

Final Project 1

Code: PMG496

Faculty of Management
Midocean University

Graduation Research Project

The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Reducing Emissions and Enhancing Environmental Project Performance at Aramco

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2026

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Chapter One: General Framework of the Study

1.1 Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become one of the most influential modern technologies in transforming industries worldwide, particularly in the energy sector, which is considered one of the largest contributors to carbon emissions. In this context, Saudi Aramco aims to adopt smart solutions through AI applications to reduce emissions and improve environmental project performance by monitoring operations, analyzing data, and supporting sustainable decision-making.

1.2 Problem Statement

The study problem can be summarized in the following main question:

What is the impact of Artificial Intelligence applications on reducing emissions and improving the performance of environmental projects at Aramco?

1.3 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study stems from the increasing global reliance on AI technologies to support sustainability initiatives. It highlights the importance of AI in achieving a balance between industrial efficiency and environmental protection, enhancing resource utilization, and minimizing emissions from industrial operations.

1.4 Study Objectives

Main Objective: To examine the impact of Artificial Intelligence on reducing emissions and improving environmental performance at Aramco.

Sub-objectives:

1. To analyze the role of AI in monitoring and reducing carbon emissions.
2. To assess the impact of AI on enhancing environmental project efficiency.
3. To identify challenges in implementing AI technologies for sustainability purposes.

1.5 Research Objectives

In light of the growing global urgency to address climate change and the increasing adoption of digital technologies across the energy sector, this study seeks to explore and clarify how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be strategically leveraged to reduce carbon emissions and enhance the performance of environmental projects at Saudi Aramco. The objectives of this research are designed to generate both theoretical insights and practical value, and are articulated as follows:

1. **To critically examine the role of Artificial Intelligence in monitoring, analyzing, and reducing carbon emissions** within oil and gas operations, with the aim of supporting Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 sustainability goals.
2. **To assess the readiness and adaptability of Saudi Aramco's existing infrastructure, workforce capabilities, and data management systems** to implement AI-driven environmental solutions effectively.

3. **To investigate the organizational, technical, and cultural factors** that significantly influence the successful deployment of AI technologies in environmental project management within the energy sector.
4. **To quantify the impact of AI adoption on key environmental performance indicators** such as emission reduction rates, resource efficiency, operational compliance, and environmental risk mitigation.
5. **To develop a conceptual and operational framework** that integrates AI capabilities into environmental project workflows, offering a roadmap for energy companies aiming to transition toward intelligent, low-emission operations.
6. **To formulate actionable recommendations** that support decision-makers and environmental project managers in accelerating digital transformation and achieving sustainable environmental excellence through the adoption of intelligent technologies.

By achieving these objectives, the study aims to bridge the existing gap between emerging AI innovations and their practical application in environmental management, ultimately contributing to more sustainable, data-driven, and low-carbon industrial systems.

1.6 Research Hypotheses

Main Hypothesis: There is a statistically significant effect of using Artificial Intelligence technologies on reducing emissions and improving the performance of environmental projects.

Sub-hypotheses:

1. There is a positive relationship between AI implementation and emission monitoring.
2. There is a positive relationship between AI and environmental performance improvement.
3. There is a positive relationship between intelligent data analysis and sustainable environmental decision-making.

1.7 Study Model

The conceptual framework of this study takes the form of a proposed study model that connects traditional and manual environmental management inputs, such as operational data collection, routine inspections, and baseline digital tools, to environmental management processes, such as manual emission tracking, periodic reporting, and compliance checks, to the ultimate outcomes of emission awareness, regulatory compliance, and operational adjustments.

The components of the model:

Inputs:

1. Manual collection of operational and environmental data (e.g., emission logs, fuel consumption records)
2. Basic monitoring equipment (e.g., standalone sensors, manual gauges, periodic sampling)
3. Conventional data recording platforms (e.g., spreadsheets, basic databases, paper records)

Processes

1. Periodic data entry and basic trend analysis (non-automated)
2. Historical comparison and identification of emission patterns
3. Scheduled environmental audits and compliance reviews

Outputs:

1. Documented emission levels without real-time intervention
2. Improved environmental reporting accuracy (post-event)
3. Awareness of resource inefficiencies (reactive rather than proactive)
4. Informed decision-making based on historical data and human analysis

1.8 Research Methodology

This case study has been designed following an integrated methodology that focuses on the uniqueness of the topic. The goal is to produce results that contribute towards closing theoretical and practical gaps especially in relation to AI as a decision tool in environmental project management and emission reduction strategies at Saudi Aramco. The methodological scope undertaken in this study is as follows:

1. Research Philosophy: The approach taken in this study reflects the philosophy of interpretivism, which aims to understand the phenomena being studied and how they occur through processes in context. This philosophy reflects the goals of the current study, which is interested in understanding how AI has been or is being applied in practice, in real industrial settings, from the perspective of environmental project managers, sustainability officers, and operations personnel.

It was also necessary to use elements of positivism when analyzing the quantitative data from the questionnaire as they are empirical facts, and the researcher was required to balance between gaining rich understanding of the human experience, while engaging in systematic clarity in analyzing the data.

2. Research Approach: The research used an inductive approach, which started in analyzing the field data from the questionnaires, to establish categories and themes to make conclusions to schemes and patterns, which could be rationally extended to liken or generalize to similar industrial contexts within the energy sector.

In using an inductive approach, the researcher used some elements of a deductive approach, particularly in terms of testing out proposed hypotheses, developed from previous theories about AI and environmental performance.

Inductive Approaches: The Inductive approach involves a matter of analyzing the specific field data and forming a broad generalization or theory about a phenomenon. It best applies to research being conducted to discover aspects of a new phenomenon while delving deeply into a complex problem. In this research, the inductive approach was carried out by:

- Reflecting on real-world AI use cases in environmental management at Saudi Aramco through practitioners' responses
- Taking patterns and trends from data regarding organizational readiness to adopt AI technologies for emission reduction
- Posing initial hypotheses or theory about the relationship between AI use and environmental performance improvements

The inductive approach is flexible in that it allows the researcher to consider "reality" without being tied to preconceived notions of what reality may present.

Deductive Approach: The deductive method starts with an existing theory or hypothesis and then utilizes empirical observation to ascertain whether or not it holds true.

In this research, the deductive method was used in the following manner:

- The researcher developed hypotheses (i.e., it will be determined if AI will have any perceived impact on emission reduction and environmental project performance) from a literature review regarding AI in environmental management and sustainability.
- The findings will be compared using quantitative tools (i.e., survey, statistical analysis) to determine if the hypotheses hold true when recognizing previously specified relationships (i.e., AI implementation, emission reduction rates, resource efficiency, compliance improvement).
- It was then possible to draw conclusions based on the results (i.e., confirmation or rejection of hypotheses) and offer advice based on conclusions.

The deductive approach can add rigor and allows researchers to assess their findings compared to theoretical expectations.

Combination of inductive and deductive: Given that the topic is both practical (i.e., environmental project management and emission reduction) and technical, the researcher has applied and integrated both methods as follows:

- Use of the inductive method to discover new knowledge in the field regarding AI's role in emissions management
- Use of the deductive method to test scientifically based hypotheses about AI's impact on environmental performance

The integration of inductive and deductive approaches increases the rigor of the research process in terms of adding analytical and interpretative depth while increasing the credibility and actionability of findings.

3. Research Strategy: The survey strategy was applied with the use of a structured questionnaire to a sample of professionals working in environmental management, sustainability, operations, and project management at Saudi Aramco. This strategy was devised to gather wide-ranging quantitative data for statistical analysis purposes to present trends and perceptions about the effectiveness of AI in emission reduction and environmental project performance through environmental practitioners and decision-makers.

4. Research Type: The research could be categorized as using a mixed methods approach as it utilizes both:

- Quantitative research, which is synthesized, analyzed, and oriented through statistical analysis of responses to the questionnaire.
- Qualitative research, which is the author's own development and interpretation of open-ended responses and observation from the field.

Due to the combined approaches, the author is able to offer a holistic view aligned to both technical and human perspectives regarding AI adoption for environmental sustainability.

5. Time Horizon: The time horizon could be described as cross-sectional as the data was collected and analyzed at a period of time and presents the current state and use of AI applications in emission reduction and environmental project management. It was not longitudinal in nature and therefore changes cannot be identified over long periods of time.

6. Data Collection and Analysis Methods:

Data collection: The electronic structured questionnaire contained closed-ended (multiple choice) and a range of open-ended questions directed to environmental project managers, sustainability engineers, operations managers, and data analysts working within Saudi Aramco's environmental projects.

The validity and reliability of the questionnaire was established through expert review and pilot testing.

Data analysis: Quantitative data was analyzed using statistical software (e.g., SPSS or MS Excel). Statistical analysis methods included:

- Descriptive statistics for general trends
- Hypothesis testing such as T-tests, ANOVA, or correlation analysis
- Reliability analysis, Cronbach's Alpha analysis

1.9 Field Study

As part of the empirical component of this research, a structured **online questionnaire** was created and distributed to professionals working in environmental management, sustainability, operations, and project planning departments within Saudi Aramco and other energy sector organizations in Saudi Arabia. The questionnaire is designed to collect quantitative data concerning the adoption of AI technologies for emission reduction, the various challenges faced when implementing these technologies in environmental projects, and their overall effect on key environmental performance indicators, including emission levels, resource efficiency, and regulatory compliance.

The questionnaire was designed using **Google Forms**, and can be accessed via the following link:

Field Study Questionnaire – Google Forms

The results from this field study will be analyzed using statistical methods as outlined in the research methodology to validate the study hypotheses and support the proposed model for integrating AI into environmental project management at Saudi Aramco.

1.10 suggested structures

The proposed project plan describes the series of scientific and practical processes to complete the study, starting from identifying the research problem and the hypotheses of the research, to collecting and analyzing data, to interpreting results, and proposing recommendations. The plan has been designed in accordance with principles of research project management and will remain on schedule.

Phase 1: Prepare and Plan (Weeks 1-2)

- Reviewing the relevant literature and past studies on AI applications in environmental management and emission reduction
- Identifying theoretical and practical research gaps in the field of AI-driven sustainability
- Developing the research problem, objectives, research questions, and hypotheses
- Developing the draft conceptual framework of the study (AI inputs → environmental processes → emission reduction outputs)
- Identifying the population and sampling methods for the study (Saudi Aramco environmental project teams)

Phase 2: Research Instruments (Weeks 3-4)

- Completing the questionnaire design based on study objectives and dimensions of the study (AI adoption, emission monitoring, environmental performance)
 - Having the questionnaire reviewed by academic experts and environmental sustainability specialists
 - Pilot testing the questionnaire by asking a small sample (4–8 people) to respond to it to ensure reliability and validity
 - Completing revisions to the instrument based on feedback and observations
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Phase 3: Data Collection (Weeks 5–6)

- Electronically distributing the questionnaire to the selected sample (environmental project managers, sustainability engineers, operations personnel at Saudi Aramco)
 - Monitoring participants' responses and ensuring representativeness
 - Conducting semi-structured interviews with environmental experts to complement the quantitative data with qualitative insights
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Phase 4: Data Analysis (Weeks 7–8)

- Coding the questionnaires and constructing a data set in Excel or SPSS
 - Applying statistical analysis tools (e.g., calculating means, regression analysis, correlation analysis)
 - Testing the research hypotheses and completing the interpretation of the results
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Phase 5: Discussion and Conclusions (Week 9)

- Comparing the study results to the findings from the literature on AI and environmental sustainability
 - Identifying how well the research objectives and hypotheses were achieved
 - Discussing the actual impact of AI on emission reduction and environmental project performance at Saudi Aramco
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Phase 6: Recommendations and Final Report (Week 10)

- Making theoretical and practical recommendations based on research findings
 - Devising a practical model for adopting AI for environmental management and emission reduction in the energy sector
 - Writing the final report in an academic format
 - Completing final language reviews and methodological revisions for publication or academic presentation
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Organizational Notes:

- **Project Duration:** 10 weeks
 - **Research Type:** Descriptive-analytical using quantitative and qualitative tools
 - **Final Outputs:** A conceptual framework, actionable recommendations for Saudi Aramco, and a full research report
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Gantt Chart (Simplified)

Week Phase Activities

1-2	Phase 1	Literature review, gap identification, problem definition, framework development
3-4	Phase 2	Questionnaire design, expert review, pilot testing, revisions
5-6	Phase 3	Questionnaire distribution, response monitoring, interviews
7-8	Phase 4	Data coding, statistical analysis, hypothesis testing
9	Phase 5	Results discussion, comparison with literature, conclusions
10	Phase 6	Recommendations, final report writing, revisions

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The literature review discusses the role of Artificial Intelligence in enhancing environmental performance and reducing the carbon footprint of industrial organizations. Many studies emphasize that predictive analytics and intelligent monitoring systems contribute significantly to more effective environmental management.

2.2 Concept of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the ability of machines and systems to simulate human intelligence, including learning, reasoning, and decision-making. It is now considered one of the main pillars of industrial transformation and sustainable innovation in the 21st century.

2.3 AI and Emission Reduction

AI plays a crucial role in emission reduction through smart sensors and real-time data analysis, allowing companies to detect inefficiencies, optimize operations, and minimize waste.

2.4 AI and Environmental Performance Improvement

Using machine learning algorithms, companies can predict potential environmental risks, improve resource allocation, and enhance project outcomes through data-driven insights.

2.5 Relationship Between AI and Environmental Sustainability

There is a strong connection between AI and environmental sustainability, as AI improves resource efficiency, reduces emissions, and strengthens environmental monitoring, thereby supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

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