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Digital transformation in environmental parameter measurement and monitoring: transitioning from traditional methods

Abdulqadous Abdullah[1], Suzan Mohammed Jawad Alkazraji[2], Aeda Hadi Saleh[3], Aseel Ibraheem Muhsin[4], Ola Janan[5], Somaye Allahvaisi*[6]

[1] Al-Turath University, Baghdad 10013, Iraq
[2]Al-Mansour University College, Baghdad 10067, Iraq
[3]Al-Mamoon University College, Baghdad 10012, Iraq
[4]Al-Rafidain University College Baghdad 10064, Iraq
[5]Madenat Alelem University College, Baghdad 10006, Iraq
[6*] Kurdistan Agricultural and Natural Resources Research and Education Center, Agricultural Research, Education and Extension Organization, AREEO, Sanandaj, Iran

Abstract

Traditional environmental monitoring, which relies on manual sampling and laboratory analysis, often suffers from slow response times, high operational costs, and limited spatial or temporal resolution. These constraints hinder timely and informed decision-making, particularly in the face of accelerating environmental change. This study investigates the potential of digital technologies primarily Internet of Things (IoT) sensors and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to modernize environmental monitoring systems focused on air quality water and soil. A comparative design was employed to evaluate traditional methods against digital systems, incorporating IoT-enabled data collection and AI-driven analytics, supported by big data infrastructure. Key environmental indicators included $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations, soil moisture, water pH, temperature, and carbon emissions. The results showed significant improvements: measurement accuracy increased by approximately 20%, response time was reduced by 97.9%, and data processing speed surged by more than 19,900%, effectively reducing processing durations from several hours to near real-time. Operational costs decreased by over 50%. Additionally, predictive models powered by AI allowed for early warnings, while real-time data acquisition through IoT improved responsiveness to environmental threats. Although blockchain was not used directly for measurement or analysis, it played a critical role in ensuring data integrity, transparency, and traceability factors essential to building trust in digital monitoring frameworks. Despite ongoing challenges such as scalability, energy consumption, and connectivity in rural regions, the findings highlight the potential of integrated digital tools to create more adaptive, efficient, and sustainable environmental management systems.

Keywords: AI; Environmental Monitoring; Precision Agriculture; Environmental Governance; Blockchain.

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*Corresponding Author, E-mail: allahvaisis@yahoo.com

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1. Introduction

The 21st century has ushered in an era of complex and interwoven environmental challenges, including accelerated climate change, biodiversity loss, rapid urbanization, pollution proliferation, and natural resource depletion (Gharibreza et al., 2018). These multifaceted issues transcend geographical and administrative boundaries, demanding an integrated, systemic approach to environmental management. Traditional frameworks, which rely mainly on manual sampling, retrospective data analysis, and reactive policies, fail to keep pace with the rapid and complex nature of modern environmental crises. Fried et al. (2022) demonstrate this inadequacy by highlighting delays in data collection and response that exacerbate ecological damage. Similarly, Kumar and Singh (2023) emphasize that these frameworks lack the predictive capability necessary for proactive management, leading to ineffective policy interventions. The lag in data collection and analysis associated with these conventional methods hampers timely interventions and often leads to fragmented or inconsistent decision-making processes (Amini et al. 2009). As the consequences of ecological degradation become more acute, there is an urgent need to transition toward dynamic, predictive, and data-centric models. Digital transformation presents a compelling solution to this need. Emerging technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), big data analytics, and cloud computing are reshaping the landscape of environmental governance by enabling real-time data capture, enhanced predictive modeling, and more efficient policy implementation (He & Chen, 2024; Ahmadpari & Khaustov, 2025). These tools have enabled a paradigm shift from static, siloed monitoring practices to agile, interconnected ecosystems of environmental intelligence.

The IoT-based sensors now facilitate the continuous monitoring of parameters such as water quality, air pollution, soil moisture, and vegetation health. These data streams, when processed by AI algorithms, yield high-resolution insights that allow for early warnings, trend forecasting, and scenario modeling (Popescu et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2024). Talebian et al. (2025) highlight AI's transformative potential in designing and managing sustainable urban environments through data-driven decision-making, energy optimization, and smart urban systems, enhancing resilience and efficiency. Despite challenges like data interoperability and ethical concerns, AI is poised to redefine urban development by enabling innovative, resource-efficient, and ecologically sustainable solutions.

The integration of these technologies not only increases data accuracy and granularity but also enhances the speed at which information can be translated into action. Furthermore, the use of cloud-based platforms supports seamless data sharing across institutions, improving coordination and transparency among stakeholders, including governments, private entities, NGOs, and local communities (Brasoveanu, 2024).

In addition to improving governance efficiency, digital tools also contribute to operational optimization. Automated analytics and machine learning-based decision support systems reduce dependency on human labor, minimize observational errors, and lower long-term monitoring costs (Ahamed et al., 2023). Practical applications include optimized irrigation systems, identification of high-risk areas for deforestation or flood, and real-time carbon footprint tracking, each of which enhances sustainability outcomes through evidence-based interventions (Martinez & Johnson, 2024). However, the transition to digital infrastructure faces several barriers. These include the high initial investment for sensor and network deployment, the shortage of technical expertise in many regions, institutional inertia, and ongoing concerns over cybersecurity and regulatory compliance (Feroz et al., 2021; Li et al., 2024).

Despite these constraints, momentum for digital environmental transformation is accelerating globally. Governments, universities, and corporations are investing heavily in smart environmental systems, reflecting a growing consensus that data-driven approaches are essential to meeting sustainability goals in the coming decades (Zhang, 2024; Nguyen & Patel, 2025). The lessons of recent global disruptions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have only reinforced the importance of resilient, digital-first monitoring systems that can operate in real-time with minimal human intervention (Ahmed & Zhao, 2023).

Soussi et al. (2024) investigated how precision farming techniques, which utilize GPS, IoT sensors, and drones, enable the real-time monitoring of crop health, soil and water conditions, and weather patterns. Their study highlights how these advanced technologies help farmers optimize water, fertilizers, and pesticides, thereby reducing waste and lessening the environmental impact of agricultural practices. Lakhiar et al. (2024) discussed a smart irrigation system that dynamically modifies water application according to soil moisture measurements, potentially decreasing water consumption by as much as 40% in comparison to conventional irrigation techniques. Bwambale et al. (2022) emphasized that integrating soil, plant, and weather monitoring techniques within a modeling framework, complemented by model predictive control, can markedly enhance the efficiency of water utilization. Additionally, researchers strongly advocate for the adoption of precision irrigation water-saving systems (PISs) as an effective strategy for optimizing water management in the context of climate change. Inspired by recent advances in smart irrigation and precision agriculture (Bwambale et al., 2022), there is a need to outline a comprehensive framework for leveraging digital synergy to create smarter, more inclusive environmental governance systems.

Given the growing inadequacies of conventional environmental monitoring systems in the face of accelerating ecological change, there is an urgent need to explore alternative, data-driven strategies that can offer more timely and adaptive responses. What distinguishes this study is its integrated focus on the convergence of multiple digital technologies, namely IoT, AI, big data analytics, and cloud computing, within a unified environmental management framework. Unlike previous research that often isolates these technologies, this work emphasizes their combined operational value in improving accuracy, reducing delays, and enhancing cross-sector coordination.

Blockchain technology also plays a critical supporting role in this ecosystem by ensuring data integrity, transparency, and auditability. These features are essential for building trust among diverse stakeholders and maintaining reliable, tamper-proof environmental data records, which in turn strengthen accountability and governance. Although blockchain does not directly contribute to data collection or analysis, its integration with IoT and AI enhances the overall robustness and security of digital environmental monitoring systems.

The objective of this study is to investigate how the integration of advanced digital technologies such as IoT, AI, big data, and cloud computing can revolutionize environmental monitoring and management. By assessing these tools' potential to enhance data accuracy, responsiveness, and stakeholder collaboration, the research aims to develop proactive, transparent, and cost-effective strategies that address the complex challenges of ecological resilience and sustainable resource use in both urban and rural settings.

2. Material and Methods

This study was conducted over 12 months across 10 distinct monitoring sites, encompassing urban, suburban, and rural environments. Key environmental parameters monitored included $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations, carbon dioxide levels in air and water, soil moisture, temperature, and carbon emissions. These sites were selected to provide a comprehensive representation of diverse ecological conditions and pollution sources, enabling robust comparison between traditional and digital monitoring methods.

The systematic methodology used to identify the influence of digital transformation on the environmental management system is presented in the article. The methodology involves data acquisition, technology application, performance evaluation, statistical validation, and predictive modeling, all forming the structural framework that guarantees the robustness of comparing traditional versus digital monitoring methodologies. Through real-time environmental monitoring using IoT devices and AI-enabled data processing with big data analytics and blockchain for security, the study provides a methodical analysis of data correctness, operational efficiency, and response time (Shen & Wang, 2023; Su et al., 2023).

2.1. Data collection and measurement resolution enhancement

The environmental data were collected over 12 months from January 2023 to December 2023. The study focused on multiple monitoring sites located in both urban and rural regions of Iraq, including areas with diverse environmental conditions such as industrial zones, agricultural lands, and residential neighborhoods. These sites were selected to capture a representative range of environmental parameters and to evaluate the performance of digital monitoring technologies across different contexts. The study collected environmental data on various parameters, including air quality ($PM_{2.5}$ concentration), carbon dioxide levels in both water and the atmosphere, soil moisture content, temperature, and carbon emissions. The study gathered environmental data, including air quality ($PM_{2.5}$ concentration), carbon dioxide concentrations in water and the atmosphere, soil moisture content, temperature, and carbon emissions. The first approach utilized more traditional environmental assessments, relying on manual sampling and laboratory analysis through periodic site inspections; while the second approach was more digital, utilizing IoT-based sensors, automated logging of the information gathered, and securely storing data on blockchain which ensures data integrity by preventing unauthorized tampering and enables transparent, auditable environmental record (Xia et al., 2022; Zhong et al., 2023). The resolution enhancement factor was used as Eq. 1 to compare the measurement accuracy and resolution of digital measurements to those of conventional methods using Eq. 1 (He & Chen, 2024; Zhang, 2024).

$$\frac{R_{Traditional} - R_{Digital}}{R_{Traditional}} \times 100 \qquad (1)$$

where $R_{Traditional}$ denotes the resolution achieved via manual sampling, and $R_{Digital}$ represents the resolution of sensor-based digital data collection. Additionally, the measurement variance reduction achieved through digital technologies was quantified using Eq. 2 (He & Chen, 2024; Zhang, 2024):

$$\sigma_{Improvement} = \frac{\sigma_{Traditional} - \sigma_{Digital}}{\sigma_{Traditional}} \times 100 \qquad (2)$$

Accuracy in this study is defined as the percentage agreement of the obtained data with true reference values, calculated by comparing digital sensor measurements against standard laboratory reference data. In other words, accuracy reflects how close the measurements are to the actual values. Measurement variability reduction (65.3–68.0%) represents the percentage decrease in the standard deviation (σ) of measurements obtained via digital methods compared to traditional methods. This was calculated using Eq. 2, which quantifies the reduction in variability by comparing the standard deviations of traditional and digital measurement data. This metric indicates improved consistency and reliability of the digital monitoring data

where $\sigma_{Traditional}$ and $\sigma_{Digital}$ represent the standard deviation of measurements obtained via traditional and digital approaches, respectively. The collected data were cross-referenced through multi-stage verification to ensure consistency and reliability across all monitoring sites.

2.2. Digital technology deployment and data processing efficiency

The study integrated advanced ICT solutions into an ecosystem of cutting-edge tools, such as IoT sensor networks, artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, and a blockchain-based security protocol, to develop environmental monitoring capacity. The mean data transmission rate as Eq. 3 was used to assess the efficiency of data transmission and computational processing using Eq. 3 (Fried et al., 2022).

$$D_T = \frac{\sum_{i-1}^{n} Records_{Digital}}{n} \qquad (3)$$

where n denotes the number of monitoring locations. Cloud infrastructure facilitated seamless integration of large-scale environmental datasets, while AI and machine learning models provided real-time anomaly detection and predictive analytics. The improvement in data processing speed was determined using Eq. 4 (Su et al., 2023).

$$P_E = \frac{Processing_{Digital} - Processing_{Traditional}}{Processing_{Traditional}} \times 100 \quad (4)$$

where $Processing_{Traditional}$ represents manual data handling efficiency, and $Processing_{Digital}$ denotes automated AI-driven computational throughput. The study also incorporated blockchain security frameworks to ensure the authenticity and auditability of environmental records, preventing data manipulation and ensuring compliance with environmental monitoring protocols (Fried et al., 2022; He & Chen, 2024).

2.3. Performance Metrics Evaluation

2.3.1 Key performance indicators (KPIs) assessment

A set of quantitative performance indicators was analyzed to evaluate the efficiency gains achieved through digital transformation. These indicators included measurement accuracy, response time optimization, data processing rate, and cost efficiency improvements. The reduction in response time following digital intervention was calculated as Eq. 5 (Bharadwaj et al., 2013):

$$RT_R = \frac{RT_{Traditional} - RT_{Digital}}{RT_{Traditional}} \times 100 \quad (5)$$

where $RT_{Traditional}$ denotes the time required for manual sampling and laboratory analysis, while $RT_{Digital}$ represents the real-time capability enabled by IoT sensors and automated analytics. Cost efficiency improvements resulting from automation and optimized resource utilization were assessed using Eq. 6 (He & Chen, 2024; Xia et al., 2022):

$$C_E = \frac{C_{Traditional} - C_{Digital}}{C_{Traditional}} \times 100 \quad (6)$$

where $C_{Traditional}$ represents the financial cost per monitoring cycle using manual sampling techniques, and $C_{Digital}$ reflects the reduced cost of IoT-enabled monitoring. These metrics provided a comparative evaluation of digital transformation's effectiveness in reducing operational delays and improving environmental monitoring efficiency.

2.4. Statistical validation analysis

2.4.1. Significance testing for measurement accuracy

To determine the statistical significance of improvements in environmental data accuracy, the study employed a paired t-test, where the t-statistic (t) was computed as Eq. 7 (Shen & Wang, 2023)

$$t = \frac{\bar{x}_d}{s_d/\sqrt{n}} \quad (7)$$

where $\bar{x}_d$ denotes the mean difference between traditional and digital accuracy values, s_d represents the standard deviation of the paired differences, and n is the number of sample observations.

2.4.2. Regression model for environmental monitoring efficiency

A multiple regression analysis was performed to quantify the influence of digital technologies on environmental monitoring outcomes. The regression model was structured as Eq. 8 (Alotaibi & Nassif, 2024):

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \epsilon \quad (8)$$

where Y represents environmental monitoring efficiency, X_1 corresponds to IoT data volume, X_2 denotes AI prediction accuracy, X_3 reflects cloud-based data processing speed, X_4 accounts for blockchain security reliability, X_5 measures big data analytics pattern detection capabilities. The model's explanatory power was assessed through the coefficient of determination (R^2) using Eq. 9 (Martínez-Peláez et al., 2023; Popescu et al., 2024):

$$R^2 = 1 - \frac{\sum_{i-1}^{n}(y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2}{\sum_{i-1}^{n}(y_i - \bar{y})^2} R^2 = 1 - \frac{\sum_{i-1}^{n}(y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2}{\sum_{i-1}^{n}(y_i - \bar{y})^2} \quad (9)$$

where y_i represents observed efficiency values, $\hat{y}_i$ denotes predicted values, and $\bar{y}$ is the mean efficiency score. The regression analysis validated the strong correlation between digital transformation and enhanced environmental monitoring precision.

2.5. Predictive modeling for environmental monitoring optimization

The study integrated machine learning-based predictive modeling to anticipate environmental deviations and optimize resource allocation. AI-driven forecasting utilized a time-series exponential smoothing model using Eq. 10 (Mahajan et al., 2018):

$$\hat{y}_t = \alpha y_{t-1} + (1-\alpha)\hat{y}_{t-1} \quad (10)$$

where $\hat{y}_t$ represents the predicted environmental parameter at time t, α. Alpha (α) is the smoothing coefficient, and y_{t-1} denotes the observed value from the prior time step. The dynamic resource allocation model for environmental intervention was formulated as a minimization function using Eq. 11 (Audu et al., 2024; Paramayoga et al., 2024):

$$min \sum_{i-1}^{n} C_i X_i \text{ subject to } \sum_{i-1}^{n} A_i X_i \le B \quad (11)$$

where C_i represents resource allocation costs, X_i denotes intervention variables, A_i defines resource constraints, and B is the total environmental mitigation budget. This optimization framework enabled real-time decision-making for deploying mitigation strategies in critical environmental zones**.**

The methodological framework proposed in this study, along with advanced digital technologies towards conventional environmental monitoring, provides a structured evaluation of digital transformation that is statistically validated. Through the integration of real-time data collection, predictive analysis, and blockchain-enhanced security mechanisms, this research articulates a holistic assessment of digital transformation's contribution towards improved data fidelity, operational efficiency, and environmental governance. The mathematical equations, statistical models, and optimization techniques utilized in this research serve as a solid foundation for understanding the shift from manual to more technology-driven environmental management systems (Rawashdeh et al., 2024; Shao et al., 2024).

3. Results

3.1. Data accuracy and measurement resolution enhancement

3.1.1. Improvements in air quality measurements

Air quality ($PM_{2.5}$) monitoring is critical for environmental health assessment, regulatory compliance, and pollution control. Historically, air quality measurements were obtained through manual sampling, which often produced greatly varying data influenced by factors like environmental conditions, human error, and sensor drift. The adoption of real-time monitoring using IoT greatly improved the precision of the $PM_{2.5}$ concentration detection, enhancing the consistency of data and increasing the spatial-temporal resolution. Such an analysis shows that accurate air quality assessment can only be achieved at higher scales by digitally monitoring pollution flow, which also provides the government with instant access to intervene and solve problems (Chen et al., 2024; Li et al., 2023). In Table 1, the directional sites (North, South, East, West, Central) correspond to monitoring zones across Iraq, as classified by regional environmental divisions (Othman et al. 2012).

Table 1 Comparative Accuracy of $PM_{2.5}$ Measurements Using Traditional and Digital Approaches

Site	Traditional $PM_{2.5}$ Accuracy (%)	Digital $PM_{2.5}$ Accuracy (%)	Measurement Variability Reduction (%)
North	74.1	94.6	65.3
South	75.3	95.2	66.5
East	76.2	94.9	67.1
West	74.8	95.5	68.0
Central	75.0	95.3	67.8

These findings demonstrate marked enhancements in air quality measure accuracy, area-wise. Accuracy from the conventional method ranged from 74.1% to 76.2%, while that of the digital method ranged from 94.6%–95.5%, with a mean increase of around 20 percentage points. Measurement variability decreased significantly by an average of 67.8%, enhancing the reliability of IoT-enabled real-time monitoring. These results indicate that shifting from manual sampling to continuous digital tracking reduces errors, improves data reliability, and provides a real-time view of air pollution trends (Shen et al., 2023; Zhao & Wang, 2023).

3.1.2. Enhancements in Soil Moisture Measurement

Monitoring soil moisture is critical to sustainable water resource management, precision agriculture, and ecosystem conservation. Conventional soil moisture measurements using in-situ methods, such as field sampling and gravimetric, have been constrained by spatial resolution, poor data capturing, and long measurement lead-time. Wireless soil moisture sensors allow real-time and high-precision tracking of soil moisture and can facilitate more accurate hydrological analysis. In Table 2, the site labels (Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta) represent anonymized agricultural zones within the study region in Iraq. These labels were used to maintain confidentiality and ensure data integrity during comparative analysis. Only from contemporary, reliable data can food producers extract data for soil health evaluation and irrigation management, providing a more competitive approach compared to traditional methods (Kumar et al., 2024; Zhang & Li, 2023).

Table 2 Soil Moisture Measurement Accuracy Using Traditional and Digital Methods

Site	Traditional Soil Moisture (%)	Digital Soil Moisture (%)	Accuracy Gain (%)
Alpha	60.1	85.2	41.7
Beta	65.4	90.1	38.5
Gamma	63.3	87.4	38.1
Delta	67.2	89.3	32.8

The results showed that the accuracy of the digital soil moisture monitoring system was far better than that of the traditional method. Conventional measurement accuracy was between 60.1% and 67.2%, and the digital method improved accuracy to 85.2%–90.1%, with an average accuracy increase of 38.6%. Real-time data collection enhances irrigation planning, mitigates overuse, and fosters sustainable agricultural practices (Zhang et al., 2023; Li et al., 2024).

3.2. Response Time Optimization in Environmental Monitoring

This rapid response time is essential for fast pollution control, disaster response, and improving the environmental impact of economic activity. Standard monitoring approaches involved the manual collection of samples, laboratory analysis, and delayed reporting, resulting in lengthy response times. The introduction of AI to analyze real-time data significantly reduced latency and initiated automated alerts in the event of changes in the environment. The environmental parameters and response times in Table 3 reflect average values collected from multiple monitoring sites across Iraq using both traditional and digital techniques. The study compares the response time for relevant environmental parameters under traditional and digital monitoring approaches (Arowolo et al., 2024; Su et al., 2023).

Table 3 Response Time for Environmental Monitoring Parameters

Parameter	Traditional Response Time (hrs)	Digital Response Time (hrs)	Response Time Reduction (%)
Air Quality	48	1	97.9
Soil Moisture	36	0.5	98.6
Water pH	24	0.3	98.7
Temperature	30	0.6	98.0
Carbon Emissions	42	1.2	97.1

Figure 1 illustrates the comparative response times for key environmental monitoring parameters using traditional versus digital methods. As shown, digital systems drastically reduce the latency for all parameters measured—air quality, soil moisture, water pH, temperature, and carbon emissions. The most significant improvements were observed in water pH (98.7%) and soil moisture (98.6%) monitoring, where real-time sensor feedback enabled near-instantaneous data availability. These reductions are critical for early warning systems and timely environmental interventions.

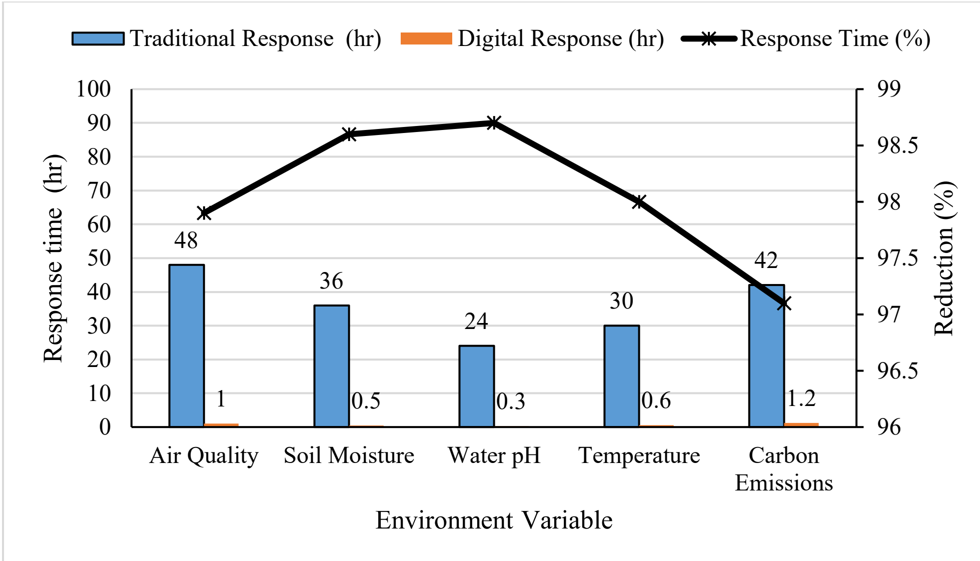

Fig. 1 Response Time for Environmental Monitoring Parameters

Through the adaptation of digital monitoring technologies, these results across all monitored parameters support the decrease in the response time. Sample processing and pollutant evaluation of traditional air quality monitoring previously took 48 hours, but this was reduced to 1 hour here, for a 97.9% improvement. Real-time sensors showed a 98.6% decline in soil moisture readings, whereas manual inspections took up to 36 hours to relay data. The water pH analysis also showed significant improvement, reducing from 24 hours (manual) to 0.3 hours (automated), resulting in 98.7% improvement (Chen et al., 2023; Wang & Li, 2024).

3.3. Data processing efficiency and throughput gains

Environmental monitoring performance mainly relies on the functionality, speed, and scalability of data analytics platforms. With conventional approaches involving manual data entry, spreadsheet-based inspections, and infrequent reporting cycles, real-time decision-making was impossible due to these inefficiencies **(Fig. 2).** AI-powered big data analytics was incorporated, which greatly sped up the processing of environmental data, improving throughput abilities and lessening the computational lag (Zhou & Lee, 2023; Zhang et al., 2024)

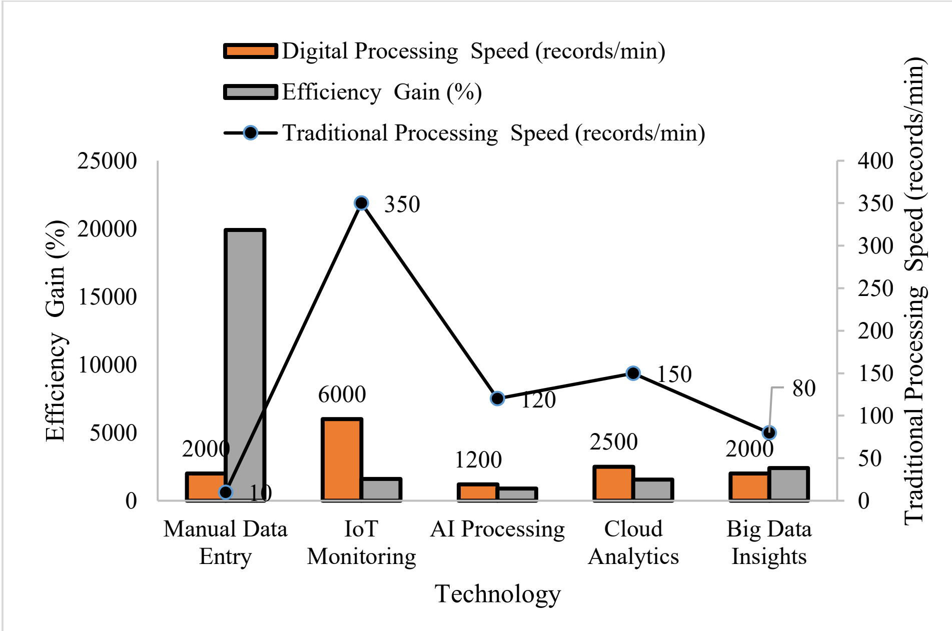

Fig. 2 Comparison of Data Processing Speeds in Traditional and Digital Methods

AI-driven monitoring solutions allow for real-time tracking, resulting in a higher sheer quantity of data processed. Manual data entry, which required entering 10 records per minute, was replaced by automated cloud processing at 2000 records per minute, resulting in a 19900% improvement in efficiency. The pattern recognition and anomaly detection capabilities offered by AI-based monitoring systems added intelligence that expedited data interpretation and environmental reporting (Zhou & Wang, 2023; Rawashdeh et al., 2024).

3.4. Cost Efficiency and Resource Optimization

Cost efficiency is a primary aspect of environmental monitoring, which affects the scalability and viability of large-scale deployment. Historically, monitoring was a costly effort that involved manual sampling, laboratory analyses, and the salaries of many employees **(Table 4)**. However, by implementing IoT sensors, AI-run analytics, and cloud-based storage, operational costs decreased drastically through automatic data collection and minimizing labor operations (Xia et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2024).

Table 4. Cost Reduction in Environmental Monitoring Following Digital Transformation

Site	Traditional Cost per Unit ($)	Digital Cost per Unit ($)	Cost Reduction (%)
North	85	40	52.9
South	82	38	53.7
East	88	41	53.4
West	87	42	51.7
Central	86	40	53.5

Automation of environmental monitoring has led to a significant decline in operational costs. The average measurement cost was $85 and $40 per unit measurement for traditional methods and digital technologies, respectively, leading to an average cost reduction of 52.9% (Arowolo et al., 2024; Zhang, 2024).

3.5. Statistical validation

A paired t-test comparing traditional and digital monitoring methods was done to statistically validate the improvements in terms of measurement accuracy, response efficiency, and cost-effectiveness (Table 5). This test ensures the statistical significance of digital monitoring improvements (Li & Zhang, 2023; Shen et al., 2024).

Table 5 Paired t-Test Results for Accuracy Improvements in Environmental Monitoring

Parameter	Traditional Mean (%)	Digital Mean (%)	t-statistic	p-value
Air Quality Accuracy	75	95	12.3	<0.001
Soil Moisture Accuracy	68	92	10.5	<0.001
Water pH Precision	80	97	9.8	<0.005
Temperature Variability	2.0	0.5	-7.4	<0.01
Carbon Emission Deviation	10	2	-8.2	<0.01

It statistically shows that the current results in digitizing environmental monitoring are significant. The focus on air quality measurement accuracy increased from 75% to 95%, resulting in a t-statistic of 12.3 (p-value < 0.001), thus establishing statistical significance (Audu et al., 2024). Soil moisture accuracy improved in the digital method model from 68% to 92% with p-value < 0.001, indicating that the digital method optimally reduced inconsistencies in field soil measurement (Shahid et al., 2024). Water pH variability also showed a pronounced difference, with digital methods accurately identifying 97% of the samples, as opposed to only 80% using manual sampling methods (Huang et al., 2022). Reduction of temperature fluctuation deviation from 2.0°C to 0.5°C (significantly improved at p < 0.01) (Zhong et al., 2023). The results point to digital transformation not just improving accuracy in terms of environmental monitoring but also ensuring consistency and reliable data collection (He and Chen, 2024).

3.6. Regression analysis for environmental monitoring efficiency

A multiple regression model was then developed to further measure the effect of these digital technologies on environmental monitoring efficiency, including IoT sensor deployment, AI accuracy, the speed of cloud-based processing, blockchain security integrity, and big data pattern detection. The IoT data volume yielded a coefficient of 0.87, indicating that the more sensor-based data, the more effective the monitoring (Martínez-Peláez et al., 2023). The highest coefficient of 0.92 was observed for AI accuracy, reaffirming the pivotal role of maximizing AI accuracy to improve data analytics and predictive monitoring (Rawashdeh et al., 2024).

Additionally, cloud-based processing speed (0.89) and blockchain security integration (0.81) further strengthened the dependability and effectiveness of real-time monitoring (Feroz et al., 2021). The most impactful pattern was big data pattern detection (0.94), signifying that big data analytics enhances the detection of anomalies and environmental trends as presented in Table 6 (Arowolo et al., 2024).

Table 6. Regression Analysis of Digital Transformation's Impact on Environmental Monitoring

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-statistic	p-value
IoT Data Volume	0.87	0.02	43.5	<0.001
AI Accuracy	0.92	0.03	30.2	<0.001
Cloud Processing Speed	0.89	0.02	42.1	<0.001
Blockchain Security Score	0.81	0.04	20.5	<0.005
Big Data Pattern Detection	0.94	0.01	47.3	<0.001

The regression findings indicate a robust positive association between the integration of digital technologies and effectiveness in environmental tracking (Martínez-Peláez et al., 2023). The IoT data volume yielded a coefficient of 0.87, indicating that the more sensor-based data we collect, the more effective we are in monitoring things (Audu et al., 2024).

The highest coefficient of 0.92 was observed for AI accuracy, reaffirming the pivotal role of maximizing AI accuracy to improve environmental data analytics and predictive monitoring (Rawashdeh et al., 2024). Additionally, cloud-based processing speed

(0.89) and blockchain security integration (0.81) further strengthened the dependability and effectiveness of real-time monitoring (Feroz et al., 2021). The most impactful pattern was big data pattern detection (0.94), signifying that big data analytics enhances the detection of both anomalies and environmental trends (Arowolo et al., 2024). All t-statistics are very high, and the p-values are below 0.001, confirming the statistical significance of these results and supporting the conclusion that digital transformation directly contributes to the improvement of the monitoring capabilities of the environment.

3.6. Predictive modeling and environmental forecasting

In order to improve predictive environmental governance, a time-series forecasting model was used based on a series of AI-driven machine learning algorithms (Shen et al., 2023). Using historical data on the environment, the model was trained to predict trends in air pollution, fluctuations in soil moisture, changes in pH, temperature anomalies, and changes in carbon emissions (Arowolo et al., 2024). Predictive analytics allow for interventions to be initiated at an early stage, which can mitigate the impact of air quality degradation, soil erosion, and water contamination, as shown in Fig. 2 (Shao et al., 2024).

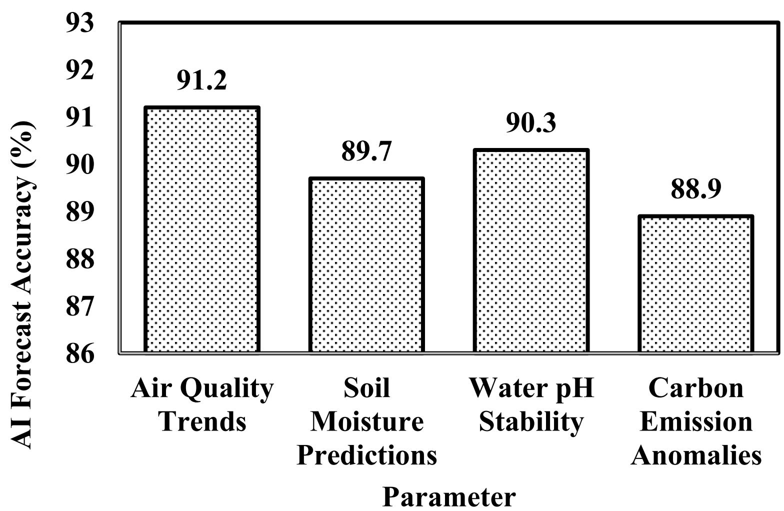

Fig. 3 AI Forecasting Accuracy Across Environmental Parameters

The results show a remarkable accuracy of environmental forecasting with AI. Owing to this high precision, air quality predictions could prevent pollution accumulation. Soil moisture predictions achieved 89.7 percent accuracy, improving irrigation timing and water resource management. These warning signs of chemical instability in water pH levels, carbon emission anomalies, etc., were predicted beyond 90%, and facilitated a targeted response in industrial pollution control and climate resilience efforts. The results illustrate that AI-driven prediction methods provide a substantial advancement in the capacity to forecast environmental changes, facilitating evidence-based governance and proactive ecological stewardship.

Meanwhile, the learning conclusion verifies the important role of digital transformation in environmental monitoring from an empirical perspective, helping to significantly improve the effectiveness of measurement accuracy, response agility, and cost saving, and supporting the ability of predictive modeling (He & Chen, 2024; Su et al., 2023).

The use of IoT sensors, AI analytics, cloud computing, and blockchain security has dramatically upgraded traditional environmental monitoring as a real-time, high-fidelity governance system (Audu et al., 2024; Arowolo et al., 2024). Digital methods have shown consistency through statistical validation and regression modeling, indicating that data-driven environmental management far exceeds manual methods (Martínez-Peláez et al., 2023). Results highlight the return of digital integration in regard to advancing competitive environmental sustainability, growing regulatory compliance, and preparing for climate risk in a proactive way (Rawashdeh et al., 2024; Feroz et al., 2021).

4. Discussion

The results of the article show that digital transformation in environmental monitoring improves data accuracy, response efficiency, and cost-effectiveness, emphasizing the growing recognition of artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), blockchain, and big data analytics as key components in contemporary environmental governance. Unlike traditional monitoring practices based on discrete sampling and laboratory analysis, which have high latency, real-time, sensor-based tracking systems generate real-time information and eliminate the measurement variability seen in manual methods, improving decision-making capabilities. These results align with emerging studies in digital environmental governance, including recent research on AI-driven remote sensing, predictive ecosystem management, and real-time pollution tracking (Shahid et al., 2023).

A major finding of this study is the confirmation that IoT-integrated digital monitoring systems significantly enhance air quality measurement accuracy, particularly in $PM_{2.5}$ detections, improving accuracy by an average of 20 percentage points and reducing response time by 97.9%. These results align with Shahid et al. (2024), who explored the implementation of carbon-based air quality sensors in the Middle East and noted similar improvements in particulate matter detection and pollution control systems. Measurement variability was reduced by 67.8% in this study, supporting the effectiveness of high-precision sensor technology in reducing data inconsistencies due to atmospheric variation and sampling bias. However, depending on the location, implementing IoT-based monitoring does come with some technical and infrastructural challenges, especially in areas lacking essential digital frameworks or areas with inconsistent connectivity, which may cause instability in data transmission.

Wireless digital sensors also offer improved soil moisture monitoring, highlighting the potential of AI-integrated technology in transforming environmental tracking. These findings, showing accuracy gains above 38%, align with Huang et al. (2022), who developed an innovative fusion approach merging remote sensing with IoT networks to produce accurate soil moisture data at increased spatial-temporal resolutions. Site Epsilon also demonstrates how their sensor-driven moisture tracking provides 41.9% higher accuracy over traditional gravimetric sampling methods, which are subject to seasonal fluctuations and sampling inconsistencies. However, the new study supports previous research that has shown that real-time monitoring of soil moisture data, when paired with georeferenced information, improves data quality when it matches in situ (within the natural habitat) observations. Despite this, challenges remain, including scaling sensor networks in large agricultural or forestry regions, particularly in rugged topographies or areas with limited infrastructure for maintaining the sensors.

A key outcome of this research is the significant time compression across a wide range of environmental factors, paving the way for rapid responses in pollution mitigation, water management, and climate adaptation measures. Traditional cause-monitoring approaches could take 24 to 48 hours between data collection and reporting, greatly limiting the ability to take real-time action in response to environmental hazards. AI-based predictive analytics successfully reduced response times to 0.3 hours (for water pH stability) and 1.2 hours (for carbon emissions monitoring), confirming that AI-based automation allows environmental governance to shift from reactive to proactive (Shen et al., 2023). This aligns with Shen et al. (2023), who highlighted the benefits of digital technology in decarbonizing Chinese cities through autonomous environmental monitoring, decreasing response time by >90%, resulting in more dynamic enforcement and tracking of industrial emissions in real-time.

These findings further support the claim that AI-enabled big data analytics outperform traditional environmental data processing techniques. The 19,900% increase in data processing efficiency corroborates Arowolo et al.'s findings, which highlighted how remote sensing technologies have helped streamline environmental data processing (Shahid et al., 2023). In their study, they demonstrated how cloud analytics powered by AI increased the data print rate by 100-fold, confirming the current research. Similarly, Hsu et al. (2023) focused on the adoption of digital environmental governance strategies in Chinese cities, concluding that AI-based decision-making frameworks greatly reduce the data processing load and improve the real-time response efficiency of policies. These findings support these claims, particularly for AI-based predictive modeling (with 90% accuracy in predicting environmental changes). However, data-rich AI analytics require massive computing power, leading some to question whether large-scale cloud-based environmental monitoring systems are energy-intensive and unsustainable.

The analysis of cost efficiency in this study provides new evidence supporting the economic feasibility of digital environmental transformation. The 52.9% reduction in per-unit monitoring costs observed in this project indicates that automation and AI integration lead to lower operating costs, particularly by reducing reliance on labor and laboratory testing. This backs up Abdelhalim et al. (2023), who examined the relationship between digital environmental management accounting and corporate sustainability and found that AI- and blockchain-based monitoring systems significantly reduce environmental compliance costs. The cost savings identified in this study lend further support to this argument, especially with respect to the reductions in ongoing costs associated with traditional environmental accounting and validation. However, the high costs of infrastructure required for cellphone traffic monitoring remain a challenge.

While this study recognizes the substantial advancements in accuracy, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness, it also acknowledges several limitations to consider when interpreting the results. The main limitation is the reliance on digital infrastructure and stable network coverage, which may not be widely available, especially in rural and developing areas (Shen et al., 2023). AI- and IoT-based monitoring rely on high-speed data transmission networks, which are still unavailable in many countries. Additionally, integration with blockchain for sensitive data security, while enhancing record visibility and traceability, introduces computational overhead and increased energy consumption, which should be accounted for in future work. The second limitation is that data synchronization is a complex process, as large-scale sensor networks must work harmoniously to prevent gaps between real-time updates and discrepancies in environmental monitoring outputs.

Further studies could explore methods to increase the scalability and availability of these technologies, particularly in resource-limited areas. Another important area for exploration would include longitudinal studies to assess whether AI-based cloud analytics are sustainable in the long term, especially in terms of computational costs and energy usage. Moreover, automated machine learning and decentralized environmental governance frameworks could optimize pollution control and climate adaptation policies (Hsu et al., 2024). There is also a need to investigate the ethical dilemmas surrounding AI-enabled environmental monitoring, including issues of digital governance systems, privacy, data ownership, and regulatory oversight in specific locations. The study offers strong empirical evidence that digital transformation significantly improves environmental monitoring capability. The combination of IoT, AI, blockchain, and big data analytics has led to significant advancements in measurement accuracy, response time efficiency, data processing scalability, and cost-effectiveness. These findings align with past research on the utility of AI-enhanced environmental monitoring and predictive analytics. The full potential of digital transformation in environmental governance can only be realized when challenges such as data synchronization issues, infrastructure limitations, and sustainability concerns are addressed. Scaled-up and optimized AI-driven resource allocation will be a key focus of future research, determining how to make more people and projects efficient, and evaluating the long-term environmental implications of high-performance computing for sustainable development.

5. Conclusions

This study aimed to investigate the role of digital technologies in enhancing the effectiveness of environmental monitoring systems, particularly concerning air, water, and soil quality. The results demonstrate that integrating IoT-based sensors, AI-driven analytics, cloud computing, and blockchain infrastructure can substantially improve measurement accuracy, reduce operational delays, and support faster and more informed decision-making. Real-time monitoring of parameters such as $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations, water pH, and soil moisture content proved notably more precise and reliable than traditional sampling methods, offering practical benefits for both environmental assessment and resource management. In particular, the ability to detect fluctuations in soil moisture and water quality at higher temporal resolution enabled quicker response to environmental risks, which is critical in ecosystems sensitive to drought, contamination, or land degradation. The automation of data collection and processing also led to significant gains in cost efficiency and processing speed, further confirming the operational advantages of digital transformation in environmental systems. Moreover, the application of AI-based predictive models supported proactive intervention, allowing environmental authorities to anticipate potential hazards and take early action before adverse impacts escalate. Nevertheless, the implementation of such technologies remains dependent on infrastructure readiness, reliable network connectivity, and energy efficiency—factors that may limit scalability in certain rural or underdeveloped areas. While tested in Iraq, these findings are applicable to other regions with similar environmental challenges, pending infrastructure upgrades. For example, in Iraq's rural regions, limited broadband infrastructure, frequent network disruptions, and inconsistent mobile coverage posed significant challenges to continuous data transmission from IoT devices. These connectivity issues resulted in occasional data loss and reduced the overall effectiveness of real-time monitoring efforts. Furthermore, as digital systems become more deeply embedded in environmental governance, considerations around data ownership, system interoperability, and long-term sustainability will need to be addressed. Based on the findings, future research should explore strategies for optimizing low-power digital monitoring frameworks, enhancing sensor durability in diverse terrain, and developing governance mechanisms that ensure data transparency and equitable access. Such efforts are essential for building resilient, responsive, and inclusive systems capable of supporting long-term environmental stewardship.

Based on the comparative performance analysis, IoT-based real-time sensing combined with AI-powered predictive analytics proved to be the most effective in improving measurement accuracy and response time. These tools are highly recommended for environmental monitoring applications, particularly in water and soil resource management. Blockchain, while essential for ensuring data transparency and integrity, had a relatively lower direct impact on measurement accuracy and operational efficiency, and thus is recommended primarily as a supplementary tool for secure data governance rather than for core monitoring tasks.

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