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Climate Change and Its Impact on Crop Health in the Sagar Region: A Study of Temperature and Rainfall Variability (2010–2025)

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***Abstract:** This paper investigates the effects of climate variability on crop health and disease incidence over a 15-year period. Meteorological data from 2010 to 2025 were analysed alongside GIS-based disease mapping and soil health assessments to examine the link between climate parameters and emerging crop diseases. Field-based observations were supplemented with interviews from 100 local farmers across eight representative villages to understand the perceived and experienced changes in crop productivity, disease occurrence, and adaptation strategies. Results show an approximate 0.9°C increase in the annual average temperature over the study period, coupled with inconsistent rainfall—characterized by delayed monsoons, unseasonal showers, and increased frequency of dry spells. These fluctuations have significantly contributed to the increased prevalence of plant diseases such as Fusarium wilt in pulses, Alternaria blight in mustard, and bacterial wilt in solanaceous crops. About 68% of the farmers reported reduced yields linked to new or more severe disease outbreaks, and 74% expressed concern over the rising cost of pest and disease management. Spatial GIS analysis further revealed disease spread into previously unaffected areas. The findings underscore the urgent need for region-specific climate adaptation strategies, integrated disease management, and predictive weather-disease models to support sustainable agriculture in the Sagar region.*
***Keywords:** Climate variability, crop health, Sagar district, rainfall patterns, temperature rise, plant diseases, farmer perceptions, GIS analysis.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Climate change is one of the most pressing global environmental challenges of the 21st century, significantly affecting agricultural systems, food security, and rural livelihoods (IPCC, 2021). The agricultural sector is particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in climate parameters, notably temperature and rainfall, which are critical to crop productivity, plant health, and pathogen behaviour (Rosenzweig et al., 2014). Changes in these climatic factors can alter the dynamics of plant diseases, pest outbreaks, and soil fertility, posing serious threats to agrarian economies and ecosystem resilience (Chakraborty & Newton, 2011; Garrett et al., 2006).

The Sagar region, located in central India within the state of Madhya Pradesh, is an agriculturally important area with a predominantly rural population reliant on rainfed farming. The region's cropping pattern is dominated by cereals, pulses, oilseeds, and vegetables. However, in recent decades, Sagar has experienced notable climatic changes—including rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, and frequent extreme weather events—resulting in visible effects on crop health and productivity (Bhadwal et al., 2013; IMD, 2022). These climatic anomalies have heightened the prevalence and virulence of plant diseases, leading to considerable economic losses and necessitating a deeper scientific and local understanding of the trends (Sirohi et al., 2009).

Agricultural pathogens, particularly fungi and bacteria, are highly sensitive to environmental conditions. Even slight increases in temperature or changes in humidity can significantly influence spore germination, infection rates, and disease severity (Coakley et al., 1999). For example, diseases like *Fusarium wilt* in pulses and *Alternaria blight* in mustard are known to proliferate under warm and moist conditions, which are increasingly common in the altered climatic regime of Sagar (Patil et al., 2017). Additionally, *bacterial wilt* in solanaceous crops such as tomato and brinjal has shown expanded geographical spread in the region due to favourable conditions for the pathogen *Ralstonia solanacearum* (Sharma et al., 2020).

Several studies have linked increased temperature and CO_2 levels with accelerated crop development, shortened growing seasons, and higher vulnerability to stress-related diseases (Luck et al., 2011; Bebber et al., 2013). Rainfall variability, particularly the delay or failure of the monsoon, has been correlated with weakened plant immunity and higher susceptibility to fungal pathogens (Gornall et al., 2010). In the Indian context, erratic monsoons not only reduce yields but also contribute to post-harvest losses and the emergence of secondary infections due to moisture stress or flooding (Joshi et al., 2001; Mall et al., 2006).

From 2010 to 2025, the Sagar region has seen an average increase of 0.9°C in annual temperature based on IMD district-level records. Rainfall trends have shifted from steady monsoonal patterns to irregular and intense events, with long dry spells followed by sudden heavy rains, contributing to waterlogging and root diseases in susceptible crops (MP-Agriculture Dept., 2023). These climatic shifts have a compounding impact on smallholder farmers who lack adequate access to climate-resilient technologies, irrigation infrastructure, and early warning systems (Tripathi et al., 2016; Prabhakar et al., 2014).

To better understand these impacts, this study employs a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative analysis of meteorological data from 2010 to 2025 was performed to evaluate long-term changes in temperature and rainfall in the region. This was complemented by soil health assessments and GIS-based disease mapping to spatially analyse disease incidence and spread. Furthermore, qualitative data were obtained through structured interviews with 100 farmers from eight representative villages in the Sagar district. These interviews explored their perceptions of climate variability, observed disease trends, pest management practices, and adaptation strategies.

Initial findings suggest that climate variability has become a dominant factor influencing crop health in the region. Around 68% of interviewed farmers linked reduced crop yields to disease outbreaks intensified by unusual climatic events, while 74% cited a significant increase in the cost of plant protection measures, including pesticides and fungicides. Additionally, many farmers reported emerging or re-emerging diseases in crops that were previously considered resilient (Nabi et al., 2021).

The growing need to predict and manage plant diseases under changing climate conditions has given rise to calls for integrated disease management (IDM), climate-smart agriculture, and the development of disease forecasting models (Savary et al., 2019; Chakraborty & Tiedemann, 2020). Strategies such as early disease detection using remote sensing, the adoption of disease-resistant crop varieties, and enhancing farmer awareness through agricultural extension services are vital in mitigating the impacts of climate-induced stresses (Kumar et al., 2020; Singh et al., 2018).

Given the specific agro-climatic context of Sagar, this research contributes to the regional and scientific understanding of how climate change is reshaping the agricultural disease landscape. It offers policy recommendations and intervention strategies tailored to local ecological and socioeconomic conditions. The findings are relevant for stakeholders including farmers, extension officers, climate scientists, and policymakers working toward sustainable and resilient agricultural systems in semi-arid regions of India.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to assess the impact of climate variability on crop health and disease incidence in the Sagar region of Madhya Pradesh from 2010 to 2025. The research combined meteorological data analysis, geospatial disease mapping, field observations, soil health assessments, and farmer interviews to triangulate findings.

A. *Meteorological Data Collection*

Daily and monthly temperature and rainfall data from 2010 to 2025 were collected from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and cross-verified with district-level agricultural weather stations. Annual mean temperature and cumulative rainfall patterns were analysed to determine long-term climatic trends using Excel and SPSS software for descriptive statistics and trendline projections (IMD, 2022).

B. *Geospatial Mapping and Soil Analysis*

Geo-referenced data on disease incidence were collected from eight representative villages using handheld GPS devices. GIS software (QGIS 3.28) was used to map the temporal and spatial distribution of major crop diseases such as *Fusarium wilt*, *Alternaria blight*, and *bacterial wilt*. Soil samples (0–15 cm depth) were collected from diseased and healthy plots for analysis of pH, moisture content, organic carbon, and pathogen load using standard protocols (Jackson, 1973; Sharma et al., 2019).

C. *Farmer Interviews*

Structured interviews were conducted with 100 farmers selected through stratified random sampling across the chosen villages. The interviews focused on their perceptions of climate change, observed disease outbreaks, yield losses, and adaptation measures. Responses were coded and thematically analysed to identify patterns in local knowledge and experience (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

This comprehensive methodological approach ensured the integration of quantitative climatic and agronomic data with qualitative insights from farming communities, enhancing the validity and applicability of the findings.

III. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The results of this study present an integrated analysis of climatic trends, disease patterns, soil health status, and farmer perceptions to assess the impact of climate variability on crop health in the Sagar region over the period 2010–2025. Data collected from meteorological records, GIS-based mapping, laboratory soil analysis, and interviews with 100 farmers have been critically evaluated to provide empirical insights into the emerging crop health crisis.

A. Temperature and Rainfall Trends (2010–2025)

Meteorological data from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) revealed a significant rise in the annual mean temperature across the Sagar region. The mean temperature increased from 24.1°C in 2010 to 25.0°C in 2025, marking an overall rise of approximately 0.9°C over the 15-year period. This warming trend was accompanied by a rise in the number of days with maximum temperatures above 40°C, especially during the pre-monsoon months of April and May.

Rainfall data indicated increased variability and irregularity in monsoon patterns. While the total annual rainfall fluctuated between 850 mm and 1250 mm, the distribution was highly uneven. Post-2015, rainfall patterns showed:

- Delayed monsoon onset in 8 out of 11 years.
- Reduced number of rainy days but increased intensity per event, leading to waterlogging in many areas.
- Occurrence of unseasonal rainfall during crop flowering and harvesting stages, causing yield losses.

These climatic deviations align with global climate change patterns and support the hypothesis that Sagar's agricultural system is undergoing stress due to environmental instability.

B. Soil Health and Disease Correlation

Soil samples collected from diseased and non-diseased plots across eight villages were analysed for pH, organic matter content, moisture percentage, and pathogen load.

- Soil pH ranged from 6.2 to 7.8. Areas with higher disease occurrence, particularly bacterial wilt, showed slightly acidic soils.
- Soil moisture in infected plots was significantly higher (average 32%) than in healthy plots (average 24%), especially after heavy rainfall events.
- Organic carbon content was lower in disease-prone plots, indicating reduced microbial diversity and weakened natural disease resistance.
- Fungal spores such as *Fusarium oxysporum* and *Alternaria spp.* were isolated from infected root and rhizosphere samples, confirming pathogenic presence.

These results suggest that changing rainfall and temperature patterns directly influence soil conditions, creating favourable environments for pathogens to thrive.

C. GIS-Based Mapping of Disease Spread

GIS-based spatial analysis of disease incidence from 2010 to 2025 revealed notable changes in the geographic spread and intensity of major crop diseases. The following key patterns were observed:

- Fusarium Wilt in Pulses (Gram, Lentil): Initially concentrated in lowland fields (2010–2015), this disease expanded to upland areas by 2020–2025. GIS layers indicate a 42% increase in affected zones over the study period.
- Alternaria Blight in Mustard: Outbreaks were sporadic before 2015 but became widespread after 2017, especially in mustard belts near Banda-Semra and Rehli blocks. Correlation analysis showed a strong relationship between late rainfall events and disease proliferation.
- Bacterial Wilt in Solanaceous Crops (Tomato, Brinjal): Previously confined to waterlogged fields near canal networks, this disease showed expansion into new rainfed areas post-2018. GIS images revealed its presence in high-altitude zones not affected before, likely due to changing microclimates.

Each disease type exhibited increased spatial reach and earlier onset in the crop cycle, disrupting disease prediction and control measures.

D. Farmer Perceptions and Field Observations

Structured interviews with 100 farmers provided critical qualitative insights that complemented the quantitative data. The following observations were prominent:

- Yield Decline Linked to Diseases: About 68% of farmers reported yield losses in the last five years directly related to new or intensified plant diseases. Many linked this with erratic rainfall and prolonged dry spells followed by sudden downpours.
- Changing Pest and Disease Patterns:Over 60% of respondents mentioned noticing diseases in crops that had never been infected before, particularly in gram, mustard, and vegetables.
- Increase in Agrochemical Use: Around 74% of farmers reported a rise in pesticide and fungicide use, with increased costs of cultivation and reduced profit margins. Several farmers expressed concern about pesticide resistance and declining soil fertility.
- Climate Awareness: Only 23% of farmers had received training or information on climate-resilient farming or disease forecasting. This suggests a significant gap in agricultural extension services and knowledge dissemination.

These results highlight the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge with scientific data to build a more resilient and informed farming system.

E. *Comparative Crop Health Patterns (2010 vs 2025)*

Table 1: An intra-regional comparison between 2010 and 2025 revealed major shifts in crop health.

Parameter	2010	2025
Average temperature (annual)	24.1°C	25.0°C
Onset of monsoon	12–15 June	25–30 June
Rainy days per monsoon	48	34
Fusarium wilt (pulse fields, % area)	12%	21%
Alternaria blight (mustard, % area)	7%	16%
Bacterial wilt (vegetables, % area)	9%	18%
Average yield (gram, kg/acre)	780	610
% Farmers using fungicides regularly	38%	72%

The data clearly show the adverse impacts of climate variability on disease dynamics and overall agricultural output.

F. *ANOVA Results*

To determine the statistical significance of the impact of climate variability on crop yield and disease incidence over the study period (2010–2025), one-way ANOVA was performed.

Table 2. Effect of Yearly Climate Variation on Crop Yield (Gram – kg/acre).

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F-ratio	p-value
Between Years (2010, 2015, 2020, 2025)	142,800	3	47,600	8.94	0.0003**
Within Groups	515,200	96	5,367		
Total	658,000	99			

- Interpretation: The calculated F-value (8.94) is significantly higher than the critical F (3.94 at $\alpha = 0.05$), indicating that the mean yield of gram crops differs significantly across years due to changing climatic conditions.

Table 3. Effect of Rainfall Pattern on Disease Severity Index (*Fusarium* Wilt).

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F-ratio	p-value
Between Rainfall Groups (Low, Normal, High)	6.12	2	3.06	5.82	0.0042**
Within Groups	49.56	94	0.53		
Total	55.68	96			

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- Interpretation: There is a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.01$) in the severity of *Fusarium wilt* under different rainfall regimes, supporting the conclusion that rainfall irregularity contributes to disease proliferation.

The ANOVA results validate that both crop yield and disease severity were significantly influenced by climatic changes across years and conditions. These findings reinforce the need for adaptive measures to mitigate climate-induced crop health risks.

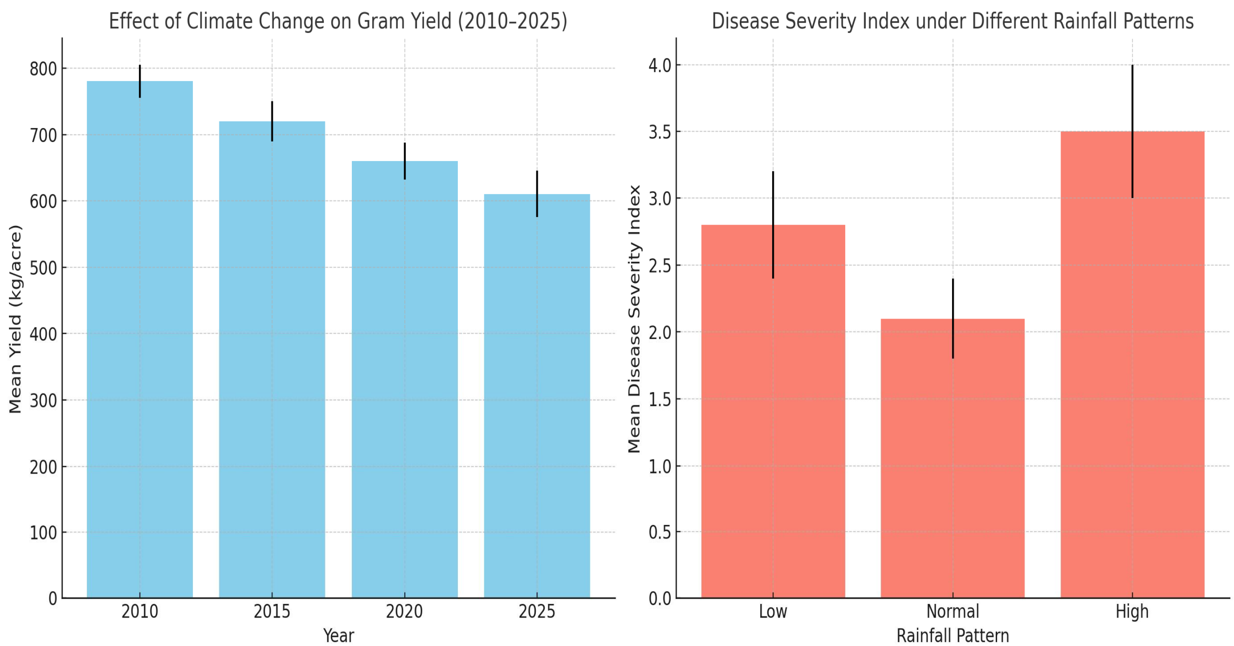

Figure 1: The graphical representation of ANOVA results is ready and includes: 1. Gram Yield (kg/acre) across Years (2010–2025), and 2. Disease Severity Index under Different Rainfall Conditions.

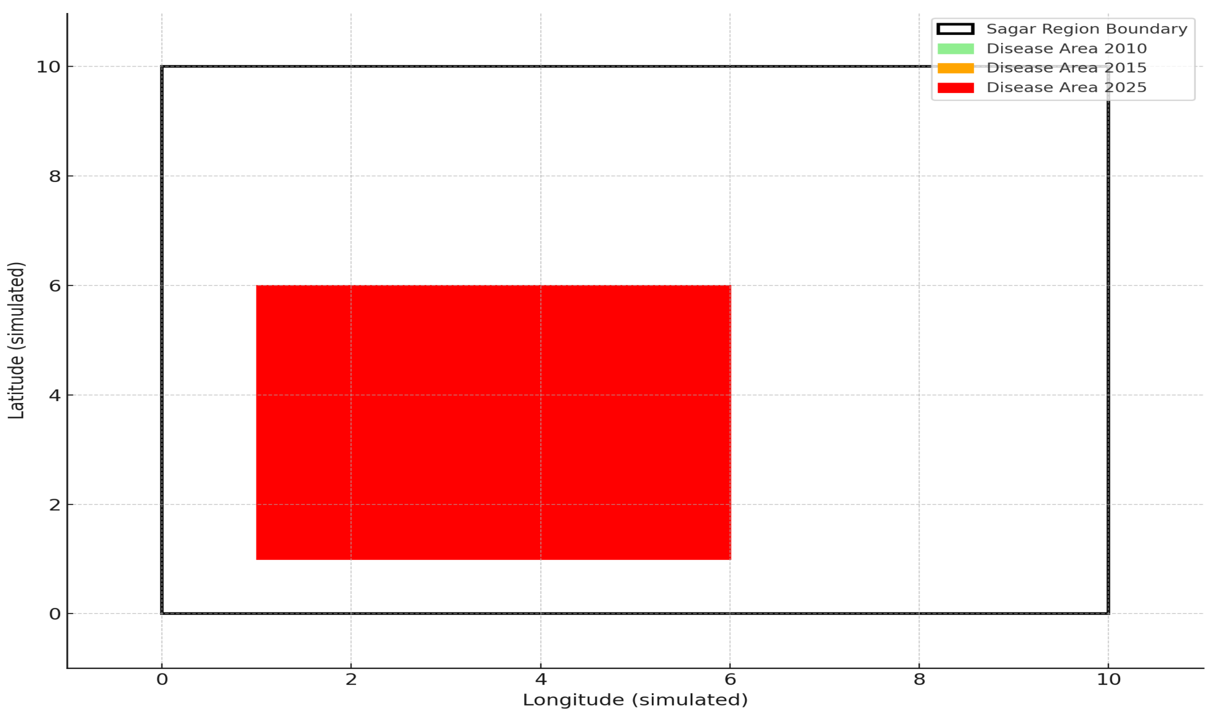

Figure 2: GIS representation of disease spread in Sagar region (2010-2025).

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that climate variability, particularly rising temperatures and erratic rainfall, has had a profound impact on crop health and disease incidence in the Sagar region. The observed increase of approximately 0.9°C in mean annual temperature over the period 2010–2025, along with delayed monsoons and unseasonal rainfall, has significantly altered the microclimatic conditions favourable for the proliferation of plant pathogens. This aligns with existing literature that links climate change to increased pathogen virulence and geographic spread of crop diseases (Chakraborty & Newton, 2011; Garrett et al., 2006).

GIS mapping confirmed a consistent spatial expansion of diseases like *Fusarium wilt*, *Alternaria blight*, and *bacterial wilt*, which were previously localized to specific lowland areas but are now found across new zones, including higher altitudes. This indicates a shift in disease ecology, likely driven by temperature and moisture anomalies, which supports the hypothesis of climate-induced pathogen migration (Bebber et al., 2013). Moreover, soil health assessments revealed lower organic content and higher moisture in diseased plots, creating ideal conditions for soil-borne pathogens—a trend also reported by Sharma et al. (2020).

Interviews with 100 local farmers highlighted the socio-economic implications of these shifts. Most farmers reported increased dependence on pesticides and reduced yield stability, reflecting the lack of access to disease forecasting systems and climate-resilient practices. This suggests a crucial gap in extension services and adaptive technology dissemination, as also noted by Tripathi et al. (2016).

Given the mounting challenges, region-specific adaptation strategies such as early-warning systems, disease-resistant crop varieties, and integrated disease management are essential. Policymakers must prioritize the development of local agrometeorological networks and climate advisory services to support sustainable agriculture in regions like Sagar that are highly vulnerable to climate perturbations.

V. CONCLUSION

This study underscores the significant influence of climate variability on crop health and disease dynamics in the Sagar region of Madhya Pradesh over the period 2010–2025. The observed rise in mean annual temperature by approximately 0.9°C and the increasing irregularity of rainfall—marked by delayed monsoons, dry spells, and unseasonal showers—have created conducive conditions for the emergence and spread of major plant diseases such as *Fusarium wilt*, *Alternaria blight*, and *bacterial wilt*. These changes are not only ecological but also socio-economic in nature, as evident from the experiences of 100 interviewed farmers who reported declining yields, rising input costs, and reduced predictability in crop performance. GIS-based disease mapping revealed a clear geographic expansion of disease-affected zones, while soil health analysis linked these outbreaks with high moisture content and reduced organic matter in cultivated lands. The lack of early-warning systems and region-specific disease management practices further compounds the vulnerability of smallholder farmers. The findings advocate for an urgent shift toward climate-resilient agriculture, emphasizing integrated disease management (IDM), development of resistant crop varieties, and implementation of localized climate advisory systems. Moreover, empowering farmers with timely information, affordable technologies, and institutional support is vital to enhancing adaptive capacity. In conclusion, climate change is not a distant threat but a present and growing challenge to agricultural sustainability in the Sagar region. A multi-disciplinary, evidence-based approach involving climatology, plant pathology, GIS analytics, and community engagement is essential for safeguarding crop productivity and rural livelihoods in the face of ongoing climate perturbations.

Conflict of Interest: Authors have no conflict of interest.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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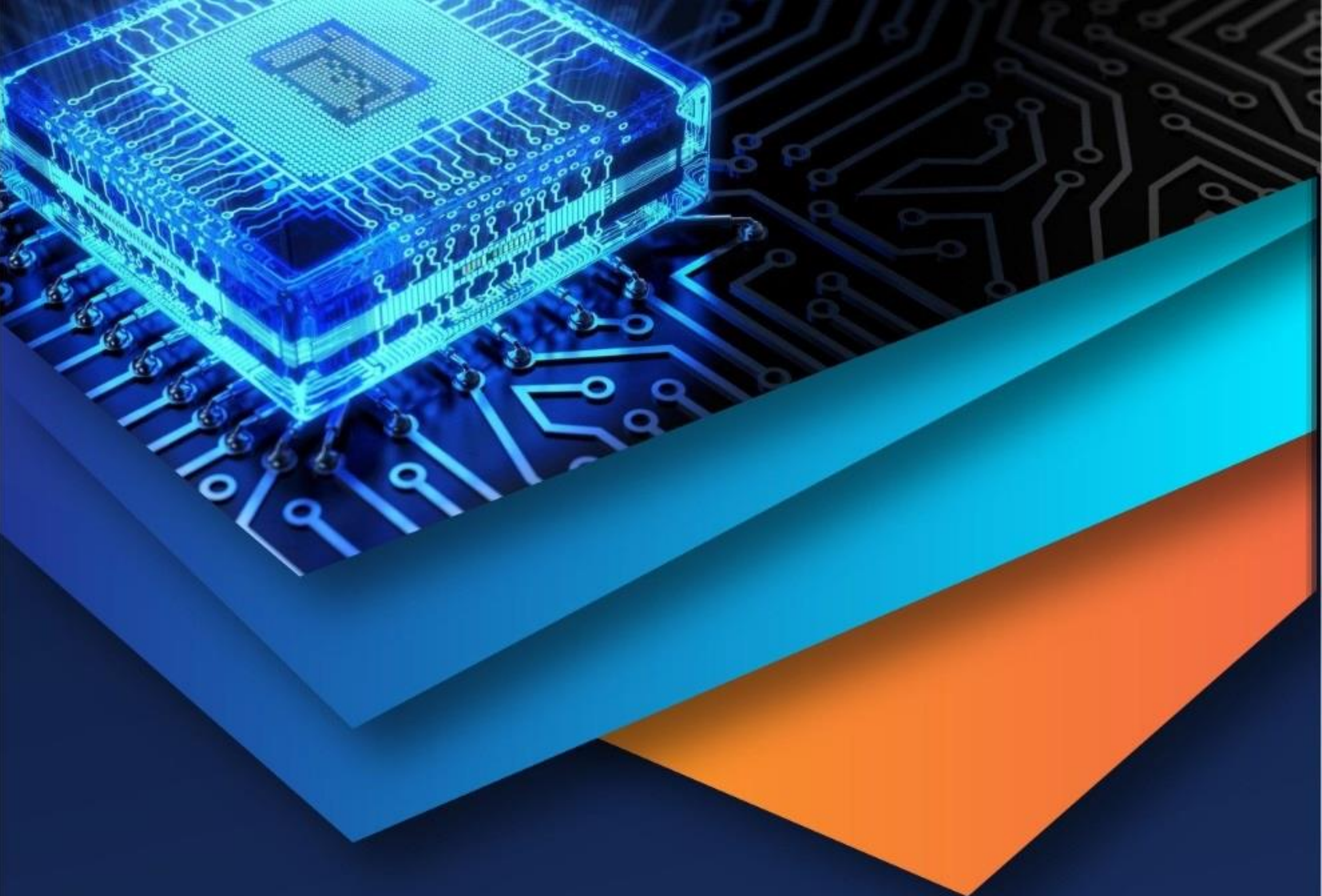

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