Smart Water Management for Sustainable Development: Bridging Groundwater-Surface Water Dynamics Amid Climate Change

Muhammad Qumrul Hassan[1*]

[1]Department of Geology, Faculty of Earth Environmental Sciences, University of Dhaka

(*Corresponding E-mail: mqhassan@du.ac.bd)

Abstract: Smart Water Management (SWM) integrates advanced technologies—IoT, AI, machine learning, and remote sensing—to optimize water use amid climate-induced stress. Through real-time monitoring, predictive analytics, and automated control, SWM enhances efficiency, mitigates scarcity, and safeguards quality. It enables spatiotemporal assessment of recharge and contamination while supporting adaptive, data-driven governance. By aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6), SWM promotes equitable access, transparency, and resilience. Despite challenges posed by regulatory and institutional gaps, SWM establishes a cyber-hydrological framework that integrates digital intelligence with sustainable management to achieve long-term water security and climate adaptation.

Keywords: ***Smart water management, Sustainable development, Climate change.***

Introduction

Smart Water Management (SWM) plays a vital role in advancing sustainable development amid escalating climate-induced pressures on global water resources (Hassan et al., 2018). Integrating advanced technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), remote sensing, and predictive analytics enables comprehensive, real-time understanding of hydrological processes, groundwater recharge, and ecosystem dynamics. Climate variability increasingly disrupts groundwater–surface water interactions, altering recharge patterns and intensifying resource scarcity. SWM facilitates adaptive and data-driven strategies—such as optimized irrigation scheduling, leak detection, and efficient water allocation—that enhance conservation, resilience, and infrastructure performance. According to Loukika et al. (2025) and Adelekan et al. (2024), these smart systems transform water governance through automation, continuous monitoring, and predictive maintenance. Ultimately, SWM enhances resource efficiency, mitigates climate risks, strengthens ecosystem stability, and ensures equitable, sustainable, and climate-resilient water management across multiple spatial and temporal scales.

Smart Water Management

Smart water management integrates advanced technologies—such as IoT sensors, AI, cloud computing, and automation—to monitor, and regulate water use in real time (Singh et al., 2024; Rousso et al., 2023). It enhances efficiency and sustainability through real-time monitoring, data analytics, automated controls, secure communication, and user-friendly management interfaces. (Hassan, 2017).

Climate Change Impact

Climate change disrupts water systems by altering precipitation patterns, intensifying droughts and floods, and accelerating glaciers and snowpack melt (Figure 1). These changes reduce water availability, increase contamination risks, and heighten competition among users. Saltwater intrusion, infrastructure stress, and ecosystem imbalances further threaten sustainable water supply and quality (Azad et al., 2021).

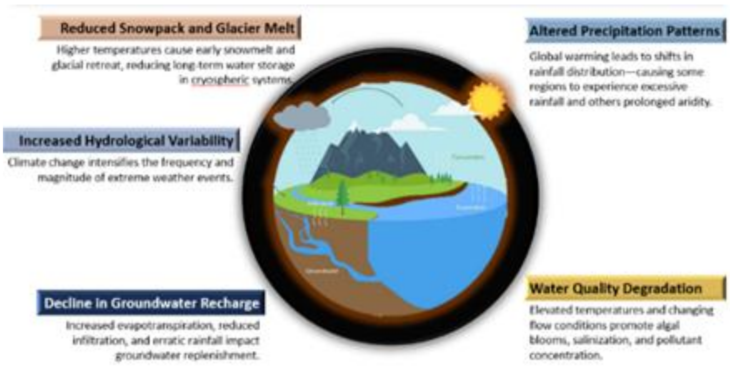

Figure 1, Climate Change impact patterns on Water resource management.

Declining Groundwater

Climate change accelerates groundwater decline by intensifying droughts, reducing precipitation recharge, and increasing evaporation rates (Figure 2). Higher temperatures and shifting rainfall patterns lead to diminished aquifer replenishment, while greater agricultural and urban demand further exacerbating depletion. Declining groundwater levels subsequently threaten drinking water supply, food security, and ecosystem services. (Hassan et al, 2021).

Degrading Water Quality

Climate change degrades groundwater quality by increasing pollutant infiltration from extreme rainfall, raising temperatures that boost microbial growth, and exacerbating saltwater intrusion in coastal aquifers (Figure 3). Additionally, over-extraction during climate-induced shortages risks land subsidence and deterioration of water quality. These changes elevate health risks and compromise water safety, demanding more advanced monitoring and treatment strategies (Raza et al., 2022).

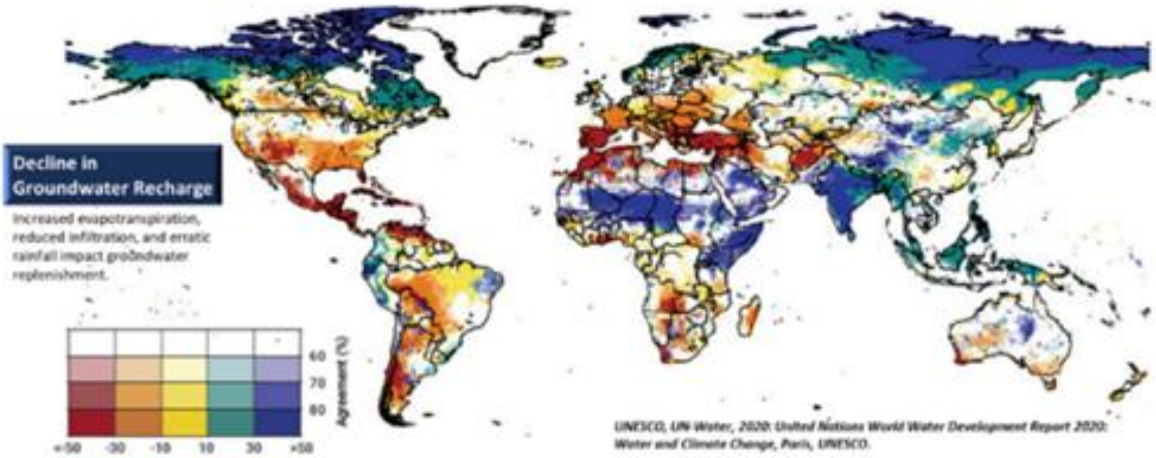

Figure 2, Global climate change impact on declining groundwater resources.

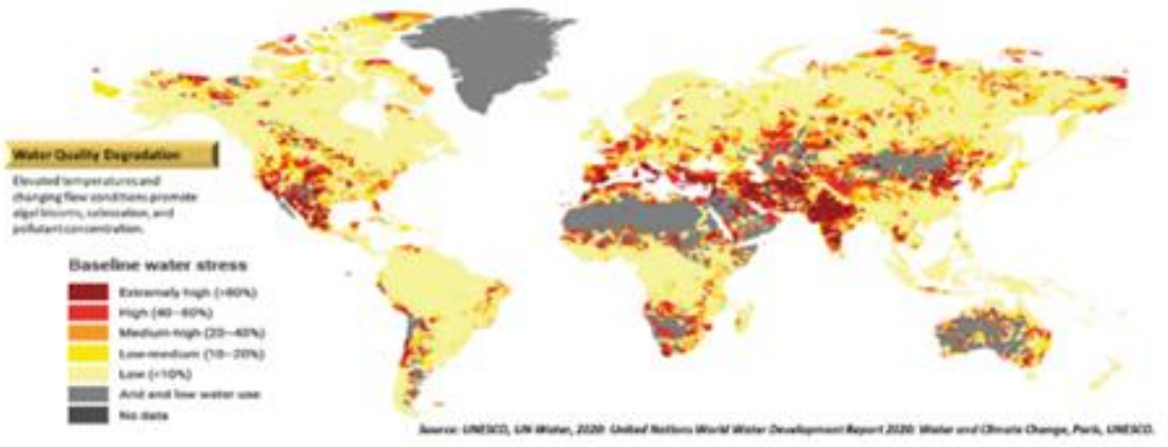

Figure 3, Global climate change impact on degrading water quality.

Smart Water Solutions

Smart water solutions integrate IoT sensors, analytics, and automation to optimize usage, minimize waste, and ensure quality. Agencies such as the USGS and the EEA (2025) emphasize adaptive management for groundwater protection.

Benefits include real-time leak detection, predictive maintenance, efficiency, cost reduction, sustainability, and enhanced climate resilience, supporting sustainable development (Figure 4; Hassan, 2019; Hassan et al., 2022).

Sustainable Development

Smart water management combines advanced technologies with community-led resilience to optimize water use, reduce waste, and enhance quality. By integrating local knowledge, governance, and adaptive strategies, it strengthens climate resilience, safeguards groundwater, and supports SDG 6. Measurable outcomes include reduced consumption, improved quality, greater participation, and enhanced health and livelihoods.

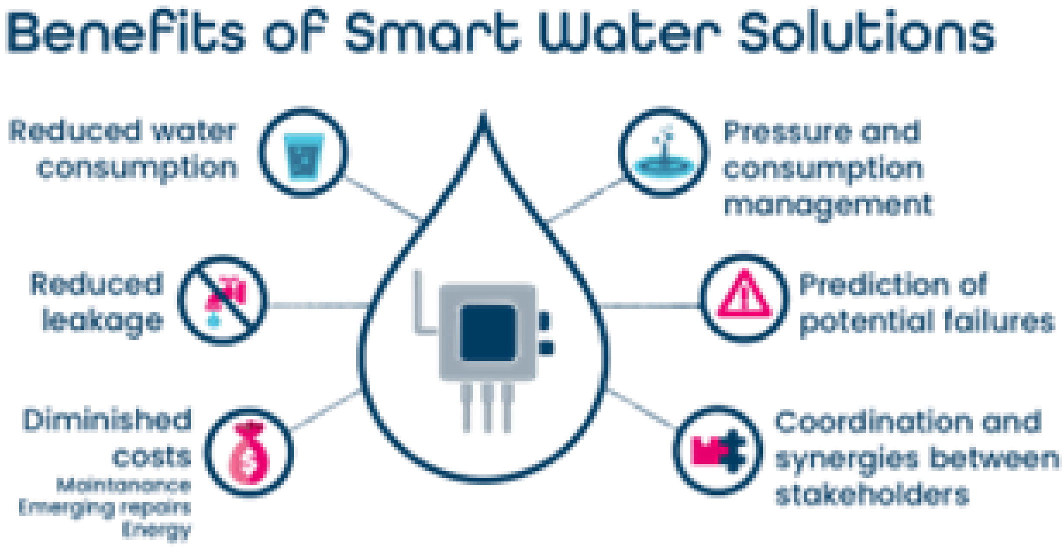

Figure 4, Benefits of smart water solutions.

Policy

Smart Water Management (SWM) policies assess how effectively governmental frameworks support technology integration, sustainability, equity, and adaptability. Effective policies enable cross-sector collaboration, promote innovation, foster inclusive governance, and ensure monitoring, while addressing regulatory, funding, and implementation barriers to achieve resilient, efficient, and equitable water management. Regulatory gaps in smart water management policies often result in insufficient coverage of emerging water issues and unclear enforcement protocols. Enforcement challenges include resource constraints, political influence, and limited monitoring capacity, leading to inconsistent implementation. These factors hinder effective regulation, reducing policy impact and water security outcomes.

Conclusions

Smart Water Management (SWM) is a transformative approach to address the escalating challenges of water scarcity, deteriorating water quality, and climate variability. By integrating surface and groundwater systems with advanced digital technologies, SWM fosters a holistic understanding and effective, data-driven intervention. These adaptive frameworks utilize IoT-based monitoring, coupled hydrological modeling, and predictive analytics to enhance responsiveness, efficiency, and resilience. Achieving sustainable, equitable water management requires not only technological innovation but also robust policies, inclusive governance, and active collaboration among public, private, and community stakeholders. Ultimately, aligning innovation with institutional reform ensures water security for all and supports long-term sustainable development.

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