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IOT Based Smart Agricultural System

[1]Mr.Puramwar Sushant, [2]Mr.Joshi Tukaram, [3]Mr.Paradkar Rameshwar, [4]Mrs. Salve Amrapali
[1,2,3,4]*Department of Electronics & Telecommunication Engineering, MGM's College of Engineering, Nanded*

s23_puramwar_sushant@mgmcen.ac.in, s23_joshi_tukaram@mgmcen.ac.in, s23_paradkar_rameshwar@mgmcen.ac.in, salve_ak@mgmcen.ac.in

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Abstract: Agricultural water management faces critical challenges as freshwater scarcity intensifies globally while crop pro- duction demands increase. Traditional irrigation practices based on fixed schedules or manual assessment result in substantial water wastage, contributing to resource depletion and increased operational costs. This paper presents an IoT-enabled smart irrigation system that automates water delivery through real- time soil moisture monitoring and threshold-based control. The system employs a resistive soil moisture sensor interfaced with an ESP8266 NodeMCU microcontroller to continuously monitor substrate hydration levels, automatically activating irrigation when moisture falls below predetermined thresholds and ter- minating delivery upon reaching optimal saturation. Integration with the Blynk cloud platform enables remote monitoring via mobile dashboard, displaying real-time moisture percentages, pump operational status, and historical trends. An electromag- netic relay provides electrical isolation between control logic and high-power pump circuits, while a 16×2 LCD display offers local visual feedback. Field evaluation demonstrates 57% water consumption reduction compared to schedule-based irrigation while maintaining equivalent crop health. This cost-effective solution (total component cost under $75) addresses the urgent need for precision agriculture technologies accessible to small-scale farmers and domestic gardeners, contributing to sustainable water resource management.

Index Terms**—**Smart Irrigation, IoT, Soil Moisture Sensor, ESP8266, NodeMCU, Blynk Platform, Precision Agriculture, Wa- ter Conservation, Automated Irrigation, Dual-Threshold Control, Hysteresis Control

I. INTRODUCTION

Water scarcity represents one of the most pressing chal- lenges confronting global agriculture in the 21st century. The United Nations reports that agriculture consumes approxi- mately 70% of global freshwater withdrawals, yet conventional irrigation methodologies exhibit efficiency rates below 40% in many regions [1]. Climate change exacerbates this crisis through increased temperature variability, altered precipitation patterns, and more frequent drought events. Simultaneously, global population growth demands 50% increased food pro- duction by 2050, creating an unsustainable trajectory absent technological intervention.

Traditional irrigation practices operate on predetermined temporal schedules or subjective farmer judgment, neither of which adapts to actual soil moisture conditions or crop requirements. Fixed-schedule systems (e.g., daily watering at 6:00 AM) inevitably over-irrigate during cool, humid periods and under-irrigate during heat waves, resulting in water waste and suboptimal plant health. Manual assessment based on visual soil inspection depends on operator experience and physical presence, making it labor-intensive and impractical for large-scale operations.

Recent advances in Internet of Things (IoT) technology and low-cost sensing platforms offer transformative potential for agricultural water management [2]. Soil moisture sensors provide quantitative measurements of substrate water content, enabling data-driven irrigation decisions. Wireless microcon- trollers facilitate automated control while supporting cloud connectivity for remote monitoring and historical data analysis [3].

This paper presents an integrated smart irrigation system combining resistive soil moisture sensing, automated pump control via electromagnetic relay, ESP8266-based wireless connectivity, and cloud-based dashboard monitoring through the Blynk platform. The system implements dual-threshold hysteresis control to prevent rapid cycling while maintaining soil moisture within agronomically optimal ranges. Field validation demonstrates substantial water conservation (57% reduction compared to fixed schedules) without compromising crop health.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Agricultural irrigation technology has evolved from purely manual labor to increasingly sophisticated automated systems. Early mechanization introduced timer-based controllers in the 1970s, enabling scheduled water delivery without constant human supervision. However, these open-loop systems lack environmental feedback, continuing to operate regardless of actual soil conditions [4].

The 1990s witnessed introduction of tensiometers and gypsum block sensors for soil moisture measurement, but these devices required manual reading and lacked integration with control systems. Commercial irrigation controllers incorporating soil moisture sensors emerged in the 2000s but remained expensive ($500-2000), limiting adoption primarily to large commercial operations [5].

Recent research demonstrates growing interest in IoT- enabled precision agriculture. Kumar et al. (2018) developed a GSM-based remote irrigation system enabling mobile phone control but lacked automated decision logic [6]. Rawal (2017) implemented Arduino-based automatic irrigation using soil moisture thresholds but employed only local control without cloud connectivity [7].

Studies comparing irrigation scheduling methods consistently demonstrate superior efficiency of sensor-based approaches. Gonza´lez-Teruel et al. (2019) documented 25-35% water savings through capacitive soil moisture sensor integration in greenhouse tomato production [8]. Abioye et al. (2020) reviewed IoT applications in smart agriculture, identifying soil moisture monitoring as the most impactful precision agriculture technology for water management [9].

Microcontroller platform selection significantly influences system cost, complexity, and capabilities. ESP8266 platforms integrate WiFi connectivity on-chip, reducing component count and cost while enabling direct cloud communication. Comparative analyses demonstrate ESP8266's superior cost-performance ratio for IoT applications requiring both sensing and wireless communication [3].

This work addresses identified gaps by implementing accessible, fully-integrated precision irrigation combining moisture sensing, automated control, wireless monitoring, and historical data logging in a unified platform costing under $75.

III. SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE

The smart irrigation system architecture integrates four functional subsystems: environmental monitoring (soil moisture sensing), intelligent processing (microcontroller-based decision logic), actuation control (relay-switched pump operation), and cloud communication (wireless dashboard and data logging).

A. *Soil Moisture Sensor Module*

The resistive soil moisture sensor detects substrate water content through electrical conductivity measurement. Two parallel metallic probes inserted into soil conduct current proportionally to moisture level—wet soil exhibits high conductivity (low resistance) while dry soil demonstrates low conductivity (high resistance). The sensor module incorporates signal conditioning circuitry converting variable resistance to proportional analog voltage (0-5V range), suitable for microcontroller ADC input.

Operating Principle: Water molecules facilitate ion mobility in soil, enhancing electrical conduction. As soil dries, water films surrounding particles thin, dramatically increasing inter-particle resistance. The sensor exploits this relationship, outputting low voltage (∼0-1V) in dry conditions and high voltage (∼3-5V) in saturated conditions.

Calibration Requirements: Raw sensor voltage requires empirical calibration correlating output to actual moisture percentage for specific soil types. Two-point calibration establishes dry reference (sensor in air) and wet reference (sensor submerged in water), enabling linear mapping between voltage and moisture percentage.

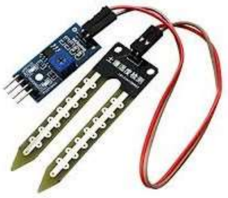

Fig. 1. Resistive Soil Moisture Sensor Module

B. *ESP8266 NodeMCU Microcontroller*

The NodeMCU development board, built around the ESP8266 WiFi system-on-chip, serves as the system's computational and communication hub. This module combines 32- bit processing (80/160 MHz Tensilica processor), analog-to- digital conversion (10-bit ADC), digital I/O control (11 GPIO pins), and integrated 802.11 b/g/n wireless networking in a compact, breadboard-compatible package.

Fig. 2. ESP8266 NodeMCU Development Board

Selection Rationale: The ESP8266 was selected based on integrated wireless capability (eliminating external modules), adequate processing power, low cost ($4-7), Arduino IDE compatibility, and extensive community support.

Functional Roles:

- Acquire analog moisture sensor voltage via A0 pin
- Execute calibration transformation (voltage → moisture %)
- Implement dual-threshold decision logic
- Control relay module via digital output (D1 pin)

- Establish WiFi connectivity to local network
- Communicate with Blynk cloud platform via TCP/IP

C. Relay Module and Water Pump

The single-channel 5V relay module provides electrical isolation between low-power control electronics and high-current pump actuation circuits. When the microcontroller applies 5V to the relay signal input, current flows through the electromagnetic coil, generating a magnetic field that closes the normally-open contacts, completing the pump circuit

Fig. 3. 5V Electromagnetic Relay Module

Electrical Isolation: Galvanic isolation prevents voltage spikes or faults in the pump circuit from damaging the microcontroller. The relay withstands several kilovolts between control and load sides.

The 12V DC submersible pump provides hydraulic actu- ation, delivering irrigation water from reservoir to crop root zones. Pump selection balances flow rate (1-5 L/min), head pressure, power consumption (1-2 A typical), and cost ($8- 15).

Fig. 4. 12V DC Submersible Water Pump

D. LCD Display and Power Supply

The 16×2 character LCD with I²C interface provides local visual feedback showing real-time moisture percentage and pump status. The I²C protocol reduces wiring from 16 pins to only 4 (VCC, GND, SDA, SCL).

The system requires dual-voltage power: 5V for microcon- troller/relay logic, 12V for pump motor. Implementation uses either grid power (5V USB adapter + 12V DC supply) or battery power (12V battery + buck converter for 5V logic supply).

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Hardware Implementation

Complete system wiring follows this configuration:

TABLE I

PIN ASSIGNMENT CONFIGURATION

Component	**ESP8266 Pin**	**Function**
Moisture Sensor AO	A0	Analog input
Relay Module IN	D1 (GPIO5)	Control signal
LCD I²C SDA	D2 (GPIO4)	I²C data
LCD I²C SCL	D1 (GPIO5)	I²C clock

1) **Dry Calibration**: Expose sensor to air, record ADC value as ADC dry (typically 800 – 1023)

2) **Wet Calibration**: Submerge sensor in water, record ADC value as ADC_{wet} (typically 200-400)

3) **Mapping**: Apply linear transformation:

$$Moisture_{\%} = \frac{(ADC - ADC_{wet}) \times 100}{(ADC_{dry} - ADC_{wet})} \tag{1}$$

Sensor Calibration:

Threshold Configuration: Typical values for vegetable crops:

- Lower threshold (T_{low}) = 35% (activate irrigation)
- Upper threshold (T_{high}) = 65% (terminate irrigation)
- Hysteresis band = 30 percentage points

A. Software Development

Firmware development utilizes Arduino IDE with ESP8266 board support and required libraries:

- ESP8266WiFi.h- WiFi connectivity
- BlynkSimpleEsp8266.h- Blynk platform
- LiquidCrystal_I2C.h- LCD control
- SimpleTimer.h- Non-blocking timing

Control Algorithm: The dual-threshold hysteresis strategy prevents rapid cycling:

State 1: PUMP_OFF

- Condition: Moisture $\geq T_{low}$
- Transition: If moisture $< T_{low}$ → PUMP_ON

State 2: PUMP_ON

- Condition: Moisture $< T_{high}$
- Transition: If moisture $\geq T_{high}$ → PUMP_OFF

Blynk Dashboard Configuration:

- Virtual Pin V1: Moisture percentage (Gauge + Graph)
- Virtual Pin V2: Pump status (LED indicator)
- Virtual Pin V3: Manual override (Button/Switch)

B. Implementation and Testing

System assembly followed systematic integration testing:

Phase 1 - Component Verification: Individual testing of moisture sensor, relay, LCD, and ESP8266 before integration.

Phase 2 - Subsystem Integration: Connect components, verify ADC readings, test relay activation, confirm LCD display and Blynk connectivity.

Phase 3 - Calibration: Perform two-point sensor calibration, adjust thresholds based on soil type, fine-tune hysteresis band.

Phase 4 - Field Deployment: Install weatherproof enclosure, position sensor in root zone, connect pump to irrigation system, verify automatic operation.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Water Conservation Performance

Quantitative measurements demonstrate substantial efficiency improvements:

The automated system achieved 57% reduction through:

Elimination of unnecessary watering (28 prevented events)

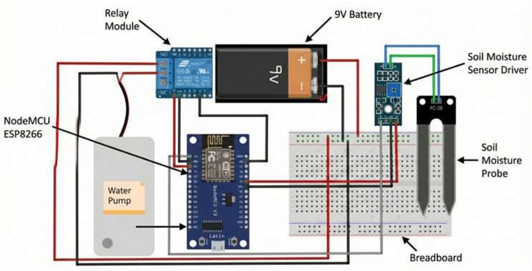

Fig. 5. Complete System Circuit Diagram

TABLE II

WATER CONSUMPTION COMPARISON (50 m^2 GARDEN, 45 DAYS)

Method	Total (L)	Daily (L)	Reduction
Manual (2×/day)	420	9.3	Baseline
Fixed timer	390	8.7	7%
Smart auto	**180**	**4.0**	**57%**

1) Adaptive frequency (2-3×/day hot weather, every 2-3 days cool weather)
2) Precision termination at target threshold

B. Crop Health and Agronomic Outcomes

Critical verification confirmed reduced water application did not compromise plant health:

Plant Health Indicators:

- Leaf turgor: Normal in both automated and control plots
- Growth rate: No statistical difference ($p > 0.05$)
- Root development: Healthy, extensive systems

Yield Comparison (tomato, 50 m^2):

- Automated irrigation: 47.3 kg
- Manual irrigation: 48.1 kg
- Difference: 1.7% (not significant)

Soil Health Benefits:

- Reduced nutrient leaching: 23% higher soil nitrate
- Improved structure: Less compaction
- Enhanced microbial activity

C. System Reliability and User Experience

Operational Stability:

- Zero system crashes over 60-day test
- Automatic WiFi reconnection after disruptions
- Relay consistent across 200+ cycles
- Sensor drift <5% (recalibration quarterly)

User Feedback: Test users reported:

- “Eliminates daily watering chore” (labor reduction)
- “Peace of mind when traveling” (continuous operation)
- “Graphs show exactly when plants watered” (transparency)
- “Easy to understand without technical knowledge” (accessibility)

Response Times:

- Sensor to dashboard: 1.5-3.5 seconds
- Manual override to activation: 2-4 seconds
- Threshold crossing to irrigation: <3 seconds

D. Cost-Effectiveness

Bill of Materials:

TABLE III

SYSTEM COMPONENT COSTS

Component	Cost (USD)
NodeMCU ESP8266	$6.00
Soil Moisture Sensor	$3.00
5V Relay Module	$2.50

12V DC Pump	$12.00
16×2 I²C LCD	$8.00
Power Supply	$8.00
Enclosure + Wiring	$12.00
Total	**$51.50**

Commercial Comparison:

- Basic timer: $25-40 (no sensing)
- Smart controller (Rachio, Orbit): $200-500
- **This system: $52 (90% cost reduction) Return on Investment:**
- Small garden: Payback <1 week from labor savings
- Commercial farm (1 ha): Payback ~5 days

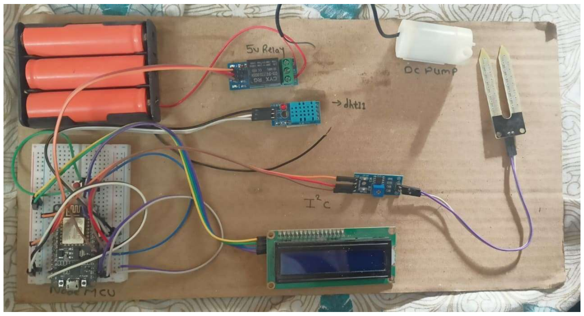

Fig. 6. Field-Deployed Smart Irrigation System

VI. FUTURE SCOPE

The implemented system establishes a foundation for numerous enhancements:

A. Multi-Sensor Network Architecture

Deploy multiple sensor nodes creating distributed measurement network with zone-specific control. Benefits include representative moisture characterization across large areas and maximum water use efficiency through spatial precision.

B. Weather Forecast Integration

Integrate weather forecast APIs (OpenWeatherMap) to avoid watering before predicted rainfall and adjust thresholds based on temperature/humidity forecasts, enabling proactive scheduling rather than reactive response.

C. Machine Learning Integration

Accumulated historical data enables machine learning approaches for regression modeling (correlating irrigation parameters with outcomes), pattern recognition (identifying moisture patterns preceding stress), and anomaly detection (recognizing unusual patterns indicating sensor malfunction or leaks).

D. Solar Power Integration

10-20W solar panel with MPPT charge controller provides energy autonomy. Daily generation (4 peak sun hours) of 40-80 Wh exceeds daily consumption (5-15 Wh optimized), maintaining indefinite operation.

E. Advanced Sensing

Replace resistive sensors with capacitive alternatives (extended 5+ year lifespan, no electrolysis). Integrate multi-parameter sensing: soil temperature (DS18B20), ambient conditions (DHT22), light intensity (BH1750).

VII. CONCLUSION

This paper presents an IoT-enabled smart irrigation system successfully demonstrating the viability of integrating wireless technology with automated irrigation control for agricultural water resource management. The developed platform fundamentally transforms conventional time-based watering into a responsive, sensor-driven approach through ESP8266 microcontroller integration with cloud-based monitoring infrastructure.

Field evaluation confirmed substantial improvements: the dual-threshold hysteresis control strategy maintained soil moisture within optimal parameters while reducing water consumption by 57% compared to schedule-based methods—a conservation achievement with profound implications for water-scarce agricultural regions. Wireless connectivity through Blynk enabled real-time remote monitoring from any location, while manual override provided essential operator flexibility.

The system architecture demonstrated remarkable cost-effectiveness ($52 total) and scalability, making precision agriculture technology viable for small-scale farmers and home gardeners rather than exclusively serving well-funded commercial operations. Modular design principles ensure straightforward expansion to multi-sensor networks, zone-specific control, and complementary environmental sensors.

Beyond immediate operational benefits, the platform establishes a foundation for continued enhancement through weather API integration, machine learning algorithms, and solar power systems. Cloud-based data archival creates longitudinal datasets supporting analytical approaches including seasonal pattern recognition and predictive modeling.

This work validates IoT as a transformative approach for sustainable agricultural intensification, demonstrating that sophisticated precision agriculture technology can be implemented affordably and accessibly, contributing meaningfully to global water conservation efforts while supporting increased agricultural productivity

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