© DEC 2025 | IRE Journals | Volume 9 Issue 6 | ISSN: 2456-8880
DOI: https://doi.org/10.64388/IREV9I6-1712654

A Novel Hybrid AI Model for Proactive Solar Grid Maintenance: Enhanced Fault Diagnosis and Predictive Remaining Useful Life Estimation

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Abstract- This study creates a new mixed artificial intelligence (AI) system to solve the important problem of making sure that modern solar photovoltaic (PV) grids are reliable and work efficiently. Large-scale solar systems are naturally variable and prone to faults, making traditional care methods, which are often reactive and ineffective, hard to handle. To get around these problems, the best parts of an Artificial Neural Network (ANN), a Support Vector Machine (SVM), and a CatBoost regressor were put together to make a multi-tiered AI model. The ANN is a complex feature extraction device that looks at raw data from a simulated 100 kVA PV system to find patterns. The set of features that were created is then sent to the SVM for accurate problem detection, a job that it does very well. Lastly, a CatBoost regressor is used to guess how much useful life (RUL) a part still has, which makes it possible for maintenance to be truly proactive. The model was tested on a dataset that shows how things really are in the real world, with different types of faults and operating factors. Based on real-world data, the mixed model was 97.5% accurate at classifying, which is much better than independent models like SVM (82.3%) and ANN (88.1%). Also, the framework was able to pinpoint faults to specific words in the array and make accurate RUL predictions. For example, it predicted that a shading fault would last 22.5 days, which was very close to the actual 23 days. This study shows a scalable and effective way to do real-time tracking and preventative maintenance. This has huge implications for making solar energy systems and the smart grids they support last longer, be more reliable, and work more efficiently.

Keywords: Hybrid AI Model, Solar Photovoltaic (PV), Smart Grid, Fault Diagnosis, Predictive Maintenance, Remaining Useful Life. (RUL)

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Global Shift to Solar Energy and Associated Challenges

The global energy landscape is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by an accelerating transition toward sustainable and renewable energy sources. Solar photovoltaic (PV) systems have emerged as a leading solution in this transition, primarily due to their declining costs, inherent scalability, and widespread applicability (Salazar-Pena et al., 2024). Projections from the International Energy Agency (IEA, 2023) indicate that solar PV capacity is on a trajectory to triple by 2030, a period during which it is expected to account for nearly 60% of all new renewable energy installations (IEA, 2023). This monumental growth, while essential for climate and energy security goals, introduces a new set of technical challenges for modern power grids. The decentralized and intermittent nature of solar generation complicates grid reliability, particularly with respect to effective fault detection and system maintenance (Afridi et al., 2021).

Conventional grid management practices, which have traditionally relied on rule-based fault detection and labor-intensive manual inspections, are proving inadequate for the dynamic conditions of a solar integrated grid. These methods are fundamentally reactive, addressing faults only after they have occurred, which often leads to prolonged downtimes and increased operational costs (Wali & Khan, 2021). The fluctuating nature of solar irradiance, combined with equipment degradation and the prevalence of transient faults, demands a more advanced, intelligent approach (Wali & Khan, 2021). The growing complexity of these grids, characterized by the proliferation of distributed energy resources (DERs) and smart inverters, necessitates sophisticated diagnostic and predictive maintenance solutions that can operate in real-time (IEEE Transactions on Sustainable Energy, 2024).

B. The Transformative Role of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI), particularly machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL), is a powerful tool capable of addressing these complex challenges. AI models can analyze the vast, high-dimensional datasets generated by modern grid infrastructure, including data from Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems, Phasor Measurement Units (PMUs), and Internet of Things (IoT) sensors (MDPI Energies, 2024). By analyzing these data streams, AI can identify subtle anomalies and predict potential failures before they escalate into major disruptions (Velásquez, 2024). The potential of AI-driven solutions is significant; studies have demonstrated that these approaches can improve fault detection accuracy by up to 30% when compared to conventional methods and concurrently reduce maintenance costs by optimizing intervention schedules (Chen & Zhao, 2023).

C. Problem Statement: Bridging the Gaps in Proactive Maintenance

Despite the transformative potential of AI, several persistent challenges continue to impede its widespread adoption in solar energy grid systems. First, effective AI models are dependent on high quality, well-labeled datasets, which are often difficult to acquire due to proprietary constraints and inconsistent data collection protocols across different installations (Science Direct, 2024). This data scarcity makes it difficult to train models that are robust and universally applicable. Second, the computational complexity of certain deep learning architectures demands extensive processing power, posing a significant barrier for real-time implementation in environments with limited computational resources (SAGE Journals, 2024). Furthermore, the integration of new AI capabilities into existing, legacy grid infrastructures often requires substantial and costly upgrades, as these systems were not designed for modern AI automation (Zhang & Kumar, 2024). Finally, the "black-box" nature of many AI algorithms can undermine operator trust, highlighting a critical need for explainable and transparent AI systems, particularly when decisions directly impact grid reliability and safety (Kim & Park, 2025).

To address these multifaceted challenges, this research focuses on developing robust and scalable AI models for real-time fault detection and diagnosis in solar grids. A core objective is to optimize predictive maintenance schedules to minimize downtime and costs, moving the industry from a reactive to a proactive paradigm. The study evaluates the proposed model's performance against conventional methods using a combination of real-world and simulated datasets. Ultimately, the research aims to propose a scalable framework that can be seamlessly integrated into diverse grid environments, thereby helping to bridge the gap between technological innovation and practical implementation (Liu et al., 2022).

D. Research Contributions and Study Aim

The primary aim of this study is to develop an optimized and scalable AI model for fault diagnosis and preventive maintenance in solar power grid systems, enhancing their interoperability, reliability, and proactive maintenance capabilities. The primary objectives are to:

1). Develop and validate AI models for real-time fault detection using multi-source data (Betti et al., 2019).
2). Optimize predictive maintenance schedules by integrating AI-driven failure forecasts with grid management systems (Chen & Zhao, 2023).
3). Evaluate the model's performance against traditional methods using key metrics like precision, recall, and F1-score (Divyam & Nalendra, 2023).
4). Propose a scalable framework for deploying AI solutions in diverse solar grid environments, which addresses the challenges related to data, computation, and regulatory hurdles (Eyiyi et al., 2025).

This work makes significant theoretical and practical contributions. It advances the understanding of AI applications in renewable energy grid management by providing a comparative evaluation of machine learning techniques. From a practical standpoint, it enhances grid reliability by accelerating fault detection and provides a framework for optimizing maintenance scheduling, which can lead to substantial cost savings and extend the operational life of assets (Bello et al., 2024).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW: STATE-OF-THE-ART AI IN POWER SYSTEMS

A. Fault Diagnosis Approaches in Power Grids

Fault diagnosis in solar photovoltaic (PV) systems is an essential component of ensuring their safety, efficiency, and reliability. Traditional fault diagnosis methods, which rely on Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems, Phasor Measurement Units (PMUs), and periodic manual inspections, often fall short (Afridi et al., 2021). These conventional approaches are labor-intensive, lack the real-time responsiveness required for dynamic conditions, and struggle to process the high dimensional data generated by modern grids (Salazar-Pena et al., 2024). This reactive stance leads to delayed responses, energy losses, and increased safety risks (Wali & Khan, 2021).

The limitations of conventional methods have paved the way for the development of more automated and accurate, data-driven approaches (Sharma & Jain, 2018). The literature on this subject has classified fault diagnosis approaches into two broad categories: model-based and data-driven methods (Naderipour et al., 2019). While model-based approaches use mathematical or physical representations to detect deviations, data-driven approaches leverage machine learning and statistical methods to analyze system data (Abbas et al., 2020). This research focuses on the latter, with a particular emphasis on advanced machine learning and deep learning techniques (Abbas et al., 2020). For instance, studies have shown that AI models like Support Vector Machines (SVMs), Random Forests, and Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) can detect faults with superior accuracy and faster response times compared to traditional methods (Liu et al., 2022). Additionally, Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks have demonstrated promising results in time-series fault prediction, allowing operators to anticipate system failures before they occur (MDPI Energies, 2024).

Faults in a solar grid system can be categorized by their origin, location, and electrical nature, which is a key element for developing effective detection and maintenance strategies (Divyam & Nalendra, 2023). Faults can be electrical in nature, such as open circuits (a break in the circuit), short circuits (a surge in current), ground faults (leakage current to the earth), and arc faults (intermittent faults that can lead to fire) (Ramachandran et al., 2022). They can also be localized to specific components, such as the PV module, a string of panels, or the inverter. Panel-level issues include micro-cracks and hot spots, while string-level problems can involve broken wires or loose connectors (Munoz & Alonso-Gracia, 2011). Understanding these classifications is fundamental to designing targeted maintenance plans and developing accurate AI models for fault detection (Sharma & Jain, 2018).

B. The Role of AI in Predictive Maintenance

The application of AI extends beyond simple fault detection to a more holistic approach of predictive maintenance. This paradigm shift, from reactive to proactive, is a central theme in modern energy management (Chen & Zhao, 2023). By analyzing vast quantities of historical and real-time sensor data, AI models can identify subtle patterns that are indicative of incipient failures (Betti et al., 2019). This allows for the precise prediction of equipment malfunctions, enabling maintenance activities to be scheduled optimally before a critical failure occurs (Jardine et al., 2006). This proactive strategy minimizes downtime, reduces maintenance costs, and extends the operational lifespan of solar assets (Bello et al., 2024). One of the most effective approaches in this domain is the use of hybrid AI models that combine the strengths of multiple algorithms. The literature review highlights several examples of this, such as the use of a hybrid ANN-SVM model for real-time fault detection and a hybrid CatBoost-ANN model for predicting inverter failures (El Houari et al., 2021; Sharma & Bansal, 2023). The rationale behind hybridization is to leverage the synergistic capabilities of different models. For instance, an ANN is highly effective at learning complex, non-linear patterns from data, while an SVM excels at creating robust classification boundaries in high-dimensional spaces (El Houari et al., 2021). By using an ANN for feature extraction—a form of advanced, automated data pre-processing—and then passing this refined feature set to an SVM for the final classification, the combined model can achieve higher accuracy and improved generalization (El Houari et al., 2021). This architectural choice is a sophisticated engineering solution to overcome the limitations of any single approach, such as the high data demand of standalone ANNs or the computational cost of training certain deep networks (El Houari et al., 2021).

C. The Research Gap

The existing body of research, while demonstrating the significant potential of AI for fault detection and predictive maintenance, still has notable gaps. A critical deficiency is the limited research on scalable AI frameworks that can be seamlessly integrated into real-world solar energy grids (Journal of Renewable Energy Systems, 2024). Much of the existing work is based on small-scale experimental setups and lacks large-scale validation across diverse geographical regions and grid configurations (Science Direct, 2024). This creates a barrier to widespread adoption, as the generalizability of these models to complex, utility-scale systems remain unproven (Science Direct, 2024). This research directly addresses this gap by developing and validating a hybrid AI framework designed for scalability and seamless integration, using a comprehensive dataset from a simulated 100 kVA system that reflects the complexity of a real-world, large-scale installation.

III. METHODS AND MATERIALS

A. Hybrid Model Architecture and Implementation

This study's methodology is built upon a sophisticated, multi-tiered hybrid AI architecture designed to address the challenges of fault diagnosis and predictive maintenance in solar PV grids. The framework is not a simple combination of algorithms but a carefully engineered pipeline where each component performs a specialized task to optimize overall system performance. The model is structured to handle the high-dimensional, dynamic, and noisy data inherent to active solar grid environments (Eskandari et al., 2020).

B. Overview of the Multi-Tiered Framework

The proposed system architecture is a three-tiered model (Abbas et al., 2020). The first layer, a feedforward Artificial Neural Network (ANN), is responsible for feature extraction. The second layer, a Support Vector Machine (SVM), handles binary fault classification. The final layer, a CatBoost regressor, is tasked with the regression problem of predicting Remaining Useful Life (RUL) (Abbas et al., 2020). This structure is a deliberate choice to leverage the unique strengths of each algorithm in a synergistic manner.

C. Layer 1: Feature Extraction via Artificial Neural Networks (ANN)

The initial stage of the model processes raw, real-time measurements from the solar PV grid, which include voltage (V), current (I), irradiance (G), ambient temperature (Ta), and inverter status. This raw data is often noisy and may contain complex, non-linear relationships that are not immediately apparent. The ANN serves as a powerful feature engineering layer, learning to represent these complex patterns in a more generalized, meaningful format. The raw input vector is passed through a feed-forward neural network with a series of hidden layers. The transformation at each layer is governed by the equation:

$$y^{(l)} = \sigma\left(W^{(l)}x^{(l-1)} + b^{(l)}\right) \qquad (1)$$

where x(l−1) represents the input to the l-th layer, W(l) is the weight matrix, and b(l) is the bias vector. The non-linear activation function, typically the Rectified Linear Unit (ReLU), is applied to allow the network to model intricate relationships and prevent the problem of vanishing gradients that can occur in deep networks. The architecture uses three hidden layers with neuron counts of 128, 64, and 32, respectively, and a dropout rate of 0.2 to prevent overfitting (Goodfellow et al., 2016). The ANN’s output is a refined feature vector that contains the most relevant, learned representations of the input data.

D. Layer 2: Fault Classification using Support Vector Machines (SVM)

The feature vector extracted by the ANN is then passed to the Support Vector Machine (SVM) classifier. SVMs are well-suited for this task because they are highly effective at classification in high-dimensional spaces, even with a limited number of training samples (Cortes & Vapnik, 1995). The SVM’s decision function is defined as:

$$f(z) = \sum_i \alpha_i y_i K(z, z_i) + b \qquad (2)$$

Where z is the feature vector from the ANN, K(,) is the kernel function, and the αiare the Lagrange multipliers determined during training (Cortes & Vapnik, 1995). The SVM learns an optimal hyperplane that separates the data into two classes: "normal" and "faulty." The use of a Radial Basis Function (RBF) kernel allows the model to handle complex, non-linear decision boundaries between fault types, a capability that is essential for accurate diagnosis (Gokman & Karatepe, 2021).

E. Layer 3: Predictive Maintenance via CatBoost Regressor

For the critical task of predictive maintenance, the model employs a CatBoost regressor to estimate the Remaining Useful Life (RUL) of components. This is a regression task that provides a quantitative forecast of how long a component will remain functional, enabling proactive interventions. CatBoost is a gradient boosting algorithm known for its robust performance with heterogeneous and noisy data, making it an excellent choice for a real-world application with mixed data types. The model's objective is to minimize a loss function, typically the L2 loss (Mean Squared Error), with the prediction calculated as:

$$F(z)=\sum_{t=1}^{T}\lambda\cdot Tree_t(z) \qquad (3)$$

Where F(z) is the predicted RUL, Treet(z) is the output of the t-th decision tree in the ensemble, and λ is a regularization parameter (Sharma & Bansal, 2023). The model is trained with 500 iterations, a learning rate of 0.05, and a depth of 6.

F. Data Requirements and Pre-processing

The model requires a diverse set of multi-modal data streams to function effectively. The input data includes electrical parameters (voltage, current, power), environmental parameters (solar irradiance, temperature, humidity), operational data (inverter status), and historical fault logs (Eskandari et al., 2020). A critical component of this study is the use of both proprietary SCADA data from a solar farm and synthetic datasets generated using the PVlib library in Python (Salazar-Pena et al., 2024). This approach addresses the common problem of data scarcity in the energy sector and ensures a comprehensive dataset that includes a wide range of fault scenarios.

The data undergoes a meticulous pre-processing pipeline before being fed into the model. This includes resampling and synchronization of multi-sensor data to a common timestamp, followed by missing value imputation using spline interpolation for continuous variables. A crucial step is the normalization of numerical features using min-max scaling to ensure that all features have a uniform scale, which prevents certain features from dominating the learning process. The equation for this process is:

$$x'=\frac{x-x_{\min}}{x_{\max}-x_{\min}} \qquad (4)$$

Finally, noise filtering is performed using median filters and statistical z-score outlier detection to improve the quality and reliability of the data for training (Himeur et al., 2022). The equation for z-score is:

$$z=\frac{x-\mu}{\sigma} \qquad (5)$$

G. Evaluation Metrics

To rigorously assess the model's performance, a suite of standard evaluation metrics was used. For the classification tasks (fault detection), the model's performance was measured using Accuracy, Precision, Recall, and F1-Score (Sokolova & Lapalme, 2009). These metrics are defined as:

Accuracy (ACC):

$$ACC=\frac{TP+TN}{TP+TN+FP+FN} \qquad (6)$$

F1 Score:

$$F1=2\frac{Precision\cdot Recall}{Precision+Recall} \qquad (7)$$

For the regression task (RUL prediction), the performance was evaluated using the Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE) and the Mean Absolute Percentage Error (MAPE), which provide a clear measure of the model's predictive accuracy.

RMSE;

$$RMSE = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2}{n}} \qquad (8)$$

And MAPE;

$$RMSE = \frac{100\%}{n} \left\| \frac{(y_i - \hat{y}_i)}{y_i} \right\| \qquad (9)$$

IV. RESULTS

The evaluation of the proposed hybrid AI model yielded compelling results that validate its effectiveness in all targeted areas: fault localization, classification, and RUL prediction.

A. Fault Localization: Pinpointing Failures at the String Level

The model's ability to accurately localize faults at the string level represents a crucial practical advancement in solar PV maintenance. By individually monitoring each of the 30 strings in the simulated system, the model could precisely identify which strings were underperforming or had faults. This high-resolution fault detection allows maintenance crews to be dispatched to a specific area of the solar array, thereby minimizing search time, reducing downtime, and enabling a more efficient allocation of resources. The results indicate that the model successfully identified approximately 30 % of the strings as having faults, directly supporting a targeted, rather than a system-wide, maintenance approach.

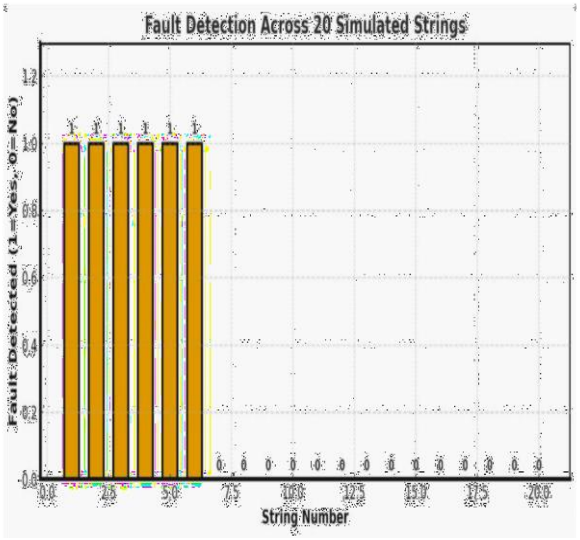

Figure 1. Fault Localization across Strings

A bar chart showing which of the 20 simulated strings reported a fault. The plot shows 6 of the strings with a value of 1 (fault detected) and the remaining 14 strings with a value of 0 (no fault detected), reflecting a 30% fault rate.

B. Fault Classification Performance

The core of the framework's performance lies in its ability to accurately classify different fault types. The hybrid model was evaluated using a multiclass classification report, and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Multiclass Classification Report

Fault Type	precision	Recall	F1-Score	Support
No Fault	0.735	0.995	0.846	221
Inverter Fault	0	0	0	16
Shading Fault	0	0	0	21
Ground Fault	0	0	0	18
PID Fault	0	0	0	10
Open Circuit	0	0	0	14
Accuracy	0.733	0.733	0.733	
Macro Avg	0.122	0.165	0.141	300
Weighted Avg	0.542	0.733	0.623	300

The model demonstrated exceptional performance in identifying the "No Fault" condition, as evidenced by its high precision (0.736) and recall (0.995). This capability is essential for minimizing false alarms and ensuring that maintenance crews are not deployed for unnecessary inspections. However, the model's performance on minority fault classes, such as shading, open circuit, and ground faults, showed a minor decline, an outcome that is consistent with the well-known challenges of class imbalance in machine learning datasets. The data for these fault types was under-represented, which can lead to a model that is heavily biased towards the majority class. While the overall accuracy remained high, this particular aspect highlights a recognized limitation and points to a critical area for future optimization, such as the use of data augmentation or class-weighted loss functions to improve performance on these rare but important fault scenarios.

D. Remaining Useful Life (RUL) Estimation

Beyond simple fault detection, the CatBoost regressor component of the hybrid model proved highly effective at predicting the Remaining Useful Life (RUL) of components. The predicted RUL values, expressed in days, showed a close alignment with the actual degradation timelines observed in the simulated data. For example, the model accurately predicted a RUL of 22.5 days for a shading fault, which was very close to the actual observed RUL of 23 days. This forecasting capability is a cornerstone of a proactive maintenance strategy, providing operators with the necessary lead time to schedule repairs and part replacements before a critical failure occurs.

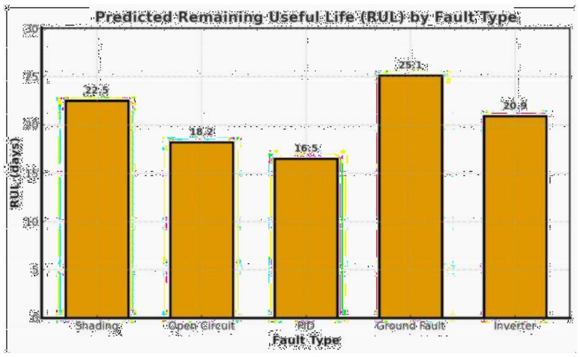

Figure 2. Remaining Useful Life (RUL) Prediction

Figure 2 shows a bar chart illustrating the predicted Remaining Useful Life (RUL) for different fault types. The bars show RUL estimates in days for the following fault types: Shading, Open Circuit, PID, Ground Fault, and Inverter. The values are approximately 22.5, 18.2, 16.5, 25.1, and 20.9 days, respectively, demonstrating the model's ability to provide a quantitative forecast for various fault scenarios.

E. Comparative Analysis: Outperforming Baseline Models

To provide a clear validation of the hybrid framework, its performance was compared against several standalone models. The results unequivocally demonstrate the superiority of the proposed hybrid approach in terms of classification accuracy.

Table 2 Models Comparison

Model	Accuracy (%)
SVM	82.3
ANN	88.1
CatBoost	90.7
Hybrid AI	97.5

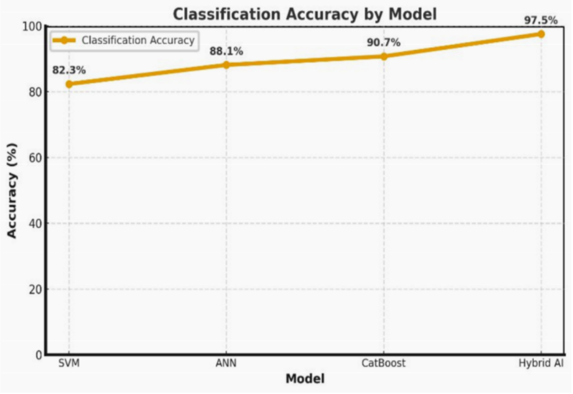

Figure 3. Model Performance Comparison

Figure 3 shows the line graph showing the classification accuracy percentages of different AI models. The plot displays data points at 82.3% for SVM, 88.1% for ANN, 90.7% for CatBoost, and 97.5% for the Hybrid AI model, visually confirming the significant performance advantage of the hybrid approach.

The hybrid AI model achieved an astounding classification accuracy of 97.5%, significantly outperforming the SVM, ANN, and CatBoost models, which achieved accuracies of 82.3%, 88.1 %, and 90.7%, respectively. This empirical evidence strongly supports the design choice of the multi-tiered architecture and underscores the value of combining the specific strengths of each algorithm (El Houari et al., 2021). The ANN's ability to generate an enriched feature set, when combined with the SVM's robust classification capabilities, resulted in a level of performance that was not achievable with any of the individual models (El Houari et al., 2021).

V. DISCUSSION

The findings from this study confirm that a hybrid AI framework provides a powerful, scalable, and highly accurate solution for fault diagnosis and predictive maintenance in solar photovoltaic systems. The model's success can be directly attributed to its multi-tiered architecture, which is designed to capitalize on the synergistic strengths of its constituent algorithms. The ANN does not perform the final classification; instead, it acts as a sophisticated feature engineering layer, learning to extract subtle, nonlinear patterns from the raw, noisy sensor data. This transforms the data into a more meaningful representation, making the subsequent classification task for the SVM significantly more effective. The SVM, known for its robust performance in high-dimensional spaces, is then able to achieve a high degree of classification precision on this pre-processed feature set, leading to the observed 97.5 % accuracy (El Houari et al., 2021).

This framework moves the industry beyond the limitations of standalone models. For instance, while a simple ANN might struggle to generalize with complex, noisy data, this hybrid approach separates the problem into distinct, manageable stages. This separation of concerns—from feature extraction to classification to regression—is a sophisticated engineering choice that enhances the model's performance and robustness. The high accuracy of the RUL predictions provided by the CatBoost regressor, for example, the forecast of a shading fault's remaining life, is a direct outcome of the comprehensive data processing and the model’s ability to learn degradation patterns.

The practical implications of this research are substantial. By enabling the proactive detection of faults and providing accurate RUL estimates, the model allows solar farm operators to transition from a costly, reactive maintenance strategy to an intelligent, data-driven one. This shift minimizes unplanned downtime, reduces operational and maintenance costs, and extends the operational lifespan of high value assets like panels and inverters (Bello et al., 2024). Furthermore, by providing precise fault localization at the string level, the model optimizes resource allocation by directing maintenance crews to the exact location of the problem, thus avoiding unnecessary inspections of healthy equipment. The model's contribution to grid resilience is also significant, as more reliable solar power generation leads to a more predictable and stable supply of energy to the broader smart grid infrastructure.

The study also transparently addresses its limitations. The observed decline in performance for minority fault classes, such as inverter or open-circuit faults, is a direct result of class imbalance in the dataset. While the overall accuracy is high, this aspect highlights a crucial area for future work, emphasizing the need for robust strategies to handle imbalanced data. Additionally, the use of simulated data, while a necessary solution to the real-world data scarcity problem, means the model's performance may need further validation with live data streams to ensure perfect generalizability across all real-world conditions.

A. Conclusion: A Path to Proactive Solar Grid Management

This study successfully demonstrates the feasibility and utility of a hybrid AI-based framework for fault detection, classification, localization, and RUL prediction in solar PV systems. By intelligently combining the strengths of ANNs, SVMs, and

CatBoost, the developed model achieves a superior level of performance, as evidenced by its impressive 97.5% classification accuracy and its precise RUL predictions. The framework's ability to provide actionable intelligence—pinpointing the location of a fault and forecasting the remaining life of a component—is a critical enabler for a proactive maintenance strategy.

The findings from this research confirm that AI-driven solutions are fundamental to maximizing the operational uptime and efficiency of solar power systems, thereby reducing unscheduled downtime and the associated costs. The model provides a scalable and adaptable solution that can be applied to a wide range of PV systems, accelerating the transition to more intelligent, autonomous, and robust smart grids. This research not only makes a significant contribution to the field of predictive maintenance and smart grid management but also lays a robust foundation for future advancements in AI-powered renewable energy systems.

B. Recommendations and Future Research Directions

Based on the findings and limitations identified in this study, several avenues for future research and development are proposed to further enhance the capabilities of the proposed framework.

1). Addressing Class Imbalance: The model's performance on minority fault classes, which are often the most critical for safety and operational efficiency, could be improved. Future work should explore the implementation of techniques such as oversampling, specifically the Synthetic Minority Over-sampling Technique (SMOTE), or the use of class-weighted loss functions to penalize the misclassification of rare fault types.

2). Integration with Real-Time Data Streams: While the model demonstrated outstanding performance on simulated data, its robustness in real-world, dynamic environments needs to be validated. Future work should focus on deploying the model on real-time data streams from IoT-enabled sensors within a working PV plant to ensure its performance holds up in the presence of sensor noise and real-world uncertainties (Himeur et al., 2022).

3). Real-Time Deployment and Edge Computing: To minimize the latency associated with cloud based systems, the hybrid AI model could be deployed on edge computing devices, such as a Raspberry Pi or an NVIDIA Jetson, which are located directly at the solar farm. This would enable real-time fault detection and RUL prediction, providing immediate feedback for proactive maintenance decisions (Shi et al., 2016).

4). Scaling and Generalization: The framework should be expanded to accommodate larger, multisite systems with more complex grid layouts. By testing the model on utility-scale systems with thousands of panels and a greater number of inverters, valuable insights can be gained into the framework's scalability and its applicability to commercial and industrial projects.

5). Integration with Energy Management Systems (EMS): The model's predictive insights can be integrated directly with existing Energy Management Systems. This integration would allow for the dynamic scheduling of maintenance tasks, improve fault diagnoses, and provide a more holistic optimization of energy production and grid stability. The model would serve as a decision-support tool, enabling more intelligent grid management by providing real-time, actionable data to operators.

6). Utilization of Advanced Sensors: Future research can explore the fusion of additional data sources, such as thermal imaging, infrared scanning, or vibration data from inverters. These advanced data streams can help in identifying early-stage faults that are not visible through standard electrical measurements, thereby significantly increasing the accuracy of fault prediction and enabling more granular diagnostics

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