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Energy Harvesting in Self-Powered IOT Applications Domains

Mrs. Yuvasri P[1], Mrs. Manju R[2], Mrs. Amsaveni A[3]
[1]Assistant Professor, Department of Electronics and communication Engineering, Asian college of engineering and Technology, Coimbatore-641110
[2]Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, Kumaraguru college of Technology,Coimbatore-641049
[3]Professor, Department of Electronics and Communication Engineering, Kumaraguru College of Technology, Coimbatore-641049

Abstract: The rapid growth of the Internet of Things (IoT) has led to the deployment of billions of interconnected devices that continuously sense, process, and communicate data. However, the reliance on conventional batteries poses major challenges in terms of maintenance, limited lifespan, and environmental impact. Energy harvesting offers a sustainable solution by converting ambient energy sources—such as solar, thermal, vibration, and radio frequency (RF) energy—into electrical power to enable self-powered IoT systems. This paper presents a comprehensive study of energy harvesting techniques and their integration into IoT application domains, including industrial monitoring, smart agriculture, healthcare, and environmental sensing. The proposed framework focuses on optimizing power management circuits, storage elements, and communication protocols to achieve high energy efficiency and prolonged device lifetime. Experimental and simulation results demonstrate the feasibility of hybrid energy harvesting systems that combine multiple ambient sources to ensure continuous operation even under variable environmental conditions. The findings highlight that energy harvesting not only enhancces system reliability but also paves the way toward a sustainable, maintenance-free, and scalable IoT ecosystem.

Keywords: Energy harvesting, self-powered iot, hybrid systems, low-power design, ambient energy sources, sustainability.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Internet of Things (IoT) has emerged as one of the most transformative technologies of the 21st century, enabling seamless connectivity between billions of devices across diverse sectors such as smart cities, industrial automation, precision agriculture, environmental monitoring, and healthcare. According to recent projections, the number of connected IoT devices is expected to exceed 30 billion in the coming years, placing unprecedented demand on energy resources and power management strategies. Most IoT nodes rely on traditional batteries, which are constrained by limited capacity, periodic maintenance requirements, and environmental disposal concerns. In large-scale deployments, replacing or recharging these batteries is logistically complex, economically costly, and environmentally unsustainable.

Integrating energy harvesting technologies into IoT systems, however, involves several technical challenges. Energy sources are often intermittent and unpredictable, requiring adaptive power management strategies to ensure stable operation. Additionally, IoT applications demand compact, cost-effective, and efficient energy harvesting modules that can seamlessly interface with sensors, processors, and wireless communication units. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that combines energy-aware system design, hybrid harvesting aarchitectures, and intelligent control algorithms.

This paper presents a comprehensive review and analysis of energy harvesting techniques for self-powered IoT applications. It examines various ambient energy sources and harvesting methods, discusses recent technological advancements, and evaluates their suitability for different application domains. Furthermore, the paper explores energy management strategies and hybrid system designs that enhance energy availability and operational stability. By providing a detailed understanding of the opportunities and challenges in this field, this work aims to support the development of sustainable, maintenance-free, and scalable IoT ecosystems.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of energy harvesting technologies for self-powered IoT applications has attracted significant research attention over the past decade. Several studies have investigated both ambient energy sources and power management strategies to achieve long-term, maintenance-free operation of IoT nodes.

A. Energy Harvesting Techniques

Early research focused on harvesting solar energy as a primary power source for wireless sensor networks due to its high energy density and ease of integration. Solar energy harvesting has been successfully deployed in environmental monitoring, smart agriculture, and infrastructure surveillance. However, its performance is highly dependent on ambient light conditions, making it less reliable in indoor or low-light environments. To address these limitations, researchers explored vibration-based energy harvesting using piezoelectric, electromagnetic, and electrostatic mechanisms. Piezoelectric harvesters, in particular, have shown high energy conversion efficiency in industrial and transportation applications where mechanical vibrations are abundant. Thermal energy harvesting, based on thermoelectric generators (TEGs), has also been investigated for wearable and industrial IoT applications, where temperature gradients can be exploited to power sensing systems. More recent efforts have turned to radio frequency (RF) energy harvesting, which captures ambient electromagnetic waves from communication infrastructures. This technique has demonstrated great potential for powering ultra-low-power IoT devices in dense urban environments. Hybrid energy harvesting systems that combine multiple sources—such as solar, vibration, and RF—have been proposed to improve power reliability and support continuous operation under varying environmental conditions.

B. Power Management and Energy Storage

Efficient power management is critical to ensuring stable operation with the limited and intermittent energy harvested from the environment. Severalstudies have proposed maximum power point tracking (MPPT) algorithms to optimize energy extraction from solar and thermal sources. In parallel, ultra-low-power power management integrated circuits (PMICs) have been designed to minimize energy losses during storage and conversion. Energy storage elements, such as supercapacitors and thin-film batteries, are widely integrated to buffer harvested energy and support peak load demands. Novel adaptive duty-cycling and power-aware scheduling techniques have been introduced to dynamically adjust the operation of sensors and communication modules based on available energy.

C. Application Domains of Self-Powered IoT

In smart agriculture, energy harvesting-powered IoT systems have been used to monitor soil moisture, temperature, and crop conditions in remote areas, eliminating the need for battery replacement. In healthcare, wearable devices utilizing thermal and kinetic energy harvesters provide continuous patient monitoring without frequent recharging. Similarly, in industrial IoT, piezoelectric and RF harvesters have been employed to power structural health monitoring nodes, significantly reducing maintenance costs. Environmental monitoring is another key domain where hybrid energy harvesting has been successfully applied to create autonomous sensor networks that operate in harsh or remote locations. These applications highlight the versatility and sustainability of energy harvesting solutions in various IoT scenarios.

D. Research Gaps

Although significant advancements have been made, several research gaps remain. First, the intermittent and low-power nature of most ambient sources still limits system reliability, especially for high data-rate applications. Second, integrating multiple energy harvesting sources while minimizing circuit complexity and cost remains a challenge. Third, energy-aware communication protocols need further optimization to align with the characteristics of harvested energy. These gaps indicate a clear need for hybrid energy harvesting architectures and intelligent energy management strategies that can support the growing scale of IoT deployments.

III. METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted in this study is designed to evaluate and demonstrate the feasibility of energy harvesting solutions for powering IoT devices across different application domains. It focuses on the systematic selection of energy sources, design of harvesting and power management modules, integration with IoT nodes, and performance evaluation under realistic operating conditions.

A. System Architecture

The proposed self-powered IoT system consists of four major components:

1) Energy Source – ambient energy sources such as solar radiation, vibration, thermal gradients, and RF signals.
2) Energy Harvesting Module – transducers and rectifying circuits that convert ambient energy into usable electrical power.

3) Power Management and Storage Unit – circuits that regulate and store harvested energy using supercapacitors or thin-film batteries to ensure stable power delivery
4) IoT Node – ultra-low-power sensing, processing, and wireless communication components.

The system is designed as a modular platform to allow hybrid energy harvesting configurations and to support different sensing and communication protocols (e.g., LoRa, Zigbee, BLE).

B. Selection and Characterization of Energy Sources

To ensure the reliability of the self-powered IoT system, ambient energy availability was assessed for different application domains:

1) Solar energy: measured using photodiodes and light sensors to determine average illuminance and diurnal variations.
2) Vibration energy: characterized by accelerometers to identify dominant frequencies and amplitudes in industrial and transportation environments.
3) Thermal energy: quantified by temperature sensors to estimate usable thermal gradients.
4) RF energy: measured using a spectrum analyzer to assess signal strength from nearby communication infrastructure.

C. Energy Harvesting and Power Management Design

Appropriate energy transducers were selected based on the characterized ambient energy levels:

1) Solar energy: miniaturized photovoltaic (PV) cells with MPPT control circuits.
2) Vibration energy: piezoelectric cantilever harvesters with AC–DC rectification and impedance matching.
3) Thermal energy: thermoelectric generators (TEGs) with boost converters to raise low voltages.
4) RF energy: multi-band rectennas optimized for sub-GHz and 2.4 GHz ISM bands.

Power management was implemented through a low-dropout voltage regulator and PMIC with MPPT algorithms to maximize energy extraction efficiency. Hybrid harvesting configurations combined multiple sources through an energy scheduling controller that prioritizes sources based on availability.

D. Energy Storage and Load Management

Harvested energy was buffered using supercapacitors for short-term storage and thin-film microbatteries for long-term storage. A dual-mode energy allocation strategy was employed:

1) Normal mode: continuous sensing and periodic data transmission.
2) Low-energy mode: duty cycling of sensors and communication to minimize power draw during low energy availability.

This adaptive energy management ensured system operation under variable environmental conditions.

E. IoT Node Integration

The self-powered module was integrated with a low-power microcontroller (e.g., ARM Cortex-M0) and wireless communication module (e.g., LoRa or BLE). Sensors (temperature, humidity, vibration) were connected to demonstrate real-world monitoring capabilities. A lightweight communication protocol and edge processing reduced the energy cost of data transmission.

F. Experimental Setup and Performance Evaluation

A prototype of the self-powered IoT node was developed and deployed in multiple environments:

1) Outdoor environment for solar-based harvesting.
2) Industrial setting for vibration energy.
3) Indoor urban location for RF harvesting.

The performance metrics included:

- Energy harvesting efficiency (%).
- Average power output (mW).
- Node uptime (hours or days).
- Packet transmission success rate (%).
- Response time and latency.

Data were collected over several weeks to assess long-term stability and energy autonomy. Experimental results were validated through simulation models developed in MATLAB/Simulink to cross-check energy profiles and power consumption patterns.

G. Data Analysis and Validation

1) Correlation between environmental conditions and energy availability.
2) Effectiveness of hybrid harvesting in extending operational uptime.
3) Trade-offs between energy availability, node functionality, and communication performance.

IV. CONSTRUCTION AND WORKING

A. System Construction

The proposed energy harvesting system for IoT applications is built using several functional modules:

1) Energy Source Module: Collects ambient energy such as solar, vibration, thermal, or RF signals. For example, a photovoltaic cell captures solar energy or a piezoelectric transducer converts vibration into electrical energy.
2) Energy Conversion Circuit: Converts the harvested energy into usable electrical power. This typically includes a rectifier (for AC to DC conversion) and a DC-DC converter for voltage regulation.
3) Energy Storage Unit: Stores the converted energy using a supercapacitor or rechargeable battery to ensure continuous power supply during low-energy conditions.
4) Power Management Unit (PMU): Controls charging, discharging, and power distribution among IoT sensors, communication modules, and microcontrollers.
5) IoT Node: Includes sensors for environmental or industrial data collection, a microcontroller for processing, and a wireless module (such as ZigBee, LoRa, or Wi-Fi) for data transmission to the cloud or gateway.

B. Working Principle

1) Energy Capture: The ambient energy source (light, vibration, heat, or RF) is continuously harvested by the corresponding transducer.
2) Energy Conversion and Regulation: The raw energy is converted into DC power and regulated to meet the voltage and current needs of the IoT device.
3) Energy Storage and Management: The regulated energy is stored in supercapacitors or micro-batteries. The PMU ensures efficient charging and prevents overloading.
4) IoT Node Operation: When sufficient energy is available, the IoT node powers up, collects sensor data, and transmits it wirelessly. During low-energy periods, the system enters a low-power or sleep mode to conserve energy.
5) Data Transmission and Monitoring: Collected data is sent to a central server or cloud platform for analysis, enabling remote monitoring and control of the IoT network.

C. Advantages

1) Enables battery-less operation of IoT devices.
2) Reduces maintenance costs by eliminating frequent battery replacement.
3) Sustainable and eco-friendly through the use of renewable energy sources.
4) Ensures continuous and autonomous operation of IoT networks even in remote areas.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The proposed self-powered IoT system utilizing energy harvesting was designed and evaluated under various ambient energy conditions to validate its performance and reliability. Different energy sources such as solar, vibration, and thermal gradients were tested individually and in hybrid configurations. The system's energy conversion efficiency, power stability, and node operation duration were measured and analyzed.

A. Energy Harvesting Performance

Experimental results demonstrated that the system could effectively harvest energy from multiple sources.

1) Solar Energy Source: Using a 5 V photovoltaic panel, an average power output of 120 mW was achieved under standard illumination (1000 W/m²).
2) Vibration Energy Source: A piezoelectric transducer generated 1.5–2.2 mW from mechanical vibrations between 50–100 Hz.
3) Thermal Energy Sou
4) rce: The thermoelectric generator provided 3.8 mW at a temperature gradient of 20 °C.

These results show that the hybrid configuration ensures a stable energy supply even when one source becomes unavailable.

B. Power Management and Storage Efficiency

The power management unit (PMU) effectively regulated voltage between 2.5 V and 3.3 V, suitable for powering low-power IoT sensors. A supercapacitor (1 F) was used for energy storage, enabling continuous operation for up to 18 hours in low-energy conditions. The efficiency of the power conversion and regulation circuit reached 85%, confirming the reliability of the design.

C. IoT Node Functionality

The IoT node, equipped with environmental sensors (temperature and humidity) and a LoRa communication module, successfully transmitted data packets at regular intervals. The node operated autonomously without battery replacement for over three weeks in real-time field testing, confirming the feasibility of long-term self-powered operation.

D. Discussion

The experimental and simulated results confirm that energy harvesting is a viable and sustainable power solution for IoT applications. The hybrid energy harvesting approach significantly enhances reliability by combining multiple energy sources, thereby reducing system downtime. The results also indicate that optimizing the energy management algorithms can further improve storage efficiency and extend device lifetime.

VI. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

The research successfully demonstrated the design and implementation of a self-powered IoT system utilizing multiple energy harvesting techniques. The proposed framework effectively integrates solar, thermal, and vibration-based energy sources with an optimized power management unit and energy storage system. Experimental results verified that the hybrid harvesting approach provides a stable and continuous power supply to IoT nodes, even under fluctuating environmental conditions. This enables long-term, maintenance-free operation of IoT devices, reducing battery dependency and promoting environmental sustainability.

A. Future Work Future research can focus on the following directions

1) Advanced Hybrid Control Algorithms: Developing adaptive algorithms that intelligently select and combine multiple energy sources based on real-time environmental conditions.
2) Nanomaterial-Based Energy Harvesters: Integrating advanced materials such as graphene or nanowires to improve energy conversion efficiency.
3) Miniaturization and Integration: Designing compact, chip-level harvesting circuits suitable for ultra-low-power IoT devices and wearable electronics.
4) AI-Driven Energy Prediction: Employing artificial intelligence and machine learning models to predict energy availability and optimize device duty cycles.
5) Field Deployment Studies: Long-term testing in diverse real-world environments to validate durability, scalability, and economic feasibility.

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