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Original Research Article

AI Applications in Sustainable Banking: A Review of Applications, Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract: The convergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and sustainable banking is transforming the global financial landscape, presenting both extraordinary opportunities and significant challenges. This paper provides an in-depth review of AI applications in the banking sector, elaborating on their role in advancing efficiency, enhancing customer experience and promoting financial inclusion, while also examining their implications for sustainability. Drawing on a thematic analysis of scholarly literature, case studies, industry reports and studies, this analysis identifies key applications of AI in fraud identification, credit risk management, wealth management, customer service automation and regulatory compliance. Further than operational welfare, the review centre is evolving sustainability-focused on uses of AI, comprising environmental, social and governance (ESG) risk calculation and green finance simplification. However, major challenges remain, notably data privacy risks, algorithmic bias, regulatory uncertainty, high operational costs, workforce disruptions and the environmental impact of AI systems. The analysis underscores significant gaps in aligning AI adoption with broader sustainability goals, regulatory expectations and ethical standards. To address the identified loopholes, this research recommends future research strategies focused on the development of accountable AI frameworks, explainable AI, stronger regulatory harmonization and inclusive financial contact. The findings contribute to both theory and practice by combining fragmented insights, providing a structured framework for indulgent AI's dual role in efficiency and sustainability and offering legal guidance for policymakers, regulators and banking authorities. Ultimately, this study highlights AI not only as a driver of operational conversion but also as a catalyst for building a more comprehensive, robust and practical global banking environment.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Sustainable Banking, ESG, Technological Innovation, Explainable Artificial Intelligence.

1. INTRODUCTION

The global banking sector has been undergoing a vital transformation determined by the dual forces of high-tech innovation and long-term necessities (AL-Dosari *et al.*, 2024; Rodrigues *et al.*, 2022). The financial sector, mainly the banking industry, has historically helped as the backbone of worldwide economies, surfacing endlessly in reaction to technological advancement, regulatory fluctuations and changing customer demands (Roy *et al.*, 2025). From branch-based services to the advent of ATM, online banking and mobile banking through mobile applications, financial organizations have gradually embraced digital transformation to improve efficiency and increase customer experiences (Alnaser *et al.*, 2023). In recent years, Artificial Intelligence has emerged as the latest frontier in this change, offering unprecedented opportunities for innovation across various banking functions (Alsoukini *et al.*, 2025; Paramesha *et al.*, 2024). By leveraging ML, NLP, RPA and predictive analytics. At present, banks can process massive datasets, automating routine

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work, providing better scope for existing employees to focus on more complex tasks and delivering highly personalized suggestions for financial matters at scale (El Hajj & Hammoud, 2023; Rodrigues *et al.*, 2022; Zheng *et al.*, 2025).

Though at the present time the integration of AI into the banking industry successfully aligns with customer needs, it remains a complex and evolving phenomenon. The current study has known its applications in fraud identification, credit scoring, robo-advisory services, regulatory obedience, loan risk management and customer service automation (Aziz & Andriansyah, 2023; Mohammed *et al.*, 2024; Zhang *et al.*, 2022). These studies ensure AI's capability to improve operational efficiency, lessen risks and improve financial inclusion (El Hajj & Hammoud, 2023; Roy *et al.*, 2025). However, challenges such as a lack of digital literacy, data privacy threats, algorithmic bias, regulatory ambiguity and huge implementation expenses raise significant questions about the ethical, social and environmental implications of AI in financial services (Afroogh *et al.*, 2024; Moharrak & Mogaji, 2025; Yenduri *et al.*, 2024). In addition, while Artificial Intelligence's role in developing efficiency is well-recognised, its contributions to sustainable banking, particularly in zones such as environmental, social and governance risk calculation, sustainable or green finance and responsible lending, remain underexplored.

A critical evaluation of the literature discloses several gaps. Firstly, much of the existing research is fragmented between technically driven analyses of AI applications and theoretical discussions of consumer trust, ethics and regulation (Wijethilake, 2025). This disengagement limits the growth of comprehensive frameworks that address together technological capabilities and socio-economic consequences. Again, earlier studies have mainly focused on operational benefits, reducing inequality and raising financial sustainability with scarce attention to Artificial Intelligence's role in constructing long-term trust (Alsoukini *et al.*, 2025; Pan & Nishant, 2023). Lastly, the environmental impact of Artificial Intelligence tools themselves has not received enough attention (Mei *et al.*, 2024), which raises concerns about the paradox of leveraging resource-intensive technologies to promote sustainability in the financial sector.

Based on the above-identified loopholes in the existing literature, this article aims to address the following pivotal research questions: (a) How is Artificial Intelligence reshaping banking operations, customer service and risk management? (b) What regulatory, ethical and environmental challenges constrain its viable adoption? (c) In what ways can Artificial Intelligence be aligned with Environmental, Social and Governance objectives and how does inclusive banking apply? As well as (d) How many banks incorporate Human-Artificial Intelligence collaboration models to ensure that employees are empowered rather than displaced?

The objectives of this study are fourfold: (i) To trace the historical development of AI in banking, highlighting key technological milestones; (ii) To examine the current applications of AI in enhancing efficiency, customer engagement and sustainability; (iii) To analyse the challenges, including ethical dilemmas, regulatory uncertainty and resource constraints; (iv) To forecast future directions by proposing strategies for responsible and sustainable AI integration in global banking.

By addressing the identified objectives, this study makes significant scholarly contributions. First, it consolidates and synthesizes a fragmented body of literature on Artificial Intelligence in banking, providing a structured thematic framework that integrates technical, operational, ethical and sustainability perspectives. By tracing the historical evolution of AI, examining current applications and highlighting key technological milestones, the study offers a comprehensive understanding of how AI has reshaped banking operations, customer service, and risk management. Furthermore, it systematically identifies the challenges-ethical dilemmas, regulatory uncertainty and resource constraints-that have constrained AI adoption, thereby clarifying critical areas for future research and policy attention. In this study, we analyze the disclosure on Artificial Intelligence beyond its conventional association with operational efficacy to illuminate its rigorous potential for instituting long-term and inclusive banking paradigms. Lastly, this article provides a critical bridge between specific AI deployments and the fulfillment of environmental, social and governmental criteria through effective human and artificial symbiosis and yielding practical guidance for governance bodies as well as financial practitioners. As a result, the study re-envisions artificial intelligence not as a simple tool but as a fundamental strategic enabler, proficient in cultivating financial architectures characterized by resilience, inclusivity and sustainability. This perspective is intended to guide current operational frameworks and stimulate future scholarly exploration.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Artificial Intelligence

The domain of Artificial Intelligence concerns the computational simulation of human cognitive faculties, including learning, problem-solving and judgment (Haleem *et al.*, 2022; Rani *et al.*, 2025; Valavanidis, 2023). Within the financial services industry, the adoption of AI technologies spanning machine learning, natural language processing, robotic process automation and predictive analytics is accelerating (Aziz & Andriansyah, 2023; Mei *et al.*, 2024; Narayanan, 2025). In addition, this mechanism mentioned strengthens financial institutions to analyse immense volumes of heterogeneous data, extracting previously indiscernible patterns to inform critical decision-making processes (Fares *et*

al., 2022; Rahman et al., 2023). For instance, ML techniques are refining credit risk assessment by evaluating multifaceted customer data (Faheem, 2021), while NLP applications are revolutionizing client interactions through intelligent, automated support systems interactions (Patil, 2024; Vashishth et al., 2024). RPA streamlines repetitive operational processes, reducing errors and improving efficiency (Lubis & Sembiring, 2023). Predictive analytics enables proactive risk management, fraud detection and portfolio optimization (Javaid, 2024). Beyond efficiency, AI also supports sustainability and ESG objectives by facilitating green lending decisions, monitoring environmental and social risks and ensuring regulatory compliance (Elhady & Shohieb, 2025; Rane et al., 2024b). Furthermore, AI-driven analytics can promote financial inclusion by designing products tailored to underserved populations, thereby reinforcing the strategic role of AI as a transformative enabler of innovation, resilience and accountable banking practices (Vasile & Manta, 2025; Yıldız & Demir, 2024).

2.2. Sustainable Banking

Traditionally, banking services were highly branch-centric, relying heavily on face-to-face interactions between customers and employees (Sheth *et al.*, 2022; Wang *et al.*, 2025). With the advancement of information and communication technologies, banks gradually shifted toward telephone banking, ATMs and online banking platforms, which enabled customers to access financial services with greater convenience and reduced reliance on physical branches (Rahman *et al.*, 2015; Rahman *et al.*, 2024; Zheng, Rahman, *et al.*, 2023). In the previous twenty years, the rise of mobile banking and financial technology or fintech innovations, has further reshaped customer service, emphasizing speed, accessibility and personalization (Kayed *et al.*, 2025; Rahman *et al.*, 2024; Wu *et al.*, 2024). This evolution underscores a clear trajectory from manual, human-driven services to digitally enabled, customer-centric models, setting the stage for AI adoption (Dewasiri *et al.*, 2023; Roy *et al.*, 2025).

The continuous change in the digital banking system is increasingly orchestrated by Artificial Intelligence, which strengthens institutions to automate standard processes, enhance predictive capabilities for risk assessment, tailor customer engagements through intelligent analytics and optimize operational performance efficiency (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2022; Tian, 2024). Surpassing detection of only efficiency, AI also serves as a cornerstone for responsible banking, enabling lending practices that adhere to ESG principles, ethical fraud detection mechanisms and inclusive financial strategies derived from sophisticated data analysis (Elhady & Shohieb, 2025; Mercier-Laurent, 2021; Thomas *et al.*, 2025). The convergence of technologies, therefore, embodies a strategic paradigm shift one that is essential for forging a financial ecosystem characterized by higher resilience, inclusivity and environmental stewardship (Dewasiri *et al.*, 2023; Fernandes *et al.*, 2024; Ul Huq *et al.*, 2016).

2.3. Applications of AI in the Banking Sector

The modern banking industry has been significantly affected after the introduction of Artificial Intelligence tools, affecting a fundamental change in how financial institutions manage risk, interact with clients and ensure regulatory adherence (Alsoukini *et al.*, 2025; Moharrak & Mogaji, 2025). Among its most transformative applications is the domain of fraud detection and risk management. Incorporating machine learning tactics, banks can scrutinize massive transactional datasets in real-time to detect anomalies, a capability that is instrumental in reducing financial exposure and fortifying security protocols (Aziz & Andriansyah, 2023; Javaid, 2024). Again, in credit scoring and loan approval, AI models go beyond traditional financial indicators by integrating alternative and non-traditional data sources, such as social behaviour, transaction patterns and digital footsteps, to generate more exact and inclusive valuations of solvency (Alnaser *et al.*, 2023; Pan & Nishant, 2023).

Customer engagement has also been hugely changed through virtual assistants like chatbots, which are powered by natural language processing (NLP), providing 24/7 support, answering queries and streamlining routine tasks, meaningfully reducing response times and enhancing the overall customer experience (Abiagom & Ijomah, 2024; Mondal *et al.*, 2015; Nithya, 2024). In wealth management, AI-driven robo-advisors offer personalized investment advice, computerized portfolio management and predictive insights founded on market trends, enabling banks to deliver sophisticated financial design services at scale (Challa, 2023; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2025; Zha & Mitra, 2024).

In addition to aligning all legal matters with proper rules and regulations, the banking industry has benefited heavily from AI's capability to monitor great volumes of transactions for suspicious patterns, ensuring obedience to AML and KYC regulations and helping banks reduce the risk of penalties or damage to goodwill (Paleti, 2022; Shirvanporzour, 2025; Turksen *et al.*, 2024). Besides these positive matters, the Artificial Intelligence and Explainable Artificial Intelligence support tactical goals, including the integration of ESG criteria, optimization of operational efficiency and promotion of financial inclusion (Limajatini *et al.*, 2025; Rane *et al.*, 2024b). By its present functions, Artificial Intelligence is not only acting as a technological tool but also revolutionizing resilience, customer satisfaction and sustainable banking practices in the overall financial environment (Alonge *et al.*, 2021; Manta *et al.*, 2025; Rahmani & Zohuri, 2023).

2.4. Enhancing Customer Experience through AI

Artificial Intelligence is basically shaping customer experience within the banking sector by driving significant advancements in personalized service, operational efficiency and service accessibility (Kovvuri, 2024; Sheth *et al.*, 2022). Automation of frequently occurring questions, including account-related questions and transaction histories, expedites service resolution, thereby elevating customer satisfaction (Favour *et al.*, 2025; Rane *et al.*, 2024a; Vashishth *et al.*, 2024). In addition, AI facilitates sophisticated personalization on digital platforms, curating recommendations for financial products like loans and investment opportunities based on individual customer profiles and behaviours (Kumar, 2020; Sultana & Faisal, 2024). The exact proposed approach not only deepens client engagement but also creates greater scope for effective cross-selling activities.

Through some significant way like predictive analytics, AI equips institutions to forecast customer behaviour, pre-empt potential risks and address service weaknesses before they intensify. These capabilities are crucial for constructing seamless omnichannel experiences, guaranteeing consistency whether a customer interacts via digital, mobile, or in-branch channels (Aziz & Andriansyah, 2023; Dzreke, 2025). Additionally, a major secondary feature is reallocation of human capital; by automating mundane tasks, AI liberates staff to focus on complex, high-value functions such as personalized financial advising and strategic relationship management (Met *et al.*, 2019; Sharma *et al.*, 2025). The significant co-operation between automated efficiency and accuracy with human mastery fosters high trust and loyalty, recasting AI from just a cost-saving instrument into a strategic asset for cultivating superior customer experiences (Igwe-Nmaju *et al.*, 2023). Ultimately, this evolution supports a broader shift from transactional interactions to a relationship-centric banking model, aligning service delivery with the long-term expectations and needs of the customer (Chakraborty *et al.*, 2025; Masum Miah *et al.*, 2012; Yang *et al.*, 2024).

2.5. Impact of AI on Banking Employees

After the introduction of Artificial Intelligence in the banking sector, it has redesigned the workforce in banking services, presenting both opportunities and challenges. On the positive side, automation of routine and repetitive tasks enables employees to redirect their efforts toward more strategic, customer-centric and creative roles, such as financial advising, product development and relationship management (Alakotila, 2023; Ochieng, 2024; Zheng, Chowdhury, *et al.*, 2023). This changeover can enhance job satisfaction, as employees can contribute to higher-value activities that demand human judgment and empathy qualities that machines cannot easily replicate (Perera, 2025). However, alongside these benefits, there are growing concerns about job displacement, particularly in back-office functions, transaction processing and routine package roles that AI systems can perform more efficiently (Megargel *et al.*, 2025; Spring *et al.*, 2022).

At the present time, AI adoption is accelerating the demand for new skill sets, including data analytics, AI system management, programming literacy and digital communication skills (Challoumis, 2024; Rodrigues *et al.*, 2022). To adapt to this changing environment, banks must invest heavily in employee reskilling and continuous exercise programs, ensuring their workforce can work successfully alongside intelligent systems. Notably, the net impact of AI on employees is not predetermined; it depends largely on how institutions manage the transition and design human—machine collaboration models. Banks that integrate AI as a complement to human proficiencies, rather than a substitute, are more likely to foster empowered, future-ready employees and maintain stronger organizational resilience (Arshad *et al.*, 2025; Saba *et al.*, 2025).

2.6 AI in Risk Management and Fraud Detection

The deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has fundamentally reshaped risk management and fraud detection in the banking sector, shifting practices from reactive investigations to proactive, real-time prevention (Appachikumar, 2025; Aziz & Andriansyah, 2023; Khan & Islam). AI-powered systems, using sophisticated machine learning (ML) and deep learning algorithms, continuously monitor vast volumes of transactional and behavioural data, establishing highly nuanced baselines for individual customers (Paramesha *et al.*, 2024). These systems excel at identifying subtle anomalies such as unusual transaction amounts, atypical geolocations, device changes, or abnormal spending velocities that would be imperceptible to human analysts or traditional rule-based systems (Khan *et al.*, 2025). By flagging doubtful activities within milliseconds, financial institutions can promptly block or suspend potentially fake or fraudulent transactions, thereby diminishing financial losses and enhancing customer trust.

One of the major pros of AI lies in its adaptive wisdom capabilities (Strielkowski *et al.*, 2025). Besides the previous rule-based systems, AI models developed with new datasets are constantly improving their ability to identify emerging fraudulent schemes, cyber threats and insider risks (Narender & Anand, 2025). This active learning ensures that fraud prevention tactics remain resilient against increasingly sophisticated attack patterns. In addition to fraud detection, AI-driven tools strengthen banks' regulatory compliance frameworks, particularly in areas such as Anti-Money Laundering and Know Your Customer requirements. Automated systems can cross-check large-scale customer records, flag inconsistencies and generate transparent, auditable compliance reports with remarkable efficiency (Van Vliet, 2023). Beyond immediate cost savings, these innovations have broader strategic benefits. AI-driven risk management reduces

operational inefficiencies, bolsters institutional credibility and supports long-term financial stability (Adekunle *et al.*, 2023; Zheng, Khan, *et al.*, 2023). Significantly, by implanting transparency and liability into risk systems, banks not only meet regulatory expectations but also align with ESG governance objectives, positioning themselves as trustworthy actors in an increasingly digitized financial ecosystem (Abramova, 2024).

2.7 AI and Credit Risk Assessment

Artificial Intelligence is altering credit risk assessment procedures by enabling a more holistic, accurate and inclusive evaluation of borrower creditworthiness (Faheem, 2021). Traditional credit scoring models, which rely primarily on historical credit bureau data and standardized financial ratios, often provide limited insights. They frequently exclude individuals with thin or non-existent credit files, such as young adults, gig-economy workers and recent migrants, thereby reinforcing financial exclusion (Elhady & Shohieb, 2025; Faheem, 2021).

AI-powered models overcome these limitations by integrating alternative data sources, including utility and rental payment histories, digital footprints, mobile phone usage patterns, social network interactions and transaction-level behavioural data from bank accounts (Pan & Nishant, 2023; Tian, 2024). Through upgrade techniques such as natural language processing (NLP), sentiment analysis and network analysis, AI systems uncover subtle indicators of financial accountability and stability that historical models fail to capture. This capability to process various and complex datasets enables the creation of more nuanced borrower profiles, reflecting not only repayment history but also real-time financial behaviours and adaptive capacity. The result is a significant improvement in the accuracy of credit risk predictions, reducing default rates while extending fair credit access to previously "unscorable" individuals (Piacentino, 2025). Banks and lending institutions benefit by being able to tailor interest rates and lending terms more precisely, aligning risk with pricing. At the same time, borrowers who were once excluded gain access to affordable credit, thereby advancing the goals of financial inclusion and social equity. Importantly, this approach also aligns with the social dimension of ESG, as AI-driven credit risk assessment facilitates responsible lending practices that broaden participation in the financial system while maintaining stability and accountability (Faheem, 2021; Oko-Odion, 2025).

2.8 AI in Investment and Wealth Management

The wealth management industry is undergoing a profound democratization driven by the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly through the rise of robo-advisors and AI-powered portfolio management platforms (Ghosn, 2025). These digital systems deliver automated, algorithm-driven financial planning and investment services with minimal human intervention, fundamentally reshaping how client's access and engage with wealth management. By gathering data on financial goals, risk tolerance, income levels and time horizons through intuitive digital interfaces, robo-advisors apply modern portfolio theory in combination with machine learning techniques to construct, monitor and automatically rebalance diversified portfolios, often composed of low-cost exchange-traded funds (ETFs) (Salinas, 2024).

This high degree of automation translates into lower fees, reduced entry barriers and minimal account requirements compared to traditional wealth managers, thereby extending professional-grade investment services to a much broader audience (Onabowale, 2024). What was once the exclusive domain of high-net-worth individuals is now accessible to retail investors, students and middle-income households, signalling a structural shift in financial inclusion. Latest AI platforms go outside basic asset allocation by offering personalized insights, real-time risk assessments, tax-loss harvesting and continuous market sentiment analysis, thus providing tailored investment strategies that adapt vigorously to market fluctuations and client needs (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2025). Implications extend beyond cost savings. By combining scalability with personalization services, AI is reshaping client expectations, placing pressure on traditional financial advisors to integrate digital tools or risk obsolescence (Onabowale, 2024; Salinas, 2024). At the same time, the growing role of AI in wealth management raises questions about algorithmic transparency, investor trust and regulatory oversight, particularly in volatile markets (Olanrewaju, 2025). However, when designed responsibly, AI-powered investment solutions embody both efficiency and inclusivity, positioning them as a cornerstone of sustainable finance and a powerful contributor to the broader goals of financial democratization and ESG-aligned investing (Sundharesalingam *et al.*, 2023).

2.9 Ethical and Regulatory Considerations in AI Adoption

While Artificial Intelligence offers major benefits for efficiency, personalization services and risk management, its adoption in banking raises key ethical and regulatory challenges that must be carefully addressed to ensure sustainable and responsible integration (Paleti, 2022; Wijethilake, 2025). A central ethical concern is data privacy and security (Wang *et al.*, 2024). Banks manage highly sensitive customer information and the use of AI requires collecting and processing vast amounts of personal and financial data. Breaches or misuse of this data can severely undermine customer trust and expose institutions to reputational and legal risks (Afroogh *et al.*, 2024; Wijethilake, 2025).

Another critical issue is algorithmic bias and fairness. AI models are only as reliable as the data they are trained on; if datasets reflect historical biases or lack diversity, outcomes may inadvertently discriminate against certain groups, leading to unequal access to credit or financial services (Chaudhary, 2024). Such outcomes conflict with principles of

fairness, inclusion and the "social" dimension of ESG (Rane *et al.*, 2024b). Closely related to this is the challenge of transparency and explainability (Thiruma Valavan, 2023). Many AI systems, particularly those based on deep learning, operate as "black boxes," making it difficult for regulators, auditors, or even banks themselves to fully explain how specific decisions such as credit approvals or fraud alerts are reached. This lack of interpretability raises accountability concerns, especially when customer livelihoods are affected. From a regulatory standpoint, uncertainty in legal matters remains a significant barrier. While worldwide regulators recognize the potential of AI, clear and consistent frameworks governing its use in financial services are still evolving. Banks often face fragmented guidelines across jurisdictions, complicating compliance and slowing adoption. Key regulatory priorities include ensuring adherence to Anti-Money Laundering (AML), Know Your Customer (KYC) and consumer protection laws, while also defending against cyber risks (Paleti, 2022; Shirvanporzour, 2025).

3. Challenges of Implementing AI in the Banking Sector

Artificial Intelligence literally contains the ability to deal with a huge amount of routine banking tasks with high accuracy, but properly handling is the pivotal issue in this context. All machine learning programmes access different databases to enrich their own dataset to ensure the best response. In this context, the banking industry is facing plenty of challenges that slow down its widespread adoption. Pivotal fears in this context are data privacy and security as financial institutions handle highly valuable and sensitive customer information like usernames, account numbers and passwords that could be exposed to cyberattacks or unauthorized access if not adequately protected (Paul et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024). Again, a burning issue is algorithmic bias, where AI models trained on incomplete or tilted datasets may produce discriminatory outcomes, such as one-sided lending decisions or exclusion of weak groups from financial services (Oguntibeju, 2024). In addition, the development and adoption of pro-AI systems like explainable AI requires substantial financial and technical investment, making high implementation costs a barrier, especially for smaller banks and institutions in third-world countries or developing economies (Aderibigbe et al., 2023). Legal bindings further complicate the scenario, since the absence of clear, standardized guidelines regarding AI's use in financial services creates hesitation among banks and increases compliance risks (Kothandapani, 2025; Truby et al., 2020). Finally, accountability, transparency and trust remain critical challenges; the "black-box" nature of many AI models makes it difficult to explain how decisions are made, raising concerns among regulatory agencies, customers and bank authorities about accountability and fairness (Chaudhary, 2024; Thiruma Valavan, 2023). This type of hurdle underscores the need for robust regulatory frameworks, greater transparency in AI model design and strategies that balance technological efficiency with ethical and sustainable practices in banking.

Besides regulatory alignment and operational difficulties, there are also digital literacy and reliability enhancement issues. Many AI systems, particularly deep learning models, operate as "black boxes" making it difficult for regulators, managers and even customers to understand how decisions are made (Chaudhary, 2024; Thiruma Valavan, 2023). This lack of explainability hampers accountability and reduces customer confidence in AI-driven services. Again, AI consists of complex programming languages that are literally tough for end users such as bank employees or customers. As a result, integration of AI into legacy banking systems presents technical difficulties, often requiring significant restructuring of existing IT infrastructure (Hentzen *et al.*, 2022; Roy *et al.*, 2025). Considering all the issues in a place, these challenges underscore that the way to AI-driven banking is neither simple nor linear. To overcome all mentioned hardles requires a combination of strong governance frameworks, regulatory simplicity, technological innovation and human AI collaboration models to ensure that AI enhances efficiency and sustainability without compromising ethical standards or financial steadiness (Mei *et al.*, 2024).

4. Opportunities to Ensure Long-Term and Sustainable Banking through AI Implementation

In cases of opportunities, the role of Machine Learning in the banking sector is remarkable to assist in different financial services with sustainable goals, helping organizations in gaining equal profitability with environment, social and governance considerations (Elhady & Shohieb, 2025). Implementing Machine Learning tools for green banking practices in financial institutions can grow fast compared with traditional banking via more inclusive and robust engagement in banking as well as in the entire economy (Rane *et al.*, 2024b). First, AI enables green finance and responsible lending by improving the identification and evaluation of environmentally sustainable projects (Hemanand *et al.*, 2022; Narayanan, 2025). Machine learning replicas can analyse vast datasets from corporate discoveries to satellite imagery to assess a borrower's environmental footprint, carbon emissions and compliance with sustainability standards (Pattnaik *et al.*, 2024). This ultimately enhances better allocation of capital toward circular economy initiatives, renewable energy, energy efficiency and thereby strengthening banks' roles in financing the low-carbon transition (Dewasiri *et al.*, 2023).

AI technologies are increasingly valuable in assessing potential risks to internal management, social and environmental factors. Backdated risk assessment methods cannot nowadays judge the potential risk in financial transactions and depend intensively on human expertise. As a result, traditional methods often fail to detect sustainable environmental risks such as resource insufficiency, climate change, or natural disasters (Aziz & Andriansyah, 2023; Tian, 2024). Machine Learning powered predictive analytics can model climate settings, stress test loan portfolios and identify

sectors that are most significant to environmental shocks (Olanrewaju, 2025). This not only strengthens financial stability but also enhances regulatory compliance with frameworks like the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD). Third, AI enhances "financial inclusion," which is a pivotal pillar of sustainable banking (Mei *et al.*, 2024). By leveraging other data sources such as mobile transactions, value payments and behavioural patterns, AI-powered credit recording systems can extend banking services to underserved populations who lack traditional credit histories (Faheem, 2021). This may promote inclusive development by empowering low-income families, women entrepreneurs and small businesses, particularly in emerging economies (Kothandapani, 2025).

The incorporation of Machine Learning into banking operations can significantly enhance operating sustainability within banks. Through smart energy management systems, process automation and adjusted resource utilization, banks can reduce their own carbon footprint and operational costs (Haleem *et al.*, 2022). For instance, ML applications can regulate energy consumption in physical branches, facilitate paperless workflows and improve digital service delivery, reducing the environmental impact of banking infrastructure (Alnaser *et al.*, 2023). In addition, Machine Learning provides opportunities to strengthen environmental, social and governmental broadcasting and transparency (Elhady & Shohieb, 2025). Natural language processing and big data analytics can mechanise the collection, confirmation, and analysis of ESG-related evidence, enabling more dependable sustainability disclosures and reducing the risk of greenwashing (Lim, 2024). These advancements not only improve stakeholder trust but also help investors and regulatory agencies make informed decisions. By leveraging its capabilities, institutions can transition from compliance-driven approaches toward proactively shaping a financial system that supports environmental stewardship, social equity and long-term economic resilience (Mohammed *et al.*, 2024).

5. METHODOLOGY

This article follows the PRISMA framework (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) to ensure reliability, transparency and rigor in identifying and analyzing the previous literature on AI applications, challenges and opportunities in the sustainable banking sector. PRISMA provides a structured approach that documents how studies are identified, screened, assessed for eligibility and finally included in the review. For instance, Fares, Wijethilake (2025) applied this approach in their systematic literature review, outlining strategic, processual and customer-centric themes and proposing an AI banking service framework. Similarly, Ndukwe and Baridam (2023) and AL-Dosari *et al.*, (2024) used thematic analysis to examine AI's role in cyber-threat intelligence, revealing a lack of research on regional applications, particularly in African banks. Lo and Farayola *et al.*, (2023) extended this method to AI-focused business models, identifying themes of effectiveness, data-driven decision formulation and customer focus, thereby illustrating the transformative yet challenging impact of AI on traditional banking strategies.

A comprehensive search was conducted across three leading databases, such as Scopus, ScienceDirect and Google Scholar, using carefully selected keywords such as "Artificial Intelligence," "Machine Learning," "Natural Language Processing," "sustainable banking," "Green Finance," "Ethical Banking" and "ESG Banking." The initial search produced 879 documents spanning the period 2016 to 2025. After removing duplicates and excluding non-English papers, conference proceedings, book chapters and incomplete drafts, 334 journal articles remained. This ensured the focus remained on peer-reviewed and high-quality publications. The remaining articles were further assessed based on inclusion criteria: (i) publication in the period from 2016 to 2025, (ii) relevance to AI applications in sustainability, ethics, or digital banking and (iii) final publication stage. At this stage, a large proportion of general AI or purely technical papers without banking or sustainability linkage were excluded. After applying the eligibility filters, 58 high-quality studies were selected for in-depth thematic analysis. These final studies provided direct insights into AI applications in sustainable banking, associated challenges and future research opportunities.

Table 1: Flowchart for Literature Selection

SPAR-4-SLR (PRISMA)	Consideration	Decision
Assembling (Identification)	Search Focus	AI Applications in Sustainable Banking Performance
	Search Keywords	Artificial Intelligent
		Machine Learning
		Natural Language Processing
		Sustainable Banking
		Green Finance
		Ethical Banking
		ESG Banking
	Search Database	Scopus, Science Direct, Google Scholar
	Search Field	Article title, Abstract and Keywords
	Search Result	879 Documents
	Search Period	2016 to 2025

SPAR-4-SLR (PRISMA)	Consideration	Decision
Arranging (Screening and	Subject Area	'Artificial Intelligence", "Sustainability", "Digital Literacy",
Eligibility)		"Ethical Issues", "Legal framework"
	Document type	'Article' 378
	Publication Stage	'Final' 369
	Source Type	'Journal' 361
	Language	'English' 334
	Developing Nation	"Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, China, Sri Lanka, etc. " 58
	Search Results	58 Documents

6. IMPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

Artificial Intelligence is no longer a minor tool in the banking sector, offering transformative applications that improve operational efficiency, creating tangible opportunities to promote environmental sustainability, reinforce threat control and endorse financial inclusion and supervisory compliance. This analysis emphasises the multi-layered applications of AI in sustainable banking, ranging from risk assessment, scam recognition and credit scoring to ESG performance nursing, green finance product development and predictive analytics for environmental and social consequences. By leveraging AI, banks can more precisely measure environmental and social risks, optimize resource allocation and support regulatory compliance while concurrently delivering value to customers and investors. For instance, AI-enabled credit scoring systems can extend financial services to unbanked populations, while predictive analytics can assimilate climate jeopardy into lending decisions, thus supporting the environmental and social dimensions of banking.

For practitioners and bank managers, the results underscore the necessity to view AI as a strategic enabler rather than just a high-tech instrument. The banking industry needs to invest money to build up AI infrastructure, talent improvement and explainable AI systems to ensure that sustainability objectives are incorporated into their digital transformation policies. For policymakers and regulators, the review emphasizes the urgency of establishing clear, forward-looking guidelines to balance innovation with ethical safeguards, particularly in areas such as data privacy, algorithmic bias and accountability. This is particularly critical for developing economies, where AI can act as a catalyst for inclusive and sustainable growth if properly regulated. For researchers and academicians, the paper delivers a structured framework that detects both the present gaps in understanding and probable future directions, such as the alignment of Artificial Intelligence with Environmental, Social and Governmental metrics and the role of human and Artificial Intelligence collaboration in sustainable banking ecosystems.

To sum up, Artificial Intelligence has the potential to redefine the forms of sustainable banking by entrenching Environmental, Social and Governance philosophies into decision-making, improving accountability and driving invention. However, realizing this potential entails addressing challenges connected to governance, ethics and execution charges. The corridor forward lies in fostering a joint ecosystem among banks, regulatory agencies, technology providers and civil society to confirm that AI adoption is both responsible and impactful. Ultimately, Artificial Intelligence should be situated not only as a tool for digital conversion but also as a foundation for building an inclusive, resilient and sustainable financial ecosystem.

7. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite these opportunities, this paper is subject to certain limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the scope of the review was restricted to publications indexed in Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar, which, although widely regarded as reliable and comprehensive, may exclude relevant research available in other databases, industry reports, or regional studies. Second, most of the existing literature on AI in sustainable banking remains conceptual or exploratory in nature, with limited empirical validation and cross-country comparative analyses. This restricts the generalizability of insights, especially when considering the diverse regulatory, cultural and technological contexts across developed and developing economies. Third, the rapidly evolving nature of AI technologies means that the findings presented here may quickly become outdated as new applications, frameworks and ethical challenges emerge. Finally, while this study categorized AI applications into thematic areas, overlaps across themes may exist, which could be further disentangled with more granular methodologies such as meta-analysis or advanced bibliometric mapping.

Building on these limitations, future research can explore several promising directions. First, future research can extend to empirical studies that quantify the impact of AI adoption on sustainable banking outcomes, such as ESG performance, financial inclusion and environmental risk management. Longitudinal and cross-country studies could shed light on how institutional, cultural and regulatory environments shape AI's role in promoting sustainability. Second, future research should examine the ethical and governance dimensions of AI in greater depth, particularly focusing on algorithmic fairness, transparency and accountability mechanisms that can align AI adoption with sustainable development goals (SDGs). Third, the intersection of AI and ESG measurement presents a rich avenue for research, where AI could be used to improve the quality, comparability and credibility of ESG reporting. Fourth, scholars should investigate the human and

AI collaboration models in banking, examining how reskilling, organizational design and employee engagement can ensure that technological adoption complements rather than displaces the workforce. Finally, interdisciplinary approaches combining insights from computer science, finance, sustainability studies and regulatory policy will be crucial to developing holistic frameworks for responsible AI adoption in banking. In summary, while this review provides a foundation for understanding the opportunities and challenges of AI in sustainable banking, there is ample scope for future research to deepen, broaden and empirically validate these insights. Addressing these gaps will not only enrich academic discourse but also guide practitioners and policymakers in leveraging AI responsibly to build a more inclusive and sustainable financial ecosystem.

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