

A REVIEW ON IDENTIFICATION & ASSESSMENT OF FOREST FIRE RISK ZONE & ITS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT USING GEOSPATIAL TECHNIQUES

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Abstract

Forest fires, as uncontrolled phenomena, present substantial ecological, environmental, and economic risks. The identification of forest fire risk zones holds pivotal importance for proactive fire management strategies. This review paper aims to comprehensively assess and spatially map forest fire risk zones while examining their consequential environmental impacts, all through the prism of geospatial techniques. The primary research objectives encompass continuous forest fire monitoring, the creation of thematic layers for in-depth risk assessment, and the critical evaluation of fire detection algorithms. Notably, the findings underscore the instrumental role of satellite imagery, with platforms like MODIS and AVHRR proving indispensable for efficient fire detection and ongoing monitoring efforts. The enhancement of accuracy through the validation of remote sensing data with on-ground observations from fire-fighting professionals is a notable outcome. Moreover, the delineation of forest fire risk zones, grounded in factors such as vegetation composition and terrain slope, is accomplished effectively through the utilization of geospatial methods. The ramifications of forest fires extend to soil properties, wherein low-intensity fires exhibit a tendency to increase soil nutrients and pH levels, while high-intensity fires result in soil degradation. As a viable solution, prescribed burning emerges as a recommended strategy to ameliorate the adverse effects on soil health. In summation, this review firmly establishes the indispensability of geospatial techniques in facilitating comprehensive forest fire risk assessment and in safeguarding the environment through informed decision-making.

Keywords: Forest fires, Geospatial techniques, Fire risk zone mapping, Fire detection algorithms, Environmental impact, Soil properties.

Introduction Forest fire, an uncontrollable inferno that engulfs wooded areas, imposes substantial tolls on vegetation, soil, and entire ecosystems. This phenomenon can be ignited by natural forces such as lightning or human activities like deliberate arson or unintentional ignition. The extensive ecological, environmental, and economic ramifications of forest fires encompass the devastation of vegetation, depletion of biodiversity, emission of greenhouse gases, erosion of soil, and destruction of infrastructure [1].

Against this backdrop, forest fire risk zones emerge as critical concepts. These zones define specific regions within forested areas that demonstrate an elevated susceptibility or likelihood of experiencing fires. Parameters like vegetation type, fuel load, weather dynamics, topography, proximity to human settlements, and historical fire occurrences dictate the demarcation of these zones [2]. Importantly, they facilitate the evaluation and prioritization of areas warranting proactive fire management strategies, spanning prevention, early detection, and effective

suppression measures [3]. The mapping and identification of these risk zones empower authorities to judiciously allocate resources, enabling the implementation of measures to curtail the occurrence and mitigate the aftermath of forest fires within these designated sectors [4].

The intricate environmental repercussions of forest fires encompass multifarious dimensions, including air quality, groundwater dynamics, soil attributes, and biodiversity. Research literature provides valuable insights into the intricate effects of forest fires on these realms [5].

Air Quality: The conflagration of forest fires releases copious volumes of smoke, particulate matter, and gases into the atmosphere. These emissions have adverse consequences for air quality, leading to respiratory ailments and reduced visibility. The combustion of organic matter during fires further gives rise to emissions of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and methane, contributing to alterations in climate [1,5].

Impact on Groundwater: Forest fires exert diverse influences on the quality and availability of groundwater. The intense heat generated during fires can trigger the combustion of organic matter within the soil, leading to the release of nutrients and potential pollutants into groundwater reservoirs. The loss of vegetation and tree cover amplifies water runoff and erosion, potentially triggering sediment deposition and causing alterations in water quality [2,6].

Consequences for Soil: The effects of forest fires on soil properties are intricate. Fires of low intensity, accompanied by ash deposition, can elevate soil pH and enhance nutrient availability. Conversely, fires of high intensity can result in extensive combustion of organic matter, causing nutrient volatilization and the disintegration of soil structure. Soil heating can detrimentally impact physical and biological attributes, ranging from diminished water infiltration and heightened soil erosion to depletion of soil microorganisms [6,7].

Alterations to Flora and Fauna: The repercussions of forest fires span immediate and enduring consequences for plant and animal communities. The direct obliteration of vegetation during fires can lead to habitat loss and displacement of wildlife. Certain plant species have adapted to fires, relying on them for seed germination, while others grapple with recovery. Changes in habitat structure and nutrient availability following fires can influence the composition and diversity of these populations [8].

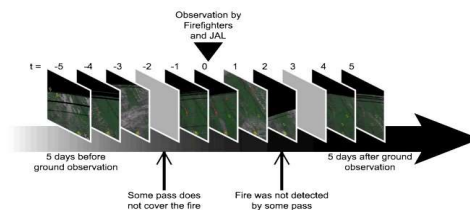
Impact on Ecosystems: Forest fires wield pivotal influence over ecosystems, bestowing both beneficial and adverse outcomes. While certain ecosystems have evolved to endure periodic fires and even derive advantages from them, the escalation in fire frequency and intensity due to climate shifts and human interventions jeopardizes biodiversity and the overall well-being of ecosystems [8]. Strategies encompassing wildfire prevention, the promotion of fire-resistant vegetation, and efficient firefighting approaches are imperative in mitigating the environmental toll of forest fires. Initiatives for post-fire ecosystem restoration and rehabilitation contribute to alleviating the protracted effects of wildfires on the environment [9].

Emergence of Detection Systems: An extensive study conducted by Panagiotis Barmpoutis, Periklis Papaioannou, Kosmas Dimitropoulos, and Nikos Grammalidis (2020) thoroughly examines and compares three categories of early fire and smoke detection systems: terrestrial, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and satellite-based systems. This article provides an in-depth analysis of the strengths and weaknesses inherent to each system type, notably highlighting the superior accuracy and rapid response time exhibited by terrestrial systems [1,5]. UAVs, propelled by technological advancements, offer broader coverage, enhanced camera resolutions, and capabilities for infrared imaging [10]. However, their operations are influenced by prevailing

weather conditions and flight duration constraints. **Identification and Assessment of Forest Fire Risk Zone using GIS discussed in previous studies**

The primary goal of this research is to utilize geospatial techniques for the identification and evaluation of forest fire risk zones along with their associated environmental implications. The study's key objectives encompass the surveillance of forest fires, the creation of maps depicting forest types and densities, as well as the development of thematic layers that encapsulate diverse parameters influencing forest fire occurrence and risk assessment. Furthermore, the research entails a comparative analysis of distinct fire detection algorithms, accompanied by a comprehensive evaluation of their efficacy.

Forest Fire Detection Based on MODIS Satellite Imagery and Comparison with Firefighters' Information" (*Koji Nakau, Masami Fukuda, Keiji Kushida, Hiroshi Hayasaka, Keiji Kimura, Hiroshi Tani. *Institute of Low Temperature Science, Hokkaido University, Japan) focuses on the validation of fire detection algorithms using satellite imagery. Through a comparison between satellite-detected pixels and reports of fires observed by local firefighters and passenger flights, the research reveals discrepancies in fire detection rates. These variations are attributed to the scale of observed fires, with firefighters proving more adept at detecting smaller incidents. The study underscores the significance of ground truth data provided by firefighters and underscores the challenges inherent in identifying small-scale forest fires using satellite imagery.



Specifically centered around MODIS satellite imagery, the study emphasizes forest fire detection and contrasts it with information sourced from firefighters. The study's abstract underscores the crucial role of early fire detection in minimizing the impacts of forest fires, particularly in remote regions. To achieve this, the study employs an advanced fire detection information system that leverages AVHRR satellite imagery and a two-dimensional histogram method algorithm for accurate forest fire detection. The validation process incorporates ground truth data obtained from local firefighters and reports furnished by JAL passenger flights [11].

Figure 1: An example of comparison of a time series of satellite imagery with a ground observation compared with a forest fire observation

The findings reveal a notable divergence in the fire detection rate between incidents reported by firefighters and those observed from passenger flights. The study highlights the influence of fire scale on this variation, showcasing firefighters' enhanced ability to identify smaller fires. The significance of accurate ground truth data, especially from firefighters, is underscored. Future research endeavours encompass an expansion of the study area and a comprehensive collection of supplementary ground truth data to further authenticate the efficacy of forest fire detection algorithms.

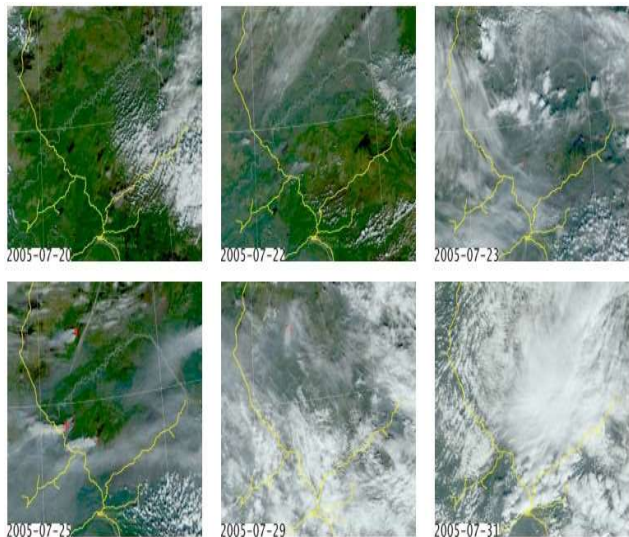


Figure 2: A series of imagery with detected hotspots of forest fires by MODIS. (Red plots correspond to hotspots, yellow line to highways. Imagery includes Fairbanks on the bottom, Coldfoot on the top and Circle on right side.

Furthermore, the study outlines its intention to incorporate MODIS satellite imagery for fire detection purposes in the state of Alaska. Through this approach, the identification of fire hotspots becomes possible. The outcomes distinctly illustrate the dynamic patterns of forest fires, depicting instances of both expansion and subsidence over time.

Overall, the study provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of fire detection algorithms using satellite imagery and the importance of ground truth data from firefighters. The findings contribute to the understanding of early fire detection strategies and highlight the challenges associated with detecting smaller-sized forest fires. The inclusion of MODIS satellite imagery adds to the comprehensive analysis of forest fire detection in different regions [11].

"Mapping Forest Fire Risk Zones Using Satellite Imagery and GIS" delves into the process of delineating forest fire risk zones by leveraging satellite imagery and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) [4]. Concentrating on the Gorna Sub watershed located in Madhya Pradesh, India, the study employs thematic layers including variables like vegetation type, slope, and proximity to human settlements and road networks to precisely demarcate these risk zones. The accuracy of the risk zone map is corroborated through a robust alignment with actual fire-affected areas, highlighting a compelling concurrence [11].

A notable emphasis is placed on the significance of establishing a forest fire risk zone map as a pivotal tool for efficient fire management. The utilization of remote sensing technology and GIS methodologies facilitates the assimilation of a diverse array of factors influencing fire occurrences, thereby enhancing the decision-making framework for fire management strategies [11].

The study is centered on the cartographic delineation of forest fire risk zones, employing satellite imagery and the capabilities of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to both preemptively address fire occurrences and mitigate potential damages. These risk zones denote regions predisposed to the ignition and rapid propagation of fires. The research's focal area is the Gorna Sub watershed located in Madhya Pradesh, India – an area recurrently plagued by forest fire incidents.

The authors harnessed satellite data, with a specific focus on a multi-hued composite image derived from the Indian Remote Sensing Satellite (IRS) 1D LISS III, for the purpose of vegetation mapping. Complementary information derived from topographic maps and on-site surveys facilitated the computation of slope gradients and encompassed features such as road networks and human settlements. The subsequent data, both thematic and topographic, underwent digitization and in-depth analysis utilizing the ARC/INFO GIS software platform.

The paper's introduction accentuates the vital role of forests in preserving ecological equilibrium, concurrently shedding light on the deleterious consequences of recurrent forest fires. Particularly in India, these fires contribute significantly to forest degradation, affecting an estimated annual average of 1.14 million hectares. Notably, most forest fires within the Indian context stem from anthropogenic activities. As a countermeasure, the creation of an elaborate forest fire risk zone map is deemed imperative, serving as a strategic tool for pre-emptive interventions to forestall and curtail fire incidents.

By assigning subjective weights to the different layers based on their sensitivity to fire or fire-inducing capability, forest fire risk zones were delineated. The authors developed a GIS-based forest fire risk model that automatically categorized the risk zones into four categories: very high, high, moderate, and low. The study revealed that nearly 30% of the study area fell under the very high and high-risk zones. The model's accuracy was validated by comparing it with actual fire-affected sites, showing strong agreement.

The study demonstrates the effectiveness of satellite remote sensing and GIS techniques in analysing and detecting forest fires. By understanding the behaviour and factors influencing fire occurrence, the authors developed a methodology for forest fire risk zone mapping. The integrated approach using satellite imagery, topographic data, and GIS proved to be a suitable model for forest fire risk assessment in India, considering the encroachment of forested land by the population.

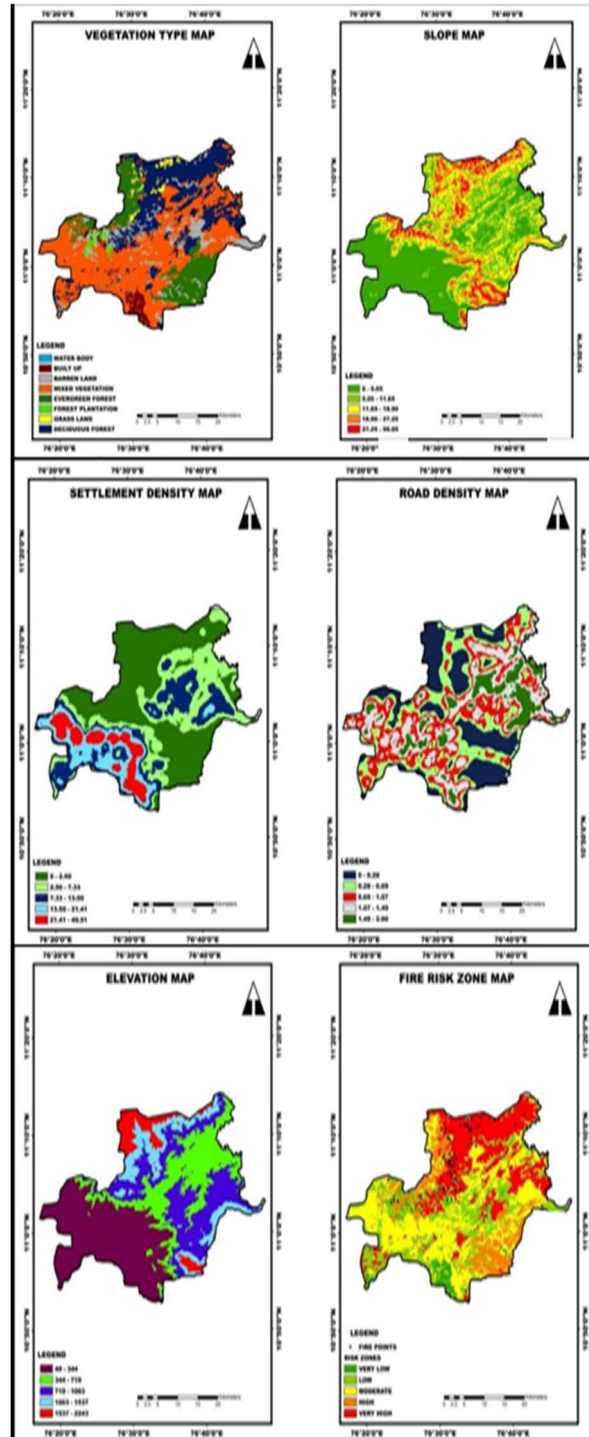
The paper also discusses the factors responsible for forest fires in the study area, including vegetation type, humidity, and proximity to settlements, and distance from roads. The methodology involved preparing vegetation type maps, assigning weights to different factors, and integrating them into a fire risk model.

The results of the study indicate that the developed model effectively captures both the likelihood of ignition and the risk of fire spreading. The incorporation of slope as a factor influencing fire spread enhances the accuracy of the model. Additionally, the research highlights that even forest areas with low risk weightings can still have a high probability of fire occurrence due to other contributing factors.

In conclusion, the research paper provides valuable insights into mapping forest fire risk zones using satellite imagery and GIS. The study offers a practical approach for assessing and managing forest fire risks, assisting forest department officials in preventing and responding to fire incidents. The developed GIS-based forest fire risk model demonstrated good agreement with actual fire-affected areas, highlighting its potential for effective fire management strategies.

"Forest Fire Risk Assessment Using Geospatial Techniques: A Study in Mannarkkad Forest Division of Palakkad District, Kerala, India" explores the assessment of forest fire risk using geospatial techniques in Mannarkkad Forest Division, Kerala, India. The study utilizes remote sensing and GIS to map fire risk zones based on factors such as vegetation type, slope, settlement density, road density, and elevation. The risk zone map is validated with fire incidence data and shows a high correlation. The study recommends the use of prescribed burning as a management tool to reduce fuel loads and prevent wildfires. The findings of the study highlight the importance of considering various factors and their spatial relationships in assessing fire risk.

The research paper focuses on assessing and mapping forest fire risk zones using geospatial techniques in the Mannarkkad Forest Division of Palakkad District, Kerala, India. Forest fires pose a significant threat to the ecological and environmental stability of a region, and the study aims to



provide valuable data for forest and disaster management departments to enhance fire risk management.

The authors employ remote sensing (RS) and Geographic Information System (GIS) techniques to delineate and map the fire risk zones. Thematic layers, including vegetation type, road networks, human settlements, and contours, were derived from satellite images and topographic maps. The Fire Risk Index (FRI) method is utilized to determine the risk zones, which are categorized into five levels ranging from "very low" to "very high." The accuracy of the prepared forest fire risk zone map is validated using fire incidence data.

Figure 3: Maps of Forest Fire affecting factors which are used for forest fire risk zone mapping along with forest fire risk zone map

The results of the study demonstrate a strong agreement between the risk zone map and actual fire-affected sites. Most fires in the Mannarkkad Forest Division are found to be of natural origin, influenced by factors such as vegetation type, slope, settlement density, road density, and elevation. The study highlights the importance of preventing forest fires in the area due to its high biodiversity and environmental significance.

The research paper acknowledges previous studies that have utilized RS and GIS techniques for forest fire risk zone mapping in different regions. The authors provide a comprehensive methodology and discuss the relevance of each factor in determining fire risk. By integrating multiple thematic layers and assigning weights and ranks, the forest fire risk zones are accurately delineated.

The study contributes to the field by providing a detailed assessment of forest fire risk in the Mannarkkad Forest Division. The risk zone map can serve as a valuable tool for forest and disaster management officials to implement effective preventive and mitigation measures. The findings emphasize the need for refined and modernized approaches in assessing and mapping forest fire risk zones using geospatial techniques.

Overall, the research paper effectively presents the methodology, results, and conclusions of the study. The integration of RS and GIS techniques provides a comprehensive understanding of forest fire risk in the study area. The findings contribute to the knowledge and practical applications of forest fire management and highlight the significance of preventive measures to safeguard the unique biodiversity and ecological balance of the Mannarkkad Forest Division.

1. Environmental Consequences:

The influence of forest fires on soil characteristics is a subject of significant importance. The paper underscores the ramifications of fire attributes, including intensity, duration, fuel load, and soil properties, on soil disturbance. Findings reveal that low-intensity fires yield short-term enhancements in soil fertility by augmenting nutrient availability and pH. In contrast, high-intensity fires induce substantial adverse effects on forest soils. Such fires cause complete organic matter combustion, resulting in the depletion of soil organic carbon and the volatilization of nutrients. Furthermore, they trigger the disintegration of soil aggregates, elevate soil bulk density, and intensify soil hydrophobicity, ultimately leading to reduced water infiltration and heightened erosion. The review accentuates the potential of prescribed burning as a management strategy to curtail fuel loads and mitigate soil disruption. Notably, prescribed burning, characterized by milder intensity and limited soil heating, offers a means to sustain soil health and mitigate adverse soil property alterations.

In summation, these research papers offer valuable insights into the identification and evaluation of forest fire risk zones and their ecological repercussions. Emphasizing the efficacy of geospatial techniques, remote sensing, and GIS in fire management and prevention, these studies contribute to the formulation of forest fire risk zone maps and sustainable forest management approaches. The incorporation of diverse factors such as vegetation type, slope, settlement density, and road density facilitates a comprehensive appraisal of fire risk, aiding informed decision-making in fire management. Additionally, the comprehensive examination of fire-induced soil property changes underscores the necessity of recognizing fire impacts on soil well-being and underscores the importance of appropriate management interventions to alleviate such effects [12].

2. Discussion Points:

The points across the given research papers are:

1. Forest fires exert significant impacts on forest ecosystems, affecting ecological, environmental, and biological aspects.
2. The timely detection of forest fires is paramount for efficient firefighting and mitigating their consequences.
3. Satellite imagery, including technologies like MODIS and AVHRR, can be harnessed for fire detection and continuous monitoring.
4. Validating fire detection algorithms is vital, with ground truth data sourced from local firefighters and relevant agencies playing a crucial role.
5. Utilizing geospatial techniques, encompassing remote sensing and GIS, enables the mapping of forest fire risk zones.
6. Factors influencing forest fire occurrence encompass vegetation type, slope, proximity to settlements, and distance from roads.
7. Forest fires induce alterations in soil properties, impacting nutrient availability, pH levels, soil organic matter, and erosion dynamics.
8. The magnitude of forest fire impacts on soil hinges on fire intensity, duration, fuel load, and inherent soil characteristics.
9. Low-intensity fires can enhance available nutrients and pH, whereas high-intensity fires may cause severe detrimental effects, including nutrient loss, soil structure degradation, heightened bulk density, and hydrophobicity.
10. Advocating prescribed burning, which involves low-intensity fires, emerges as a recommended management strategy to mitigate fuel load and curtail adverse soil impacts.
11. The creation of forest fire risk zone maps and efforts towards soil restoration emerge as pivotal components of effective forest and soil management practices.
12. Escalating risks of forest fires are attributed to global warming, elevated temperatures, and heightened instances of extreme drought.

3. Challenges and Research Gaps:

Limited Satellite Imagery Availability: A noted challenge is the scarcity of available satellite imagery, potentially impacting accurate forest fire detection and monitoring. Enhancing the frequency and extent of satellite image coverage could mitigate this challenge.

Detection of Small-Sized Fires: The study underscores the difficulty in detecting smaller forest fires, indicating a gap in existing fire detection algorithms. Enhancing algorithm sensitivity for early identification of minor fires would enable swift responses.

Technical Geo-Location Limitations: Technical factors affecting geo-location data collection can introduce errors up to 10 km in fire detection. Addressing these limitations would refine fire detection accuracy and geographical mapping.

Incomplete Fire Risk Assessment: While forest fire risk mapping considers factors like vegetation type, slope, and proximity to settlements and roads, additional elements like weather dynamics and historical fire patterns might influence risk. Incorporating a comprehensive set of variables can yield a more precise fire risk assessment.

Validation and Comparative Analysis: Current research lacks exhaustive validation and comparison of methods and outcomes. Rigorous validation protocols and comparative assessments against established techniques would bolster research reliability and applicability.

Acknowledging Uncertainties and Limitations: Inadequate discussion on method uncertainties and limitations is evident across the papers. Acknowledging uncertainties tied to data quality, model assumptions, and parameter selection fosters a comprehensive comprehension of research findings.

Spatial and Temporal Dynamics: A prevailing limitation is the narrow focus on specific spatial and temporal scopes, neglecting wider fire dynamics and soil impact patterns. Accounting for spatial heterogeneity and temporal trends enhances fire management and recovery strategies.

Comprehensive Soil Analysis: Existing fire impact studies on soil often target specific aspects, omitting holistic analysis of physical, chemical, and biological soil attributes. An encompassing analysis would offer deeper insights into fire's ecological impacts and guide soil management strategies.

Contextual Research Needs: The identified research underscores specific context requirements, such as tropical climates or diverse ecosystems. Expanding research in these contexts will address knowledge gaps and yield location-specific insights for fire detection, risk assessment, and soil rehabilitation.

Addressing these shared research gaps promises to advance understanding in forest fire detection, risk assessment, and soil impact. It also supports the formulation of effective fire management approaches and informed decision-making to mitigate ecological and environmental ramifications of forest fires [13].

4. Correlations and Interpretations:

- 1. Significance of Verified Data:** The study that contrasts satellite-identified pixels with accounts from firefighters and aerial observations underscores the crucial role of validated data, particularly from firefighting personnel. The congruence between satellite findings and on-ground observations validates the precision of fire detection algorithms, augmenting the efficiency of early fire identification [14].
- 2. Impact of Observed Fire Scale on Detection:** The research discerns a marked variance in fire detection rates between incidents reported by firefighters and those by passenger flights, ascribed to differences in the scope of observed fires. Firefighters, due to their proximity, exhibit heightened proficiency in early fire spotting compared to aerial observations. This inference underscores the necessity of incorporating fire scale considerations in the development of fire detection algorithms [15].
- 3. Alterations in Soil Properties due to Forest Fires:** The comprehensive review on forest fire impacts on soil properties elucidates the intricate relationship between fire intensity and soil

attributes. Mild-intensity fires can prompt shifts in soil composition, augmenting nutrient availability, whereas intense fires trigger adverse outcomes like nutrient loss, soil structure degradation, and depletion of soil organisms. The prescription of controlled burns with limited intensity is recommended to curtail soil heating and mitigate detrimental effects on soil ecosystems [16].

5. Directions for Future Research:

- 1.Improving fire detection algorithms:** Future research can focus on developing more accurate and sensitive fire detection algorithms, particularly for small-sized forest fires. Incorporating advanced image processing techniques and machine learning algorithms can help enhance the precision and early detection capabilities of fire detection systems.
- 2.Integration of additional variables in fire risk assessment:** Further research can explore the inclusion of additional variables, such as weather conditions, historical fire patterns, and climate change projections, in fire risk assessment models. This can provide a more comprehensive understanding of fire-prone areas and improve the effectiveness of fire management strategies.
- 3.Long-term monitoring of post-fire soil recovery:** Studying the long-term effects of forest fires on soil properties and their subsequent recovery is essential. Monitoring the regeneration of soil biota, nutrient replenishment, and soil erosion dynamics can help guide post-fire restoration efforts and contribute to sustainable forest management practices.
- 4.Evaluation of different fire management strategies:** Comparative studies evaluating the effectiveness of different fire management strategies, such as prescribed burning, fire suppression techniques, and community-based fire prevention initiatives, can provide valuable insights for developing robust fire management policies and practices. These evaluations should consider ecological, social, and economic factors to ensure a holistic approach to fire management.

I gratefully acknowledge **Integral University** for providing the **MCN Number-IU/R&D/2024-MCN0002402** for this research. I extend my sincere thanks to my friends for their unwavering support and encouragement. I would especially indebted to Dr. Amina Jafri, Dr. M. A. Khalid, and Dr. P. Kunwar for their invaluable guidance and support. Finally, I express my deepest gratitude to my parents and God for constant love and belief.

Statement and Declaration:

This study is not having any kind of financial interest and has not been funded by any organisation/ institution, this is part of the research study. This study has not been submitted in any other journal.

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