

Machine Learning Models for Financial Risk Assessment

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Abstract-Financial risk assessment is a very crucial part of decision-making for institutions, investors, and regulators that involves the assessment and subsequent mitigation of probable threats that will adversely impact the financial condition of an entity or an entire market. Recently, the conduct of financial risk assessments using machine learning (ML) models has revolutionized the ability to provide dynamic, data-driven prediction, quantification, and management of risk. It differs from the historical methods of risk assessments whereby using ML methods, it can be distinguished and processed with vast historical and real-time data, revealing hidden patterns and being subjected to complexities-among other non-linear formations found in the financial ecosystem. The paper reviews various applications of ML algorithms in financial risk assessment, ranging from supervised learning (e.g., decision trees, random forests, gradient boosting, and neural networks) for credit scoring, loan default prediction, and fraud detection, as well as unsupervised learning (clustering, anomaly detection) to identify patterns that are out of the ordinary in transactions and market behavior. Models concerning deep learning and reinforcement learning were also studied concerning their high-level capabilities in market movement predictions, optimization of investment strategies, and portfolio management in relation to risks. One of the significant advantages of ML models in financial risk assessment is their ability to work with different types of data such as transactional data, social media sentiment, and macroeconomic indicators. It reveals risk from a much broader perspective by considering both structured and unstructured data sources. It allows real-time risk monitoring for financial institutions, enabling them to respond rapidly to new risks as they arise. However, the application of ML into financial risk assessment has not been without challenges, concerns such as data quality, the interpretability of complex models, over fitting in models, and bias in data that are required to obtain reliable results,

among others. Further, new evolving regulatory frameworks to keep pace with the rapid progress of ML techniques have presented additional concentration in assessment and compliance with the model as well as validation. This paper recommends that the hybrid models that the paper envisions are the future of financial risk assessment as hybrid models have the best of traditional financial theories such as Value at Risk and stress testing with the advanced techniques of machine learning. Such hybrid systems can provide a more comprehensive, accurate, and adaptive framework for financial risk management which is beneficial both for financial institutions and regulatory bodies in an increasingly volatile global economy. Additionally, the continued development of Explainable AI (XAI) techniques is expected to improve model transparency and encourage stakeholder trust along the same lines.

I. INTRODUCTION

This is financial risk assessment that serves as the backbone of every decision-making process in the financial industry. In the entire financial chain, all players-among them, banks, insurance companies, investment firms, and regulators-have to identify, measure, and mitigate risk so as to maintain stability and safeguard profitability. Traditional risk assessment was carried out by statistical models and expert judgment with methodologies such as Value at Risk (VaR), stress testing, and credit scoring, forming the foundation of the risk management framework. Although these models have served the purpose of the industry in general, their efficacy and usefulness in times of unprecedented complexity, growing volume, and increasing variety of data has always been suspect. The predilection machine learning is showing towards evaluation-of-risk-in-finance has begun heralding a new wave of competition. It brings revolutionary opportunities for developing engines of predictive analysis, deciphering patterns, interpreting data, and even making decisions - 'based mostly on data.' ML

models have, over time, developed the ability to analyze huge and heterogeneous input data sets, showing remarkable ability to uncover insights that escape the older tailored models. These models can learn from old data, recognizing the latent patterns, and will soon begin to predict future risks. This dynamic increases their operational efficiency as it makes them suitable for the open and complex domains like financial markets, where factors such as investor sentiment, changes in geopolitical events, or even technological innovations tend to affect prices of assets and even the stability state of finance. Other general usages for machine learning in commercial finance include supervised and unsupervised methods alongside reinforcement learning and deep learning applications. Most still relate to a number of functions involving risk in finance: predicting whether an applicant will default on a loan, catching fraudulent uses of a credit card when it happens, forecasting how predictions will move in the market, and making investment portfolios efficient. Unlike traditional methods for risk assessment that often rely on simplified assumptions, machine learning models are capable of handling large-scale as well as a non-linear relationship within the data, making them more versatile in real-world occurrences. Apart from this, machine learning can conduct processing in real-time, thus serving quick detection of impending risks while promoting agility in risk management practices.

Along with all its unexplored potential, machine learning in financial risk assessment also faces a host of challenges as far as its application is concerned. Effective and efficient use of these technologies requires resolving issues regarding quality of data input, model transparency, model interpretability, and compliance with regulations. In addition, as the sophistication of machine learning models increases, there will be an inevitable push for developing avenues among financial institutions and regulators wherein ethical and fair use of these sophisticated tools can be achieved without the danger of injecting bias into decision-making. Thus the present paper aims at understanding the value-added position of machine learning in financial risk assessment with an analytical approach—a combination of its techniques concerning specific challenges-to-hybrid models that bring together the human intelligence of traditional risk assessment methods improved by machine

learning. We hope this dense exploration of what potentially the strengths and limits of machine learning can do in this area leads to an understanding of how such technologies can be made to work for improving risk management practices and at the same time be integrated with existing financial theory and regulatory frameworks to create more robust, adaptable, and effective risk management systems.

II. KEY FINANCIAL RISKS

Financial risk is often a broad term which signifies many uncertainties threatening the stability, health, and profitability of financial institutions, markets, and individual investments. Thus, the gripping factor right in here is understanding and mitigation of those risks, without which confidence in the financial system will fail to last. Following are some of the key financial risks that the financial institutions, investors, or regulators should deal with:

1. Credit Risk refers to the risk of loss to the lender or investor because of the failure of a borrower or counterparty to meet their financial obligations. Such risk is particularly important to banks, lending institutions, and bondholders. Credit risk results from default, partial payment, or an alteration in the borrower's credit quality. Assessments of credit risk consider determining the general financial condition and repayment capacity of the borrower and collateral. It is such evaluations, which have traditionally relied on credit scoring models that people use, but this is increasingly leaning on machine learning, which utilizes financial data patterns to predict defaults.

2. Market Risk

Market risk is a kind of risk that exposes one into a situation of losing because of effective price variations of any financial assets, which include stocks, bonds, commodities, and currencies. Such changes could be a result from changes in any specific market factors such as interest, stock prices, exchange rates, or commodity prices. Normally, one refers to the following types of market risks:

- 1) Equity risk: Risk changes in the prices of stocks.
- 2) Interest rate risk: Risk of loss because of variation of interest rates.
- 3) Currency risk: Risk emerging from exchange rate fluctuations.

Market risk can be ameliorated through portfolio diversification, derivatives, and hedging strategies.

Machine learning models, especially time-series forecasting and deep learning methods, have proven effective in predicting market trends and assessing volatility.

III. LIQUIDITY RISK

Liquidity risk means that the entity cannot meet short-term payment obligations out of its liquid assets because of some imbalance between liquid assets and liabilities. It can be two types:

- 1) Market liquidity risk refers to the risk that an asset cannot be easily bought or sold without affecting the price.
- 2) Funding liquidity risk constitutes that risk under which an institution or firm is unable to acquire the necessary funding to meet its short term obligations.

Liquidity risk can very quickly come to be visible during a period of financial stress, and it may lead to financial instability. Machine learning models monitor transaction data, market conditions, and financial metrics presently, thereby assisting with early identification of signs of liquidity stress.

III. MACHINE LEARNING TECHNIQUES

With machine learning techniques during this time, financial risk assessment broadens from analyzing a lot of data into revealing hidden patterns and improving decision making in an organization. In addition, machine learning will give financial institutions and regulators tools for predicting and managing risk in a more accurate and dynamic manner. Below are the core machine learning algorithms used in financial risk assessment?

1. Supervised Learning

One of the most commonly applied techniques in the assessment of financial risk, the model in supervised learning is trained in a labeled dataset, containing input-output pairs. The algorithm will predict the output based on the input features, making it very suitable for applications like credit scoring, fraud detection, or loan default prediction.

Common Algorithms:

- 1) Decision Trees: Decision trees classify and segment the data into various classes on the basis of features. In finance, they can assess credit risk, predict defaults, and identify erroneous transactions.
- 2) Random Forests: A random forest is an ensemble method that produces many decision trees and then aggregates their output for a more accurate and less overfitted result. This feature is critical in credit scoring and fraud detection, where robustness and accuracy are of utmost priority.
- 3) Support Vector Machines: SVMs operate particularly well in high-dimensional data, being able to classify data points into different risk categories for detecting anomalies in relevant markets or transactions as fraudulent/legitimate.
- 4) Logistic Regression: Logistic regression is applied when working with two or more categories with one dependent binary outcome, like a prediction: default or no; fraud or no fraud. It is widely used in credit-risk applications and customer behavior predictions.
- 5) Neural Networks: Artificial neural networks (ANNs), a class of algorithms inspired from the studies of the human brain, capable of modeling very complex, non-linear relationships in data. In finance, they find application in risk prediction, fraud detection, and market forecasting.

Applications in Financial Risk:

- 1) Credit Risk Assessment: Risk factors considered in predictions above are of a borrower rejecting the loan request based on past data and characteristics of the said borrower.
- 2) Fraud Detection: Unusual patterns are picked up in transaction data and potential cases of fraud are flagged.
- 3) Market Risk Prediction: Predicting that based on past behavior of any trend or price on some active data together with some macroeconomic indicators.

2. Unsupervised Learning

Data is left unlabeled in the case of self-training. After that, the model will work on these data by understanding the hidden structure, pattern, or anomaly in that dataset. This can be a significant means by which the unknown risk factors become determined or outliers get discovered in a big dataset.

Common Algorithms:

- 1) Clustering Algorithms (e.g. K-Means, Hierarchical Clustering): These are algorithms that group similar data points. For instance, segments of some customers or the financial products based on shared characteristics. If not, clustering can also be used to identify the different customer segments with respect to their risk profiles or those market segments prone to volatility.
- 2) Anomaly Detection (such as Isolation Forest, DBSCAN): Anomaly detection is a technique for identifying rare or unusual; in some cases the abnormalities could be considered as "patterns" in data, indicating some possible risk. This is mainly more applicable in finance when outlier transactions would usually be singled out for digging inside on whether the entries are fraud or not.
- 3) Principal Component Analysis (PCA): PCA transforms the original high-dimensional datasets into low-dimensional datasets that retain the largest share of the significant aspects. The close common application of usage is regarding portfolio risk management. It identifies the core drivers of risk and optimizes the portfolios along these lines.

Applications in Financial Risk:

- 1) Fraud Detection: For example, one can see many spending patterns burn holes in pockets. These could be identified by even rare and different patterns of spending in financial transactions.
- 2) Customer Segmentation: Different types of customer segments in terms of risk profiles and the possibility of defaulting may also be observed by this approach when applied to insurance and loans as financial instruments.
- 3) Stress Testing: Unsupervised learning models, like financial systems and portfolios, would convert under a stress scenario, which can be a sudden massive plunge in markets or shortage in liquidity, to measure responses.

3. Reinforcement Learning

Reinforcement learning is a section of machine learning in which a model is trained based on trial and error. An RL agent learns from interacting with an environment whose feedback is based on actions taken by the agent. The feedback could either be positive or

negative, and the goal of the agent would be to maximize those rewards over a period.

Some Of The Algorithms:

- 1) Q-Learning: A model-free RL algorithm learns the value of actions in certain models at links with states. It can generally be referred to in portfolio optimization and risk management by running portfolios in different investment strategies and learning the most optimal actions to take in that state in order to minimize risk.
- 2) Deep Q-Networks (DQN): DQN is a newly evolved technique that combines deep learning with Q from reinforcement learning for solving complex problems. DQN is used in asset management and algorithmic trading with good adjustment of the conditions in the market.

Applications in Financial Risk:

- 1) Portfolio Optimization: Reinforcement learning provides optimum portfolios through learning the best investment strategies over time to dynamically adjust portfolios while balancing returns and risks in the course of market changes.
- 2) Asset Pricing: The application of reinforcement learning models in altering pricing strategies for financial products maximizes the returns while safeguarding minimal exposure to market risk.
- 3) Market-Making and Trading: Reinforcement learning may also be put in algorithmic trading to cope with environments changing through time in between, optimizing order placements, and improving execution strategies in real time.

4. Deep Learning

Deep learning is a branch of machine learning based on artificial neural networks with many layers (or "deep") for modeling complex, high-dimensional data. It is especially applicable to a wide range of unstructured data, such as text, image, and time-series data, which makes it efficacious in practical applications in the financial markets.

Some of the common algorithms include:

- 1) Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs): Primarily focused on image and time series data analysis, it has enormous applications in the detection of patterns within financial data, such as trends in stock prices, alongside many complex

characteristics that may be totally missed by traditional models.

- 2) Recurrent neural networks (RNNs) and Long Short Term Memory (LSTM)? RNNs and LSTMs are thus mainly designed to face the sequential data as well as time series problems. In finance, it is commonly applied fields such as forecasting stock prices, predicting market volatility, and modeling the relationships across time in a financial dataset.
- 3) Auto encoders: for example, abnormal detection and dimensionality reduction, are applicable in detecting unusual financial scenarios or improving risk models through the dimension reduction that would keep essential information.

Applications of financial risk:

- 1) As deep learning models predict stock prices, market movement, or interest rates with historical data, they can also be used in market predictions such as the LSTM network.
- 2) Fraud detection: Deep learning techniques have unique applications: analyzing transaction data. They apply machine learning algorithms to understand and develop detection methods based on these models. An example includes credit card transactions, point-of-sale transactions, and online banking.
- 3) Sentimental analysis: This involves natural language processing and deep learning techniques that seek to analyze text data, which is usually unstructured such as social media posts, news of the financial world, and many more, to capture market sentiments that might give rise to risks or opportunities.

IV. DATA SOURCES FOR FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT USING MACHINE LEARNING

Information of training and prediction has a prominent role in effectiveness of machine learning (ML) models in financial risk assessment. Comprehensive, accurate, and up-to-date data are required for any financial institution or regulatory authority to make informed decisions on risk management. Following are the key data sources important for financial risk assessment-as a result of consultation of both traditional and alternate data types.

1. Market Data

Market data refers to the historical and real-time information about financial instruments such as stocks, bonds, commodities, currencies, and derivatives. These data points are crucial for assessing market risk, liquidity risk, and forecasting market trends.

Types of Market Data:

- 1) Stock Prices: Daily, minute-by-minute, or even second-by-second data on the prices of publicly traded stocks. This is essential for predicting market movements, volatility, and risk exposure.
- 2) Bond Yields and Credit Spreads: Data on interest rates and bond prices, which are crucial for assessing interest rate risk, credit risk, and investment portfolio performance.
- 3) Commodity Prices: Data related to the pricing of commodities like oil, gold, and agricultural products. This is important for assessing commodity price risks and their impact on financial markets.
- 4) Foreign Exchange Rates: The exchange rates between different currencies, which are critical for assessing currency risk, especially for global financial institutions.
- 5) Derivatives Data: Includes data on options, futures, and other derivatives, which help in measuring financial risk, hedging, and market predictions.

Applications:

- 1) Market Risk Prediction: ML models use historical market data to forecast future price movements and volatility.
- 2) Portfolio Management: Real-time market data is used to assess asset correlations, diversification, and the overall risk of investment portfolios.

2. Credit Data

Credit data includes information on the creditworthiness of individuals, businesses, or financial institutions. This data is crucial for assessing credit risk and determining the likelihood of loan defaults.

Types of Credit Data:

- 1) Credit Scores: Numerical representations of an individual's or business's creditworthiness, often

provided by credit bureaus like Experian, Transunion, and Equifax.

- 2) Loan and Credit History: Information on past loans, payment histories, and outstanding debt. This data helps in predicting the likelihood of future defaults.
- 3) Bank Statements: Data showing cash inflows and outflows, which helps in determining an individual's or business's ability to repay debts.
- 4) Payment Behavior: Information regarding how promptly borrowers make payments on existing debt.

Applications:

- 1) Credit Risk Modeling: Machine learning models, such as logistic regression, decision trees, and random forests, are trained on credit data to predict the risk of loan defaults and assess borrower creditworthiness.
- 2) Fraud Detection: Credit data combined with transaction history can help detect potential fraud by identifying unusual spending patterns or sudden changes in financial behavior.

3. Transactional Data

Transactional data includes information on financial transactions, including purchases, deposits, withdrawals, and transfers. It provides insights into customer behavior and financial health, making it essential for fraud detection, liquidity risk assessment, and operational risk management

Types of Transactional Data:

- 1) Bank Transactions: Includes deposits, withdrawals, transfers, and payment history.
- 2) Credit Card Transactions: Details on purchases, payments, and credit card usage patterns, which can be analyzed for credit risk, fraud, and customer segmentation.
- 3) Peer-to-Peer Payments: Data from platforms like Venom, PayPal, or Zelle that include person-to-person money transfers.
- 4) Investment Transactions: Data on trades, securities purchases, and asset allocations in investment portfolios.

Applications:

- 1) Fraud Detection: Anomaly detection techniques can flag unusual transaction patterns, such as rapid

withdrawals or transactions in high-risk geographies.

- 2) Customer Segmentation: Transaction data can be used to segment customers based on behavior and financial risk profiles.
- 3) Liquidity Risk Assessment: Real-time monitoring of cash flows and liquidity positions can help assess the institution's ability to meet short-term obligations.

V. THE APPLICATIONS OF MACHINE LEARNING IN FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

Machine learning (ML) methods are being applied in many disciplines in financial risk assessment to improve decision-making, accuracy, and loss reduction. ML modeling utilizes massive amounts of data and computational power to realize patterns and trends that may be inaccessible to human analysts. The following will discuss the major applications of ML in the financial sector, especially in risk assessment.

1. Credit Risk Assessment

Credit risk is the risk that a borrower will fail to meet his financial obligations. It has been demonstrated that machine learning models can offer a feasible solution in the credit-risk analysis-worthy practice of processing massive amounts of financial and non-financial data for the evaluation of borrower's worthiness.

How Is ML Used?

- 1) Credit Scoring: For the prediction of the likelihood of default, the machine uses analysis on historical credit defaults with repayment history, income level, types of loans, etc., by which the machine learns models such as decision trees, support vector machines, and random forests.
- 2) Alternative Data for Creditworthiness: For those individuals with scarce or no conventional credit records ("thin-file" customers), the dependent target variable for determining creditworthiness will be examined with respect to alternative social behavior data using machine learning models. Such additional aspects can include social media usage, utility bill payments, and even behaviors associated with mobile usage.

3) Loan Default Prediction: The models make use of various applicant characteristics in conjunction with all the accessible information like the applicant's financial history, behavior patterns, economic indicators, and market trends for predicting the chances of loan defaults.

Applications:

- 1) Personal loans and mortgages: ML algorithms increase the speed of lending processes by financial institutions while fine tuning the effort to eliminate chances for human error and bias-giving rise to fairer and more accurate assessments.
- 2) Corporate Credit Risk: The banks and financiers use ML in making decisions on companies which are creditworthy all based on financial statements, market conditions, and company performance.

2. Fraud Detection

Fraud detection is the application of machine learning for its most versatile purpose: that of managing financial risk. Thus, machine learning algorithms can detect patterns and anomalies in massive transaction datasets, which would lead to real-time apprehension of activity that may be potentially fraudulent.

How ML Applies:

- 1) Anomaly Detection: Offline learning such as Isolation Forest and One-Class SVM can also detect that a transaction differs from others, which may indicate something suspiciously like unauthorized transfer or fraudulent impersonation.
- 2) Behavioral Biometrics: In addition, machine learning models will analyze some kind of behavioral characteristics, such as typing speed, mouse movements, and so forth, during navigation to be able to identify whether the user is the true account owner or not.
- 3) Transaction Monitoring: Transactions from credit cards, banks, and e-commerce appear in real time with the help of supervised learning models, such as logistic regression or random forests, to classify transactions as either legitimate or suspicious.

Applications:

- 1) Banking: Banks employ machine learning algorithms to detect frauds like credit card fraud, identity theft, and money laundering.

2) Payment Systems: Online payment systems now use ML in real time for transaction observation and security measures, as well as to detect fraudulent activities.

3) Insurance: With an ML pattern, these models can be designed to flag fraudulent claims by simply identifying inconsistencies or abnormal patterns within the data buildup of the claims.

CONCLUSION

The advent of machine learning is potentially revolutionary to a huge variety of financial-risk assessments: financial institutions may use it to process huge amounts of data; recognize complex patterns; and arrive at better-informed decisions regarding risk. Increased predictability of risks, process automation, and improved accuracy will pertain to enhanced decision-making in several areas, which may include credit risk, fraud detection, market volatility, and operational risk management. On the flip side, the use of machine learning in financial risk assessment also comes with challenges. The foremost challenges are high-quality, complete, and real-time data; transparency and interpretability of complex models; and fairness that does not lead to biases resulting in discriminatory effect. On top of this lie very volatile external factors such as geopolitical events or economic changes, which continuously pose challenges for model validation and performance monitoring in the financial markets.

Another dilemma that needs to be addressed is compliance with stringent regulatory frameworks, data privacy, and protection against an adversarial attack. Machine learning may eliminate manual errors and improve accuracy while detecting unforeseen risks, but care must be taken to avoid over fitting and mispredictions as a consequence of interplays between the complexities of financial systems and the pace of changes in the relevant markets. In order to allow the best use of machine learning for financial risk assessment, it will be instrumental for corporations to think of an all-encompassing strategy, which includes investing in the best computational infrastructure, reinforcement of ethical model governance, facilitation of model transparency, and continuous model validation. Cooperation between financial institutions, regulators, and technology vendors is also

needed to establish common guidelines for the responsible, fair, and safe application of machine learning.

If the challenges are addressed, the development and refinement of machine learning technology promise resilient financial systems that more efficiently predict and mitigate risk - to the benefit of the institutions and their clients.

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