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AI AND COMPUTATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY: HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY FOR A CYBER FUTURE

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ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly recognized as a transformative tool in addressing global sustainability challenges. From climate change monitoring to smart cities, AI-driven solutions are enabling more informed decision-making and efficient resource management. However, alongside these advancements, ethical considerations such as data privacy, bias, and the environmental impact of AI itself must be addressed. Computational sustainability is an emerging field that leverages artificial intelligence (AI) and computational methods to address complex environmental and societal challenges. This abstract explores the transformative potential of AI in advancing sustainability efforts, particularly in areas such as environmental conservation, resource management, and climate change mitigation. Through ecosystem modeling, precision agriculture, and energy optimization, AI-driven solutions enable more efficient and scalable approaches to preserving natural resources and promoting long-term environmental health. However, the integration of AI in sustainability also raises ethical considerations, including data privacy, bias, and the environmental impact of AI technologies themselves. This abstract highlights the dual role of AI as both a powerful tool for achieving sustainability goals and a subject of scrutiny regarding its broader implications, emphasizing the need for responsible and collaborative approaches in harnessing AI for a cyber future.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Computation, Cyber Future, Sustainability.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of AI is not a recent phenomenon; it has its roots in the 1950s, driven by the goal of creating machines that can replicate human abilities such as sensing, reasoning, and thinking. While AI technology and ideas have existed for over fifty years, significant advancements in sophisticated algorithms, access to larger datasets, and the growing adoption of digital technologies have accelerated its development. Today, numerous products and services incorporate AI-based methods, such as voice recognition virtual assistants and autonomous vehicles. AI is expected to have a substantial impact on nearly every aspect of life. By emulating cognitive functions and engaging in continuous self-learning and improvement, AI facilitates the resolution of complex tasks through four primary types of AI systems: autonomous systems that make decisions without human input (e.g., medical diagnosis); automated systems that perform repetitive and labor-intensive tasks (e.g., forest management); assisted systems that help humans carry out tasks (e.g., smart home technologies); and augmented systems that aid individuals in understanding and predicting complex future events (e.g., agricultural decision-making)[2].

As the world grapples with pressing environmental and societal challenges, the need for innovative solutions that balance development with sustainability has never been more critical. Computational sustainability is an interdisciplinary field that harnesses the power of artificial intelligence (AI) and computational methods to address complex problems related to the environment, natural resource management, and societal well-being. By integrating AI with sustainability science, this field aims to develop scalable and efficient strategies that support long-term ecological health and human prosperity.

AI's role in computational sustainability is pivotal, offering advanced tools for analyzing vast datasets, predicting future trends, and optimizing processes across various domains. From monitoring ecosystems and conserving biodiversity to enhancing energy efficiency and mitigating climate change, AI-driven approaches are transforming the way we understand and interact with our environment. These technologies are not only improving decision-making but are also paving the way for more sustainable practices across industries and communities.

However, as computational sustainability evolves, it also brings forth challenges and ethical considerations. The environmental impact of AI technologies, issues of data privacy, and the potential for bias in AI models must be carefully addressed to ensure that the benefits of these innovations are realized without unintended consequences.

This article surveys the landscape of computational sustainability, examining the AI methods employed, the sustainability issues addressed, and the contributions made to decision-making processes. By exploring these dimensions, the paper sets the stage for a deeper synthesis of how AI can evolve into sophisticated and holistic decision-making and advisory agents, capable of driving meaningful change towards a more sustainable future.

2. RELATED WORK

The article review the dark side of Artificial Intelligence and sustainability for cyber future.

[1] Sustainability is a significant concern, encompassing a broad range of challenges arising from the interactions between natural ecosystems and human-developed environments across various timeframes and geographical scales. This complexity has driven computer science researchers to focus their expertise on addressing environmental and societal sustainability issues. Among the technologies being utilized, AI stands out as one of the most crucial for helping humanity navigate and manage the intricate challenges associated with sustainability.

[3] Development Goals The first principles related to sustainability emerged as early as the 18thcentury (Von Carlowitz, 1713). Nowadays, we mainly refer to the Brundtland report (Brundtland et al., 1987). This report emphasizes that the needs of the present should be met without comprising the ability of future generations. To considerthe broadness of the term, this paper draws on two conceptualizations for making sustainability more manageable (see Appendix A): First, a widely accepted approach is given by the differentiation between three interrelated dimensions—the Triple Bottom Line(Elkington, 1997)—for the economy (e.g., financial success), environment (e.g., benefits for the nature), and society(e.g., benefits for people). Second, as another universally applicable conceptualization, we build upon the UN’s2030 Agenda. This agenda organizes targets and indicators across 17 SD which seek to preserve peace and prosperity for humanity and the planet (United Nations, 2015).

[4] Gomes defined research efforts at the intersection of computing and sustainability as computational sustainability, aiming to create innovative computational models, methods,

and tools that support the balancing of environmental, economic, and societal needs to achieve a sustainable future.

[5] The paper also highlights potential gaps in the current landscape of computational sustainability, noting a relative shortage of research on AI applications for sustainable design and a lack of focus on addressing the unintended consequences that may result from AI interventions.

[7] Research in computational sustainability within AI has previously been categorized by (a) the AI techniques utilized, (b) the sustainability issues targeted, and (c) the impact on decision-making, which typically involves human decisions.

[6]Describing sustainable AI as a movement aimed at transforming the entire lifecycle of AI products—encompassing idea generation, training, deployment, and governance—toward enhancing ecological integrity and social justice. This perspective emphasizes that sustainable AI is concerned with more than just AI applications; it encompasses the entire socio-technical system surrounding AI.

There are two key dimensions to consider: the application of AI to support sustainability efforts (referred to as "AI for sustainability") and the importance of making sure that AI systems themselves are sustainable (known as the "sustainability of AI"). Regarding the first dimension, researchers acknowledge AI's considerable potential in driving sustainability initiatives, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). AI is increasingly recognized for its impact across various areas: socially, by promoting workforce development, gender diversity, and transparent hiring practices; environmentally, through its role in managing energy use and waste; and economically, by improving industry efficiency.
However, AI technologies also pose risks, often referred to as the "dark side of AI." As Vinuesa et al. (2020) point out, AI failures can compromise transparency, safety, and ethical standards. Berente et al. (2021) also highlight that many of the challenges associated with AI are rooted in moral and ethical issues. Therefore, it's crucial that AI is developed and deployed in a trustworthy and ethical manner, adhering to human values and ensuring non-discrimination, diversity, and inclusivity, as emphasized by scholars like Galaz (2021) and Holzinger (2021).

Their review particularly emphasized environmental topics, including biodiversity, water resources, energy conservation, smart cities, and climate change. The authors explored how AI could contribute to achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Drawing on a "consensus-based expert elicitation process, informed by three prior studies mapping SDG interlinkages" (p. 1), they found that AI could potentially support approximately two-thirds of the UN's goals. This conclusion represents the collective insights of experts from various fields.

In a more focused study, Di Vaio et al. (2020) examined the role of AI in developing sustainable business models by conducting a quantitative bibliometric analysis of 73 publications from 1990 to 2019. Although their research offered valuable insights, the reliance on quantitative methods often lacked the nuanced understanding that qualitative approaches provide. Additionally, the study's word cloud analysis highlighted a strong focus on technology, while the connection between technology and sustainability was relatively underexplored.

On the other hand, Holzinger et al. (2021) examined the potential risks associated with using AI for sustainability. The authors highlighted that while AI technologies offer significant promise, they also pose unforeseen threats that must be addressed. They discussed

several critical issues, including bias, data privacy, data resilience, method transparency, and trust in outcomes.

Our analysis, utilizing data from AISeL and Top Basket (see Appendix B), reveals a growing interest within the information systems (IS) community in leveraging AI for sustainability (refer to Figure 2, left). Over 69% of the articles were presented at conferences, with significant contributions from HICCS (15%), ICIS (14%), AMCIS (13%), PACIS (11%), and ECIS (3%). A similar trend is seen in journals, where about 28% of our sample includes publications in JMIS (9%), ISR (8%), and MISQ (4%). The thematic analysis underscores a strong focus on the social aspects of sustainability (see Figure 2, right). Technologically, nearly all articles (96%) utilize some form of machine learning (ML), employing a range of algorithms from both supervised and unsupervised learning methods. [8]

3. SUSTAINABILITY-ORIENTED GOALS AND AI METHODS FOR CYBER FUTURE

To address the first question regarding goals (Q1), we used an inductive approach to identify topics, mapped them to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), counted their frequency within our sample, and examined their connection to sustainability (see Table 2). Each topic was accompanied by a descriptive term indicating the type of decision or task involved, such as classification, prediction, or monitoring. In some cases, it was difficult to assign a topic to just one SDG, so the overview of goals is not mutually exclusive; an article could be linked to multiple goals.

Our analysis of 95 IS articles shows that the majority (76%) contribute to social sustainability. Within this domain, the primary focus is on good health and well-being (SDG 3), addressing topics like physical health (e.g., gait analysis, blood pressure), mental health (e.g., depression, addictions), and healthcare (e.g., activity monitoring). Other significant areas include peace and justice (SDG 16), covering issues such as fraud detection, dark web activities, and misinformation, as well as education (SDG 4), which looks at tutoring systems, personalized learning, and automatic error correction.

Regarding ecological concerns, which made up 17% of the sample, articles focused on modern energy (SDG 7) through load shifting, forecasting, and management; responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) with an emphasis on consumption forecasting; and zero hunger (SDG 2), including studies on plant seedling classification. In terms of economic goals (24%), the research addressed infrastructure and innovation (SDG 9), particularly in the context of smart cities, as well as working conditions and economic growth (SDG 8), focusing on labor market predictions and sales forecasting[10].

"While IS researchers may not create new algorithms, they utilize existing ones to address business or social problems, making it essential for them to understand these technologies and methods." We explored the technological aspect of research (AI methods, Q3). Consequently, we extracted, quantified, coded, and classified the full range of approaches, methods, and algorithms from our literature corpus. We distinguished between key AI-related concepts based on our understanding in Section 2.1, including ML, ANN, DL, NLP, and CV [13].

The random forest algorithm, an ensemble learning technique using decision trees for classification and regression (Ho, 1995), is applied in several articles to address social issues.

For instance, it is used to classify conditions like asthma (#T97) and schizophrenia (#117), as well as to predict various entities within the Bitcoinblockchain ecosystem (#T43). Additionally, random forests are employed to assess the impact of weather on electricity demand (#418) and to forecast agricultural yields (#35). In the ecological realm, articles examine the relationship between weather conditions and electricity load profiles (#418) and classify animal health (#62). For economic sustainability, random forests are used to predict labor market competition (#T18) [17].

Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), inspired by biological vision and natural signal processing, are popular learning architectures. In the context of social issues, CNNs analyze medical images for conditions like glaucoma (#96), diabetes (#71), and brain tumors (#404). They are also utilized in education and peace initiatives by predicting sentiments in online courses (#405) and identifying threats on the dark web (#T41). Economically, CNNs help analyze consumer behavior (#T5) and labor markets (#T18). However, CNNs were notably not applied to environmentally focused topics [15].

Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs), with their internal feedback loops, can learn sequential patterns and model time dependencies by creating memory. They are commonly used for time-series data, event sequences, and natural language processing. However, simple RNNs often struggle with limited memory capacity when handling long sequences, leading to vanishing gradient issues. To overcome this, RNNs can be enhanced with Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) cells (LeCun et al., 2015). In our sample, RNN-related articles focus on social concerns, such as detecting drug addictions (#57), supporting learning tutors (#50), and identifying fake news (#415), as well as economic aspects like designing an image-based fashion curation system for personalized outfits (#61) [16] .

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. **AI's Contribution to Sustainable Development:**
   - **Environmental Impact:** AI is increasingly being used to optimize resource usage, reduce waste, and manage energy consumption. Techniques such as machine learning and deep learning are applied to predict energy demands, monitor environmental changes, and optimize supply chains, directly contributing to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as affordable and clean energy (SDG 7) and climate action (SDG 13).
   - **Social Impact:** AI technologies are being deployed to improve health outcomes, enhance educational systems, and promote social equity. For example, AI-driven systems are helping to diagnose diseases, personalize learning experiences, and detect biases in hiring processes. These applications align with SDGs focused on good health and well-being (SDG 3) and quality education (SDG 4).
   - **Economic Impact:** AI is also contributing to economic sustainability by increasing efficiency across industries, fostering innovation, and supporting the development of smart cities. AI-driven automation and predictive analytics are helping businesses optimize operations, reduce costs, and create new opportunities for growth.

2. **Ethical and Moral Considerations:**
   - **Trustworthiness and Transparency:** The discussion often highlights the importance of ensuring that AI systems are transparent and trustworthy. This involves addressing issues related to algorithmic bias, data privacy, and the potential for AI to be misused. Scholars emphasize the need for AI to align with human values and to be developed in ways that promote fairness, inclusivity, and non-discrimination.
   - **Sustainability of AI Itself:** There is a growing concern about the environmental impact of AI technologies, particularly in terms of the energy consumption required for training large models. Researchers are calling for more sustainable practices in AI development, including the use of renewable energy sources and the optimization of algorithms to reduce their carbon footprint.

3. **Technological Advancements:**
   - **Innovations in AI Methods:** The development of more efficient algorithms, such as those in machine learning, neural networks, and natural language processing, is crucial for enhancing the capability of AI systems to address sustainability challenges. These advancements are enabling AI to process larger datasets, make more accurate predictions, and provide more effective solutions to complex problems.
   - **Cybersecurity and Resilience:** As AI systems become more integral to critical infrastructure, ensuring their security and resilience against cyber threats is paramount. This involves not only protecting AI systems from attacks but also leveraging AI to detect and respond to cyber threats in real time.

Discussion

The discussion around AI and Computational Sustainability typically centers on balancing the benefits of AI with the potential risks and challenges. While AI offers significant opportunities for advancing sustainability goals, it also raises important questions about ethical considerations, environmental impact, and the need for robust governance frameworks.

- **Ethical AI:** Ensuring that AI technologies are developed and deployed in ways that respect human rights and promote social good is a key theme in the discussion. This includes addressing algorithmic bias, ensuring transparency in AI decision-making, and promoting diversity and inclusivity in AI development.
- **Sustainable AI Development:** The conversation also focuses on the need for more sustainable AI practices, particularly in terms of reducing the environmental impact of AI systems. Researchers are exploring ways to make AI more energy-efficient and to integrate sustainability considerations into the AI development lifecycle.
- **The Role of Policy and Regulation:** There is a growing recognition of the need for policy and regulatory frameworks to guide the development and use of AI in ways that promote sustainability. This includes setting standards for ethical AI, promoting transparency and accountability, and encouraging the use of AI for social and environmental good.

5. CONCLUSION

This article provides a comprehensive overview of computational sustainability research, examining the field through the lens of AI methods used, the sustainability challenges tackled, and the contributions to decision-making, often focused on human decision processes. By exploring these aspects, the paper lays the groundwork for a more in-depth analysis, which will include the potential to develop advanced and integrated AI systems capable of making decisions and offering advice in a holistic manner. In conclusion, the intersection of AI and Computational Sustainability offers a promising avenue for addressing some of the most pressing challenges of our time. However, realizing this potential requires careful consideration of the ethical, environmental, and technological implications of AI, as well as strong governance to ensure that AI is harnessed for the benefit of all.As another limitation, we particularly shed light on research results that comprise artefacts and situated instances in the form of algorithms, methods, and systems.

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