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## Mapping the Research Landscape of PMU-Based Fault Detection, Classification, and Localization in Power Systems

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**Abstract:** The rising complexity of the modern power systems and the transition towards smart grids have made the development of rapid and reliable fault detection techniques a need. The Phasor Measurement Unit (PMU) has emerged as a crucial enabler for real-time monitoring and security of power networks with its capabilities to provide time-synchronized high-resolution measurements. We propose a systematic and bibliometric review of PMU-based fault detection, classification and localization algorithms in power systems for the period 2014–2023, based on a comprehensive dataset of 162 research articles. The surveyed literature is divided into five primary categories, including signal processing-based methods, model-based approaches, machine learning techniques, deep learning frameworks and hybrid intelligent methods. The extensive examination of these categories shows the transition from conventional signal processing methods to data-driven and deep learning based approaches, driven by the rising availability of PMU data. From the bibliometric data, it is clear that the number of publications has increased substantially after 2018 indicating a strong trend towards artificial intelligence based solutions. On comparing the existing approaches, it is found that the traditional methods are simple and respond quickly but are not flexible enough to be used in dynamically changing operational situations. On the other hand, machine learning and deep learning methods show more accuracy and robustness but require large data sets and computer resources. Despite considerable progress, there are still a number of hurdles, including communication delays, data quality, cybersecurity, and limited real-time deployment in practical systems. This review emphasizes significant research gaps and future initiatives such as integration of edge computing, development of cyber resilient frameworks, and use of advanced deep learning models for real-time fault analysis. The results of this study give a systematic insight into the available methodologies and represent an essential reference for researchers and practitioners in the future of PMU-based power system protection.

**Keywords:** *Phasor Measurement Unit; Fault Detection; Fault Classification; Fault Localization; Power Systems*

### 1. Introduction

The modern electric power system is undergoing a considerable transformation driven by the integration of renewable energy sources, growing load demand and the rapid development of smart grid technology. These changes have brought new operational problems, especially in maintaining system stability, reliability and security. One of the most important tasks in power system operation is the timely detection, categorization and localization of faults, since failure to do so may lead to severe

repercussions, such as equipment damage, cascading outages and large-scale blackouts [1–237].

Traditional defect detection methods are mostly focused on local measurements and protection schemes. These methods frequently have limited observability and slow response under dynamic operating situations. As power networks become more and more linked and sophisticated, there is a demand for better monitoring and protection methods that provide online system-wide information. In this regard, the PMU has been recognized as a critical enabling technology for modern power systems [24], [148]. PMUs are

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devices that offer high resolution, time synchronized measurements of voltage and current phasors utilizing Global Positioning System (GPS) signals. This enables accurate monitoring of system dynamics at geographically scattered locations.

The availability of synchronized phasor data has boosted the capability of Wide Area Monitoring, Protection and Control (WAMPAC) systems greatly. In particular, PMU-based fault detection schemes have received much interest because of their capability of fast and precise disturbance detection under wide-area situations [24], [148]. Over the past decade, various methodologies have been proposed including signal processing based approaches, model based analytical techniques and more recently, data driven approaches such as machine learning and deep learning [14], [105], [24], [63], [72], [83].

The recent literature reviewed comprehensively suggests a marked methodological shift. Early research mainly concentrated on signal processing techniques such as Fourier transform, wavelet transform and Hilbert–Huang transform, which are effective for transient analysis but limited in dealing with nonlinear and noisy situations [105], [63], [72], [88]. Later, model based approaches, such as impedance based fault location and state estimate methods, have been proposed to increase interpretability, although they are still affected by system parameter uncertainties [148], [54], [79]. Recently, the availability of large-scale PMU datasets increased, which has allowed the use of machine learning and deep learning approaches, which give more adaptability and accuracy in the tasks of fault detection and classification [14], [24], [83], [97], [118].

While research in this area is growing rapidly, the literature is still scattered, with individual studies focused on specific approaches, system configurations, or application scenarios. Moreover, although some review articles have been published, most of them focus on limited aspects, e.g., communication infrastructure, islanding detection or power quality analysis, instead of providing a comprehensive and unified framework for PMU-based fault detection [13], [14], [105], [148]. Moreover, the current advances in deep learning, hybrid approaches and real-time implementation issues have not been systematically included in the prior reviews [24], [118], [141].

Driven by these restrictions, this paper offers a systematic and bibliometric review of fault detection, classification and localization strategies based on PMU in power systems spanning the period 2014–2023, using a comprehensive dataset of 162 research papers. The research shows the progression of methodology from traditional analytical approaches to sophisticated intelligent systems and gives quantitative information on research directions and progress.

The primary contributions of this study are summarized as follows:

- Development of a comprehensive taxonomy of PMU-based fault detection techniques, including signal processing, model-based, machine learning, deep learning, and hybrid approaches
- Presentation of a bibliometric and trend analysis highlighting the evolution of research between 2014 and 2023
- A detailed comparative evaluation of different methodologies in terms of accuracy, computational complexity, and real-time applicability
- Identification of key research challenges and emerging directions, including real-time implementation, cybersecurity, and intelligent protection systems

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 shows the identification of a literature review and important research gaps in the existing PMU-based fault detection studies. Section 3 explains the research methodology including systematic literature review approach, data gathering plan and selection criteria. In Section 4, a bibliometric analysis of the selected literature is performed, including publication trends, prominent journals, keyword distributions and regional research contributions. Section 5 describes the methodological frameworks of PMU-based protection, namely signal processing, model-based, machine learning, deep learning and hybrid techniques and their comparative evaluation. Section 6 covers the evolution of methodology, performance trade-offs of techniques, practical implementation issues and upcoming research prospects. Finally, Section 7 ends the work and discusses the future research directions of PMU-based intelligent protection systems.

## 2. Literature Review and Research Gap

This section includes a comprehensive evaluation of literature on PMU-based applications for power systems, with a special focus on techniques for fault detection, classification and localization. The analysis identifies major research gaps, therefore establishing the motivation and novelty of the present study.

### 2.1 Overview of PMU-Based Fault Detection Studies

Traditional electricity systems are being transformed into highly linked, data-driven smart grids, which has dramatically raised the requirement for real-time monitoring and protection. In this context, the PMU has arisen as a key technology to provide time-synchronized high precision measurements of electrical quantities. PMUs enable dynamic observability of the grid and can be used for advanced applications like as fault detection, classification, and localization, unlike traditional SCADA systems.

In the past decade (2014–2023), research on PMU-based fault detection has been growing significantly. The early works focused on signal processing methods like Fourier transform, wavelet transform and Prony analysis to extract the fault associated features from synchrophasor data. These approaches offered fast reaction and ease of implementation but showed limits in treating noise, non-stationary signals and complicated system dynamics.

Later improvements included model-based and analytical techniques such as impedance-based fault location and state estimation methods which increased interpretability, but still suffered from system parameter uncertainties and modeling errors. With the availability of large-scale PMU datasets, the research has gradually moved towards data-driven methodologies, particularly machine learning techniques such as support vector machines and artificial neural networks. Recently deep learning approaches, such as convolutional and recurrent neural networks, have been shown to

outperform in detecting nonlinear patterns and enhancing the accuracy of fault classification.

In addition, hybrid methods that merge signal processing with artificial intelligence and optimization methods, have been attracting attention because to their greater resilience and adaptability. This development is indicative of a clear trend away from the classic deterministic methodologies towards intelligent, data-driven frameworks for problem identification in modern power systems.

### 2.2 Review of Existing Studies

Various review studies have been conducted on different areas of PMU applications, synchrophasor technology and fault detection in power systems. These studies offer useful insights, but are generally limited in scope and depth.

Several review studies have studied different elements of synchrophasor technologies and PMU applications in power systems. However, there is a major difference in terms of scope, technique and focal areas in these research. Table 1 presents a comparative summary of the most important review publications reviewed in this investigation.

Authors in [13] provide a complete study of synchrophasor communication systems, with a primary focus on communication technologies, protocols, and architectures that support Wide Area Monitoring System (WAMS). Though throughout the study, the relevance of communication infrastructure for reliable PMU operation is highlighted, the study mainly focuses on communication issues rather than fault detection approaches. In [14], the authors study PMU-based data analytics and islanding detection approaches for distribution systems. The paper categorizes islanding detection techniques into communication-based, active and passive methods and highlights the importance of data analytics. However, it is mainly concerned with islanding cases and does not offer a generic framework for problem detection and classification. A study of PMU applications in real-time grid monitoring and protection, including WAMS architecture, state estimates, and load shedding methods, is presented in [24].

**Table 1. Summary of Existing Review Studies on PMU-Based Applications**

<b>Ref. No.</b>	<b>Objective / Scope</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Key Focus Areas</b>	<b>Major Findings / Contributions</b>	<b>Research Gaps Identified</b>
13	Review of synchrophasor communication systems, technologies, standards, and WAMS applications	Literature review and classification of communication technologies and architectures	Synchrophasor Communication System (SPCS); communication technologies; IEEE standards; WAMS; network architectures	Identifies communication system as backbone of WAMS; classifies wired/wireless technologies; discusses IEEE C37.118 standards; highlights role in real-time monitoring	Limited research on SPCS; lack of practical validation; insufficient reliability analysis; limited work on optimal placement; need for co-simulation; under-explored SDN applications
14	Review of PMU-based data analytics and islanding detection in distribution systems	Literature review of islanding detection techniques and PMU data analytics methods	Islanding detection (active, passive, communication-based); PMU data analytics; WAMS; frequency and phase-based methods	Classifies islanding detection methods; integrates PMU data analytics; highlights role in real-time monitoring and grid reliability	Difficulty distinguishing islanding vs faults; threshold selection issues; high computational complexity; missing PMU data; limited real-time implementation
24	Review of PMU applications in real-time monitoring, protection, and WAMS-based systems	Systematic review of PMU applications and protection schemes	PMU; WAMS; state estimation; fault detection; load shedding; communication systems	Highlights PMU advantages in real-time monitoring; discusses WAMS architecture; enables advanced protection and load shedding schemes	Optimal PMU placement challenges; communication delays; cybersecurity issues; high cost; lack of standardization; limited real-time validation
105	Review of power quality disturbance (PQD) characterization using signal processing and pattern recognition	Classification-based review of feature extraction, selection, and classification techniques	PQ disturbances; signal processing (FT, WT, HHT); pattern recognition; machine learning; PMU-based monitoring	Provides taxonomy of PQD techniques; compares signal processing and AI-based methods; highlights transition toward intelligent approaches	Limited real-time implementation; sensitivity to noise; lack of hybrid models; insufficient PMU integration; computational complexity issues
148	Review of synchrophasor technology, PMU architecture, placement, and applications in transmission and distribution systems	Comprehensive literature review of ST architecture, standards, placement, and applications	PMU architecture; WAMS; optimal PMU placement; fault detection; state estimation; smart grid applications	Provides detailed ST architecture; classifies applications in transmission and distribution; highlights advantages over SCADA; discusses IEEE standards	Lack of scalable PMU placement solutions; communication latency; cybersecurity issues; limited AI integration; challenges in distribution systems

Although the review gives an overall picture of PMU applications, it does not provide thorough classification and comparison of fault detection methods. In [105], authors focus on power quality disturbance characterisation by employing signal processing and pattern recognition techniques. This paper includes a complete taxonomy of feature extraction, selection and classification algorithms but is limited to power quality analysis and does not provide a comprehensive overview of PMU-based fault detection and localization. Authors in [148] present a comprehensive assessment of synchrophasor technologies covering PMU architecture, optimal positioning and applications in transmission and distribution systems. The study includes a variety of applications such as monitoring, state estimation and protection, but, it does not provide a structured taxonomy or comparative analysis of defect detection techniques.

Existing review studies, in general, deal on some areas such as communication systems, islanding detection, power quality analysis or general PMU applications. None of these studies present a unified and systematic picture of the PMU-based fault detection.

### 2.3 Research Gap

Based on the critical analysis of existing review articles, many key research gaps are identified:

- **Lack of standardized taxonomy:** The literature available does not offer a complete classification structure that unifies signal processing, model-based, machine learning, deep learning, and hybrid techniques for PMU-based fault detection.
- **Limited attention on fault detection as a main theme:** A majority of the research focus on broader PMU applications (e.g., communication systems, WAMS, power quality) rather than particularly addressing fault detection, classification and location in an integrated manner.

- **Limited coverage of current developments:** current advances in machine learning and deep learning approaches, especially after 2018, are not thoroughly addressed in previous review articles.

- **Lack of bibliometric and trend analysis:** Previous studies do not provide quantitative information such as publishing trends, evolution of research, and change of methods over time. **No comparative evaluation:** There is no extensive comparison of alternative strategies in terms of accuracy, computational complexity, robustness and real-time applicability.

- **Limited explanation of practical implementation challenges:** Critical issues like as communication latency, data loss, cybersecurity threats, and real-time deployment limits are not fully discussed.

### 2.4 Contribution of the Present Study

To bridge the mentioned gaps, this work provides a comprehensive and bibliometric review of PMU based fault detection, classification and localization algorithms in power systems for the years 2014-2023. In total, 162 research publications are examined to provide:

- A detailed taxonomy of strategies for fault detection
- Trend analysis showing the transition from traditional to intelligent approaches
- Comparison of methodologies
- Determined the key obstacles and potential research directions

This paper provides a systematic and up-to-date knowledge of PMU-based fault detection systems. Therefore, it might be a valuable reference for researchers and practitioners working in the power system protection field.

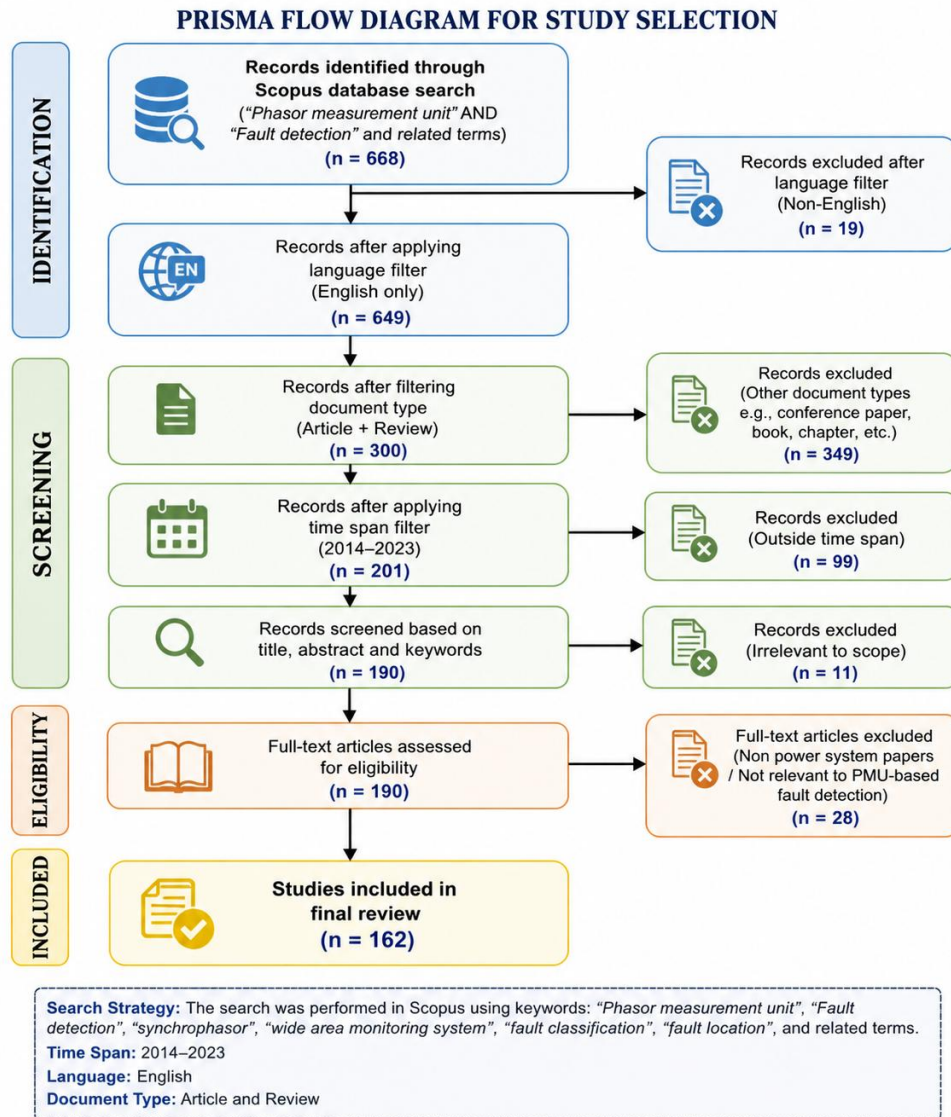


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram for Literature Screening and Selection (2014–2023)

### 3. Research Methodology

This section describes the systematic review structure, including the selection of data sources, the screening method, inclusion-exclusion criteria and the classification strategy used to analyze the 162 selected research papers.

#### 3.1 Research Design

This present work uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to conduct a complete review of the development of PMU application for power system protection in the last decade. The systematic design guarantees a visible, rigorous and reproducible technique. This technique mitigates selection bias through a systematic review process and offers a credible synthesis of methodological shifts, prevalent optimization algorithms, and

testing settings that define contemporary fault detection and location strategies.

#### 3.2 Data Source and Search Strategy

The Scopus database was selected as the major data source for the aggregation of peer-reviewed literature. It was chosen to assure high quality aggregation as it covers a large number of high-impact electrical and power engineering publications. A targeted Boolean search string was developed to cover essential technological domain. Main search phrase was: ("Phasor measurement unit" OR "PMU") AND ("Fault detection" OR "Fault location") The initial search in document titles, abstracts and author keywords revealed a preliminary total of 668 documents.

### 3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To refine the initial results into a highly relevant dataset focusing on grid safety and optimization, strong inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined:

- **Language:** Only documents written in the English language were included to maintain accuracy during qualitative analysis.
- **Document Type:** The search was strictly limited to peer-reviewed "Articles" and "Reviews." Conference proceedings, book chapters, and short surveys were excluded to uphold a high standard of validated empirical and theoretical research.
- **Timeline:** A definitive observation window from 2014 to 2023 was applied. This timeframe captures the most critical era of growth, mirroring the transition from traditional analytical models to advanced data-driven grid monitoring.
- **Scope Relevancy:** Papers that referenced PMUs but were disconnected from core protection mechanisms—such as those lacking focus on fault diagnostics or coordination—were systematically excluded.

### 3.4 Study Selection Process

The application of inclusion and exclusion criteria was done using a multi-stage filtering cascade, following the PRISMA structure as shown in Figure 1, which led to the final database used in this review:

1. **Initial Identification:** The baseline keyword search across the Scopus database returned 668 papers.
2. **Language Filter:** Applying the English-language-only restriction removed 19 non-English documents, leaving 649 papers.
3. **Document Type Filter:** Restricting the results strictly to full-length journal articles and comprehensive reviews reduced the dataset to 300 papers.

4. **Temporal Filter:** Applying the 2014–2023 publication timeline narrowed the pool to 201 papers.

5. **Primary Screening (Title/Abstract/Keyword):** A manual review of the titles, abstracts, and keywords was conducted to eliminate false positives and off-topic studies, resulting in 190 relevant papers.

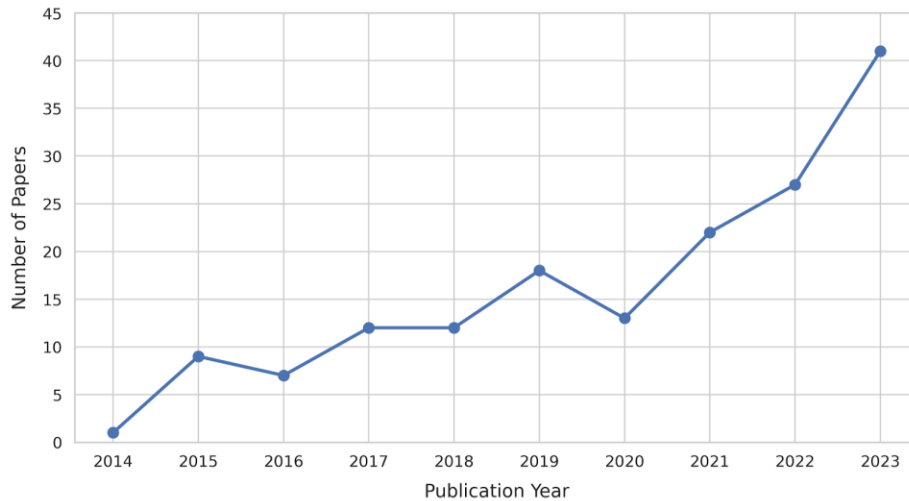
6. **Secondary Screening (Full-Text Review):** A rigorous full-text screening was performed on the remaining documents to ensure methodological alignment with core power system protection goals. This final step yielded the definitive dataset of 162 core papers.

### 3.5 Data Extraction and Classification

The selected 162 publications were assembled in a structured database for more detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis. The theme review was driven by the separation of data extraction into three major categorization vectors:

- **Bibliometric and Temporal Data:** Extraction of publication years, source journals, and authorship networks to map the chronological growth of the research.
- **Algorithmic and Methodological Classification:** Papers were categorized by their core analytical approaches. This includes tracking the utilization of advanced metaheuristic algorithms, the integration of distributed generation impacts, and the notable shift toward machine learning techniques for fault diagnosis.

Validation frameworks and coordination strategies: The studies were also categorized based on their simulation environment (e.g., MATLAB, RTDS) and specific applications in grid security, including the investigation of PMU data usage for optimizing relay coordination operating times and enhancing directional overcurrent relay performance in complex networks.



**Figure 2. Annual publication trend of PMU-based fault detection research (2014–2023).**

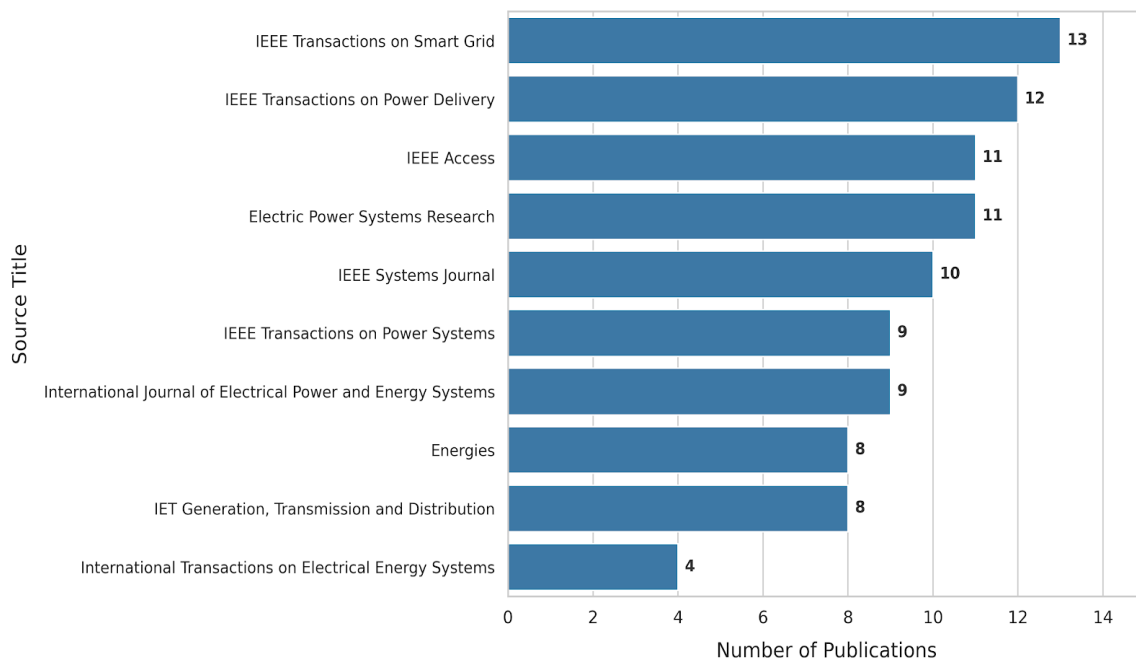
#### 4. Bibliometric Analysis

A bibliometric analysis was undertaken on the final set of 162 selected papers to map the basic landscape of the current research. This quantitative study offers critical insights into the development of the discipline, the main academic venues that influence the discourse, and the changing thematic interests of scholars over the last 10 years.

##### 4.1 Publication Trends and Growth Trajectory

The examination of the time distribution of the selected literature demonstrates a clear exponential increase of research interest in PMU-driven fault detection.

The decade started with little attention, with only one very relevant paper in 2014, as can be shown in Figure 2. However, there was a continuous increase between 2017 and 2019 reflecting the initial proliferation of Wide-Area Monitoring Systems (WAMS). The largest rise is seen in the latter three years of the data, where it rises from 13 publications in 2020 to a peak of 41 papers in 2023. This recent surge in the volume of published work is strongly associated with the increasing complexity of modern power grids, increasing penetration of distributed energy resources (DERs), and the pressing need for high-speed, data-driven protection schemes capable of dealing with bidirectional power flows.

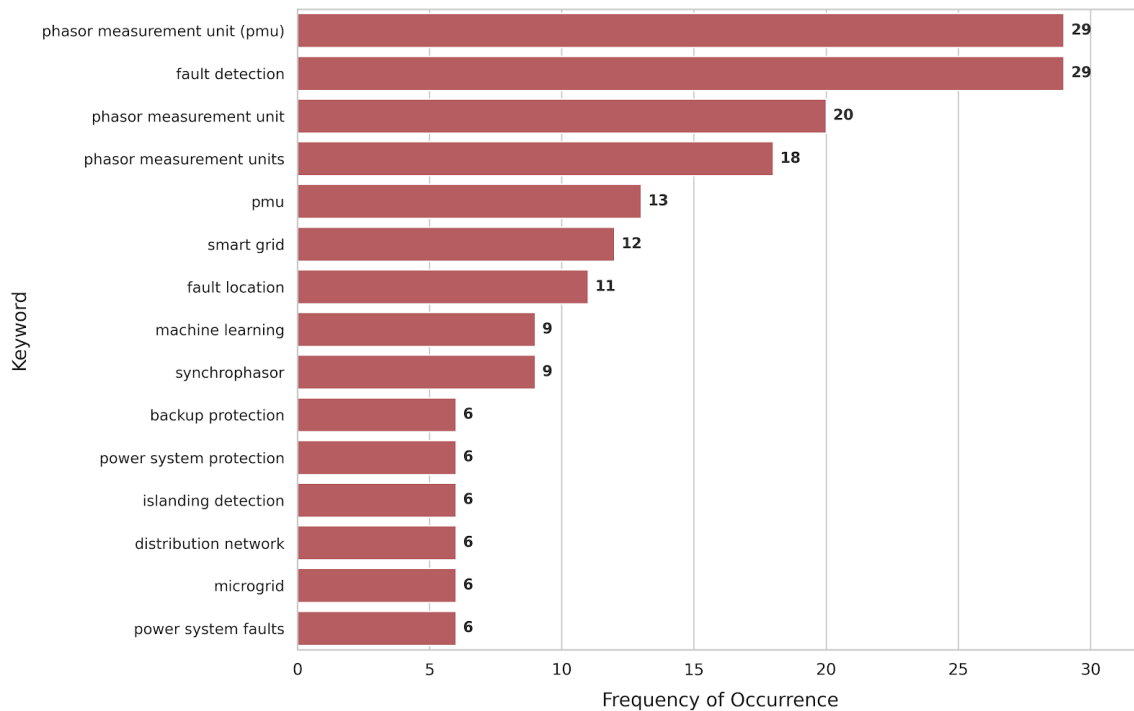


**Figure 3. Top 10 publication venues contributing to PMU-based fault detection research (2014–2023)**

## 4.2 Leading Venues and Academic Impact

Analysis of the source titles of the collected literature indicates that research on PMU-based fault detection is highly focused in top-tier, high-impact engineering publications. The main publication sites are described in Figure 3. The most influential journal is IEEE Transactions on Smart Grid (13 publications), followed by IEEE Transactions on Power Delivery (12 publications),

IEEE Access (11 publications), and Electric Power Systems Research (11 publications). The dominance of these rigorous IEEE transactions and top-quartile energy journals indicates the technological maturity of the area. This also means that the suggested fault detection algorithms and relay coordination mechanisms are being put through the wringer of peer review and validation at the highest levels.



**Figure 4. Frequency of the top 15 author keywords identified in the selected literature (2014–2023)**

## 4.3 Keyword Analysis and Thematic Focus

Naturally, the main search parameters made keywords such as “phasor measurement unit” and “fault detection” stand out. However, a look at the secondary author keywords shows the specific application fields and methodological changes driving the current study. As illustrated in Figure 4, the prevalence of secondary keywords shows three different topic pillars in the recent literature:

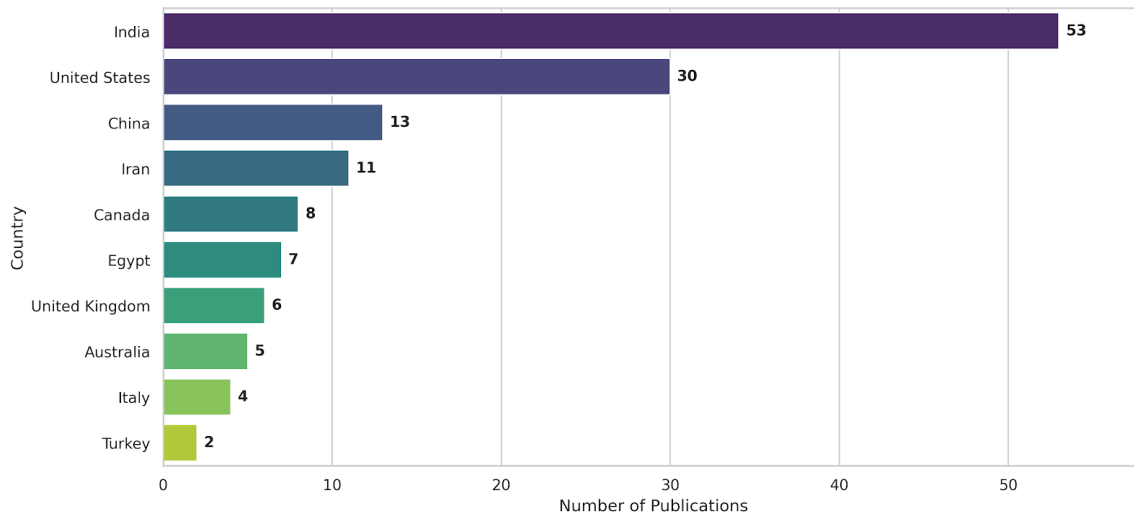
1. *Application Environments:* Keywords such as Smart Grid (12 occurrences), Distribution Network (6 occurrences), and Microgrid (6 occurrences) indicate a strong shift from traditional transmission line protection toward complex, decentralized network topologies.
2. *Protection Mechanisms:* Terms like Backup Protection (6 occurrences) and Islanding Detection (6 occurrences) reveal that PMU data is

not just being used for general monitoring, but is being actively integrated to optimize specific, critical relay coordination tasks.

3. *Algorithmic Evolution:* The prominence of Machine Learning (9 occurrences) as a leading keyword visually confirms the methodological pivot identified during the abstract screening. Researchers are increasingly moving beyond traditional metaheuristic mathematical models, leveraging artificial intelligence to process massive streams of synchrophasor data for rapid fault classification.

## 4.4 Geographical Distribution of Research

Figure 5 presents a high concentration of research in some areas of the world in terms of authors' affiliations for the 162 selected papers. Phasor Measurement Units (PMUs) are being used globally, however the intellectual output is dominated by a few significant countries:



**Figure 5. Geographical Distribution of Research (Top 10 Countries)**

- **India:** Leading the global research output, India accounts for 53 publications. This significant contribution likely stems from the country's aggressive modernization of its national grid and the integration of WAMS to manage its vast and complex electrical infrastructure.
- **United States:** Ranked second with 30 publications, the U.S. continues to be a major hub for PMU innovation, driven by early adoption of synchrophasor technology and extensive research into grid resilience and cyber-physical security.
- **China:** With 13 publications, China represents a significant force in the field, focusing on high-speed fault detection for its extensive ultra-high voltage (UHV) transmission networks.
- **Other Key Contributors:** Iran (11 papers), Canada (8 papers), and Egypt (7 papers) also show a consistent research presence, indicating that PMU-based fault detection is a priority for nations managing both expanding grids and the integration of renewable energy sources.

**Thematic Significance:** This geographical clustering indicates that the research on PMU-based fault detection is concentrated in areas experiencing particular grid issues such as large-scale geographic coverage, the shift towards smart grids, and the requirement for decentralized protection in microgrids. The data suggests that countries with a strategic interest in autonomous, high-speed grid self-healing are driving the technology conversation.

#### 4.5 Document Profile and Accessibility (Updated)

Finally, the bibliometric analysis investigates the characteristics of the publications and their availability. This assessment guarantees that the review is anchored in original empirical data and is consistent with current trends in academic publishing models.

##### 4.5.1 Distribution of Document Types

As shown in Figure 6 (left), the dataset consists almost entirely of original research:

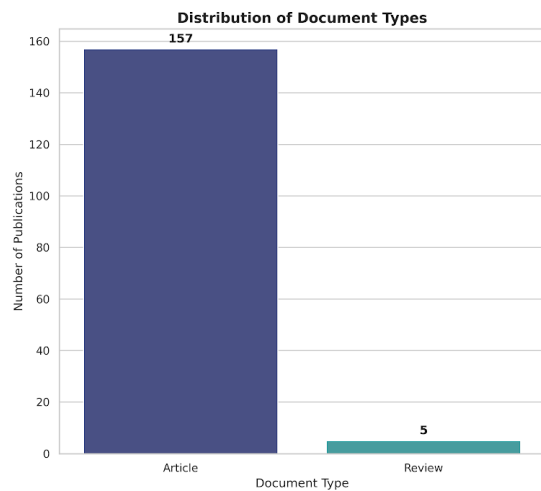
- **Articles (157 papers):** The overwhelming majority of the selected literature comprises original research articles. This ensures that the findings of this review are based on primary experimental data, novel algorithmic developments, and rigorous mathematical modeling.
- **Reviews (5 papers):** A small fraction of the dataset consists of high-level review papers. These provide valuable secondary perspectives on the overarching challenges and historical development of PMU technology.

The high article-to-review ratio suggests the active phase of the technological innovation and empirical validation in the field of PMU-based fault detection.

##### 4.5.2 Subscription vs. Open Access Trends

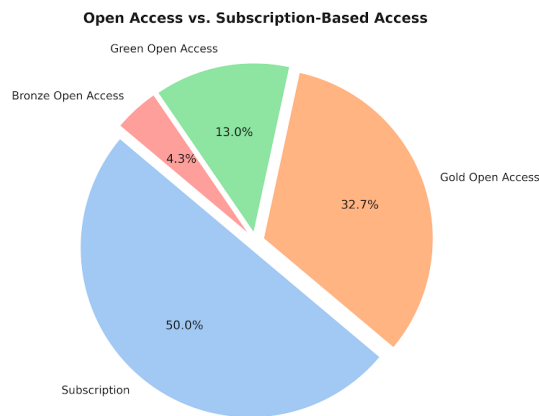
Accessibility is an important measure of research diffusion. The data shows a distinct division between open access synchrophasor research and research that is behind a paywall:

- *Subscription-Based (50.0%):* Exactly half of the identified literature (81 papers) is published under traditional subscription models. These often require institutional access or individual purchase, representing research that may not be fully accessible to all global stakeholders without specific credentials.
- *Gold Open Access (32.7%):* Approximately one-third of the papers are available via Gold Open Access, where the final version of record is immediately and permanently free to read.



- *Green Open Access (13.0%):* A notable portion is available through self-archiving in institutional or subject repositories.
- *Bronze Open Access (4.3%):* A smaller segment is made free to read on the publisher's website without a formal open license.

The fact that 50% of the literature is open access indicates a strong willingness of the power engineering community to communicate crucial developments in the field of grid protection worldwide, whilst the other 50% is behind traditional subscription walls.



**Figure 6. Distribution of document types (left) and accessibility status (right).**

## 5. Methodological Frameworks for PMU-Based Protection

This section includes a detailed classification and technical review of PMU-based defect detection techniques covering signal processing, model-based, machine learning, deep learning and hybrid techniques.

### 5.1 Overview of Classification Framework

The 162 selected research publications were carefully classified into five separate methodological frameworks based on the basic algorithmic methodology used, so as to give a structured technical review. This classification offers a clear understanding of the history of strategies for defect detection based on PMUs and allows for a comparative comparison of different methodologies.

The categories identified are [24], [105], [148]: (i) model-based methods, (ii) machine learning approaches, (iii) deep learning techniques, (iv) signal processing-based methods, and (v) hybrid

approaches. The categories reflect the trend of research shifting from traditional physics-based and mathematical models towards data-driven and intelligent frameworks. Model-based techniques (25 publications) use power system topology and physical equations to find and locate failures. They are good in interpretability but weak in adaptability under dynamic settings [148]. Machine learning techniques (19 articles) such as support vector machines and artificial neural networks use statistical learning to find patterns and get better categorization results [14]. Deep learning methods (5 publications) such as convolutional and recurrent neural network further improve the performance of defect detection by automatically extracting complicated features from large-scale PMU datasets [24].

Transient feature extraction is based on signal processing techniques (3 publications), e.g. wavelet transform and Hilbert–Huang transform, which can achieve quick responses but limited robustness in

complicated circumstances [105]. Hybrid techniques (34 publications) integrate several frameworks, leveraging the characteristics of signal

processing and artificial intelligence to provide better accuracy, robustness, and real-time applicability [14], [24].

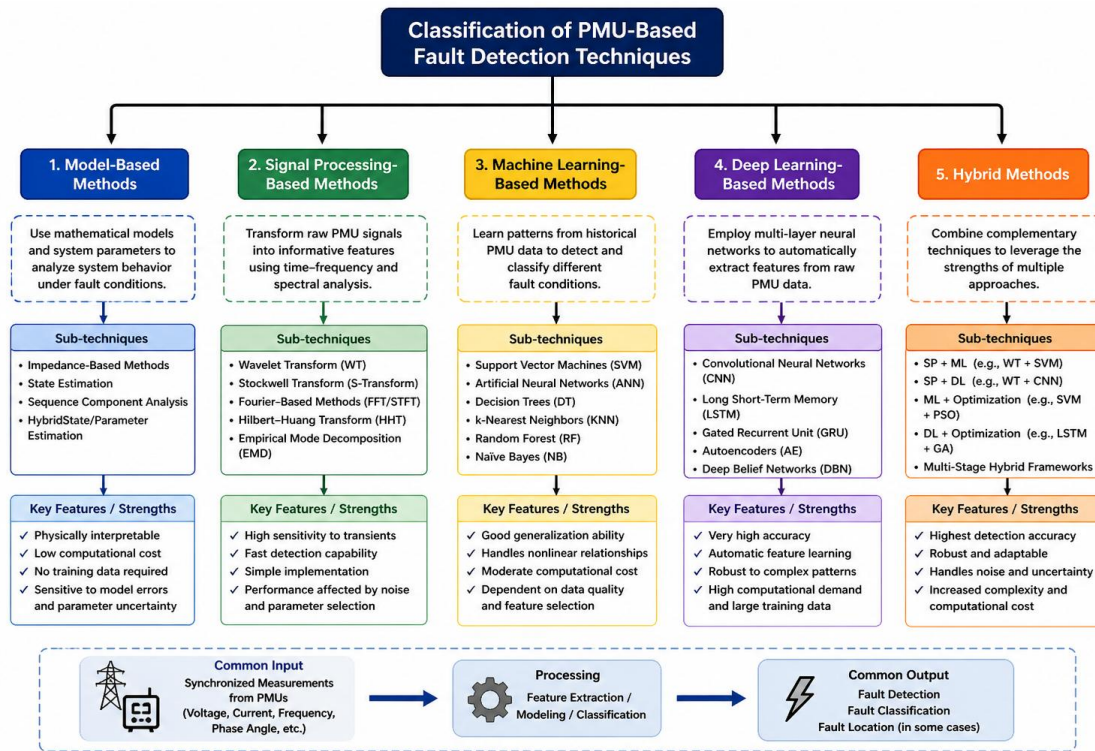


Figure 7. Classification of PMU-Based Fault Detection Techniques [1-237]

This classification shows in general a strong tendency in research towards hybrid and intelligent approaches due to the growing availability of high-resolution data from Phasor Measurement Unit (PMUs) and the improvement of computing tools [24], [148]. The taxonomy of PMU-based fault detection strategies is shown in Figure 7, where the available techniques are classified into model-based, signal processing, machine learning, deep learning and hybrid approaches.

## 5.2 Signal Processing-Based Methods

Synchrophasor data are pre-processed with signal processing (SP) algorithms that convert raw voltage and current measurements into meaningful feature vectors for defect identification [24], [105]. These methods are well adapted to treat the non-stationary nature of power system disruptions, where the properties of the signal can change rapidly with time. SP methods can identify flaws at an early stage by using transient behaviors based on the data of the PMU [105], [148].

### 5.2.1 Core Techniques

Some of the signal processing techniques generally applied for defect detection in PMUs include:

- **Wavelet Transform (WT):** Wavelet transform is generally employed for multi-resolution analysis that permits the decomposition of data into various frequency bands. This capacity is very successful for the detection of quick transient events and sudden variations related to the commencement of a defect [105], [72], [88].
- **Stockwell Transform (S-Transform):** The S-transform provides frequency-dependent resolution directly related to the Fourier spectrum. It provides better time-frequency localization and has been frequently used for assessing various fault scenarios in power systems [105], [91].
- **Fourier-based methods (FFT/STFT) :** Basic tools for harmonic analysis and steady-state phasor estimate are Fourier transform techniques such as Fast Fourier Transform (FFT) and Short-Time Fourier Transform (STFT). But the performance of their system in dynamic settings

suffers from problems like spectral leakage and fixed resolution [105], [63].

### 5.2.2 Technical Evaluation for Signal Processing Methods

Signal processing-based methods have various advantages such as computational economy and fast responsiveness. They are very effective for detection of high frequency components and accurate fault initiation time detection that is crucial for protection systems [105], [72].

But these methods also have considerable shortcomings. They are sensitive to measurement noise which may have a considerable effect on the feature extraction accuracy. Moreover, appropriate selection of parameters, e.g. analysis window size, decomposition level and transform functions, is crucial to prevent distortion of the signal [105, 88]. These difficulties degrade robustness in complex and highly dynamic contexts of power systems.

In general, signal processing techniques provide a good basis for fault identification, but their limitations have resulted in the use of data-driven and hybrid strategies in recent studies [14], [24].

### 5.3 Model-Based Methods

Model-based solutions represent the traditional backbone of power system protection, utilizing mathematical formulations and physical concepts to detect and find defects [148], [24]. These methods study the system behavior under fault scenarios by using system parameters, network topology and electrical principles. More accurate and wide-area fault analysis has been achieved by combining synchronized measurements from PMUs with model-based approaches [24], [13].

#### 5.3.1 Core Techniques

The analyzed studies in this category primarily employ impedance-based measurements and state estimation algorithms:

- *Impedance-Based Methods:* These methods estimate the apparent impedance between the measurement location and the fault point. By comparing calculated impedance values with predefined thresholds, faults can be detected and localized along transmission lines [148], [54], [79].
- *State Estimation Techniques:* State estimation approaches use PMU data to determine system states such as voltage magnitude and phase angles. Fault conditions are identified by detecting

deviations between measured and estimated system states [24], [61].

- *Sequence Component Analysis:* For fault classification and localization, positive-sequence components are typically used for balanced faults, while sequence-component analysis (positive, negative, and zero sequences) is applied for asymmetrical faults [148], [66].

### 5.3.2 Technical Evaluation

Model-based approaches have many advantages, among them strong physical interpretability as they are based on well-established electrical principles [148]. Moreover, the proposed methodologies do not require huge training data sets and may be applied to systems with limited history data.

However, their success heavily depends on the accuracy of the system parameters and the network models. Both differences in topology, parameter estimation or measurement synchronization can have a non-negligible impact on the accuracy of fault detection [24], [13]. Moreover, these approaches are less flexible to dynamic and nonlinear situations which are more widespread in modern power systems with high renewable energy penetration [148, 79].

In summary, although model-based approaches are still dependable and widely used, the limits of these methods have caused a transition to data-driven and hybrid approaches for better performance and flexibility [14], [24].

### 5.4 Machine Learning-Based Methods

ML-based techniques consider power system safety as a pattern recognition problem, in which models are trained on historical data to understand the signatures of different fault types [14], [24]. These methods can find intricate links between system variables and fault circumstances and thus improve the detection and classification performance by using synchronized measurements from PMU [24], [148].

#### 5.4.1 Dominant Architectures

The analyzed studies highlight several widely adopted ML techniques:

- *Support Vector Machines (SVM):* SVMs are extensively used for fault classification and islanding detection due to their ability to achieve high accuracy in high-dimensional feature spaces [14], [83], [97]. Their strong generalization

capability makes them suitable for distinguishing between multiple fault conditions.

- *Artificial Neural Networks (ANN)*: ANN models mimic biological neural systems and are capable of approximating nonlinear mappings between input phasor measurements and fault categories. They have been widely applied for capturing complex system behaviors [24], [76], [102].
- *Decision Trees (DT)*: Decision tree-based methods are particularly suitable for real-time applications, as they can be translated into simple “if-then” rules that are easy to interpret and validate by system operators [14], [69].

#### 5.4.2 Technical Evaluation for ML Methods

Machine learning-based approaches have the advantage of better generalization ability and effectiveness in the presence of nonlinear interactions inherent in power system dynamics [24], [83]. These methods are suitable for large scale processing of PMU data and enhance classification accuracy greatly over older methods.

However, their effectiveness depends heavily on the quality and labeling of the training dataset. Poor performance and reliability of the model can be due to inaccurate or incomplete training data [14], [97]. Furthermore, feature selection and pre-processing are still necessary processes requiring domain knowledge, and wrong handling may influence the accuracy of the model [24, 76].

In summary, machine learning approaches have boosted the capability of PMU-based fault detection systems, but their dependence on data quality has led to the development of more sophisticated deep learning and hybrid algorithms [24], [148].

#### 5.5 Deep Learning-Based Methods

Deep learning-based methods represent the state of the art in PMU-based fault detection and protection. They employ multi-layered neural architectures to automatically extract characteristics from raw data streams [24], [148]. Deep learning models, as opposed to traditional machine learning methods, do not require manual feature engineering, instead learning hierarchical representations directly from synchronized measurements received using PMU [24]. This capacity makes them particularly convenient for

dealing with complicated, nonlinear and high dimensional data in current power systems.

#### 5.5.1 Specialized Applications

Recent studies have explored several deep learning architectures for fault detection and related applications:

- *Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN)*: CNNs are widely used by transforming one-dimensional synchrophasor data into two-dimensional time-frequency representations. This enables the model to capture complex spatial patterns, making it highly effective for fault classification and emerging applications such as cyber-physical security, including detection of data-manipulation and false data injection attacks [105], [118], [126].
- *Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) Networks*: LSTM networks, a specialized form of recurrent neural networks (RNNs), are designed to process temporal sequences and retain long-term dependencies. This makes them particularly suitable for analyzing time-varying synchrophasor data and monitoring gradual system changes, such as drifting signals during slow-moving instabilities or evolving fault conditions [24], [121].

#### 5.5.2 Technical Evaluation for DL Methods

Deep learning approaches have a few benefits, namely the capacity to learn complicated features automatically from raw PMU data without the need for manual preprocessing [24], [118]. These methods provide great accuracy and robustness, particularly in detecting complex fault signatures and nonlinear system behaviors.

Yet these advantages are not without disadvantages. Deep learning models carry a substantial computational load, demanding high processing power and huge training data set [148], [126]. Furthermore, they are often not physically interpretable, which complicates the explanation of decision-making processes compared to typical model-based methods [24]. This is difficult to accomplish for important power system applications that require transparency and reliability.

In general, deep learning algorithms provide powerful tools for improved fault identification and monitoring, but their actual application needs careful consideration of the computational resources and system constraints [24], [148].

## 5.6 Hybrid Methods

Hybrid methods constitute the largest category in the analyzed dataset (36 papers), reflecting the growing emphasis on combining multiple techniques to enhance the robustness and accuracy of PMU-based fault detection systems [14], [24]. These approaches integrate the strengths of signal processing, machine learning, and optimization techniques to overcome the limitations of individual methods.

### 5.6.1 Hybrid Mechanism

Typically, hybrid techniques work via a simple two-step procedure. In the first stage, a signal processing method, for example wavelet transform or Hilbert–Huang transform, is applied to extract significant features from synchrophasor data acquired from PMUs [105], [72], [88]. These properties generally contain the energy content, frequency components and transient characteristics associated with fault episodes. In the second stage, the recovered characteristics are inputted to a machine learning based classifier such as support vector machines or fuzzy logic systems to obtain fault detection and classification [14, 83, 97]. This combination provides efficient feature extraction and accurate and adaptable decision making.

### 5.6.2 Optimization Strategies

In many hybrid techniques, metaheuristic optimization algorithms are combined further to

improve the system performance. The optimum parameters such as PMU location, feature selection and relay thresholds are selected using certain popular techniques such as Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO) and Genetic Algorithms (GA) [148], [134], [141]. These optimization solutions can increase the detection accuracy, lower the computational complexity, and provide higher flexibility under different operating situations. Besides, they are of great importance for solving practical problems, e.g. optimal placement of sensors and modifying parameters of the protective system.

### 5.6.3 Technical Evaluation for hybrid methods

Hybrid methods provide various advantages over stand-alone methods, such as increased accuracy, robustness and adaptability [24], [141]. Complementary approaches are used to deal efficiently with non-linearities, noise and complicated dynamics of the systems. Also, the use of optimization methods improves the system efficiency and performance. However, these approaches also bring more system complexity and processing overhead. Combining several strategies needs careful design and adjustment of parameters, which can limit the real-time implementation in large-scale systems [148], [134]. In general, hybrid approaches are a promising avenue for PMU-based fault detection since they can balance the strengths of traditional and data-driven approaches while addressing their particular shortcomings [14], [24].

**Table 2. Comparative Analysis of PMU-Based Fault Detection Techniques**

Methodology	Accuracy	Processing Speed	Real-Time Feasibility	Complexity
Model-Based	Moderate	High	Excellent	Low
Signal Processing	High (Transients)	High	Good	Moderate
Machine Learning	High	Moderate	Good	Moderate
Deep Learning	Very High	Low	Moderate	High
Hybrid Methods	Highest	Moderate	Excellent	High

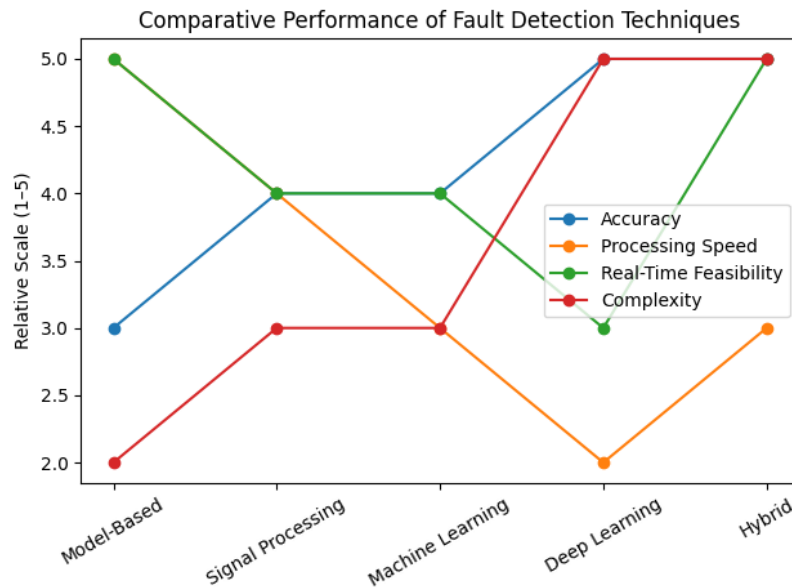
## 5.7 Comparative Analysis of Methodologies

A comparison of the performance of different PMU-based fault detection systems is presented to evaluate their performance taking into account some important factors including accuracy, processing speed, real-time feasibility, and

computational complexity [24], [148]. The summary of this comparison is shown in Table 2. Figure 8 shows visual comparison of accuracy, processing speed, real-time feasibility and computational complexity of several defect detection approaches. Table 2 shows that each category of fault detection techniques has its own advantages and disadvantages. Model-based

approaches are of good real-time practicality and low computing cost which are ideal for practical deployment, but their accuracy is limited in dynamic settings [148], [24]. Signal processing

approaches provide good accuracy for transient detection and fast reaction, but the performance is subject to noise and parameter selection [105], [72].



**Figure 8. Comparative Performance of PMU-Based Fault Detection Techniques**

Machine learning methods increase the classification accuracy and adaptability but they need modest processing time and depend on the data quality [14], [83]. Deep learning based approaches can attain the best accuracy by capturing complicated nonlinear patterns, however the high computing requirements of deep learning approaches limit their use in real-time in large-scale systems [24], [126]. Hybrid methods that combine the advantages of numerous approaches and reach the maximum accuracy and good real-time feasibility [14], [24], [141] are the best overall performance. They are more sophisticated, but they are the most promising approach for future PMU-based fault detection systems.

## 6. Discussion

A comprehensive review of 162 research articles demonstrates a clear progression of PMU-based fault detection systems from traditional analytical approaches to more sophisticated data-driven and hybrid schemes. The rising complexity of modern power systems, the widespread installation of PMUs and the increasing availability of high-resolution synchrophasor data [24], [148] are the main reasons for this trend.

### 6.1 Evolution of Methodologies

The results show that the early studies (2014-2017) were dominated by signal processing and model-based methods that provided fast response and ease of implementation but were limited in dealing with nonlinearities and uncertainties [105], [148]. However, with the evolution of power systems towards more dynamic and distributed architectures these traditional methodologies were insufficient to capture complex fault patterns. Since 2018, there is a clear shift towards the use of machine learning and deep learning techniques, as can be seen in the growth trends of the publications. The machine learning techniques raised classification accuracy and flexibility by using the historical PMU data. The deep learning techniques advanced the performance further by autonomous feature extraction and nonlinear modeling capabilities [24], [14]. This change signifies a paradigm shift from deterministic models to data-driven intelligence in power system protection.

### 6.2 Performance Trade-offs Across Techniques

The comparative analysis presented in Section 5.7 demonstrates that no single methodology satisfies all performance requirements simultaneously. Model based methods still have advantages in terms of interpretability and real-time practicality which makes them appropriate for actual

deployment in conventional systems [148]. However, their performance is limited due to the need of accurate system parameters, especially under uncertain and fast time-varying settings.

Signal processing approaches are highly sensitive to transitory events and have quick detection, but are highly impacted by noise and parameter adjustment [105]. Machine learning algorithms provide better generalization and classification accuracy but their performance is highly dependent on the availability of quality labeled datasets [14].

Deep learning approaches offer the best accuracy in defect identification and classification because of their ability to capture complicated nonlinear interactions. However, their high computing costs and lack of interpretability are problems for real-time implementation and operator trust [24], [148]. The hybrid approaches, which incorporate signal processing, machine learning and optimization methodologies, show the most balanced performance, achieving high accuracy, resilience and real-time feasibility [14], [24].

### 6.3 Practical Implementation Challenges

Despite the huge progress, the application of PMU-based fault detection systems in practical power systems is limited due to many obstacles. One of the primary concerns is the communication latency and data loss, which affect the reliability of Wide Area Monitoring Systems (WAMS) [13], [24]. In addition, model-based and data-driven methods might be affected by synchronization issues and missing data. Another big concern is cyber security since the PMU-based systems are susceptible to cyber physical attacks such as fake data injection which may affect the accuracy of fault detection [24], [148]. Moreover, the application of sophisticated machine learning and deep learning algorithms to present protection systems requires significant computing power and infrastructure changes.

Further, the application of these techniques in practice is inhibited by the lack of defined frameworks regarding the location of PMUs, data handling and real-time processing. These problems underscore the gap between theoretical progress and practical application.

### 6.4 Emerging Research Directions

The review of the chosen literature suggests that the research on PMU-based fault detection is

progressing fast in the direction of intelligent, adaptive and real-time protection schemes. Several prospective research directions stemming from the identified research gaps and recent technological advancements can guide future progress. One of the most important new topics is the integration of edge computing and distributed intelligence into PMU-based protection systems. Edge-based designs allow processing of synchrophasor data closer to the measurement source, therefore considerably reducing communication latency, bandwidth needs and computational overhead, and enabling speedier real-time fault detection in large-scale smart grids. Another promising research avenue is the development of cyber-resilient and safe protection mechanisms. With an increasing number of networked PMU-based WAMS, the susceptibility to cyber-physical risks such as fake data injection attacks, communication failures and synchronization issues is also increased. Hence, future study should emphasize on secure communication protocols, anomaly detection schemes, and resilient fault diagnosis systems.

Recent advances in deep learning and cognitive analytics also provide great prospects for improving the performance of defect detection. Hybrid CNN-LSTM architectures, transformer-based models, and attention mechanisms have demonstrated great potential in modeling complicated spatial and temporal interactions in synchrophasor data. Moreover, the application of Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) approaches can improve the model interpretability and boost the trust of the operator in the AI-driven protection systems. The increasing penetration of renewable energy sources and distributed generation also forces to design adaptive and self-learning protection systems, which can react dynamically to the continuously changing operational conditions. Future intelligent protection schemes are projected to use online learning, predictive analytics and autonomous decision making skills to enhance grid resilience and operational flexibility. Moreover, the integration of digital twin technology, real-time simulation platforms, and cloud-assisted monitoring frameworks may present novel prospects for predictive fault diagnosis and proactive grid management. These technologies can be used for continuous monitoring of the system, virtual testing, and intelligent coordination of protection devices.

Finally, further study is necessary in the fields of standards, interoperability and practical application. To enable large-scale real-world deployment of PMU-based intelligent protection systems, challenges such as optimal PMU location, synchronization reliability, communication infrastructure, and hardware deployment limits need to be addressed.

## 7. Conclusion

This report provides an extensive systematic and bibliometric overview of PMU-based strategies for fault detection, classification and localization in power systems from 2014 to 2023 based on an in-depth examination of 162 academic articles. The study presented a systematic taxonomy of existing methodologies, classifying them into signal processing-based methods, model-based approaches, machine learning techniques, deep learning frameworks, and hybrid methods. This classification provides a comprehensive view on the development of the defect detection techniques in modern power systems.

The results show a significant shift from conventional analytical and signal processing methods towards data-driven and intelligent procedures, due to the increased availability of high-resolution synchrophasor data and the advances in computer technologies. Traditional approaches are still valuable because of their simplicity, interpretability and applicability in real-time, however, it suffers from the limits of non-linearity and dynamic grid conditions. On the contrary, machine learning and deep learning approaches are more accurate and flexible but require huge datasets, computational resources, and robust training frameworks. The comparative research reveals that the hybrid methods are the most promising answer, integrating the qualities of numerous methodologies, and attaining enhanced accuracy, resilience and real-time feasibility. However, their rising complexity and implementation issues demonstrate the need for streamlined and scalable frameworks for real application.

This is a great progress, but some key issues remain. These are communication delay, data quality problems, cybersecurity concerns, and lack of defined frameworks for PMU deployment and data processing. Moreover, the gap between

theoretical study and practical application is a big concern especially in large scale and highly dynamic power systems. In summary, this work gives a detailed and systematic knowledge of the methodologies for PMU-based fault detection and illustrates the current transition to intelligent and adaptive protection systems. The insights offered in this paper serve as a significant reference for researchers and practitioners developing next-generation smart grid protection systems.

## Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools

The authors used AI-assisted technology only for language refinement and grammatical correction during manuscript preparation. All scientific content, interpretations, and conclusions are the sole responsibility of the authors.

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