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# Optimization of Energy Efficiency in Smart City IoT Sensor Networks

**Bedabrata Chakraborty***

School of Computer Engineering, KIIT (Deemed to Be) University, Bhubaneswar -751024, Odisha, India; 2229173@kiit.ac.in.

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## Abstract

As urban areas expand, smart city initiatives increasingly rely on IoT sensor networks to monitor and manage resources, optimize traffic, and enhance quality of life. However, these sensor networks face challenges in energy efficiency, which is critical to ensure long-term sustainability, reduce operational costs, and minimize environmental impact. This paper explores strategies to optimize energy efficiency within smart city IoT sensor networks, focusing on low-power protocols, adaptive network topologies, and efficient data transmission methods. This study identifies common energy bottlenecks by analyzing existing smart city implementations and evaluates emerging low-power technologies, such as Narrowband IoT (NB-IoT) and Long Range (LoRa) communication protocols. Further, it examines hardware improvements in sensor design and edge computing's role in reducing transmission energy by processing data closer to the source. Our analysis reveals that a hybrid approach—incorporating both hardware advancements and software optimization strategies—provides the most significant gains in energy efficiency. Additionally, we propose a framework that allows for adaptive power management based on environmental conditions and network demands, thereby enhancing the longevity and scalability of IoT networks in urban contexts. The findings from this study provide valuable insights for policymakers, urban planners, and technologists aiming to build sustainable smart cities, underscoring the importance of energy-aware designs in IoT infrastructure.

**Keywords:** Energy efficiency, IoT sensor networks, Smart cities, Sustainability, Low-power protocols, Adaptive network topologies, Edge computing.

## 1 | Introduction

The rapid expansion of urban areas has led to significant challenges in resource management, environmental sustainability, and quality of life. Smart city initiatives offer a solution by integrating Internet of Things (IoT) technologies, which enhance urban functionality through real-time monitoring and data-driven decision-making [1]. Central to this innovation is IoT sensor networks, which provide the infrastructure to gather,

Corresponding Author: 2229173@kiit.ac.in

transmit, and process data across various domains, including transportation, energy management, waste reduction, and public safety. *Fig. 1* shows smart city IoT architecture.

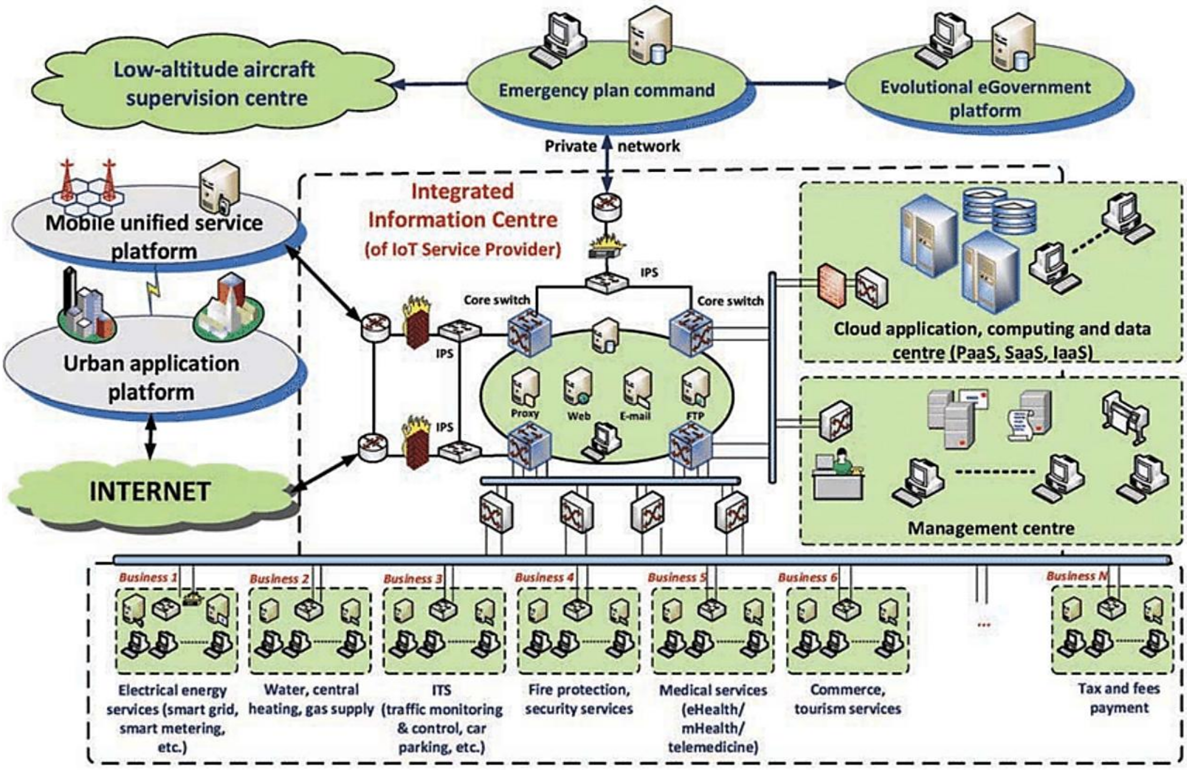

**Fig. 1. Smart city IOT architecture.**

However, the widespread deployment of IoT devices in smart cities introduces unique challenges, particularly regarding energy efficiency. IoT sensor networks often rely on limited power sources, such as batteries or energy-harvesting modules, making it crucial to optimize energy consumption to ensure the sustainability and longevity of these systems [2], [3]. Energy inefficiency can result in frequent maintenance, increased costs, and environmental waste, undermining smart city development goals. *Fig. 2* shows the energy comsumption breakdown in IoT sensor networks.

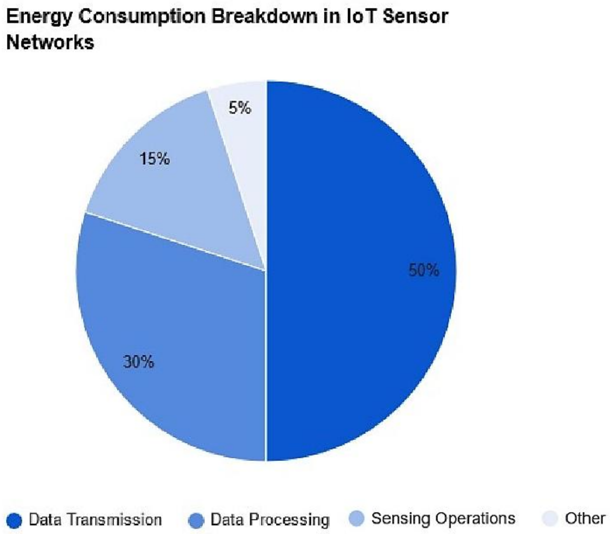

**Fig. 2. Energy comsumption breakdown in IOT sensor networks.**

In recent years, various approaches have been proposed to address the energy efficiency of IoT sensor networks. These strategies include optimizing communication protocols, employing energy-efficient hardware, implementing intelligent data management techniques, and exploring adaptive network topologies [4], [5]. While individual strategies have demonstrated promise, a comprehensive framework that combines hardware, software, and network-level optimizations is essential to meet the complex demands of urban IoT infrastructure.

This paper aims to investigate current solutions and propose an optimized framework for energy-efficient IoT sensor networks in smart cities. By analyzing existing models and identifying best practices, this study provides a blueprint for implementing sustainable, low-power IoT networks that support the continued growth of smart city initiatives. Through this work, we aspire to contribute to a more sustainable urban future where technology and environmental consciousness intersect to address the evolving needs of modern cities.

## 2 | Literature Review

The rapid urbanization and increasing demand for sustainable solutions have driven the adoption of IoT technologies in smart cities. Smart cities leverage interconnected devices to create a network of sensors that collect and transmit valuable data to optimize urban services. These services range from traffic management, energy consumption, environmental monitoring, and public safety to waste management and health services. The integration of IoT technologies has the potential to enhance urban living by improving efficiency, reducing costs, and promoting sustainability. However, the energy efficiency of these networks is a critical concern [6], [7]. Deploying millions of battery-powered devices can lead to significant energy consumption and environmental impact, thereby challenging the sustainability goals of smart city initiatives.

A fundamental approach to enhancing energy efficiency in IoT sensor networks is carefully selecting and deploying low-power hardware components. Researchers have extensively investigated various energy-efficient microcontrollers, sensors, and wireless communication modules, emphasizing their role in minimizing power consumption. For instance, study by [8] has demonstrated the effectiveness of low-power microcontrollers such as the MSP430 and Arduino in practical applications. The MSP430 microcontroller, for example, features a low operating voltage, which allows it to function efficiently in environments where energy resources are constrained. Its architecture supports multiple power-saving modes, including a deep sleep mode significantly reducing energy consumption during inactivity.

Moreover, sensor selection plays a crucial role in the overall energy efficiency of IoT networks. Various sensor technologies, such as passive infrared sensors for motion detection and low-power environmental sensors for monitoring temperature and humidity, are specifically designed to operate on minimal power budgets. These sensors often employ advanced features like event-driven data transmission, where data is sent only when significant changes are detected, thus conserving energy.

In addition to hardware, adopting energy-efficient wireless communication protocols has garnered considerable attention in optimizing communication overhead. Protocols such as IEEE 802.15.4, Zigbee, and LoRaWAN [9] have been specifically designed for low-power and low-data-rate applications, making them well-suited for IoT networks. These protocols utilize techniques like duty cycling, which allows devices to wake up at predetermined intervals to transmit data, significantly reducing energy consumption during idle periods. Furthermore, adaptive data rates enable devices to modulate their transmission power based on distance and environmental conditions, which minimizes energy expenditure and enhances data transmission's reliability. By thoughtfully selecting hardware components and optimizing communication protocols, researchers have demonstrated substantial reductions in energy consumption, thus enhancing the sustainability of IoT sensor networks.

Data-driven approaches have emerged as powerful tools to optimize energy consumption in IoT sensor networks, providing insights into device behavior and environmental dynamics. Machine learning (ML) techniques, such as clustering, classification, and Reinforcement Learning (RL), have been employed to identify energy-efficient patterns and predict future energy consumption trends. For instance, researchers have developed predictive models that optimize sensor activation schedules, data transmission rates, and power management strategies by analyzing historical data collected from various sensors across a smart city [10].

This adaptability allows IoT systems to respond proactively to environmental changes, ensuring energy is used only when necessary. Reinforcement learning can be employed to create intelligent agents that optimize decision-making processes based on continuous feedback from the environment. These agents can learn from previous actions to improve energy efficiency over time, making them invaluable in managing energy consumption dynamically.

Furthermore, data-driven approaches can optimize network topology and routing protocols, saving energy significantly [11]. By implementing intelligent routing algorithms considering current network traffic and energy availability, devices can make informed decisions on data transmission paths. For example, algorithms can analyze the energy levels of neighboring nodes to select paths that prolong the network's lifespan. Integrating ML into these processes allows networks to self-adapt to changing conditions, such as fluctuating energy sources or varying data transmission needs, thus improving overall efficiency.

The selection of network topology and routing protocols employed in IoT sensor networks significantly impacts their energy efficiency. Studies have shown that cluster-based and hierarchical network topologies can dramatically reduce energy consumption by minimizing the hops required for data transmission and decreasing communication overhead [12]. In these configurations, devices are organized into clusters, with each cluster electing a representative, or cluster head, to manage data aggregation and communication with the central server. This architecture minimizes the number of direct transmissions to the base station, thereby conserving energy across the network.

Cluster-based topologies have been shown to improve not only energy efficiency but also the scalability of IoT networks. As the number of devices in a smart city grows, cluster heads can effectively manage local data, reducing the burden on central servers and minimizing energy use. Moreover, energy-aware routing protocols, such as Low-Energy Adaptive Clustering Hierarchy (LEACH) [13] and Threshold-sensitive Energy Efficient Network (TEEN) [14], have been developed to optimize data transmission routes. These protocols consider critical factors such as the energy levels of individual nodes, link quality, and traffic load, allowing them to select routes that minimize energy expenditure. For instance, LEACH employs a randomized rotation of cluster heads, distributing energy usage more evenly across the network and prolonging the lifetime of all nodes.

In addition to these established protocols, ongoing research explores advanced techniques such as Software-Defined Networking (SDN) and Network Function Virtualization (NFV) to enhance energy efficiency [15]. By decoupling network control from data forwarding, these techniques can provide greater routing and resource allocation flexibility, allowing for more dynamic and energy-efficient network configurations.

Energy harvesting techniques present a promising solution to prolong the operational lifetime of battery-powered IoT devices [16]. Devices can extend their operational duration without relying solely on conventional battery power by harnessing energy from ambient sources—such as solar, thermal, wind, and vibrational energy. The ability to generate power from renewable sources is crucial for sustainable smart city initiatives, as it reduces dependency on finite energy resources and minimizes environmental impact.

While integrating energy harvesting technologies is still nascent, ongoing research has focused on enhancing their efficiency and reliability. Recent advancements in energy harvesting technologies, including high-efficiency solar cells and innovative piezoelectric materials, have shown great potential in powering low-power IoT devices. For example, integrating flexible solar panels into devices allows them to recharge while operating, significantly extending their lifespan continuously [17]. Furthermore, piezoelectric materials can convert mechanical stress into electrical energy, providing an additional power source for devices deployed in dynamic environments, such as pedestrian walkways or transportation systems. This integration enhances the energy self-sufficiency of IoT devices and supports their deployment in locations where traditional power sources are unavailable or impractical.

Moreover, hybrid energy harvesting systems combining multiple sources—such as solar and wind—are being developed to maximize energy capture. These systems can adapt to changing environmental conditions, ensuring a more reliable energy supply for IoT devices. By combining energy harvesting techniques with energy-efficient hardware and software, researchers have made strides in developing self-sustainable IoT devices capable of operating for extended periods without requiring battery replacements. This advancement contributes significantly to the long-term viability of smart city infrastructure.

## 3 | Optimization Techniques for Energy Efficiency

As smart cities continue to evolve, optimizing the energy efficiency of IoT sensor networks has become paramount to ensuring sustainability and extending the lifespan of these systems. Several strategies can be employed to reduce energy consumption while maintaining data collection and transmission effectiveness. Key optimization techniques include data aggregation, sleep modes, energy-efficient routing protocols, and integrating renewable energy sources.

Data aggregation refers to collecting and consolidating data from multiple sensors before transmission, which reduces the volume of data sent over the network [18]. This technique plays a crucial role in lowering energy consumption in several ways. By aggregating data, sensors can minimize the number of transmissions required; instead of sending raw data continuously, sensors can process and summarize the information, sending only essential updates or summarized results. For instance, rather than sending every temperature reading every minute, a sensor could aggregate readings over a defined period and transmit an average value. This significantly reduces the number of communication events, which are often energy-intensive.

Additionally, reducing the amount of data transmitted leads to lower bandwidth consumption. High bandwidth utilization often correlates with increased energy use, as the power required for transmission is proportional to the data size. By sending aggregated data, sensors conserve energy while still providing valuable insights. With fewer data transmissions, the overall energy usage of the network decreases, which can lead to an extended lifespan for battery-operated sensors. This extended lifetime is particularly beneficial in large-scale sensor networks, where frequent battery replacements can be costly and logistically challenging.

Sleep modes are another effective technique for conserving energy in IoT sensor networks [19]. These are low-power states that sensors can enter during periods of inactivity. Many sensors can be designed to operate duty-cycled, spending most of their time in a low-power sleep mode and waking up periodically to take measurements or transmit data. This approach drastically reduces power consumption since the sensor's active mode consumes significantly more energy than its sleep mode. Moreover, sensors can utilize adaptive sleep scheduling based on environmental conditions or network traffic. For example, if no significant changes are detected over a period, the sensor can extend its sleep duration. Conversely, the sensor can increase its active time during high-activity periods. This flexibility allows sensors to optimize their energy usage dynamically while ensuring timely data collection when necessary. Advanced algorithms can also determine optimal sleep schedules based on historical data patterns or predictive modeling. By leveraging ML techniques, sensors can learn from past data transmission patterns and adjust their sleep modes to maximize energy savings without sacrificing performance.

Energy-efficient routing protocols are critical in determining how data packets are transmitted through a sensor network [20]. These protocols minimize energy consumption and extend the network's operational lifetime. Hierarchical routing protocols group sensors into clusters, each with a designated cluster head responsible for data aggregation and forwarding. By reducing the number of nodes that actively communicate with the base station, hierarchical routing significantly decreases overall energy expenditure.

Additionally, energy-aware routing protocols consider the remaining energy levels of nodes when determining data transmission paths [21]. By routing data through nodes with higher energy levels and avoiding those with low battery life, energy-aware routing extends the overall lifespan of the sensor network, reducing the likelihood of network partitioning and ensuring consistent data flow even in energy-constrained environments. Multi-path routing techniques further enhance energy efficiency by enabling data to be sent through multiple paths simultaneously. This effectively balances the load across the network, enhancing data reliability and minimizing energy consumption by preventing any single path from becoming a bottleneck.

Integrating renewable energy sources, such as solar or wind power, is a promising approach to powering IoT sensor networks sustainably. Solar panels can be installed alongside sensors to harness sunlight and convert it into electrical energy, providing a continuous power supply, especially in areas with ample sunlight. Solar-powered sensors significantly reduce reliance on batteries, which can be costly and environmentally taxing to replace. In regions with consistent wind patterns, small wind turbines can supplement energy needs for sensor networks. By utilizing wind energy, cities can create self-sustaining sensor networks that minimize operational costs and reduce carbon footprints [22]. Beyond traditional renewable sources, innovative energy harvesting techniques that convert environmental energy (e.g., vibrations, thermal energy) into electrical energy can further enhance the sustainability of sensor networks. These technologies allow sensors to remain operational indefinitely without battery replacements, significantly improving the sustainability of IoT deployments in urban environments.

Optimizing energy efficiency in smart city IoT sensor networks is critical to sustaining their long-term viability and effectiveness. By employing data aggregation, sleep modes, energy-efficient routing protocols, and integrating renewable energy sources, cities can significantly reduce energy consumption while ensuring robust data collection and communication. As technology advances, further innovations in these areas will continue to enhance the sustainability and resilience of urban infrastructure, ultimately contributing to the development of smarter, more environmentally friendly cities.

# 4 | Challenges to Optimizing Energy Efficiency

While optimizing energy efficiency in IoT sensor networks for smart cities presents significant opportunities, it also poses various challenges that can impede progress [23]. Addressing these obstacles is crucial for ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of smart city initiatives. Key challenges include network reliability, data security, and the initial cost of deployment.

Ensuring the reliable operation of IoT sensor networks is fundamental to their effectiveness. Several factors contribute to the challenges of maintaining network reliability. Communication failures can occur as IoT sensor networks rely on wireless communication, which can be susceptible to interference, signal degradation, and environmental obstacles. Such failures can lead to data loss or transmission delays, ultimately undermining the real-time capabilities of smart city applications. To mitigate this issue, robust communication protocols must be developed to adapt to changing conditions and ensure reliable data transmission despite disruptions.

Additionally, deploying many sensors in urban environments increases the likelihood of device failures due to environmental factors, wear and tear, or battery depletion. These failures can create data collection gaps and reduce the sensor network's overall effectiveness. Implementing redundancy strategies, such as deploying backup sensors or using self-healing network designs, can help maintain reliability, but these solutions may require additional resources and increase costs. Furthermore, the demand for additional sensors and data collection points increases as smart cities grow. Scaling up an existing sensor network can introduce network management, coordination, and data integration challenges. Ensuring the network remains reliable while accommodating new devices requires careful planning and developing scalable solutions that efficiently handle increased data flow and device density.

Data security is another significant concern for IoT sensor networks, particularly in smart cities where sensitive information is collected and transmitted. IoT devices can be vulnerable to cyberattacks, including unauthorized access, data tampering, and Denial-of-Service (DoS) attacks. Such vulnerabilities can compromise the integrity and availability of sensor networks, leading to data loss or manipulation. Ensuring robust security measures, including encryption, authentication, and intrusion detection systems, is essential to protect sensor networks from malicious attacks. The collection and transmission of personal or sensitive data, such as location information or environmental conditions affecting health, raise privacy concerns among citizens. Users may be apprehensive about collecting, storing, and utilizing their data. Establishing transparent data governance policies and employing anonymization techniques can alleviate privacy concerns and build public trust in smart city initiatives.

Furthermore, implementing effective security measures in IoT sensor networks adds complexity to network management. Ensuring all devices are secured, regularly updated, and compliant with security standards can be resource-intensive. Continuous monitoring and assessing security vulnerabilities requires dedicated resources, which may be challenging for many cities.

The initial cost of deploying IoT sensor networks can be a significant barrier to optimizing energy efficiency in smart cities. Establishing an IoT sensor network requires significant investment in hardware, software, and infrastructure. The costs of purchasing sensors, communication equipment, and data management systems can be substantial, particularly for cities with limited budgets. This initial financial outlay can deter cities from adopting smart technologies and implementing energy-efficient solutions. In addition to the upfront costs, ongoing maintenance, and operational expenses can pose challenges. Ensuring that the sensor network operates reliably requires regular maintenance, software updates, and troubleshooting, all of which add to the total cost of ownership. Cities must consider the long-term financial implications of deploying IoT sensor networks, including potential savings from energy efficiency improvements. Moreover, implementing IoT sensor networks often requires specialized skills and knowledge in data analytics, network management, and cybersecurity. Hiring or training personnel with the necessary expertise can incur additional costs. Furthermore, ongoing training may be required to keep staff up-to-date with rapidly evolving technologies and best practices, further straining city budgets.

In conclusion, optimizing energy efficiency in smart city IoT sensor networks presents various challenges that must be addressed to ensure successful implementation. Network reliability, data security, and the initial cost of deployment are critical factors that can hinder progress. By proactively tackling these challenges through robust strategies, effective planning, and collaboration among stakeholders, cities can enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of their smart city initiatives. Ultimately, overcoming these obstacles is essential for realizing the full potential of energy-efficient IoT sensor networks and fostering a more sustainable urban future.

## 5 | Future Directions for Enhancing Energy Efficiency

As smart city initiatives evolve, emerging technologies and trends present significant opportunities to improve the energy efficiency of IoT sensor networks further. By leveraging advancements in edge computing, ML, and other innovative solutions, cities can enhance data processing, optimize resource allocation, and reduce energy consumption.

Edge computing refers to decentralized data processing closer to the generation source rather than relying solely on centralized cloud servers. This approach offers several benefits for energy efficiency in IoT networks. By processing data at the edge, cities can minimize the volume of data transmitted to the cloud, thereby reducing bandwidth usage and associated energy costs. This localized data processing allows quicker responses to real-time events, such as traffic management and environmental monitoring, without the delays caused by long-distance data transmission. Furthermore, edge devices can filter and aggregate data before sending it to the cloud, ensuring that only relevant and processed information is transmitted. This selective approach reduces unnecessary data transfer, conserving energy and extending the lifespan of battery-operated sensors. Additionally, edge computing enables real-time analytics and decision-making, allowing sensors to act autonomously based on local data. This capability enhances operational efficiency by enabling devices to adapt to changing conditions without relying on cloud processing, ultimately saving energy.

ML and Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies are rapidly advancing and hold the potential to improve energy efficiency in smart city IoT networks significantly. ML algorithms can analyze historical data to identify patterns and predict future energy consumption. By understanding usage trends, cities can optimize sensor operation schedules, adjust data sampling rates, and implement proactive energy-saving measures. Moreover, AI can facilitate intelligent resource management by dynamically adjusting the operation of sensors based on real-time conditions. For instance, AI algorithms can determine when to activate or deactivate sensors, thereby minimizing energy consumption during periods of low activity. Additionally, ML can enhance network optimization by analyzing traffic patterns and energy usage, leading to the development of adaptive routing strategies that minimize energy consumption and prolong the operational lifespan of the network.

Future advancements in energy harvesting technologies can further enhance the sustainability of IoT sensor networks. Innovations in solar, wind, and kinetic energy harvesting can provide more efficient and reliable sensor power sources, reducing reliance on traditional battery power. By integrating these technologies with energy-efficient designs, cities can develop self-sustaining networks capable of operating indefinitely without needing battery replacements.

The rollout of 5G technology is poised to revolutionize the communication landscape for smart cities. 5 G's increased bandwidth, lower latency, and enhanced connectivity will facilitate more efficient data transmission and reduce energy consumption in IoT networks. With the ability to connect many devices simultaneously, 5G technology can enable more seamless integration of sensors, resulting in optimized energy usage and improved system performance.

As smart city IoT networks expand, the need for standardization and interoperability among devices and systems becomes increasingly important. Developing universal protocols and standards will enable different sensors and platforms to communicate effectively, reducing duplication and inefficiencies. Cities can streamline energy management processes and improve overall system efficiency by fostering interoperability.

# 6 | Conclusion

The optimization of energy efficiency in IoT sensor networks is pivotal for the sustainable development of smart cities. This research has highlighted the critical role that IoT technologies play in enhancing urban functionality through real-time data collection and analysis. As urban areas continue to expand, the need for efficient resource management becomes increasingly urgent, making energy-efficient IoT networks essential.

Examining various optimization techniques, including data aggregation, sleep modes, energy-efficient routing protocols, and the integration of renewable energy sources, it is clear that a multifaceted approach is necessary to tackle the energy consumption challenges faced by IoT sensor networks. Each technique contributes uniquely to reducing energy expenditure, thereby prolonging the lifespan of sensor devices and minimizing environmental impact.

However, several challenges remain in optimizing energy efficiency. Issues related to network reliability, data security, and the initial costs of deployment pose significant barriers to the widespread adoption of these technologies. Addressing these challenges requires continued innovation and collaboration among researchers, urban planners, and technology developers to create robust, scalable, and secure IoT solutions.

Emerging technologies such as edge computing and ML present exciting opportunities for enhancing energy efficiency in smart city IoT networks. Cities can optimize resource allocation and operational performance by leveraging localized data processing and intelligent analytics. Additionally, advancements in energy harvesting techniques and the deployment of 5G technology will further support the development of sustainable, resilient urban infrastructures.

In conclusion, integrating energy-efficient strategies and emerging technologies is crucial for realizing smart city initiatives. As cities worldwide strive for sustainability and improved quality of life for their residents, implementing optimized IoT sensor networks will play a key role in achieving these goals. This research underscores the importance of ongoing efforts to develop innovative solutions that align technological advancements with the pressing need for environmental stewardship in urban environments.

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## Author Contribution

Bedabrata Chakraborty: conception, design, literature review, data analysis, interpretation, manuscript drafting, revision, intellectual content, clarity, coherence, optimization techniques, energy efficiency, smart city, IoT sensor networks, research outcomes.

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## Data Availability

The data used and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper. If necessary, these sections should be tailored to reflect the specific details and contributions.

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