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A Systematic Review of Big Data Analytics in Aviation Operations and Decision-Making

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About Article

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ABSTRACT

This systematic review examines the impact of Big Data Analytics (BDA) on airline operations and decision-making, with an emphasis on its applications, problems, and future prospects. The aviation sector generates massive and complicated datasets from various sources, including flight operations, maintenance logs, passenger records, and air traffic control systems. BDA allows greater operating efficiency, predictive maintenance, increased safety, and data-driven decision-making in a variety of aviation disciplines. Key applications investigated include route profitability analysis, air traffic flow optimization, supply chain resilience, and real-time monitoring via the integration of the Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Machine Learning (ML). A systematic review technique was used to maintain academic rigor. A qualitative analysis was performed on 19 peer-reviewed research chosen from over 200 papers obtained from major academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, IEEE Xplore, and ScienceDirect. The inclusion criteria were aviation-specific BDA applications published between 2010 and 2024. Thematic analysis was performed to extract insights and organize the findings into important areas of effect. The findings show that BDA adoption has tremendous benefits, but it also faces continuing challenges such as data complexity, high implementation costs, ethical concerns, and a need for qualified people. This review establishes a platform for future research and practical implementation strategies in aviation analytics.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The aviation industry generates massive volumes of data from flight operations, maintenance records, passenger systems, and air traffic control. The advent of Big Data Analytics (BDA) presents unparalleled opportunities to harness this wealth of information, driving improvements in operational efficiency, safety enhancements, and more informed decision-making processes (Dou, 2020; Ushakov *et al.*, 2022). BDA enables the efficient handling of these complex datasets, facilitating smarter strategies across various aviation functions.

This systematic review explores the transformative impact of BDA on aviation management practices. Specifically, it analyzes existing research to uncover key trends, challenges, and potential future research directions. It also addresses the unique characteristics of aviation data particularly its volume, complexity, and variability highlighting the need for customized analytical methods and the integration of BDA with advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning.

The study addresses the following research question: How has the application of Big Data Analytics impacted operational performance and strategic decision-making within the aviation industry? In addition to mapping the benefits, the review identifies persistent challenges and proposes future directions for effective implementation. It further emphasizes the critical role of human factors in the successful adoption and utilization of BDA systems in aviation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Big Data in aviation

A lot of people in academia as well as business are interested in how Big Data could change the way aviation works (Sivarajah *et al.*, 2016). Increasingly, aviation companies are using BDA solutions to improve their operations, make strategic progress, and get an edge over their competitors (Sivarajah *et al.*, 2016). This extensive use is part of a bigger trend in several fields where BDA is seen as a key enabler of data-driven decision-making (Sivarajah *et al.*, 2016). The aviation industry is in a great position to take advantage of BDA since it needs real-time information and careful preparation ahead of time (Dou, 2020). The ability to analyze huge datasets makes it possible to make more accurate predictions, better use of resources, and proactive tactics for reducing risks, all of which are important for keeping aviation safe and efficient (Dou, 2020). Big Data is seen as a vital answer to the big problems that the aviation sector has with safety and performance (Dou, 2020).

2.2. The nature of aviation data

To study aviation data, you need special analytical approaches because of its unique features. The amount of data created every day is astounding and needs a strong infrastructure for storing and analyzing it (Badea *et al.*, 2018). Because data is being created so quickly with real-time data streams from many sources, systems need to be able to handle high-throughput data processing (Badea *et al.*, 2018). Since there are so many different types of data coming from a variety of sources (aircraft sensors, air traffic control systems, weather stations, etc.), it is necessary to use advanced algorithms to combine and clean the

data (Badea *et al.*, 2018). In businesses where safety is a top priority, the truthfulness of data is very important because wrong information can have serious effects (Badea *et al.*, 2018). Lastly, the worth of these data depends on how well they can be analyzed and understood, as well as how well raw data can be turned into useful information (Badea *et al.*, 2018). The aviation sector faces both big obstacles and big potential with these five "V's" of Big Data: volume, velocity, variety, veracity, and value (Munawar *et al.*, 2020). Managing vast amounts of data is extremely hard for the aerospace industry compared to other industries (Badea *et al.*, 2018).

2.3. Applications of big data analytics in aviation

2.3.1. Enhanced route profitability and optimization

BDA is very important for making airline routes more profitable and making better use of planes (Kasturi *et al.*, 2016). Airlines learn a lot about what makes them profitable by looking at big sets of aviation data. For example, they look at things like route distance, seat availability, fuel prices, and cargo revenue (Kasturi *et al.*, 2016). These important aspects are very important for making good decisions in the aviation business (Kasturi *et al.*, 2016). Airlines may make data-driven choices on which routes to take and where to put their planes by using advanced profitability optimization models that use a variety of heuristic methodologies. This helps them make the most money and run their businesses as efficiently as possible (Kasturi *et al.*, 2016). These models work well with big data sets and give useful information that helps with better route management and resource allocation (Kasturi *et al.*, 2016).

2.3.2. Predictive maintenance: steps to take ahead of time to improve reliability

BDA is changing the way airplanes are maintained by moving the industry from reactive to proactive and predictive tactics (Liu *et al.*, 2018). Real-time data analytics make it possible to predict equipment failures more accurately, which leads to better maintenance plans and less downtime (Liu *et al.*, 2018). Digital twins are a way to make virtual copies of real-world things that change over time. This lets you keep an eye on and analyze how well an airplane is doing (Liu *et al.*, 2018). Digital twins are very important for making better decisions about airplane maintenance (Liu *et al.*, 2018). Data fusion approaches, which mix data from several sensors and sources, are very important for making predictive models more accurate and reliable (Liu *et al.*, 2018). This proactive strategy not only lowers maintenance costs by a lot, but it also makes operations more available and extends the life of aircraft parts and systems (Liu *et al.*, 2018).

2.3.3. Air traffic flow management: enhancing efficiency and safety

BDA is very important for making Air Traffic Flow Management (ATFM) better, especially in busy airspaces (Gui *et al.*, 2020). Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) and other advanced technologies give real-time information about the positions, speeds, and paths of planes (Gui *et al.*, 2020). It has been shown that a big data platform that uses distributed ADS-B ground station messages can follow and monitor planes



in real time (Gui *et al.*, 2020). Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks and other machine learning algorithms can look at this data to figure out how traffic will flow, find any problems, and make aircraft routes better (Gui *et al.*, 2020). This better understanding of the situation gives air traffic controllers the ability to make quicker and better judgments, which leads to safer and smoother air traffic flow (Gui *et al.*, 2020). Adding BDA to ATFM makes the aviation system smarter and more responsive (Gui *et al.*, 2020).

2.3.4. Enhancing supply chain resilience: managing problems and uncertainties

BDA is a key part of making the aviation industry's supply chain more resilient (Belhadi *et al.*, 2020). Real-time information about different supply chain activities is very important for keeping operations going during times of interruption, as the COVID-19 pandemic (Belhadi *et al.*, 2020). BDA gives organizations important real-time information that lets them quickly respond to problems, lower risks, and keep the flow of important goods and services (Belhadi *et al.*, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, BDA has been very important for giving real-time information about supply chain activity (Belhadi *et al.*, 2020). It is important to combine Industry 4.0 technology with BDA in order to make aviation supply chains more resilient and better able to handle unexpected events in the future (Belhadi *et al.*, 2020).

2.3.5. Utilizing the internet of things (iot) to improve operational efficiency

The combination of the Internet of Things (IoT) and Big Data analytics is changing how aviation works (Ushakov *et al.*, 2022). IoT sensors built inside planes and ground infrastructure collect huge volumes of real-time data on many operational factors, such as weather conditions, flight schedules, and maintenance needs (Ushakov *et al.*, 2022). The IoT has the power to change several industries, including aviation, where it greatly improves operating capabilities (Ushakov *et al.*, 2022). When looked at with BDA methods, these numbers give us useful information that helps the whole aviation industry make better decisions (Ushakov *et al.*, 2022). One of the best things about this is that it lets you find and fix problems before they become big ones (Ushakov *et al.*, 2022). This is especially important for keeping an eye on systems that are key to safety, such engines and fuel tanks (Ushakov *et al.*, 2022).

2.4. Challenges and limitations

BDA's implementation in aviation is faced with substantial obstacles, despite its significant potential.

2.4.1. Data complexity and integration

The complexity of aviation data is one of the primary challenges (Badea *et al.*, 2018). Information from a variety of sources frequently arrives in a variety of formats and structures, necessitating a significant amount of effort to clean and integrate (Badea *et al.*, 2018). The storage, processing, and analysis of these data are further complicated by their volume, velocity, and diversity (Badea *et al.*, 2018). It is imperative to guarantee the quality and reliability of data, as inaccuracies

can result in flawed insights and potentially jeopardize safety (Badea *et al.*, 2018; Elgendy & Elragal, 2016). In the safety-critical aviation sector, the preservation of data integrity is an absolute imperative (Elgendy & Elragal, 2016; Badea *et al.*, 2018).

2.4.2. The need for skilled professionals

Professionals who are equipped with competency in aviation operations, analytics, and data science are essential for the successful implementation of BDA (Sivarajah *et al.*, 2016). The successful implementation of BDA technology can be substantially hindered by the shortage of individuals with this specialized skill set (Sivarajah *et al.*, 2016). A supportive organizational culture that fosters data-driven decision-making is equally critical (Sivarajah *et al.*, 2016). Resistance to change within organizations may hamper implementation efforts, resulting in the underutilization of valuable data and analytical tools and the creation of additional barriers to successful integration (Sivarajah *et al.*, 2016; Shahbaz *et al.*, 2019).

2.4.3. Data security and privacy concerns

In the aviation industry, data security and privacy are major concerns (Sivarajah *et al.*, 2016; Shahbaz *et al.*, 2019). Aviation data frequently includes sensitive information regarding passengers, flight operations, and security protocols (Shahbaz *et al.*, 2019; Sivarajah *et al.*, 2016). In order to safeguard this data from unauthorized access and intrusions and to guarantee adherence to data privacy regulations, it is important to implement robust security measures (Shahbaz *et al.*, 2019; Sivarajah *et al.*, 2016). A need for meticulous examination of the ethical and legal implications of AI is further emphasized by the potential for misuse, such as security intrusions and privacy violations (Sivarajah *et al.*, 2016).

2.4.4. High implementation costs

The expenses associated with the implementation and maintenance of BDA systems can be substantial (Sivarajah *et al.*, 2016). Significant financial resources are necessary to invest in sophisticated software, hardware, and personnel (Sivarajah *et al.*, 2016). Before implementing BDA on an extensive scale, organizations must thoroughly assess the return on investment (ROI) (Sivarajah *et al.*, 2016). The high cost of implementation can serve as a major obstacle to entrance for smaller aviation companies, which could increase the disparity between larger and smaller organizations (Thirathon *et al.*, 2017). The adoption of data analytics may be challenging for smaller organizations over their larger counterparts (Thirathon *et al.*, 2017).

2.4.5. Research gaps and methodological limitations

The existing literature uses a variety of methodologies, such as systematic literature evaluations, empirical surveys, and case studies (Sivarajah *et al.*, 2016). Empirical surveys facilitate quantitative analyses (Sazu & Jahan, 2022), systematic reviews provide comprehensive overviews (Sivarajah *et al.*, 2016), and case studies offer in-depth insights (Adrian *et al.*, 2018.). However, the level of methodological rigor varies, and it is imperative to conduct more rigorous quantitative research in order to establish precise causal relationships between



the implementation of BDAs and specific aviation outcomes (Sivarajah *et al.*, 2016). There are still a number of research gaps:

i. *Long-term impact assessment*: Further investigation is needed to examine how BDA affects several aviation outcomes over the long run (Sivarajah *et al.*, 2016).

ii. *Comparative analysis of BDA techniques*: Additional research is necessary to evaluate the efficacy of various BDA techniques in specific aviation environments (Sivarajah *et al.*, 2016).

iii. *Ethics*: It is imperative to conduct research that concentrates on the ethical implications of the use of BDA in aviation, particularly in relation to algorithmic bias and data privacy (Sivarajah *et al.*, 2016).

iv. *BDA implementation in SMEs*: Research is necessary to determine which are the most effective methods for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the aviation sector to make use of BDA, considering their resource constraints (Elgendy & Elragal, 2016).

v. *The effect of BDA on organizational culture and human factors*: More research is needed on how BDA affects organizational culture and how human factors play a role in making BDA work (Thirathon *et al.*, 2017).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a systematic review technique to investigate the existing literature on the applications, problems, and future directions of Big Data Analytics (BDA) in aircraft operations and decision-making. The methodological framework is informed by widely acknowledged standards for performing systematic reviews in technology and management.

3.1. Research design

A qualitative systematic review design was used to synthesize the body of knowledge from peer-reviewed academic literature. The goal was to provide a comprehensive and well-structured understanding of how BDA is transforming aviation operations across a range of domains, including supply chain resilience, air traffic control, flight optimization, predictive maintenance, and organizational decision-making. Finding significant themes, gaps in the literature, and recent advancements relevant to the aviation industry is made simpler with this approach.

3.2. Data sources and academic databases

The following scholarly databases were searched in order to guarantee thorough and reliable coverage of the academic literature:

- Scopus
- Web of Science
- IEEE Xplore
- ScienceDirect
- SpringerLink
- Taylor & Francis Online
- Google Scholar

These databases were chosen for their comprehensive coverage of conference papers, peer-reviewed journal articles, and systematic reviews in fields such as engineering, data analytics, information systems, and aviation management.

3.3. Search strategy

To guarantee the thorough retrieval of pertinent studies, a set of keywords and Boolean operators were established. The following were among the primary search terms:

- “Big Data Analytics” AND “Aviation”
- “Predictive Maintenance” AND “Aircraft”
- “Big Data” AND “Air Traffic Management”
- “Machine Learning” AND “Aviation Decision-Making”
- “Data-Driven Decision Making” AND “Airlines”
- “IoT” AND “Aviation Systems”
- “Ethics” AND “Big Data” AND “Aviation”

To ensure the inclusion of recent research and technological advancements, searches were limited to articles published between 2010 and 2024.

3.4. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The following standards were used to ensure consistency.

3.4.1. Criteria for Inclusion

- Proceedings from conferences and peer-reviewed journal article
- Research on BDA applications unique to the aviation industry
- English-language publications that discuss the organizational, ethical, operational, or technical facets of BDA in aviation

3.4.2. Criteria for exclusion

- Theses, dissertations, and grey literature
- Studies that only briefly discuss BDA or have little bearing on aviation
- Papers that don't provide a thorough empirical, theoretical, or methodological analysis

3.5. Study selection and screening process

The initial search of the database found over 200 articles. After getting rid of duplicates, the titles and abstracts of 158 studies were examined to see how relevant they were. Then, the full texts of 79 papers were retrieved and analyzed based on the criteria for inclusion and exclusion. In the final stage of the selection and screening process, 19 high-quality publications were chosen for a thorough evaluation and synthesis. These

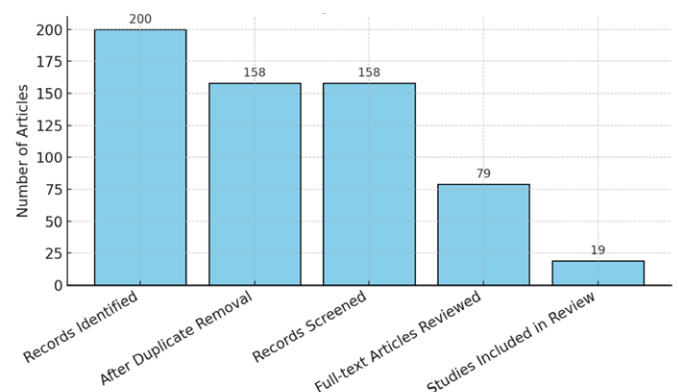


Figure 1. Article filtering based on search strategy and eligibility criteria



included systematic reviews, empirical investigations, case studies, and conceptual papers from a number of different areas of aviation.

3.6. Data extraction and analysis

To guarantee legitimacy and academic rigor, each study was evaluated using a quality rating checklist founded on factors such as:

- Authors and year of publication
- Research objectives and questions
- BDA techniques or technologies used
- Application areas (e.g., route optimization, maintenance, ATFM, etc.)
- Methodology used (e.g., case study, simulation, empirical survey)
- Key findings and conclusions
- Challenges or limitations identified
- Recommendations for future research

The extracted data were coded and thematically analyzed to identify patterns, recurring themes, contradictions, and research gaps. The themes were grouped into five core categories: (1) Operational Applications, (2) Data Characteristics and Management, (3) Human and Organizational Factors, (4) Ethical and Regulatory Issues, and (5) Emerging Trends and Technologies.

3.7. Quality assessment

To ensure credibility and academic rigor, each study was assessed using a quality appraisal checklist based on parameters such as:

- Clarity of research objectives
- Appropriateness of methodology
- Relevance to aviation and BDA
- Rigor of data analysis
- Contribution to theoretical or practical knowledge

Only publications that received at least three out of five on this checklist were included in the final synthesis.

3.8. PRISMA Framework and flow diagram

This review also followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) 2020

standards to ensure transparency and rigor throughout the review process (Page *et al.*, 2021). The PRISMA framework standardizes systematic review reporting by accurately documenting each phase of the study selection process: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion (Page *et al.*, 2021).

A PRISMA flow diagram is provided to help visualize the flow of information through these phases. This graphic illustrates the number of records retrieved through database searches, the number of duplicates removed, full-text articles evaluated for eligibility, and the total number of studies included in the qualitative synthesis. The implementation of this approach improves the review's methodological integrity and enables the replication of future research.

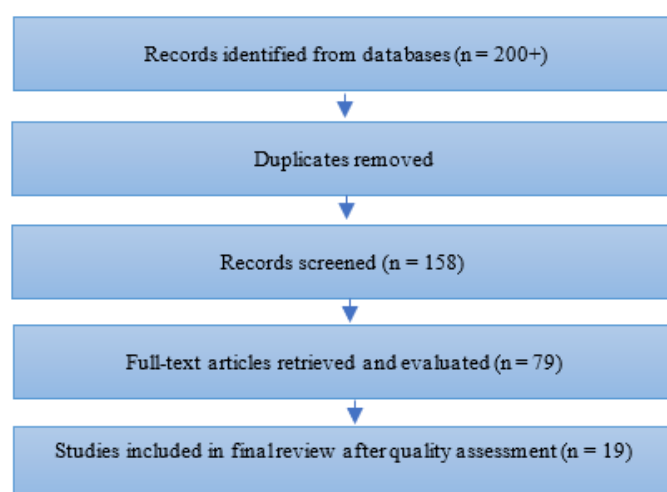


Figure 2. PRISMA flow diagram of the study selection process

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this systematic review show that Big Data Analytics (BDA) has impacted several aspects of airline operations. The 19 peer-reviewed studies assessed revealed five major subject areas: route optimization, predictive maintenance, air traffic flow management, supply chain resilience, and data-driven decision-making.

Table 1. Summary of big data analytics applications in aviation: key impacts and representative studies

Application Domain	Key Impact	Representative Study
Route Optimization	Higher route profitability and better fleet utilization	Kasturi <i>et al.</i> (2016)
Predictive Maintenance	Earlier fault detection, reduced downtime via digital twin analytics	Liu <i>et al.</i> (2018)
Air Traffic Management	Increased safety/efficiency from real time flow monitoring	Gui <i>et al.</i> (2020)
Supply Chain Resilience	Business continuity during shocks (e.g., COVID 19)	Belhadi <i>et al.</i> (2020)
IoT Integration	Real time insights, smarter operations through pervasive sensing	Ushakov <i>et al.</i> (2022)

BDA has shown useful in route profitability and optimization, allowing airlines to examine big statistics like as fuel usage, seat load factors, and flight schedules to increase efficiency and revenue creation (Kasturi *et al.*, 2016). In predictive maintenance, BDA enables the use of digital twins and real-time sensor data

to forecast equipment failures, reduce downtime, and increase aviation system lifespans (Liu *et al.*, 2018).

Real-time analytics and machine learning models improve situational awareness in air traffic flow management, hence reducing delays and increasing safety (Gui *et al.*, 2020). Similarly,



supply chain resilience has improved dramatically, particularly during disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when BDA enabled rapid response and continuity via real-time monitoring (Belhadi *et al.*, 2020).

The integration of BDA with developing technologies such as AI, ML, and IoT expands the possibilities for automation and smarter aviation systems (Papineni *et al.*, 2021; Gui *et al.*, 2020; Ushakov *et al.*, 2022). However, challenges remain, such as the complexity of integrating large amounts of heterogeneous data, a scarcity of skilled professionals, high implementation costs, and ethical concerns about data privacy and algorithmic bias (Elgendy & Elragal, 2016; Ienca & Vayena, 2020; Shivarajah *et al.*, 2016; Shahbaz *et al.*, 2019).

Overall, this assessment emphasizes BDA's strategic significance in improving decision-making, managing resources, and assuring operational safety. However, its full potential can only be achieved through investments in human capital, ethical governance, and customized technical frameworks. These findings provide a basis for researchers and practitioners working to accelerate BDA implementation in the aviation industry.

5. CONCLUSION

Big Data Analytics provides a tremendous opportunity to transform aviation operations and decision-making. The applications are varied and significant, spanning from route optimization to predictive maintenance, air traffic flow management, and supply chain resilience. However, difficulties such as data complexity, the need for qualified personnel, data security, and high implementation costs must be addressed to ensure the successful and responsible adoption of this technology. Future research should concentrate on developing more advanced and personalized BDA approaches, assuring effective human-machine integration, and comprehensively investigating the ethical and societal consequences of these powerful technologies. By proactively addressing these problems and capitalizing on new opportunities, the aviation sector can fully realize BDA's transformative potential, improving safety, efficiency, and profitability while adhering to the highest ethical standards.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future research should focus on several key areas:

- **Advanced BDA Methods tailored to aviation:** Future research should focus on building more robust and reliable BDA approaches that are tailored to the special challenges of aviation data (Papineni *et al.*, 2021). This requires establishing methods for managing the complexity, volume, velocity, and variety of aviation data while also addressing concerns about data quality, security, and privacy (Papineni *et al.*, 2021). The changing nature of the data emphasizes the use of improved methodologies in big data analytics (Papineni *et al.*, 2021).

- **Integration of BDA with emerging technologies:** BDA should be integrated with other cutting-edge technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), to improve aircraft decision-making capabilities (Gui *et al.*, 2020; Papineni *et al.*, 2021). This integration has the ability to create more advanced predictive models, optimize resource allocation, and enhance safety systems (Gui *et al.*, 2020; Papineni *et al.*,

2021). The combination of data-driven approaches with AI and ML may be very useful for addressing complicated challenges in aviation analytics (Papineni *et al.*, 2021).

- **Human-centered design for effective human-machine interaction:** Human-centered design concepts should be prioritized in the development and deployment of BDA systems (Char & Burgart, 2020). It is vital to successfully integrate BDA tools into existing workflows and teach staff to use them effectively (Char & Burgart, 2020). This requires a human-centered approach to guarantee that BDA systems are intuitive, user-friendly, and supportive, rather than replacing human decision-making (Char & Burgart, 2020). Addressing concerns about skill atrophy and ensuring enough human oversight in BDA-driven systems is critical (Char & Burgart, 2020). When applying machine learning, it is critical to consider workflow, skill atrophy, accountability, and user autonomy, all of which are ideas that are easily applied to aviation environments (Char & Burgart, 2020).

- **Addressing ethical and societal implications:** Future study should focus on the ethical and societal consequences of BDA in aviation (Ienca & Vayena, 2020; Yeung, 2016). This involves important concerns including data privacy, algorithmic bias, accountability, and openness (Ienca & Vayena, 2020; Yeung, 2016). Creating thorough ethical norms and regulatory frameworks is critical to ensuring that new technologies are utilized ethically, benefiting society while reducing potential hazards (Ienca & Vayena, 2020; Yeung, 2016). Responsible data collection and processing, particularly during public health crises, provide invaluable insights into the aviation setting (Yeung, 2016). Furthermore, the development and application of explainable AI (XAI) methodologies is critical for increasing openness and trust in BDA systems (Khosravi *et al.*, 2022).

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