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**Topic**: Climate Variability and it's Impact on Water, Vegetation and Soil in Nainital District, Uttarakhand

**Department**: Department of Geography

**Keywords:** Climate variability; Revised universal soil loss equation model; Temperature vegetation dryness index; Random Forest model; Groundwater potential

## Findings

Climate variability has emerged as a significant stressor on ecosystems, primarily driven by increasing greenhouse gas emissions resulting from human activities like fossil fuel combustion, deforestation, and land-use changes. This study investigates the impacts of climate variability on water, vegetation, and soil in the Nainital district, Uttarakhand. The region's ecological sensitivity, characterized by its mountainous landscape, makes it highly susceptible to climate change. Recent projections indicate a substantial rise in temperature, increasing the risks of soil erosion, groundwater depletion, and vegetation degradation. Using a combination of remote sensing, geographic information systems (GIS), and machine learning algorithms, the study evaluates climatic trends, assesses groundwater and surface water resources, analyzes vegetation health, and estimates soil loss patterns. Additionally, a household survey captures local perceptions of climate variability, offering insights into the socio-economic impacts of changing environmental conditions.

The findings reveal significant shifts in rainfall and temperature patterns from 1989 to 2019. While annual rainfall showed variability, summer and monsoon seasons experienced notable increases, heightening the risk of floods and soil erosion. Future projections suggest a 54% decrease in rainfall by 2035, with a considerable increase in extreme weather events. Surface water bodies, analyzed using Normalized Difference Water Index (NDWI) and Modified NDWI, exhibited a decline in extent, indicating hydrological stress. The study also assessed groundwater potential using machine learning models, with the Multi-layer Perceptron (MLP) model providing the most accurate predictions. Sensitivity analysis highlighted rainfall, drainage density, and lineament density as major influencing factors.

Vegetation health, assessed using the Temperature Vegetation Dryness Index (TVDI), indicated increasing vegetation dryness, particularly in low-lying regions with sparse vegetation. The regression analysis demonstrated that topography significantly influenced vegetation conditions, with north-facing slopes exhibiting healthier vegetation due to lower sunlight exposure. Soil loss estimation using the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE) model classified the district into low, moderate, high, and very high soil loss zones. High soil erosion rates were primarily observed in the northern part, where steep slopes and deforestation exacerbated soil degradation. The study confirmed that variations in rainfall directly influenced soil loss, posing challenges for agricultural productivity and ecological stability.

The household survey results further revealed that 99% of respondents acknowledged climate change, with most attributing it to human activities. Concerns over declining groundwater resources, increased soil erosion, and vegetation loss were widely expressed. Respondents emphasized the need for proactive government interventions and individual actions to mitigate climate variability impacts. The study concludes with recommendations for sustainable water management, forest conservation, and climate-resilient agricultural practices. Emphasizing renewable energy adoption, community-based forest management, and ecosystem restoration can enhance the region's resilience to climate change. These findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the interactions between climate variability and natural resources, supporting policymakers and local communities in developing effective adaptation strategies.