FMDB ***Transactions on Sustainable Intelligent Networks***

IoT-Based Real-Time Air and Water Quality Monitoring System Using ESP 32 and ThingSpeak

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Abstract: Being conscious of the environment is more important than ever in the modern, fast-paced world. In most cases, centralised systems are the ones that inform us about the safety of our surroundings; yet, clean air and Water are essential for a healthy life. To bridge that gap, the ESP32 microcontroller is utilized to develop a real-time monitoring system that is straightforward, low-cost, and uncomplicated. The system utilizes sensors for measuring air quality, including the MQ2, MQ7, and MQ135; water quality sensors, such as those for turbidity and pH, are also employed. The ESP32 collects data from these sensors and sends it to a local web dashboard for real-time viewing. Additionally, it sends the data to ThingSpeak for cloud-based monitoring. Through the use of your mobile device or computer, this technology provides instantaneous information on indoor air pollution, drinking water contamination, and environmental changes occurring in local water bodies. In addition to number interpretation, we also provide fundamental interpretation, such as determining whether the readings are safe or indicate cause for alarm. Environmental sensing should be simplified to make it more accessible to everyone. In settings where the cleanliness of the air and Water is of utmost importance, such as households, farms, small enterprises, and schools, this method is effective.

Keywords: Internet of Things; ThingSpeak; PH Sensors; Environmental Monitoring; Highly Accurate; Detecting Smoke; Harmful Gases; Water Turbidity; PH levels; Web Dashboard.

Received on: 28/08/2024, **Revised on:** 07/11/2024, **Accepted on:** 15/12/2024, **Published on:** 07/03/2025

Journal Homepage: https://www.fmdbpub.com/user/journals/details/FTSIN

DOI: https://doi.org/10.69888/FTSIN.2025.000369

Cite as: P. Srinivasan, J. J. Fredlin, M. S. Subramanian, and R. A. Shankar, "IoT-Based Real-Time Air and Water Quality Monitoring System Using ESP 32 and ThingSpeak," *FMDB Transactions on Sustainable Intelligent Networks*., vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 49–58, 2025.

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the world has experienced unprecedented industrial growth, urban development, and a significant increase in population. While these advancements have significantly contributed to global economic progress and improved living standards, they have also brought with them a host of environmental challenges. One of the most pressing issues is the increasing level of pollution, particularly in the air we breathe and the Water we consume. This growing concern about environmental degradation has extended beyond the purview of governments and large organisations and now resonates with the general public. People are becoming more aware of the long-term health and ecological consequences of polluted air and

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contaminated Water [1]. Traditionally, the monitoring of air and water quality has relied on sophisticated and costly systems operated by environmental monitoring agencies.

These setups, although highly accurate, are typically confined to specific locations and are not easily accessible to ordinary citizens. As a result, many communities remain unaware of potential environmental hazards until they experience health complications or observe visible signs of pollution. This lag in detection underscores the need for a more inclusive, accessible, and real-time solution to environmental monitoring. With recent technological advancements, particularly in the field of the Internet of Things (IoT), there is now a promising opportunity to revolutionise how we monitor environmental conditions. IoT facilitates seamless communication between sensors and devices via the internet, enabling the collection, transmission, and analysis of real-time data. This paper leverages the power of IoT by proposing the development of a cost-effective, real-time air and water quality monitoring system using readily available sensors and an ESP32 microcontroller [2].

The ESP32, a compact yet powerful microcontroller with built-in Wi-Fi capabilities, serves as the central unit of the system. It is connected to various sensors capable of detecting smoke, harmful gases, water turbidity, and pH levels. The data collected by these sensors is not only displayed on a local web interface but also uploaded to the ThingSpeak cloud platform, where it can be monitored and analysed remotely. This setup allows users to access environmental data in real-time, empowering individuals and communities to make informed decisions regarding their environment. Ultimately, the proposed system represents a scalable and user-friendly approach to environmental monitoring that bridges the gap between advanced technology and everyday accessibility [3]; [4].

- To build a simple and affordable system that can keep track of both air and water quality in real time, using easily available sensors.
- To help people understand their surroundings, we present data clearly and understandably, so they can see if the air is safe to breathe or if the Water they use is clean.
- To raise awareness about pollution at the local level, so even regular folks without a technical background can understand when something’s not right and maybe do something about it.
- To experiment with how IoT can be used not just for convenience, but for environmental monitoring that could help prevent health risks.
- To create a project that could be expanded or improved in the future, like maybe adding alerts, logging historical data, or even applying machine learning to predict issues before they happen [5].

2. Literature Survey

With the growing emphasis on environmental protection, numerous researchers have explored IoT-based solutions for real-time monitoring of air and water quality. These studies have laid the groundwork for low-cost, scalable, and remotely operated environmental monitoring systems. The reviewed literature highlights the evolution of such systems in terms of sensor selection, data communication techniques, geographical applicability, and user interfacing. Gupta and Jain [11] in their work, “IoT-Based Air Pollution Monitoring System,” utilized the MQ135 gas sensor with a NodeMCU microcontroller to detect common air pollutants. The data was transmitted over Wi-Fi and uploaded to a cloud platform, enabling users to remotely monitor air quality levels [6]. This system effectively demonstrated the practicality of low-cost IoT devices in urban environments, particularly for real-time tracking of gaseous pollution. Bose and Roy [12] developed a “Real-Time Water Quality Monitoring Using IoT” system using pH, turbidity, and TDS sensors.

The collected data was sent to the ThingSpeak cloud platform. This setup proved especially beneficial in rural and remote areas by offering early contamination detection, which is crucial for preventing waterborne diseases. Jadhav and Singh [6] in their study titled “Design and Implementation of Smart Air and Water Monitoring System using IoT,” combined both air and water sensors in a unified system. Unlike others, they opted for GSM modules for data transmission, making it suitable for regions with poor or no internet connectivity, which showcases their adaptability in challenging environments. Jadhav and Singh [6] focused on particulate matter in their paper “Air Pollution Monitoring System Using IoT.” Using PM2.5 and PM10 laser dust sensors, the system provided real-time data on airborne particles. This setup aimed to improve public awareness and inform health advisories in heavily polluted urban areas [7]; [8].

In “IoT-Based Industrial Wastewater Monitoring System,” Kumar and Aggarwal [3] tackled pollution caused by industrial effluents. Their system monitored pH and turbidity, issuing alerts when thresholds were crossed. This approach aligns with environmental regulations and can help industries maintain compliance while minimizing environmental damage. Sharma and Sinha [1] introduced a system titled “Smart Air Quality Monitoring Using Blynk IoT Platform.” By using DHT11 and MQ135 sensors, their device monitored temperature, humidity, and gas levels, sending real-time updates to a mobile app. Notifications were pushed to users when air quality dropped below safe levels, thereby enhancing public engagement and response [9]; [10]. Bandyopadhyay and Pal [9] expanded the scope with a “Multi-Node Environmental Monitoring System Using IoT.” Their distributed network of sensor nodes covered different zones, capturing air and water parameters and feeding them to a central server. This system provided a comprehensive environmental overview and could be scaled for regional monitoring. Patel and Desai [2] proposed a "LoRa-Based IoT System for Rural Environmental Monitoring." LoRa technology enables long-range, low-power communication, making it suitable for remote agriculture and rural areas with poor connectivity.

This system enhanced environmental surveillance, where conventional technologies faltered. Bose and Roy [12] emphasised user experience in "Smart Environmental Monitoring Dashboard with IoT Integration." They developed a web-based dashboard that shows real-time and historical data through intuitive visualizations, making environmental monitoring accessible and understandable for non-technical users [11]. Finally, Iqbal and Ansari focused on sustainability in their work, "Solar Powered IoT Device for Remote Environmental Monitoring." Their solar-powered device functioned autonomously for extended periods, demonstrating the viability of green technologies in off-grid applications [12]. These studies collectively demonstrate a shift toward integrated, user-friendly, and resource-efficient environmental monitoring systems using IoT. Each contributes unique insights into improving sensor integration, connectivity, usability, and sustainability, which are critical for the next generation of smart environmental solutions [13]; [14].

3. Methodology

The proposed system involves designing and implementing a system that continuously monitors air and water quality using IoT sensors, and then displays the data both locally and online, allowing anyone to access it in real-time. Here is the step-by-step procedure for operating the hardware.

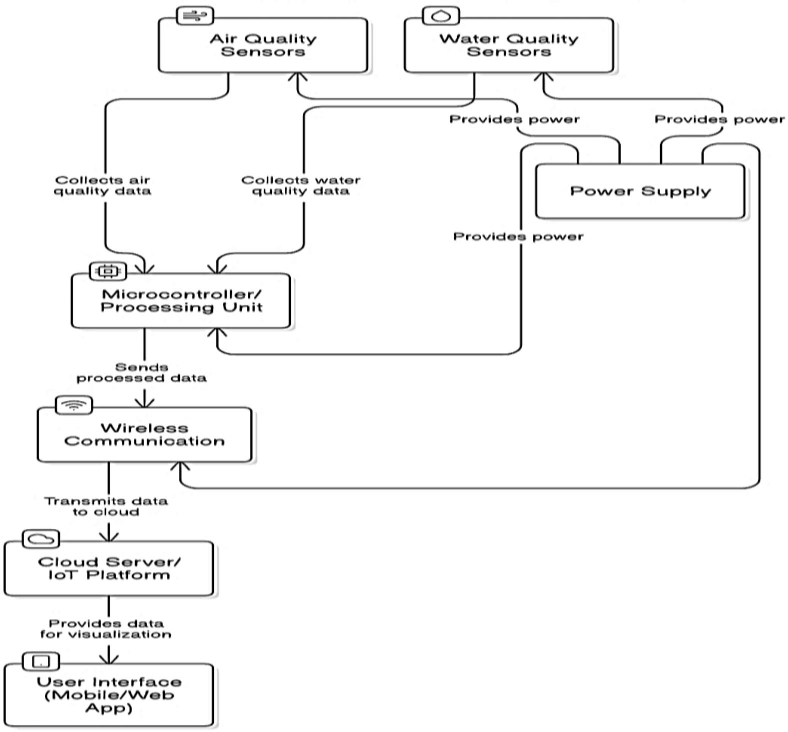

Figure 1: Block diagram of the air and water quality monitoring system

Setting up the sensors: We began by connecting key sensors to our ESP32 board, including the MQ2, MQ7, and MQ135 for gas and air quality checks, as well as sensors for turbidity and pH to monitor water quality. Each sensor is connected to an analogue pin on the ESP32, and it constantly feeds in values based on the environment.

Programming the ESP32: We wrote the code using Arduino IDE. It reads data from all the sensors, processes it, and then performs two actions: it serves a basic webpage (hosted on the ESP32 itself) that displays real-time readings when connected to the same Wi-Fi. It also sends the readings to ThingSpeak, a cloud platform that logs the data and plots graphs over time.

Connecting to Wi-Fi: As soon as the system powers on, the ESP32 connects to the Wi-Fi network we've hardcoded in the code. This is important because without Wi-Fi, it can't send anything to the cloud or host the web dashboard.

Visualising the data: The local dashboard is a simple HTML page that refreshes every few seconds. It displays values such as smoke levels, CO concentration, water turbidity, and pH in a clear format. At the same time, ThingSpeak shows real-time plots of each parameter so you can track changes over time — which is especially useful for long-term analysis.

Machine Learning Integration (Optional): Although we've put this part on hold for now, we had plans to collect historical data from the sensors, train a model (possibly using Random Forest or a similar algorithm), and utilize that model to detect anomalies or predict potential pollution spikes. This could later be run on a server or through an HTTP API and even integrated into the ESP32's logic 10.

Alerts and Interpretation: In future versions, we plan to add thresholds and simple messages, such as "Air Quality: Unsafe" or "Water pH: Normal," directly on the dashboard. This helps users understand the values without needing to interpret the raw numbers. That's the overall flow: it starts with sensor input, processes through ESP32, displays locally via Wi-Fi, and logs everything to the cloud for remote access and analysis. Simple in structure but pretty effective for real-world monitoring. The block diagram of the proposed system is illustrated in Figure 1.

3.1. Working of circuit diagram

The system integrates several sensors capable of detecting gases, air pollution, water turbidity, and even pH levels in Water. Each sensor serves a different purpose: the MQ2 detects smoke, the MQ135 monitors general air quality, the MQ7 detects carbon monoxide, and the turbidity sensor assesses water clarity or turbidity. We also included a sensor to track the pH level, indicating whether the Water is basic or acidic. The prototype utilizes an ESP32 microcontroller, which is connected to all the sensors. The ESP32 converts the analogue signal provided by the sensors into digital readings that we can understand. In the code, we incorporated logic to filter out abrupt spikes and smooth the data.

Once the sensor reads the data, the ESP32 sends the information to two locations. First, it displays live values on a local web dashboard that can be accessed via a browser on the same Wi-Fi network. Second, it transmits this data to ThingSpeak, a cloud-based storage and visualisation tool. This way, ThingSpeak enables us to view real-time updates and trends, even when we are not physically near the device. It also provides us with a history of changes in air and water quality, which is beneficial for research purposes. With sustainable power, the system continuously collects air and water quality data using sensors, processes the data with the ESP32, displays it locally, and logs it to the cloud. It is small, portable, and offers a comprehensive overview of environmental conditions. The circuit diagram of the proposed system is illustrated in Figure 2.

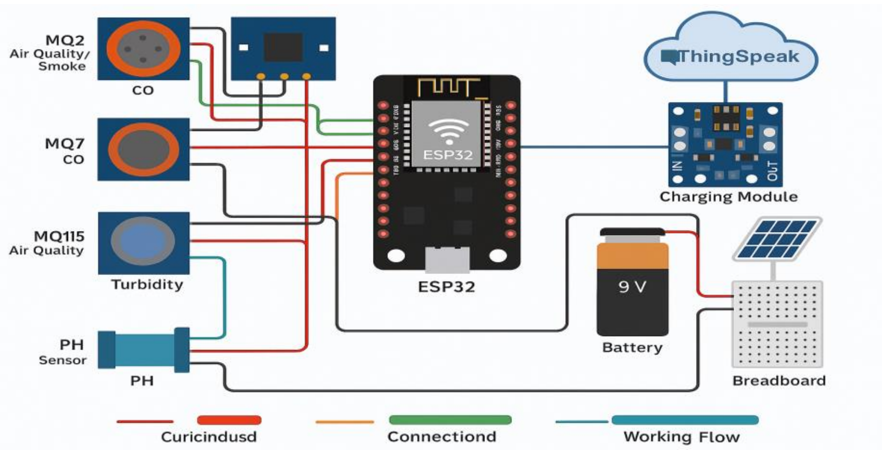

Figure 2: Circuit diagram of the air and water quality monitoring system

4. Hardware Discussion

The hardware diagram of the proposed system is illustrated in Figure 3. Building an IoT-based system for monitoring air and water quality in real time is not only possible but also practical in today's environment. The core technology required for such a system is widely available and affordable. Sensors for detecting gases, particulate matter, pH levels, turbidity, and total dissolved solids can be sourced easily from local or online electronics stores. These sensors can be integrated with common microcontrollers, such as Arduino, ESP32, or NodeMCU, which are known for their low power consumption and reliable performance.

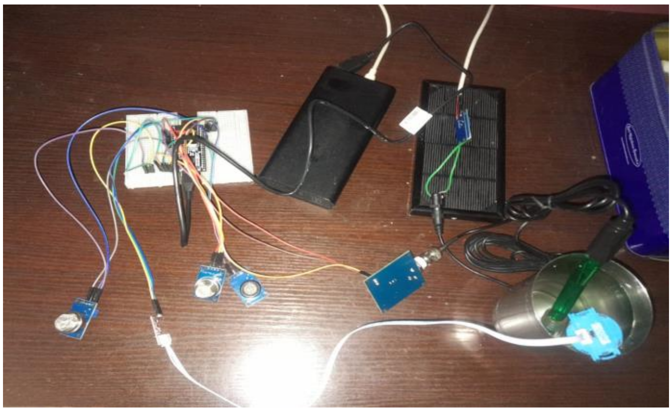

Figure 3: Hardware setup of the proposed system

Most of the components used are plug-and-play, enabling a simple setup and rapid deployment. On the software side, programming the system does not require advanced skills. Platforms like the Arduino IDE, combined with cloud services such as ThingSpeak or Blynk, make it straightforward to collect, store, and visualise environmental data.

Figure 4: Air quality detection in an occupied room

These platforms also enable remote access, allowing users to monitor conditions even when they're not physically present near the device. Updates can be viewed in real-time through web dashboards or mobile apps, and alerts can be configured to notify users when environmental readings exceed safe limits.

Figure 5: Air quality monitoring in vehicle parking (smoke)

Air Quality Monitoring System for various enclosed environments, including: occupied rooms, vehicle parking areas, kitchens (LPG use), closed rooms, and normal room temperature conditions as indicated in (Figures 4 to 8).

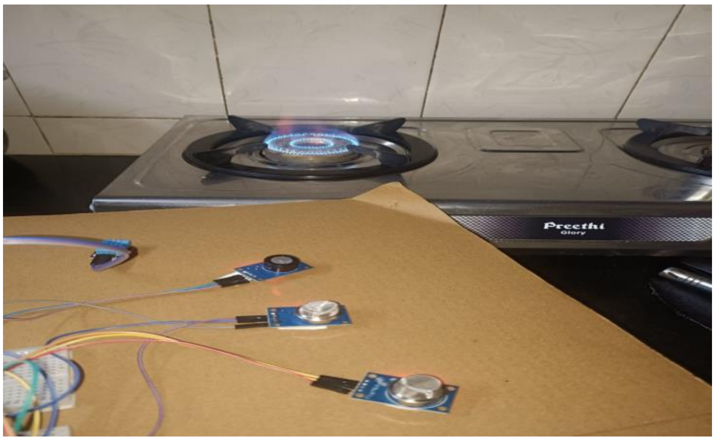

Figure 6: Air quality detection while cooking (LPG)

Powering the system is also flexible. In urban or semi-urban areas, regular power supplies or USB adapters are sufficient. For remote or rural areas, the setup can include rechargeable batteries supported by small solar panels. This makes the system self-sustaining and capable of operating in off-grid environments.

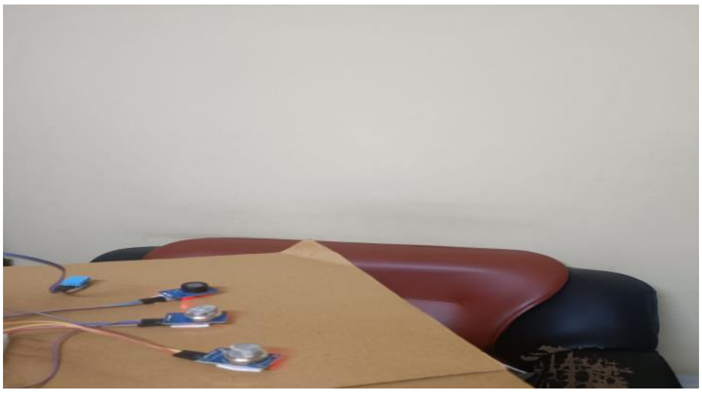

Figure 7: Air quality monitoring in a normal room temperature

The system's low energy needs ensure it can run for days without requiring maintenance or charging, especially when power-saving modes are properly utilized. In terms of communication, the system supports both Wi-Fi and GSM-based data transmission. This dual connectivity makes it adaptable to different environments.

Figure 8: Air quality monitoring in a closed room

Wi-Fi can be used in households, schools, or office areas with stable internet access, while GSM modules enable mobile data communication where Wi-Fi is unavailable. These options provide the system with a wide deployment range, from smart cities to agricultural lands and even forest monitoring stations.

Figure 9: Water quality sensing from detergent

Water Quality Sensing for various household water conditions such as detergent-contaminated Water, boiled Water, citric acid solutions, and used washing water. The analysis focuses on IoT-based systems utilizing commonly available sensors with ESP32 and platforms such as ThingSpeak, as illustrated in Figures 9 to 12.

Figure 10: Water quality sensing from boiled Water

Scalability is another strength of this system. New sensors can be added easily, and multiple units can be installed across different locations. The collected data can be managed centrally through a cloud-based platform, offering a comprehensive view of environmental conditions across regions.

Figure 11: Water quality sensing from citric acid

This makes it ideal not just for individual use, but also for institutions, municipalities, and research groups. Considering all of the above, implementing such a system is both feasible and beneficial. It requires a modest investment, simple maintenance, and offers long-term value by enabling users to monitor and respond to environmental issues before they become critical.

Figure 12: Water quality sensing from washing water

With the growing importance of sustainability and health-focused technology, this kind of real-time monitoring system can play a meaningful role in promoting cleaner, safer living conditions.

Table 1: Water quality monitoring system

Water sample	pH	Turbidity
Tap Water (municipal supply)	7.2	1-2
Bottled Drinking Water	7.0	0-1
Washing Water (after cloth wash)	8.0	50
Water + Lime Juice (homemade acid)	4.5	5-10
Water + Salt (salt water)	7.5	5-15
Water + detergent (soap water)	9.0	40-60

Table 1 illustrates the water quality monitoring system, which shows the pH and Turbidity values. Table 2 displays the air quality monitoring system's temperature and humidity levels using MQ sensors.

Table 2: Air quality monitoring system

Scenario	MQ2 (Smoke)	MQ7 (CO)	MQ135 (Air Quality)	Temp °C	Humidity %
Home Indoor Room (normal)	150	80	120	27	50
Kitchen (during cooking)	400	200	420	32	55
College Classroom (occupied)	180	90	150	29	48
College Library (quiet/closed)	120	70	100	24	45
College Parking Area (vehicles)	320	260	400	33	60

5. Results and Discussion

The collected data comprises real-time environmental readings involving four key parameters: MQ7, MQ135, Turbidity, and pH. The MQ7 sensor values range from 189 to 195, indicating consistent levels of carbon monoxide (CO) that are typically within safe thresholds.

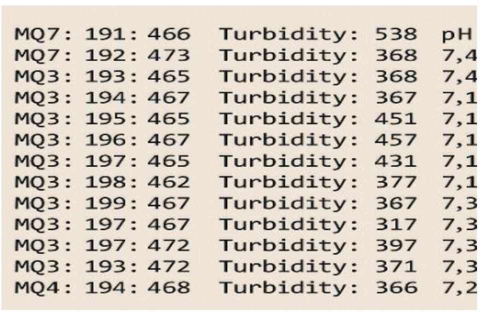

Figure 13: Screenshot of output from ThingSpeak Internet of Things

MQ135 readings fluctuate from 464 to 477, reflecting varying concentrations of air pollutants such as ammonia, nitrogen oxides, and CO_2. These variations may be attributed to changes in nearby emission sources or airflow patterns. Turbidity values exhibit notable fluctuations between 362 and 538 NTU, signifying varying degrees of water clarity. High turbidity (e.g., 538 NTU) suggests the presence of suspended particles, possibly due to contamination or disturbance of the sediment. Such variability implies that water quality is dynamic and may be influenced by external environmental or operational conditions. pH values remain within a relatively neutral band (7.00 to 7.46), which is ideal for most aquatic organisms and indicates a chemically stable environment. The slightly alkaline trend in some readings (above 7.3) could result from dissolved minerals or treatment chemicals. The screenshot of the output from ThingSpeak is illustrated in Figure 13.

MQ7: 191 | MQ135: 466 | Turbidity: 538 | pH: 7.10
MQ7: 192 | MQ135: 473 | Turbidity: 368 | pH: 7.46

- pH values are around neutral (7.00 to 7.46), indicating fairly balanced water quality.
- Turbidity varies significantly (from 362 to 538), possibly indicating changes in water clarity.
- MQ7 and MQ135 values fluctuate within a narrow band, likely showing moderate levels of target gases.

Overall, the data reflect a functional and responsive sensing system capable of capturing environmental shifts. The correlation between turbidity and pH appears weak, indicating independent influences. However, simultaneous spikes in MQ135 and turbidity may hint at pollution events or nearby human activity. Continuous logging with statistical analysis can further validate trends and enhance early warning capabilities for environmental monitoring applications.

6. Conclusion

The design and implementation of an IoT-based real-time air and water monitoring system reflect a growing need to observe and respond to environmental challenges in a smarter, more efficient way. With increasing concerns about pollution, public health, and climate change, real-time data collection has become more essential than ever. Traditional environmental monitoring methods are often slow, expensive, and limited in scope. In contrast, this system provides a more flexible and cost-effective approach, enabling continuous data collection and real-time alerts, even in remote or resource-constrained settings. By integrating various sensors to track air quality indicators such as carbon monoxide, ammonia, particulate matter, and water quality parameters like pH, turbidity, and TDS, the system delivers a well-rounded view of environmental conditions. The use of microcontrollers and wireless communication modules ensures that collected data can be accessed from anywhere, eliminating the need for constant on-site presence. The cloud-based dashboard provides clear, user-friendly visualisations of the data, making it easier for individuals, researchers, and policymakers to interpret trends and make informed decisions. The project also emphasises sustainability through the use of solar panels and energy-efficient components, allowing the system to run continuously with minimal power demands. This makes it especially suitable for deployment in agricultural fields, industrial zones, rural villages, and urban areas where environmental monitoring is critical but often overlooked. Although there are limitations, such as the need for occasional sensor maintenance, calibration, and dependence on network availability, these issues are manageable with proper planning and support.

The modular nature of the system enables easy upgrades and future expansion, such as integrating weather data, adding GPS tracking, or incorporating more advanced sensors as needed. What truly sets this project apart is its potential to empower communities with real-time information, helping them take action before environmental issues escalate. It can also aid local governments in enforcing pollution control measures and raising awareness among citizens. Overall, the project serves as a practical, scalable, and impactful solution that bridges the gap between environmental data and everyday decision-making. With further development, this system can play a critical role in shaping healthier environments, promoting sustainability, and fostering greater public involvement in protecting our natural resources. As technology continues to evolve, systems like this one will become increasingly important in supporting smart cities, sustainable agriculture, and clean industries. It is a step forward toward a future where environmental awareness and digital innovation work hand in hand.

Acknowledgment: The authors gratefully acknowledge SRM Institute of Science and Technology for providing the facilities and support to carry out this research. We also extend our sincere thanks to the faculty and peers for their valuable guidance and encouragement.

Data Availability Statement: The data for this study are available from the corresponding authors upon reasonable request.

Funding Statement: This manuscript and research work were carried out without any financial assistance or external funding.

Conflicts of Interest Statement: The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest regarding this study. This work represents a collective contribution by the authors, with all references and citations appropriately included.

Ethics and Consent Statement: This research was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and the authors collectively ensured that confidentiality measures were in place to safeguard participant privacy.

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