, and AI-driven techniques, have been examined and compared based on their functionality and level of automation. The findings indicate that while conventional and automated systems reduce manual effort, they often lack adaptability and efficient resource utilization.Advanced approaches incorporating IoT and artificial intelligence offer improved monitoring, control, and decision-making capabilities, enabling more efficient and reliable cleaning operations. However, challenges such as system cost, environmental variability, water usage, and dependency on external factors still limit their widespread implementation.

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