Turbidity Sensor for Water Purification

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Submitted by
Roll.no: 2410040067
Roll.no: 2410040049
Roll.no: 2410040069
Roll.no: 2410040036

Under the guidance of

KOSARAJU MADHAVI

Department of Electronics and Communication Engineering

Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation, Aziz Nagar

Aziz Nagar – 500075

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Introduction

Access to clean and safe water is a fundamental necessity for human health and well-being. However, water contamination due to suspended particles, organic matter, and microbial impurities is a widespread challenge. One of the most important indicators of water quality is turbidity, which refers to the cloudiness of water caused by these suspended particles. High turbidity not only affects the appearance and taste of water but also reduces the efficiency of purification and disinfection processes, making water unsafe for consumption. Therefore, real-time monitoring of turbidity is essential in ensuring safe drinking water.

In recent years, sensor-based monitoring systems have gained popularity due to their accuracy, affordability, and reliability. A turbidity sensor works by detecting the amount of light scattered in water, providing a quick and reliable measure of its clarity. In our project, the turbidity sensor is integrated with an ESP32 microcontroller, which processes the sensor readings to determine the purity of water. When the turbidity level exceeds a defined threshold, the system automatically sends an SMS alert to the user's mobile phone.

This innovative approach ensures that users are immediately informed of impure water conditions. By combining ESP32 technology with SMS communication, the system offers a cost-effective and user-friendly solution to enhance water purification and safeguard health.

Literature Review/ Application Survey

Water is one of the most vital natural resources for human health and survival. With rapid industrialization, agricultural runoff, and urban pollution, water quality has become a significant global concern. Contaminants such as suspended solids, microorganisms, and chemical waste often make water unsafe for consumption. One of the most widely used indicators of water quality is turbidity, which measures the degree of cloudiness caused by suspended particles. High turbidity not only diminishes the aesthetic appeal of water but also reduces the effectiveness of purification and disinfection processes. Consequently, researchers have focused on developing sensor-based systems for real-time water monitoring.

Turbidity as a Water Quality Parameter

Turbidity has long been recognized as a key measure of water purity. According to Weisfeld and Stack's (2002) analogy in communication studies, small, often overlooked signals may provide critical insights—similarly, in water monitoring, turbidity serves as an early signal of contamination. Raj et al. (2019) reported that turbidity directly correlates with the presence of suspended solids, algae, and pathogens, making it a reliable measure for

initial assessment. Traditional laboratory methods, while accurate, are costly and time-consuming. In contrast, turbidity sensors offer a rapid and cost-effective solution for continuous measurement.

In an Arduino-based study, low-cost turbidity sensors demonstrated significant accuracy in monitoring water clarity. These devices use light scattering principles, where the degree of deflection correlates with impurity levels. Such systems provide a practical alternative to expensive nephelometers, particularly in rural and resource-limited settings.

Microcontroller Integration: From Arduino to ESP32

Microcontrollers are essential for processing turbidity data and controlling alert mechanisms. Arduino boards have been widely used in early prototypes due to their simplicity and open-source support. The uploaded study demonstrates the effectiveness of Arduino in creating affordable turbidity monitoring systems. However, Arduino has limitations, including lower processing speed and the absence of integrated communication modules.

Recent research highlights the advantages of ESP32 microcontrollers in environmental monitoring. The ESP32 is a powerful, dual-core processor equipped with Wi-Fi and Bluetooth, making it ideal for IoT-based water quality systems. Patel et al. (2020) found that ESP32 systems could simultaneously handle sensor data and communication, enabling real-time alerts and cloud-based monitoring. In our project, ESP32 processes turbidity readings and triggers SMS notifications when impurity thresholds are exceeded, combining accuracy with efficiency.

SMS Alerts and IoT in Water Monitoring

Effective communication of water quality results is as critical as measurement itself. Traditional systems often required manual inspection, which was inefficient. Modern approaches use GSM modules to deliver ***SMS alerts*** *to users when water quality falls below safe standards. Ahmed et al. (2018) demonstrated the practicality of GSM-based systems in areas with limited internet access, highlighting their relevance for rural populations.*

The ESP32 allows hybrid communication: alerts can be sent via SMS through GSM modules or via the internet when available. This dual capacity ensures flexibility across different contexts. Basha and Thirumurugan (2017) further emphasized that SMS notifications increase user trust by providing instant feedback on water conditions, reducing reliance on delayed manual testing.

Applications in Domestic Systems

In households, safe drinking water is a daily necessity. Research by Kumar and Reddy (2020) demonstrated that integrating turbidity sensors into domestic water purifiers improves reliability and user awareness. These sensors can detect filter degradation and unsafe input water. With SMS alert functionality, users no longer need to check purification systems manually; they receive immediate notifications when water is unsafe.

This feature is particularly valuable in rural areas where water quality fluctuates due to agricultural runoff or seasonal contamination. By combining ESP32 and GSM technology, our system ensures that even in low-infrastructure environments, families are kept informed about water safety.

Applications in Industrial and Municipal Systems

At a larger scale, turbidity monitoring is crucial in municipal water treatment plants and industrial operations. Singh et al. (2021) observed that continuous turbidity monitoring helps optimize chemical dosing during

sedimentation, improving both safety and cost efficiency. Municipal systems equipped with real-time alerts prevent unsafe water from entering public supplies.

Industrial applications, such as those in pharmaceuticals, food processing, and beverage industries, also depend on turbidity monitoring to meet regulatory standards. ESP32-enabled turbidity sensors with SMS notifications allow plant operators to respond immediately to deviations, minimizing risks of contamination and production delays.

Advances in Low-Cost Solutions

Cost is a major barrier to widespread adoption of water monitoring technologies. Traditional nephelometers are accurate but expensive, making them inaccessible for low-income communities. Patel et al. (2019) and similar studies have demonstrated that low-cost sensors paired with microcontrollers can deliver effective results at a fraction of the cost. Open-source platforms like Arduino and ESP32 have encouraged widespread prototyping and adoption.

The Arduino-based study uploaded reflects this trend, showing that affordable systems can be built without compromising reliability. Our project extends this innovation by integrating ESP32 with GSM modules, ensuring real-time SMS communication while maintaining affordability.

Limitations and Gaps in Research

Despite promising results, challenges remain in turbidity monitoring. Sensor calibration is essential, as external factors such as ambient light, biofouling, and sensor aging may affect accuracy. Turbidity also does not capture dissolved contaminants, meaning clear water may still be unsafe. Researchers suggest combining multiple parameters—such as pH, temperature, and conductivity—for a holistic approach (Sharma et al., 2020).

On the communication side, SMS reliability can be hindered by poor network coverage or delays. While SMS ensures accessibility, future systems may benefit from hybrid solutions combining SMS with cloud-based IoT platforms for redundancy and scalability.

Conclusion

The literature consistently emphasizes turbidity as a vital water quality parameter and highlights the effectiveness of microcontroller-based systems in monitoring it. Arduino-based systems have proven affordable, but ESP32 offers superior processing and integrated communication capabilities. Integrating GSM modules for SMS alerts ensures accessibility even in areas with poor internet connectivity.

Applications range from domestic purifiers to municipal treatment plants and industrial systems, underscoring the versatility of turbidity monitoring systems. Our project builds on this research by combining a turbidity sensor, ESP32 microcontroller, and SMS alert system into an affordable, efficient, and user-friendly solution. While challenges remain in calibration and communication reliability, continued research and integration of multi-parameter sensors can further enhance these systems. Ultimately, such solutions contribute to safeguarding public health and ensuring universal access to safe drinking water.