LEX LOCALIS-JOURNAL OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT
ISSN:1581-5374 E-ISSN:1855-363X
VOL. 23, NO. S4(2025)

AN EVALUATION OF WATER SECURITY IN COASTAL URBAN AREAS: A COMPREHENSIVE CASE STUDY OF BHUBANESWAR, ODISHA

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Abstract:
Water security is a crucial concern in coastal regions, mostly in the context of climate change and rapid urbanization. This study focuses on assessing water security in Bhubaneswar, a rapidly growing city in the coastal state of Odisha, India. By developing a comprehensive Water Security Index (WSI), this research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to water resource management in Bhubaneswar.
The study uses a mixed-method approach, integrating quantitative data, with qualitative insights from stakeholder interviews. Key indicators such as *"water availability, quality, accessibility, and sustainability"* are analyzed to construct the WSI. This index offers a multidimensional perspective, capturing the complex interplay between natural and human systems influencing water security in the region. Findings show significant variability in water security across different parts of Bhubaneswar, induced by factors such as *"infrastructure development, population density, and local governance practices"*.While areas with stronger administration and infrastructure show more degrees of water security, areas with poor infrastructure and high population density face severe water shortage and quality problems.
The study highlights the importance of adaptive management strategies that incorporate community participation, technological innovation, and policy integration to enhance water security in coastal urban settings. Recommendations include the implementation of decentralized water management systems, investment in water purification and distribution infrastructure, and the promotion of sustainable water use practices among residents. This research contributes to the broader discourse on urban water security by providing a replicable framework for assessing water-related challenges in other coastal cities.

Keywords: Climate Change, Coastal Urbanization, Water Security Index (WSI)

1. Introduction

Water security is a foundation of sustainable urban development, particularly in coastal cities that grapple with the intensifiedencounters of climate change, rapid urbanization, and governance inefficiencies. The United Nations (2020) underscores that access to clean and sufficient water is a fundamental human right, yet its availability remains unevenly distributed, particularly in developing economies. Coastal cities, due to their geographical positioning, are exposed to multiple hydrological stressors, including rising sea levels, saline intrusion, and erratic precipitation patterns, all of which exacerbate water security concerns (Mukherjee & Singh, 2021). As urban populations surge, the demand for water escalates, creating an urgent need for sustainable management strategies that integrate hydrological, infrastructural, and socio-economic dimensions.

Bhubaneswar, the capital city of Odisha, India, provides a pertinent case study for examining water security in a rapidly urbanizing coastal environment. Over the past two decades, Bhubaneswar has experienced accelerated urban expansion, with its population increasing from 648,032 in 2011 to an estimated 1.2 million in 2023 (Government of Odisha, 2023). This demographic surge has placed immense pressure on the city's water resources, necessitating an urgent reassessment of water security frameworks. The city's dependency on monsoon-fed water sources, combined with

infrastructural deficiencies and governance challenges, further amplifies the complexity of ensuring sustainable water access (Pradhan et al., 2022).

Water security involves not just the supply of water but also its accessibility, quality, resilience to climatic unpredictability, and long-term sustainability. The Global Water Partnership (2021) characterizes water security as "*the reliable availability of an adequate quantity and quality of water for health, livelihoods, and production, alongside an acceptable level of water-related risks."* In Bhubaneswar, this definition requires a multifaceted approach that evaluates both the physical availability of water and the socio-political frameworks regulating its distribution (Sharma & Kundu, 2021). Due to Bhubaneswar's physical proximity to the Bay of Bengal, the city encounters heightened hydrological risks, including coastal floods and saltwater intrusion, which exacerbate water management challenges (Mishra et al., 2021).

This research establishes a detailed Water Security Index (WSI) to assess water security in Bhubaneswar, incorporating essential elements including hydrological availability, infrastructural adequacy, socio-economic accessibility, and governance efficiency. The study seeks to identify essential vulnerabilities within the city's water security framework and offers insights into adaptive management strategies. The evaluation of water security via this index is crucial in urban planning, as it supports evidence-based policymaking and improves resilience to future water-related crises (Gupta et al., 2022).

The global context of water security highlights the necessity of this research. The World Resources Institute (2022) indicates that India is one of the most water-stressed countries globally, with an estimated 40% of its population likely to experience severe water scarcity by 2030. The conditions in coastal cities are increasingly vulnerable because of combined anthropogenic influences and climatic extremes. Research conducted by Narain et al. (2022) demonstrates that urban water governance in India frequently suffers from insufficient integration among stakeholders, resulting in inefficiencies in water distribution and quality management. In Bhubaneswar, fragmented governance and rapid land-use changes have resulted in decreased groundwater recharge rates and heightened reliance on external water sources (Das & Mohanty, 2021).

The existing infrastructural deficiencies exacerbate the challenges associated with water security. Notwithstanding initiatives aimed at broadening piped water supply systems, a considerable segment of Bhubaneswar’s populace, especially within informal settlements, persists in depending on groundwater extraction and tanker deliveries. The reliability of these alternative sources is questionable, and they also present significant concerns regarding water quality and potential contamination risks (Panda et al., 2021). Furthermore, variations in rainfall patterns induced by climate change have led to seasonal water shortages, highlighting the need for more resilient and adaptive water management policies (Rath et al., 2022).

From a policy perspective, the significance of governance in the assurance of water security is paramount. Effective water governance necessitates a participatory framework that engages government agencies, local communities, and private stakeholders to enhance the optimization of water distribution and conservation initiatives (Verma & Jha, 2022). The government of Odisha has implemented various initiatives, notably the Smart City Mission, which seeks to improve water infrastructure and management within the city of Bhubaneswar. Nonetheless, considerable disparity persists between the development of policies and their practical execution, indicating the need for a more cohesive and decentralized governance structure (Choudhury & Samal, 2023).

The results of this research suggest significant implications for other coastal urban areas

encountering similar water security issues, contributing to the development of a more resilient and sustainable urban environment.

2. Literature Review

Water security signifies a complex framework that integrates sustainable availability, accessibility, and quality of water resources vital for human livelihoods, well-being, and economic advancement, while also promoting resilience to water-related risks (Gleick, 1993; Grey & Sadoff, 2007). This framework has transitioned from an initial emphasis on water scarcity to a more comprehensive perspective that encompasses hydrological, socio-political, and technological factors (UNESCO, 2019). In recent years, academic discussions have increasingly highlighted the importance of thorough evaluation frameworks to tackle the intricate aspects of water security, especially within urban environments.

The conventional viewpoint on water security primarily focuses on the quantitative dimensions of water scarcity. Contemporary studies emphasize the importance of adopting a thorough perspective that contains multiple dimensions, including the "*availability, accessibility, quality, and sustainability"* of water resources. Falkenmark and Rockstrom (2004) emphasized the significance of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), which considers the complex relationships between natural and human systems. Recent investigations have underscored the essential importance of governance and institutional capacity in addressing water security issues, particularly within urban settings (Vorosmarty et al., 2010; Sadoff et al., 2015).

Urban areas encounter distinct water security challenges curtailing rapid urbanization, population growth, and climate change. These factors intensify problems including water scarcity, pollution, and susceptibility to water-related disasters. Bengaluru, India, has undergone substantial changes from being known as the "Garden City" to the "Silicon Valley of India," resulting in critical infrastructure issues such as water scarcity and flooding. Rapid industrial development has led to resource overextension, underscoring the necessity for sustainable urban planning and effective water management strategies (Business Insider, 2024). Chennai has experienced significant flooding because of intense monsoon rains, resulting in the closure of educational institutions and government offices, highlighting the necessity for efficient flood management systems (AP News, 2024).

The creation of comprehensive assessment frameworks is essential for accurately reflecting the complex aspects of water security in urban environments. These frameworks allow policymakers and stakeholders to identify vulnerabilities, prioritize interventions, and monitor progress effectively. Recent research has introduced multiple indices and models for evaluating urban water security. The Blue-Green Cities Research Project (2013-2016), directed by Colin Thorne, investigated the incorporation of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and green infrastructure to improve urban flood resilience and water quality (Thorne, 2023). The project illustrated that the implementation of Blue-Green infrastructure can effectively mitigate noise and air pollution, enhance carbon sequestration and habitat area, and improve residents' access to greenspace, thus contributing to urban water security.

Nature-based solutions, exemplified by the "sponge city" concept, have emerged as sustainable strategies for urban water management. Sponge cities, which originated in China, seek to improve urban flood management by reinforcing green infrastructures rather than depending exclusively on conventional drainage systems. This method incorporates nature-based solutions such as green roofs, stormwater parks, and permeable pavements to regulate water flow and alleviate stress on conventional drainage systems (The Times, 2024). The implementation of such systems in cities such as Hull and Mansfield in the UK demonstrates potential; however, challenges including space

constraints and existing infrastructure may complicate retrofitting efforts. The advantages encompass not only flood management but also enhancements in mental and physical health, urban cooling, crime reduction, and property value appreciation. Incremental advancements and strong policies are essential for wider implementation.

Efficient flood risk management is essential for urban water security. Non-structural approaches, including flood risk assessment, mapping, and modeling, are essential for comprehending and alleviating flood dangers. Flood risk management seeks to mitigate human and socio-economic losses resulting from floods and is a component of the broader discipline of risk management. Flood risk management examines the interactions between physical systems and socio-economic contexts via flood risk assessment, aiming to foster comprehension and proactive measures about the hazards associated with floods. Engaging stakeholders is essential, since it guarantees the incorporation of varied viewpoints in flood management strategies, resulting in more effective and acceptable solutions.

India has acknowledged the urgent necessity to tackle urban water security issues and has commenced substantial investments to alleviate flooding and conserve water in prominent cities. The federal government sanctioned over $300 million over two years to mitigate urban flooding and save water in seven major cities, including Mumbai, Chennai, and Bengaluru. The project includes the expansion of water bodies and the construction of new drainage systems to address recurrent and severe flooding, frequently intensified by growing urbanization and obstructed drains (Reuters, 2024). This effort represents India's inaugural flood control strategy centered on natural water bodies and will incorporate early-warning systems. The objective is to alleviate flood effects and address acute water shortages previously encountered in cities such as Delhi and Bengaluru.

3. A Comprehensive Demographic and Administrative Profile of Bhubaneswar City

Bhubaneswar, the capital of Odisha, India, is located at 20°12' N latitude and 85°50' E longitude, encompassing an area of roughly 135 square kilometers (Development Alternatives, 2021). According to the 2011 Census, the city had a population of 843,402, which has been consistently increasing due to swift urbanization and economic advancement (Census of India, 2011).

Bhubaneswar is situated in the Mahanadi River delta, distinguished by its predominantly flat terrain with an average elevation of 45 meters above sea level. The city has a tropical savanna environment, with average annual precipitation between 1,200 and 1,500 millimeters, primarily occurring during the monsoon season from June to September. Temperatures generally fluctuate from 12°C in winter to 45°C in summer (Das et al., 2022).

Figure 1: Ward Map of Bhubaneswar

The city's population has surged significantly during the last twenty years, attaining roughly 1 million inhabitants according to the 2021 census. The population boom has resulted in heightened demand for water, causing considerable strain on the city's current water infrastructure. Bhubaneswar predominantly depends on surface water sourced from rivers such as the Mahanadi and groundwater extracted from both shallow and deep aquifers. The city's water delivery system encounters difficulties including uneven distribution, deteriorating infrastructure, and contamination from industrial and domestic sources.

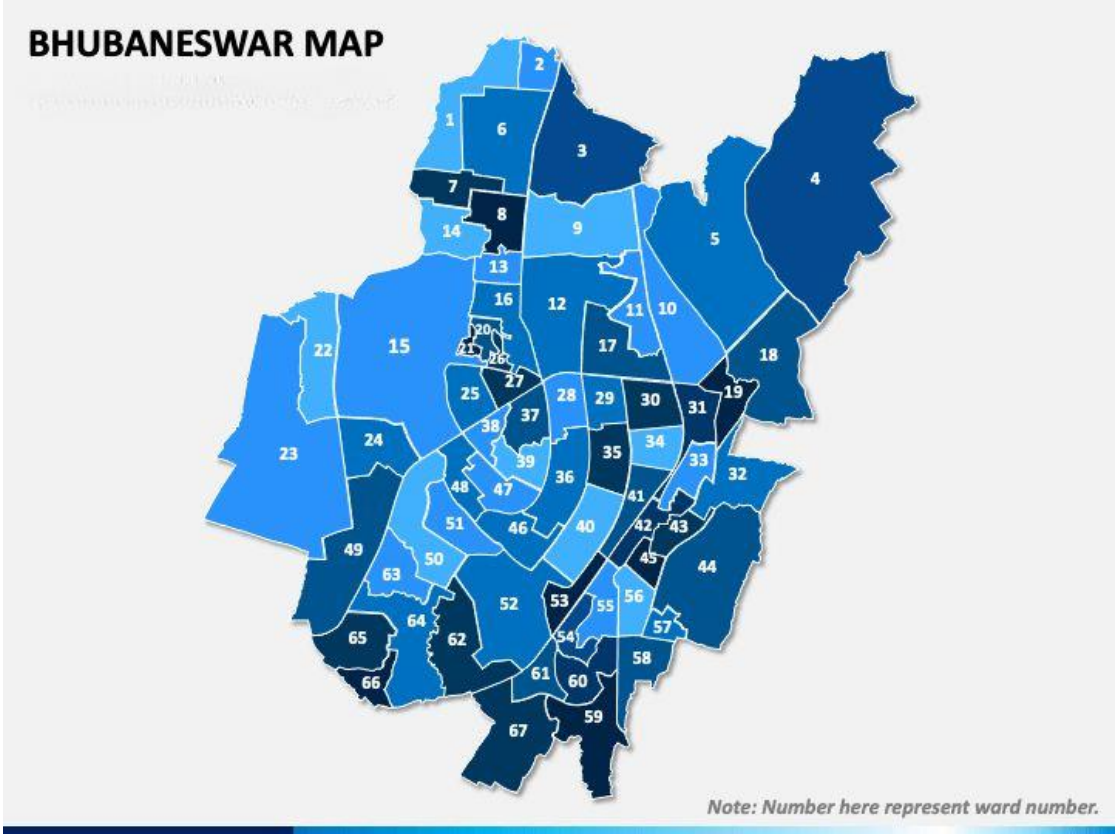

Fig-1: Ward Map of Bhubaneswar. The numerical designations on the ward map of Bhubaneswar City correspond to the administrative divisions within the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC).

Water Resources and Supply Infrastructure

The primary sources of water supply in Bhubaneswar include both surface water and groundwater. Surface water is mainly drawn from the Mahanadi River and its tributaries, while groundwater is extracted through numerous bore wells scattered across the city (Development Alternatives, 2021). The Public Health Engineering Organization (PHEO) is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the water supply system.

The total water production capacity for Bhubaneswar is approximately 255 million liters per day (MLD). However, considering physical losses within the distribution system, around 53 MLD of water is lost, resulting in an effective supply of about 202 MLD. This water is distributed across three PHEO divisions: Division I receives around 101 MLD, Division II about 64.4 MLD, and Division III approximately 37 MLD (Development Alternatives, 2021).

Water Quality and Challenges

Assessments of groundwater quality in Bhubaneswar have revealed variations in several parameters across different seasons. A study analyzing twelve water quality parameters, including "*pH, dissolved oxygen (DO), total hardness, electrical conductivity (EC), total dissolved solids (TDS), chloride, iron, alkalinity, nitrate, fluoride, and sulfate, indicated that certain areas exhibited values beyond permissible limits as per 10500:2012 standards* (Dash et al., 2021)".

For instance, parameters like pH varied by 73.3% in summer and 93.3% in the rainy season across various locations. The Mancheswar area showed high variations in electrical conductivity and nitrate levels during summer and rainy seasons, respectively. The Water Quality Index (WQI) indicated that 33.3% and 40% of areas in summer and rainy seasons, respectively, were unsuitable

for drinking, highlighting the need for interventions to prevent further groundwater contamination (Dash et al., 2021).

Water Demand and Supply Dynamics

The per capita water supply in Bhubaneswar varies across different zones, with some areas receiving adequate supply while others face deficits. The city's rapid urbanization has led to increased water demand, exerting pressure on existing water resources. The distribution system experiences physical losses estimated at 21%, amounting to approximately 53 MLD. The remaining water is billed or unbilled and distributed across the three PHEO divisions (Development Alternatives, 2021).

Wastewater Management

It is estimated that 80% of the water consumed is discharged as wastewater, amounting to around 40.3 MLD. This wastewater is often directly discharged into water bodies without adequate treatment, posing environmental and public health risks (Development Alternatives, 2021).

Challenges and Initiatives

Bhubaneswar faces several challenges in ensuring water security, including:

- **Urbanization Pressure**: Rapid population growth has led to increased water demand and strain on existing infrastructure (Census of India, 2011).
- **Water Quality Concerns**: Contamination of groundwater due to urban activities has been observed in certain areas, necessitating regular monitoring and mitigation strategies (Dash et al., 2021).
- **Infrastructure Deficiencies**: Losses in the distribution system and inadequate wastewater management highlight the need for infrastructure improvements (Development Alternatives, 2021).

4. Research Objectives

1. To assess the current state of water security in Bhubaneswar through a Water Security Index.
2. To analyze the spatial and demographic variability in water security across the city.
3. To identify key determinants affecting water availability, quality, and governance.
4. To propose policy interventions/strategies for enhancing water security in Bhubaneswar.

5. Research Questions

1. What are the key factors influencing water security in Bhubaneswar?
2. How does water security vary across different socio-economic and geographic segments of the city?
3. What policy measures can enhance water security resilience in Bhubaneswar?

6. Methodology and Data Analysis

This study utilizes a complete water security assessment framework, employing an indicator-based technique to develop a Water Security Index (WSI) for Bhubaneswar. The methodological framework for implementing urban water security is organized into three tiers, comprising five essential dimensions: (1) water supply and sanitation, (2) water production, (3) water-related disasters, (4) water environment, and (5) water governance. These dimensions consider the fundamental variables affecting water security and encompass specific elements essential for sustainable urban water management. Each dimension is depicted by a sequence of indicators, which are further quantified through a set of potential variables.

The data collection method followed this structured approach and occurred between November and December 2023, utilizing both primary and secondary sources. Data regarding water supply, sanitation, and water productivity was acquired from the Public Health Engineering Organization

(PHEO) Odisha and the Water Resources Department, Government of Odisha, specifically through their Water Balance Plan Report associated with the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT 2.0) initiative. The water governance aspect was evaluated from the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) and the Odisha Water Supply and Sewerage Board (OWSSB) report. Additionally, information pertaining to the aquatic environment was obtained from the Odisha State Pollution Control Board (OSPCB) to assess parameters including water quality, contamination levels, and ecological effects.

This study seeks to deliver a comprehensive and contextually relevant evaluation of Bhubaneswar's water security by including multi-source data inside this analytical framework, hence providing empirical insights for informed policy interventions and sustainable urban water governance.

6.1.Water Security Assessment Framework

The Water Security Index (WSI) developed in this study is a "multidimensional tool designed to evaluate the water security status of Bhubaneswar across four key dimensions: *availability, quality, accessibility, and sustainability".* Each dimension is assessed using a set of indicators derived from both quantitative and qualitative data sources.

1. **Water Availability:** Indicators *include annual rainfall*, surface water levels, groundwater recharge rates, and per capita water availability.
2. **Water Quality:** This dimension is assessed through indicators such as *water contamination levels (e.g., presence of heavy metals, nitrates*), biological oxygen demand (BOD), and *compliance with drinking water standards.*
3. **Water Accessibility:** Indicators include *the percentage of the population with access to piped water*, the *reliability of water supply, and the presence of alternative water sources*.
4. **Water Sustainability**: This dimension considers factors such as the *rate of groundwater depletion, the efficiency of water use in different sectors* (*domestic, industrial, agricultural*), and the *implementation of water conservation practices*.

Policy indicators and framework for a water security assessment in Bhubaneswar City

S.No	Dimension	Indicator	Variable	Score	Variable Value	Reference for Normalisation
1	"Water supply and sanitation	Water availability	Per capita water use (lpcd)	5	248	Howard and Bartram (2005)
2		Accessibility to water	Water imported (%)	5	0	Babel et al. (2020)
3		Quality of water supplied	Population access to piped water supply (%)	3	35	ADB (2013)
4		Hygiene and sanitation	Residual chlorine (%)	4	92.86	Babel et al. (2020)
5	Water productivity	Economic value of water	Proportion of customers connected to sewer line system (%)	1	9.32	ADB (2013)
6	Water-related disasters	Disaster mitigation	Water Price (USD/m^3)	3	0.84	Aboelnga et al. (2019)
7		Disaster	Disaster budget	3	3	Babel et al.

		preparedness	factor (%)			(2020)
8	Water environment	State of natural water bodies	Natural Drainage factor (%)	1	3.7	Babel et al. (2020)
9		Effect of polluting factors	Natural water quality factor (%)	5	133.33	Babel et al. (2020)
10	Water governance	Overall management of the watersector	Wastewater treatment factor (%)	0	24	ADB (2013)
11		Potential to adapt to future changes	Institution factor (no unit)	2	2	Babel et al. (2020)
12		Citizen support for water security	Adaptability factor (no unit)	1	1	Babel et al. (2020)"

Interpretation of the Water Security Index for Bhubaneswar:
According to the WSI Condition Description:

- ***0 ≤ 1.5 Poor Water Security***
- ***1.5 ≤ 2.5 Fair Water Security***
- ***2.5 ≤ WSI < 3.5: Good Water Security***
- ***3.5 ≤ 4.5 Very good Water Security***
- ***4.5 ≤ 5 Excellent Water Security***

The overall Water Security Index (WSI) for Bhubaneswar is determined by computing the mean of the individual indicator scores. The calculation is as follows:
Substituting the values: **WSI = (∑ Score) / (Total Number of Indicators)**

WSI = 33 / 12 ≈ 2.75

According to the classification framework, Bhubaneswar is categorized as having "Good Water Security," indicating moderate security with sufficient provisions in essential areas. Nonetheless, obstacles remain in wastewater management, institutional readiness, and public involvement. Although the city is comparatively safe, it is crucial to address these deficiencies through strategic planning and governance for enduring sustainability.

Detailed Observations:

(a) Water Supply and Sanitation:

- ***Per Capita Water Use:*** Bhubaneswar's per capita water supply stands at 248 liters per capita per day (lpcd), surpassing the benchmark of 135 lpcd set by Howard and Bartram (2005).
- ***Accessibility to Water:*** The city sources its drinking water primarily from surface water (approximately two-thirds) and the remainder from groundwater resources. There is no significant reliance on imported water.
- ***Quality of Water Supplied:*** Only 35% of households have direct water supply connections, indicating limited access to piped water.
- ***Hygiene and Sanitation:*** Residual chlorine levels are maintained at 92.86%, reflecting effective disinfection practices.

(b) Water Productivity:

Economic Value of Water:A mere 9.32% of customers are connected to the sewer line system, highlighting challenges in wastewater management.

(c) Water-Related Disasters:

- ***Disaster Mitigation:*** The water price is USD 0.84 per cubic meter, aligning with regional standards.

- ***Disaster Preparedness:*** The disaster budget factor is at 3%, indicating moderate allocation for disaster management.

(d) Water Environment:

- ***State of Natural Water Bodies****:* The natural drainage factor is low at 3.7%, suggesting potential issues with waterlogging and urban flooding.
- ***Effect of Polluting Factors****:* The natural water quality factor is high at 133.33%, indicating minimal pollution levels.

(e) Water Governance:

- ***Overall Management of the Water Sector:*** The wastewater treatment factor is 24%, pointing to inadequate wastewater treatment infrastructure.
- ***Potential to Adapt to Future Changes:*** The institution factor is rated at 2, reflecting limited institutional capacity to adapt to future water challenges.
- ***Citizen Support for Water Security****:* The adaptability factor is 1, indicating low public engagement in water security initiatives.

Bhubaneswar's Water Security Index of roughly 2.75 categorizes it as having 'Good Water Security.' The city shows sufficient water availability and quality; nonetheless, substantial enhancements are required in water accessibility, wastewater management, institutional capacity, and public engagement to improve overall water security.

7. Policy Recommendations

- ***Decentralized Water Management:*** Enhance community governance by empowering local water user groups and municipal entities to manage resource allocation, distribution, and conservation initiatives. This participatory methodology improves openness, accountability, and localized decision-making, guaranteeing equal access to water resources.
- ***Investment in Infrastructure:*** Prioritize extensive modernization of urban water infrastructure, encompassing leak-proof pipeline networks, sophisticated sewage treatment facilities, and comprehensive rainwater collection systems. These strategies augment water efficiency, mitigate contamination concerns, and bolster resilience to climate-induced water scarcity.
- ***Regulatory Enhancement:***Establish real-time water quality monitoring systems and strict groundwater extraction limits to prevent over-exploitation and contamination. Establishing a thorough legislative framework including penalties for non-compliance ensures long-term sustainability and protection of fragile water supplies. Start evidence-based communication campaigns to inform local populations about efficient household use, water conservation techniques, and the effects of water insecurity on socio-environmental issues.

8. Conclusion

The persistent water security challenges in Bhubaneswar, even as a recognized smart city, highlight the gap between rapid urban development and the essential infrastructure and governance systems required to support it. The findings of this study underscore the systemic vulnerabilities that emerge from unregulated groundwater extraction, inadequate wastewater treatment, and inefficiencies in distribution networks, resulting in inequitable and unsustainable water availability (Gupta & Ranjan, 2021). Considering noticeable improvements in infrastructure, the current administration remains disjointed, highlighting the need for a unified and adaptable approach to managing urban water resources.

An extensive evaluation utilizing the Water Security Index (WSI) uncovers significant spatial and demographic inequalities in water accessibility, availability, quality, and sustainability. The study

also reveals that peripheral and socio-economically marginalized populations disproportionately face service deficiencies and increased pollution risks (Sharma et al., 2020). These findings validate the imperative for data-driven policymaking, prioritizing high-risk areas for targeted actions to improve water equity and resilience.

The regulatory framework governing water security in Bhubaneswar is evidently inadequate in tackling the escalating threats of groundwater depletion and contamination. The absence of stringent extraction regulations and immediate water quality evaluations has facilitated the unsustainable exploitation of water resources (Mishra & Patel, 2019). A reassessment of governance frameworks is crucial, incorporating decentralized water management strategies that enable local stakeholders and enhance regulatory adherence to ensure enduring sustainability.

Alongside legislative reforms, the advancement of infrastructure is crucial. Investments in impermeable pipeline networks, advanced sewage treatment facilities, and extensive rainwater collecting systems are crucial for enhancing the efficiency and resilience of urban water infrastructure (Kumar et al., 2022). Technological advancements must be paired with governance frameworks that promote community involvement and public awareness initiatives aimed at fostering water conservation practices and nurturing social responsibility in resource management (Verma & Joshi, 2021).

The water security dilemma in Bhubaneswar necessitates a significant shift from reactive and fragmented strategies to a proactive, integrated management system. Addressing governance inefficiencies, infrastructural deficiencies, and socio-spatial disparities through a comprehensive strategy is essential for attaining equitable, sustainable, and resilient urban water management. Absent purposeful recalibration, the city jeopardizes the continuation of water insecurity, which undermines its developmental advancement and intensifies socio-economic inequalities. In the future, a synthesis of rigorous rules, advanced infrastructure, and community-oriented governance will be essential for safeguarding Bhubaneswar's water resources from escalating urban and climatic pressures.

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