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Renewable Energy Systems and Sustainable Technology Innovation

Babatunde Temitope Ogunyemi and Richard Alexis Ukpe

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Abstract: *The process of renewable energy system transformation lies at the forefront of global efforts to counteract rising energy demand, greenhouse gas emissions, and climate change. In this article, the issue of renewable energy systems and sustainable technology driving the process of global transition towards clean energy is examined. A synthesis and review methodology was used, drawing on peer-reviewed journals, policy briefs, and global energy databases, supplemented with case studies of Nigeria, Germany, India, Iceland, Denmark, and Brazil. The evidence suggests that solar, wind, hydropower, biomass, and geothermal power plants have been found to have high potential when supplemented by technologies like advanced energy storage, smart grids, digitalization, and recyclable material. Case studies indicate context-appropriate applications: Nigerian rural electrification was supplemented by solar microgrids; Germany's Energiewende created space in the grid for big wind and solar; India's solar irrigation broke the dependence of agriculture on diesel pumps; Iceland became energy independent using geothermal resources; Denmark was a trailblazer in wind power; and Brazil used biomass to produce electricity and ethanol. Constraints remain in intermittency, infrastructure, finance, and resource dependence notwithstanding advances. The research concludes that climate resilience, socio-economic development, and energy security are at the center of sustainable technology innovation-supported renewable energy systems. Policy consolidation, promotion of decentralized energy solutions, investment in hybrid systems, and application of circular economy principles are recommended to make the transition to renewable energy sustainable in the long run.*

Keywords: *Renewable energy, Sustainable technology, Energy systems, Innovation, Climate resilience*

Babatunde Temitope Ogunyemi
Department of chemistry, federal university Otuoke, Bayelsa state
Email: ogunyemibt@fuotuoke.edu.ng
Orcid id: **https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3634-488X**

Richard Alexis Ukpe
Department of Chemistry, Federal University, Otuoke, Bayelsa State, Nigeria
Email: ukpera@fuotuoke.edu.ng
Orcid id: **https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1010-4933**

1.0 Introduction

The world energy market stands at crossroads, confronted by the dual dilemma of increasing demand and ways to mitigate the negative consequences of fossil fuel dependence. Fossil fuels remain the global leading source of energy with more than 70% of overall consumption but are also the key greenhouse gas producers, climate drivers, and cause of environmental degradation (International Energy Agency [IEA], 2022). The global agenda has thus shifted to a movement away from fossil energy systems to renewable energy systems led by technological innovation that enhances efficiency, affordability, and sustainable energy alternatives.

Extensive research has been done in renewable energy in many areas, and there have been enormous advances in solar, wind, hydropower, biomass, and hybrid systems. Solar energy has competed effectively due to the efficiency of PV systems increase, which provides accessibility within the lower range as low as 12 percent in early silicon-based cells to higher limit starting from 40 percent in multi-junction cells. In addition, perovskite and thin-film solar cell technologies have contributed greatly to the supply of cheaper, lighter, and flexible solar solutions for numerous applications (Smith et al., 2022). Wind power has also also witnessed fast-tracking innovation such as the installation of offshore and floating wind turbines with higher capacity and competing less for land use (IRENA, 2023). Micro- and small-hydro plants within hydropower are being used more for rural electrification because they cause less environmental degradation than large dams (Kaunda, Kimambo, & Nielsen, 2012). Biomass and bioenergy systems have developed through waste-to-energy systems that are combined with circular economy principles, generating electricity and biofuels from farm residues and minimizing waste management issues (Scarlat, Dallemand, & Fahl, 2018). Also, hybrid systems or solar-wind-battery microgrids are gaining popularity in off-grid and remote locations due to advantages associated with possible combination of renewables combined with energy storage for higher reliability and resilience (Luthra et al., 2015).

In spite of the above reviewed progresses, some barriers are still pending and need to be resolved. One of the challenges facing the renewable energy systems is their proness to intermittency, high-cost storage, and infrastructural constraint, particularly in developing nations. While a lot of research on individual renewable technologies has been performed, comparatively little integrative work explores how renewable energy systems and sustainable technology innovations as a whole can speed up energy transitions. This imbalance generates the demand for comprehensive studies that not only discuss the evolution of technologies but also evaluate their deployment under varying socio-economic circumstances.

The objective of this research is to examine the contribution of renewable energy systems towards sustainable technology innovation and their integration based on international case studies. A consideration of innovation associated with energy storage, hybrid energy and smart grid technology. The present investigation offers sound perception of how the efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability of renewable energy can be enhanced.

The research is important in the sense that it helps bridge the knowledge gap on the adoption of renewable energy and innovation in sustainable technologies. The meaning of the research has implications to policymakers, academics, and businesspeople who wish to enhance the shift towards clean energy systems, realise climate objectives, and promote sustainable socio-economic development in the developing and developed world.

2.0 Methodology

This text takes a review and synthesis strategy, bringing together available knowledge from the sources and presenting a holistic picture of sustainable technology innovations and renewable energy systems. The approach is contextualized to balance theory bases and practice in a manner that the discussion is not only evidence-informed but also contextually meaningful.

The main data for this research came from secondary sources consisting of peer-reviewed journal articles, global policy reports, institution reports, and credible international energy databases like those of the International Energy Agency (IEA), the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Between 2010 and 2023, literature has covered a systematic way with a significant historical trends, in combination with the most recent technological developments in innovations in renewable energy and sustainability. Relevance, authenticity, and the involvement of quantitative information such as efficiency gains, adoption rates, and environmental benefits affected the choice of sources.

Also addressed was comparative analysis regarding the measurement of the progress and challenges of renewable energy uptake in various contexts. Consequently, comparison of energy potential for production, policy direction, as well as the level of technological development between developed and developing contexts. Through matching and divergence, the study presents transferable lessons and context-specific solutions.

For purposes of illustrating practical utility, Nigeria, Germany, and India were purposively sampled for case studies. They are a sample of diversity of socio-economic circumstances and energy: Nigeria as a case study of a developing nation with acute energy access issues; Germany as a world leader in the use of renewable energy and policy-making; and India as a fast-developing economy embracing renewable energy for rural and agricultural growth. All case studies were compared on the basis of three parameters: (i) renewable energy technologies being used, (ii) sustainable technology innovations being used, and (iii) problems and results encountered.

Lastly, the results of literature review, comparative analysis, and case studies were synthesized to generate a composite picture of the art of the state of renewable energy systems and their relationship with sustainable technology innovation. This manner is such that not only are recent developments revealed but also gaps and areas for future research, as well as policy intervention, revealed.

3.0 Renewable Energy Systems and Sustainable Technology Innovation

Development of renewable energy systems has taken a lead role in the world progress towards carbon emissions reduction and long-term sustainability achievement. Renewable energy systems are based on naturally recharged energy sources like solar radiation, wind, water, biomass, and geothermal heat. All the sources of energy have their unique technologies, performance efficiency, strengths, and weaknesses, which define their suitability for use in various environments. Table 1 illustrates key renewable energy systems, key technology, efficiency range, strengths, and weaknesses.

Table 1. Overview of Renewable Energy Systems and Their Characteristics

Energy Source	Key Technology	Efficiency Range	Advantages	Limitations
Solar PV	Silicon, Perovskite, Thin-film	15–40%	Abundant, modular	Intermittent, storage needed
Wind	Onshore, Offshore, Floating turbines	25–50%	High yield, scalable	Noise, land use issues
Hydropower	Micro, Small, Large-scale dams	30–60%	Reliable, storage capacity	Environmental impact
Biomass	Anaerobic digestion, gasification	20–40%	Waste utilization	Competes with food crops
Geothermal	Binary cycle, flash steam	10–20%	Base-load power	Location-specific

The table shows that the renewable energy technologies are very divergent in efficiency and utility. Of special significance is solar photovoltaic (PV) technology, which has efficiencies of 15% and more than 40% in high-efficiency multi-junction cells, because it is abundant and modular and can be installed both at the utility and household level. Its intermittency requires, however, complementary storage technologies. Wind power, with 25–50% efficiency, has been demonstrated to be largely scalable, especially with offshore and floating deployment but is an issue with noisy land use within populated regions. Hydroelectric plants are the most efficient up to 60% efficiency and have inherent energy storage with reservoirs but can be ecosystem-disruptive and displacing. Some biomass technologies including anaerobic digestion and gasification are generators of energy and also plays remarkable roles in waste management. However, the major challenges associated with them is competition with food production. Geothermal plants, being geographically restricted to zones of geologic activity, are a source of firm base-load power and a good firm complement to intermittent sources.

In addition to the renewable energy technologies themselves, green technology innovations also increase the efficiency of the technologies. Storage technologies like lithium-ion and solid-state batteries, hydrogen fuel cells, and pumped hydro storage are addressing the intermittency problem of solar power and wind power by providing energy even when resource availability is low. Artificial intelligence-based smart grids provide dynamic demand-response, economic energy exchange, and decentralized supply, enhancing reliability. The utilization of green materials, including recyclable solar cells, biodegradable battery materials, and light-weight composites, lowers environmental impacts and enhances the life cycle sustainability of the energy technologies. Digital technologies, such as IoT, as well as blockchain, have contributed significantly in facilitating peer-to-peer energy trading and decentralized energy management. This has led to the promotion of local/community power and energy system resilience.

Generally, the above listed innovations and technologies confirms that the synergetic relationship between technology innovation and renewable resources. Despite the fact that one cannot ignore the limitations of renewable energy—intermittency, environmental effect, and place specificity—it is ever increasingly that sustainable technology innovations are addressing these limitations, making renewable energy technologies more efficient, reliable, and flexible in different environments.

To further exemplify the incorporation of sustainable innovation in technologies into renewable energy systems, a flowchart is presented in Fig. 1. The figure traces the logical sequence from rising global energy demands to the use of renewable energy systems, followed by incorporation of sustainable technologies and the resultant socio-economic and environmental benefits that are achieved through incorporation.

Fig.1 shows the pattern clean technology solutions and renewable energy systems response to the energy demand of the world. The Figure illustrate that as the energy demands rise, the desire for sustainable measures intensifies. Therefore, the implementation measures for renewable energy systems (such as solar, wind, hydropower, biomass, and geothermal) is driven by this trend. However, their complete potential is only realized once complemented by clean technologies like advanced energy storage, smart grids, and digitalization technologies. These innovations are capable of ehancing system efficiency and reliability, with expected beneficial outcomes such as reduction in carbon emmision and expansible socio-economic and othe environmental benefits, isuch as energy security, rural electrification, jobs, and climate change mitigation.

4.0 Determinants of the Efficiency of Renewable Energy Systems

The efficiency of renewable energy systems is contingent on a combination of technological, environmental, and operational factors. These variables differs for different sources of renewable energy and can affect their performance and geographic suitability. Therefore an insight into these determinants can significantly guide system optimization design, reliability improvement, and overall sustainability.

For solar photovoltaics, though, efficiency is most importantly determined by PV material quality, e.g., monocrystalline silicon, thin-film, or novel perovskite technology. Environmental conditions such as solar irradiance, ambient temperature, deposited dust, and shading also play a significant role. For example, temperature can lower the voltage output of most solar cells and consequently, the average efficiency. . Solar panel orientation and tilt angle towards the sun also significantly affect energy yield.

Fig. 1: Flowchart of Renewable Energy and Innovation Integration

For wind power systems, efficiency depends on wind velocity, blade form, hub height, and air density. Turbines function best at moderate to high velocities of wind but experience efficiency loss at very low or highly low wind velocities. Aerodynamic blade shapes make it easier to convert energy, and taller towers make wind flows more stable and powerful. Turbulence and obstacles like buildings and trees can slow things down and lower output.

The flow rate of the water, the head (the difference in height between the water head and the turbine), and the design of the turbine all affect how well hydropower projects work. More flow and more head mean that there is more potential energy that can be used. To obtain optimum performance from a turbine system , the right choice and design must be considered, alligning to —Kaplan, Francis, or Pelton—that fits the conditions at the site. The amount of hydropower available also depends on the patterns of seasonal rainfall and river discharge.

The functionality of biomass technology will depend on several factors but the major ones are the nature of feedstock, the moisture content of the feedstock, and the conversion technology employed. Drier feeds make more energy, but wetter feeds make it less efficient to burn. The variation in the efficiencies of conversion in technologies such as anaerobic digestion, pyrolysis, and gasification are function of the process, temperature, and pressure. Logistical problems while gathering, storing, and moving feedstock also have an indirect effect on how well the whole system works.

The efficiency of geothermal power plants is a depends on the temperature of the reservoir, the geothermal gradient, and the technology used to extract heat. When reservoirs are very hot, it's easier to make power, especially with flash steam or dry steam technology.

Where lower geothermal gradients prevail, binary cycle plants are typically employed, though at comparatively lower efficiencies. Geologic stability and resource availability also constrain geothermal production.

Generally, , the effectiveness of renewable energy systems is determined largely by the prevaling environmental conditions, system design, and operating practices as it is of technology employed.

While solar and wind are highly dependent on climatic and geographical conditions, the efficiency of hydropower and geothermal power plants is site-specific and should be adequately evaluated. Efficiency of biomass is very much reliant on feedstock quality and the conversion processes. The enhancement of efficiency in all systems requires overcoming environmental and technical challenges, which can be achieved through progressive technological innovation, site improvement, and implementaion enabling policies. To illustrate the diverse variables influencing renewable energy performance, Fig. 2 is a flowchart showing the major factors that can influence the efficiency of solar, wind, hydropower, biomass, and geothermal energy systems. The figure demonstrates how a combination of technological design and environmental conditions impacts overall system output.

Fig. 2 shows that several factors can influences the efficiency of renewable energy systems. However, the efficiency of solar energy is a function of photovoltaic material, solar irradiance, ambient temperature, and panel orientation. On the other hand, expected output from wind energy is determined by the speed of wind, the density of the air, the aerodynamics of the blade, and height of the tower. Finally, the efficiency of hydropower efficiency is is a function of the speed of the flowing water, hydraulic head, turbine type, and seasonal variations in water availability. Efficiency of biomass conversion varies by feedstock type, moisture level, and technology employed, such as anaerobic digestion or gasification. Finally, efficiency of geothermal energy relies on underground reservoir temperature, the geothermal gradient, and the extraction system. In general, the figure illustrates that efficiency of renewable energy varies rather than being fixed and relies both on technological progress and environmental conditions

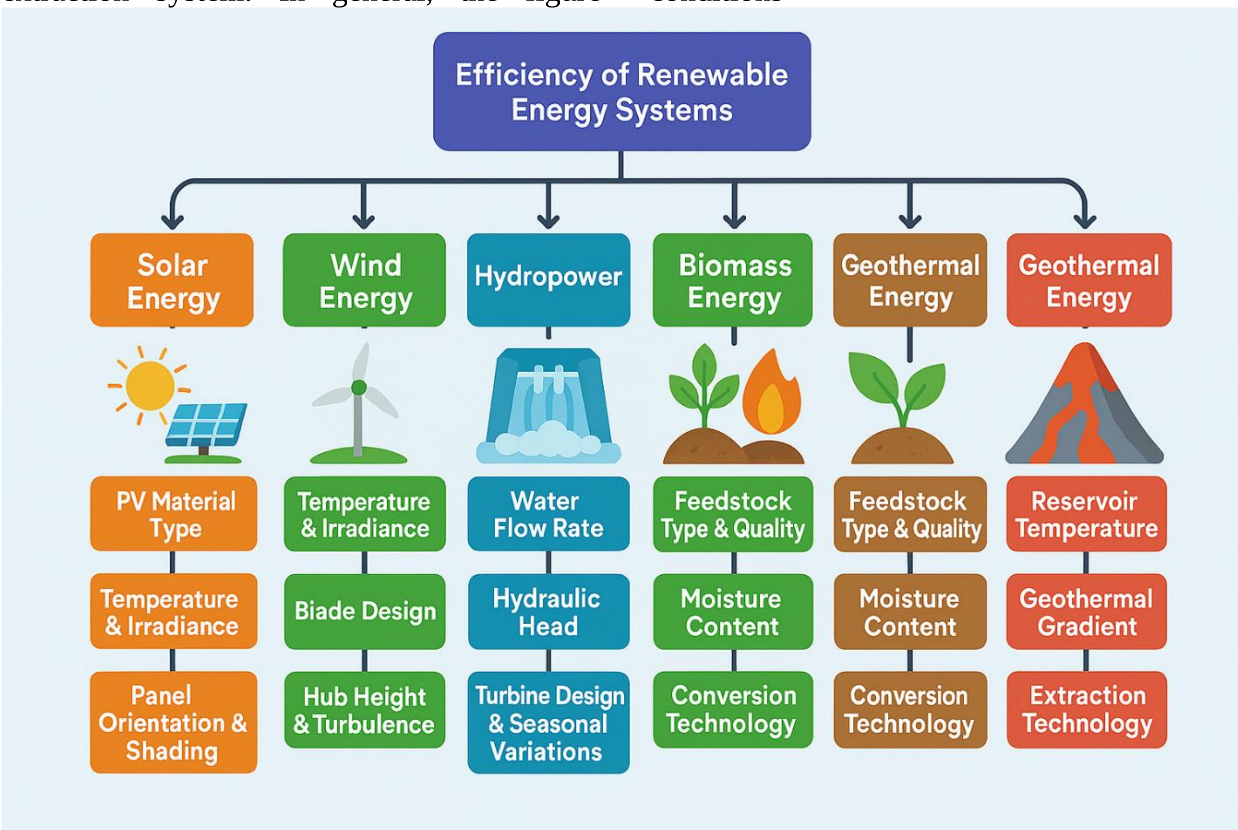

Fig. 2. Flowchart of Factors Determining the Efficiency of Renewable Energy Systems

5.0 Prospects, Challenges, and Future Directions

International shift towards renewable energy systems is driven by the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enhance energy security, and promote sustainable development. As technology advances and favorable policy conditions exist, renewable energy is at the verge of becoming the backbone of future energy systems. However, for this to be realized, several challenges have to be addressed while pursuing strategic directions that provide long-term sustainability and equity.

5.1 Prospects

The prospects of renewable energy are very bright. In recent times, there exist significant competition on the application of wind and solar power (compared to fossil fuels) due to increasding price drop concerning their acquisition, for both developed and developing countries alike. Advancement in technologies concerning the storage of energy in solid-state batteries and hydrogen fuel cells have also also facilitated higher levels of grid penetration of intermittent renewables. Off-grid technologies such as solar home systems and hybrid microgrids deliver reliable power to unserved rural populations, particularly in Africa and Asia. Besides, breakthroughs in sustainable technology such as recyclable materials, digital energy platforms, and smart grids enhance system efficiency and sustainability. All these trends imply that renewable energy can be at the heart of achieving net-zero emissions and advancing global energy access goals.

5.2 Challenges

Still, fierce challenges do exist. Intermittency of solar and wind power remains a technical issue, and what is needed is low-cost and scalable storage systems. Limitations arising from especially from nations that are relatively poor can restrict the capacity of renewable deployment due to weak grids and limited investment possibilities. Policy and regulatory uncertainty are significant factors against private investment, but the absence of financing facilities can be effective in retarding innovation. There are social and environmental concerns too: hydroelectric schemes disturb ecosystems, biomass crops encroach on farm land, and wind farms are resisted due to noise and land-use conflict. Moreover, production and mining of renewable technology material elements (e.g., lithium, cobalt, and rare earth) have sustainability challenges that must be addressed to avoid impending shortages.

5.3 Future Directions

The prospect of renewable energy systems remains a factor to be integrated with sustainable technologies and global collaboration.

On this note, hybrid power systems including solar power, wind power, biomass power, and storage will progressively be significant for the delvery of a stable power supply in various conditions. Artificial intelligence and digitalization will transform grid management, enabling decentralized systems and peer-to-peer energy trading. Circular economy options regarding recycling of solar panels and batteries is essential for the minimization of environmental footprints. It is evidence that the arrival of investment , achievement of innovation and inducement of balance to renewable energy accessibility requires a long term regime. International collaboration, particularly in finance and technology transfer, will be critical to enable the developing world to leapfrog towards a sustainable energy future. Enforcement of entraining innovation, policy, and social acceptance, can boast renewable energy systems to shift to climate-resilient, inclusive, and resilient solutions to the global energy demands.

6.0 Case Studies

Experiential learning involving sustainable technology and renewable energy systems offers essential lessons regarding their socio-economic benefit, scale-up, and impacts. A series of case studies from across the world demonstrate how renewable technologies are being implemented for local needs as well as to address global imperatives of access, affordability, and climate change.

Case Study 1: Solar Microgrids in Nigeria

Nigerian rural communities are left with unstable and unaffordable grid electricity, with over 40% of the country lacking access to a stable power source.

To counter this disadvantage, solar photovoltaic (PV) microgrids with lithium-ion battery storage have been introduced in several states, including Kaduna, Ogun, and Cross River. The systems is currently providing stable electricity to more than 50,000 houses and small scale businesses. Also, the innovation has lowered the rate of patronage on diesel generator and has led to more 70%, saving on homeowners and businesses money, as well as lessening greenhouse gas emissions. Improved access to reliable power has also improved local health delivery, education, and small-scale economic activity, demonstrating the prospects of decentralized renewable systems in revamping developing environments.

Case Study 2: Germany's Energiewende

Germany's Energiewende (energy transition) is amongst the most far-reaching national projects to shift an energy system to sustainability.

Wind, solar, and bioenergy provided over 50% of Germany's electricity by 2023. Offshore wind farms from North Sea and Baltic Sea, along with progress in grid balancing and storage, have been central to success. The integration of smart grid technology with policies to promote renewable adoption has made it viable to integrate in mass while ensuring grid stability. In spite of concerning issues arising from factors such as high costs and an unreliable power supply, Energiewende has lifted Germany at the edge of renewable energy policy and associated technological innovation.

Case Study 3: Solar-Powered Irrigation in India

Indian agriculture utilizes nearly 20% of the country's electricity, much of it used for irrigation through electric or diesel pumps.

Cutting down its dependence on fossil fuels, the government has launched mass-scale solar-based irrigation schemes under programs such as the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM). Farmers using solar-powered irrigation systems have experienced reduced operating costs, higher crop yields, and enhanced water-use efficiency. Nationally, the scheme has reduced CO_2 emissions by approximately 1.2 million tonnes annually. The plan has also created new employment opportunities in solar installation and maintenance, illustrating the role of renewable energy for rural development.

Case Study 4: Geothermal Energy in Iceland

Iceland is an exemplar for the utilization of geothermal resources.

Nearly 90% of Icelandic residences are heated geothermally, and over 25% of Icelandic electricity generation is from geothermal energy. With its huge geothermal reservoirs, Iceland is nearly independent of fossil fuels in electricity and heat generation. In addition to supplying power to homes, geothermal power stations supply energy-intensive industries such as aluminum smelting with electricity, giving Iceland a competitive advantage in the global market. The case shows how site-specific assets, when well managed, can offer sustainable, long-term energy security.

Case Study 5: Wind Power in Denmark

Denmark has led the way in the application of wind power, with wind supply now accounting for approximately 50% of the nation's power requirement.

The establishment of both onshore and offshore wind farms, assisted by solid government policy and public tolerance, has been central to this success. The country has also invested heavily in the development and manufacturing of wind turbine technology and has become the global hub for wind energy tech exports. Denmark's case illustrates how technology investment, grassroots and stable policy support can converge to make renewables a main source of energy.

Case Study 6: Biomass Energy in Brazil

Brazil's bioenergy sector is another case of renewable integration on the national level.With the use of sugarcane ethanol and biomass electricity, Brazil has minimized the use of fossil fuels significantly. Bagasse, which is a fibrous by-product from sugarcane processing, is used in combined heat and power plants that produce most of the nation's electricity. The biomass system, apart from collecting agricultural waste, also supports Brazil's substantial ethanol industry, which is one of the largest worldwide. The case reveals how bioenergy can complement farm output and enable a closed-loop energy cycle.

Discussion of Case Studies

In combinations, these case studies show the adaptability of renewable energy systems in multiple contexts.

Application-focused and decentralized solutions such as microgrids and solar irrigation are addressing energy poverty and farm sustainability directly in India and Nigeria. Germany and Denmark, however, demonstrate how effective policy frameworks combined with technological ingenuity can allow mass integration of renewables into the national grid. Iceland and Brazil demonstrate how availability of resources at the local level—geothermal and biomass, respectively—can help establish energy autonomy as well as economic advantage. Whereas challenges such as intermittency, financing, and infrastructural limitations are present, the global experiences outlined herein affirm that renewable energy, underpinned by sustainable technology advances, is able to drive economic development, environmental protection, and human development simultaneously.

7.0 Conclusion

Findings of this study suggest that renewable energy technologies are becoming increasingly efficient and useful at a rapid rate, with solar, wind, hydro, bioenergy, and geothermal technology advances taking center stage in influencing the global energy shifts.

Case studies from countries such as Nigeria, Germany, India, Iceland, Denmark, and Brazil have shown that renewable energy can be applied successfully across different socio-economic and geographic contexts. Addition of sustainable technology innovations, including advanced storage devices, smart grids, digital interfaces, and recyclable materials, has been shown to enhance renewable energy systems in efficiency, scalability, and eco-friendliness. However, intermittency, infrastructural limitations, finance constraints, and technology-specific obstacles are still the lingering dampeners of widescale adoption, particularly in the Third World. All in all, renewable energy technologies, through strategic integration with sustainable technology developments, are a solution for achieving climate goals, improving energy access, and facilitating socio-economic development.

The case studies from around the world indicate that good outcomes depend not only on technological advancements but also on approachable policies, financial products, and civic participation. The study highlights that renewable energy is no longer a backstop option but a pillar to complement future energy systems, with the capacity to reduce fossil fuel dependence and strive for inclusive development. Based on these points, governments and policymakers are urged to strengthen long-term renewable energy projects, facilitate private capital, and pursue research and innovation in energy storage, smart grid, and circular economy.

Decentralized technologies such as microgrids and hybrid systems should be prioritized for developing nations for fighting energy poverty as developed nations must continue to lead in the scale integration of renewables and technology transfer. Collaboration between industry, academia, and governance will be essential to bridging technological and financial gaps, while additional recycling and green focus on material content will ensure that renewable energy transitions remain environmentally sustainable in the long run.

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Declaration

Competing interests

There are no known financial competing interests to disclose

Ethical Consideration

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Authors' Contributions

Both authors contributed equally in all aspect of the worlk