

Socioeconomic and Environmental Impacts of Renewable Energy on Society

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Abstract : Renewable energy sources have gained significant attention as a sustainable alternative to conventional fossil fuels. This paper aims to examine the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of renewable energy on society. By analyzing empirical studies and case examples, the study provides insights into the transformative effects of renewable energy adoption on various aspects of society. The socioeconomic impacts are investigated in terms of job creation, economic growth, and energy security. The paper explores how renewable energy projects stimulate local economies, create employment opportunities, and contribute to energy independence. Furthermore, it examines the social implications of renewable energy, such as community empowerment, energy access, and educational advancements, highlighting their role in fostering sustainable development. The environmental impacts of renewable energy are critically evaluated, focusing on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution, and ecological degradation. The study investigates the potential of renewable energy sources to mitigate climate change, improve public health, and protect ecosystems. Additionally, it examines the challenges and opportunities associated with the integration of renewable energy into existing energy systems. The paper discusses policy frameworks, technological innovations, and financial mechanisms that facilitate the socioeconomic and environmental benefits of renewable energy adoption. It emphasizes the importance of public awareness and engagement in driving the transition towards a renewable energy-powered society. By analyzing the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of renewable energy, this paper provides valuable insights for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders. It contributes to the understanding of the potential benefits and challenges of renewable energy adoption and offers recommendations for effective strategies and policies to accelerate the transition to a sustainable energy future.

Key words: Renewable energy; Socioeconomic impacts; Environmental impacts; Sustainable development; energy transition.

1. Introduction

Renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind, hydro, and geothermal power, have gained significant attention

as viable alternatives to conventional fossil fuels. The adoption of renewable energy technologies has the potential to bring about profound socioeconomic and environmental changes in society.

1.1 Background and significance

The transition to renewable energy sources has gained momentum globally due to increasing concerns about climate change, energy security, and sustainable development. Understanding the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of renewable energy on society is crucial for informing policy decisions, promoting sustainable energy transitions, and achieving long-term sustainability goals. This section provides a background on the topic and highlights the significance of studying these impacts.

Renewable energy technologies offer numerous socioeconomic benefits. Studies [1-2] have shown that the renewable energy sector can drive economic growth and job creation. Renewable energy investments stimulate local economies through infrastructure development, project installations, and manufacturing activities, leading to the creation of skilled and unskilled jobs [3,12].

Energy security is another significant aspect influenced by renewable energy adoption. Fossil fuel dependence poses risks related to price volatility, supply disruptions, and geopolitical conflicts. Renewable energy sources, on the other hand, offer domestic energy production options that reduce reliance on imported fuels. Research [4,13] highlights the importance of energy security in the context of renewable energy adoption.

From an environmental perspective, renewable energy plays a crucial role in mitigating climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [5,14] emphasizes the need to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius, with renewable energy identified as a key component of achieving this target. Furthermore, the reduction of air pollution associated with fossil fuel combustion through the adoption of renewable energy contributes to improved public health outcomes [6,15].

Understanding the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of renewable energy adoption is vital for policymakers, businesses, and society as a whole. It provides insights into the opportunities and challenges associated with renewable energy transitions, guides

decision-making processes, and supports the formulation of effective policies and strategies for a sustainable future.

1.2 Research objectives

The research objectives of this study on the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of renewable energy on society are as follows:

- To examine the extent to which renewable energy adoption contributes to job creation, economic growth, and energy security, based on empirical evidence and case studies [1, 4].
- To assess the environmental benefits of renewable energy in terms of greenhouse gas emissions reduction, air pollution mitigation, and conservation of natural resources, drawing on studies by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [5], World Health Organization [6], and other relevant literature.
- To explore the social implications of renewable energy adoption, including community empowerment, energy access, and educational advancements, and to investigate their role in fostering sustainable development [1,7].
- To identify the challenges and opportunities associated with the integration of renewable energy into existing energy systems, such as intermittency and grid integration issues, financial and policy frameworks, and technological advancements [3,5].

By addressing these research objectives, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of renewable energy on society, contributing to the existing knowledge base and informing decision-making processes for a sustainable energy transition.

2. Socioeconomic Impacts of Renewable Energy

Renewable energy adoption has significant socioeconomic impacts on society. This section highlights the socioeconomic benefits associated with renewable energy, supported by relevant references.

2.1 Job Creation and Economic Growth:

Renewable energy projects have the potential to create employment opportunities and drive economic growth. Studies have shown that the renewable energy sector generates jobs at a higher rate compared to the fossil fuel industry. The International Renewable Energy Agency [3] estimates that the renewable energy sector employed approximately 11.5 million people worldwide in 2019, with the potential to reach 42 million jobs by 2050. This job creation effect stimulates local economies, enhances income generation, and promotes sustainable development.

2.1.1 Local Economic Development:

Renewable energy projects contribute to local economic development by creating demand for goods and services. These projects require infrastructure development, manufacturing, installation, and maintenance, which generate economic activity and stimulate local supply chains. Research [8] highlights the positive relationship between corporate social responsibility, which includes renewable energy initiatives, and national competitiveness, leading to economic growth.

2.2 Energy Security and Independence:

Renewable energy reduces reliance on imported fossil fuels, enhancing energy security and independence. By diversifying the energy mix, countries can mitigate risks associated with price volatility and supply disruptions. [1,16] emphasize the importance of energy security as a key benefit of renewable energy adoption.

These references provide a foundation for understanding the socioeconomic impacts of renewable energy on society, highlighting job creation, economic growth, local economic development, and energy security as significant benefits associated with renewable energy adoption.

3. Environmental Impacts of Renewable Energy

Renewable energy adoption has substantial environmental impacts, which are crucial in understanding the overall socioeconomic and environmental effects on society. This section highlights the environmental benefits of renewable energy, supported by relevant references [17].

3.1 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction:

Renewable energy sources produce little to no greenhouse gas emissions during operation, unlike fossil fuels. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [5,18] emphasizes the pivotal role of renewable energy in mitigating climate change and achieving global climate goals. Transitioning to renewable energy helps reduce carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to the decarbonization of the energy sector.

3.2 Air Pollution Mitigation:

The combustion of fossil fuels for energy generation is a major source of air pollution, leading to adverse health effects and environmental degradation. Renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power, produce clean energy without emissions of pollutants like sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and particulate matter. The World Health Organization [6,19] acknowledges the role of renewable energy in reducing air pollution and improving public health.

3.3 Resource Conservation:

Renewable energy harnesses natural resources such as sunlight, wind, water, and geothermal heat, which are abundant and sustainable. Unlike finite fossil fuel reserves, renewable energy sources provide a continuous and inexhaustible supply. By relying on renewable energy

[2,20], society can reduce the pressure on natural resources and promote sustainable resource management. These references provide evidence of the environmental benefits of renewable energy, including greenhouse gas emissions reduction, air pollution mitigation, and sustainable resource utilization. Understanding these environmental impacts is crucial for evaluating the overall socioeconomic and environmental effects of renewable energy on society.

4. Social Implications of Renewable Energy Adoption

Renewable energy adoption has significant social implications that intersect with the socioeconomic and environmental impacts on society. This section discusses the social implications of renewable energy adoption, supported by relevant references.

4.1 Community Empowerment and Participation:

Renewable energy projects often involve local communities in planning, decision-making, and implementation processes. This engagement fosters community empowerment, social cohesion, and a sense of ownership over energy resources. By involving communities, renewable energy projects can address social inequalities, promote inclusivity, and enhance social well-being [7,21].

4.2 Energy Access and Rural Development:

Renewable energy technologies, such as off-grid solar systems and mini-grids, have the potential to provide electricity access to remote and underserved communities. This energy access improves quality of life, enables educational opportunities, enhances healthcare services, and supports economic activities in rural areas. Access to affordable and clean energy is crucial for poverty alleviation and sustainable rural development [9,22].

4.3 Educational Advancements:

Renewable energy adoption offers educational opportunities through capacity building programs, research, and skill development. Educational institutions and training centers play a crucial role in equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary for the renewable energy sector. This contributes to human capital development, promotes innovation, and supports the growth of a green economy [7,23].

By considering these social implications of renewable energy adoption, society can better understand how the socioeconomic and environmental impacts intersect with social dimensions, and ensure that renewable energy transitions are inclusive, equitable, and beneficial for all stakeholders.

5. Challenges and Opportunities

The adoption of renewable energy presents both challenges and opportunities concerning the

socioeconomic and environmental impacts on society. This section explores some of the key challenges and opportunities associated with renewable energy adoption.

5.1 Intermittency and Grid Integration:

Renewable energy sources such as solar and wind are intermittent in nature, which poses challenges for grid stability and reliability. Effective integration of renewable energy into existing grids requires advanced technologies, energy storage solutions, and grid infrastructure upgrades to manage fluctuations in supply and demand [10,24].

5.2 Financial and Policy Frameworks:

The upfront costs of renewable energy installations can be substantial, making financing a significant challenge. Access to affordable financing, favorable policy frameworks, and supportive regulatory environments are crucial to incentivize investment in renewable energy projects [11]. Additionally, policy stability and long-term commitments are needed to provide investor confidence and foster sustained growth in the renewable energy sector.

5.3 Innovation and Technological Advancements:

Renewable energy adoption presents opportunities for innovation and technological advancements. Continued research and development efforts can lead to improved efficiency, cost reductions, and new renewable energy technologies. Breakthroughs in energy storage, smart grids, and renewable energy integration solutions can enhance the scalability and reliability of renewable energy systems [11].

5.4 Job Creation and Economic Growth:

The renewable energy sector has the potential to drive job creation and economic growth. Investments in renewable energy projects stimulate local economies through the development of manufacturing, installation, and maintenance industries. This can lead to the creation of skilled jobs, including in engineering, construction, operations, and maintenance [3].

5.5 Sustainable Development and Environmental Benefits:

Renewable energy adoption aligns with sustainable development goals, offering opportunities to address environmental challenges while promoting economic growth. It can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, mitigate air pollution, and contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts [5,25]. Renewable energy also provides opportunities for decentralized energy systems, promoting energy access and resilience in underserved communities.

By addressing the challenges and capitalizing on the opportunities, society can maximize the socioeconomic and environmental benefits of renewable energy adoption.

Continued research, supportive policies, technological advancements, and collaboration between stakeholders are vital for realizing the full potential of renewable energy in driving sustainable development.

6. Case Studies of Renewable Energy Impacts

6.1 Germany's Energiewende: Lessons learned

Germany's Energiewende, or energy transition, is a prominent case study that demonstrates the challenges and opportunities associated with transitioning to a renewable energy-based economy. This paper examines the key lessons learned from Germany's Energiewende, focusing on its socioeconomic and environmental impacts. Through an analysis of policies, market mechanisms, technological advancements, and public participation, the paper provides valuable insights that can inform and guide other countries in their pursuit of sustainable energy transitions.

6.1.1 Policy Framework and Market Mechanisms

This section discusses the policy framework that facilitated Germany's energy transition. It examines the role of feed-in tariffs, renewable energy laws, and market mechanisms in promoting renewable energy deployment. The section also analyzes the challenges and lessons learned regarding policy stability, cost-effectiveness, and grid integration.

6.1.2 Socioeconomic Impacts

This section explores the socioeconomic impacts of Germany's Energiewende. It examines the job creation potential, the growth of renewable energy industries, and the effects on energy prices and affordability. The section also discusses the social acceptance and community participation aspects, including the role of citizen energy cooperatives.

6.1.3 Environmental Impacts

The environmental impacts of Germany's Energiewende are analyzed in this section. It discusses the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, improvements in air quality, and the implications for biodiversity and land use. The section also examines the challenges related to the intermittency of renewable energy and the need for energy storage solutions.

6.1.4 Technological Advancements and Innovation

This section focuses on the technological advancements and innovations that emerged from Germany's energy transition. It explores the development of renewable energy technologies, energy storage solutions, and smart grid systems. The section also discusses the role of research and development in driving technological progress.

6.1.5 Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Drawing from the analysis, this section presents the key lessons learned from Germany's Energiewende. It highlights the importance of long-term policy commitments, stakeholder engagement, grid modernization, and international cooperation. The section concludes with recommendations for other countries embarking on their own energy transitions.

6.1.6 Conclusion

The conclusion summarizes the main findings of the paper and underscores the significance of Germany's Energiewende as a valuable case study. It emphasizes the importance of considering the multifaceted challenges and opportunities in achieving a successful and sustainable energy transition.

By analyzing Germany's Energiewende as a case study, this paper aims to provide valuable insights and lessons learned for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders involved in renewable energy transitions worldwide. It offers a comprehensive understanding of the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of Germany's energy transition and serves as a guide for designing effective strategies for sustainable energy transformations.

6.2 Costa Rica's renewable energy success story

Costa Rica has emerged as a global leader in renewable energy adoption, showcasing a remarkable success story in transitioning to a sustainable energy system. This case study examines the key factors contributing to Costa Rica's renewable energy achievements, including its policy framework, technological advancements, and socioeconomic benefits. By analyzing the country's experience, this paper aims to extract valuable lessons and insights that can inform and inspire other nations in their pursuit of renewable energy transitions.

This case study provides an overview of Costa Rica's renewable energy success story, highlighting the country's ambitious goals, achievements, and global recognition. It sets the context for the case study and outlines the research objectives of the paper.

6.2.1 Policy Framework and Institutional Support

This section explores the policy framework and institutional support that facilitated Costa Rica's renewable energy success. It examines the role of government policies, regulations, and incentives in promoting renewable energy development. Additionally, the section analyzes the importance of institutional collaboration and stakeholder engagement in driving the energy transition.

6.2.3 Renewable Energy Mix and Technological Innovations

This section delves into Costa Rica's renewable energy mix and technological advancements. It discusses the significant contributions of hydropower, wind power,

geothermal energy, and solar energy in the country's energy portfolio. The section also explores the innovative approaches and investments in renewable energy technologies, such as grid integration solutions and energy storage systems.

6.2.3 Socioeconomic Benefits and Community Engagement

This section examines the socioeconomic benefits derived from Costa Rica's renewable energy success. It discusses the creation of green jobs, local economic development, and social empowerment through community participation in renewable energy projects. The section also explores the implications for energy access, affordability, and social equity.

6.2.4 Environmental Impacts and Sustainability

This section focuses on the environmental impacts and sustainability aspects of Costa Rica's renewable energy achievements. It examines the reduction in carbon emissions, improved air quality, and conservation of natural resources. Additionally, the section discusses the challenges and strategies for managing environmental concerns associated with renewable energy development.

6.2.5 Lessons Learned and Replication Potential

Drawing from the analysis, this section presents the key lessons learned from Costa Rica's renewable energy success story. It highlights the importance of long-term political commitment, supportive policy frameworks, technology innovation, and stakeholder engagement. The section concludes with insights on how other countries can replicate and adapt Costa Rica's experiences to their unique contexts.

6.2.6 Conclusion

The conclusion summarizes the main findings of the case study and emphasizes the significance of Costa Rica's renewable energy success as a source of inspiration and guidance for other nations. It underscores the potential for global renewable energy transformations and the importance of comprehensive approaches that consider policy, technology, socioeconomic factors, and environmental sustainability.

6.3 Rural electrification in developing countries

Rural electrification plays a crucial role in improving the quality of life and fostering economic development in developing countries. This case study examines successful initiatives and strategies for rural electrification in developing countries, focusing on the challenges faced, the approaches taken, and the socioeconomic impacts achieved. By analyzing specific case studies, this paper aims to provide valuable insights and lessons learned that can guide future efforts to bring electricity access to rural communities in developing nations.

This paper provides an overview of the significance of rural electrification in developing countries, highlighting its impact on livelihoods, education, healthcare, and overall economic development. It sets the context for the case study and outlines the research objectives of the paper.

6.3.1 Case Study 1: Bangladesh's Solar Home Systems

This section focuses on Bangladesh's successful initiative to provide rural electrification through solar home systems. It examines the challenges faced, such as limited infrastructure and affordability, and analyzes the strategies employed to overcome these challenges. The section also highlights the socioeconomic impacts achieved, including improved access to education, increased productivity, and enhanced social well-being.

6.3.2 Case Study 2: Kenya's Last Mile Connectivity Project

This section explores Kenya's Last Mile Connectivity Project, which aimed to extend electricity access to remote rural areas. It discusses the project's innovative approaches, such as public-private partnerships and community engagement. The section analyzes the socioeconomic benefits, including job creation, increased business opportunities, and improved healthcare services.

6.3.3 Case Study 3: India's National Rural Electrification Program

This section examines India's National Rural Electrification Program (Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana), which aimed to achieve universal electrification in rural areas. It discusses the challenges faced, such as geographical complexities and financial constraints, and explores the strategies employed, including decentralized renewable energy solutions. The section highlights the socioeconomic impacts, including improved agricultural productivity, enhanced livelihoods, and reduced dependence on traditional fuels.

6.3.4 Lessons Learned and Best Practices

Drawing from the case studies, this section presents the key lessons learned and best practices for successful rural electrification in developing countries. It emphasizes the importance of tailored approaches, stakeholder engagement, sustainable financing mechanisms, and the integration of renewable energy sources. The section concludes with recommendations for policymakers, energy practitioners, and international organizations involved in rural electrification initiatives.

6.3.5 Conclusion

The conclusion summarizes the main findings of the case study and underscores the significance of rural electrification in driving socioeconomic development in developing countries. It highlights the transformative

power of electricity access and the need for comprehensive strategies that address the unique challenges faced by rural communities.

7. Policy Recommendations

Based on the case studies and analysis of rural electrification in developing countries, the following policy recommendations are proposed to guide future efforts and enhance the effectiveness of rural electrification initiatives:

7.1 Tailored Approaches: Recognize the diverse needs and characteristics of rural communities and develop customized approaches for each region. Consider factors such as geographical location, population density, and economic activities to design appropriate electrification solutions [26].

7.2 Holistic Planning and Implementation: Adopt a comprehensive approach that goes beyond simply providing electricity access. Incorporate strategies for productive uses of energy, such as promoting income-generating activities and supporting entrepreneurship in rural areas.

7.3 Sustainable Financing Mechanisms: Establish sustainable financing mechanisms to ensure the long-term viability of rural electrification projects. Explore innovative financing models, such as public-private partnerships, microfinance, and community-based funding approaches.

7.4 Renewable Energy Integration: Prioritize the integration of renewable energy sources in rural electrification projects. Explore the potential of solar, wind, mini-hydro, and other renewable technologies to provide reliable and sustainable electricity to remote areas.

7.5 Stakeholder Engagement and Capacity Building: Foster active participation and ownership of local communities, including rural residents, local government bodies, and community organizations. Involve them in the decision-making process, implementation, and maintenance of electrification projects. Provide capacity building programs to empower local communities and ensure the sustainability of the initiatives.

7.6 Policy and Regulatory Frameworks: Develop supportive policy and regulatory frameworks that facilitate rural electrification. Streamline administrative processes, establish clear guidelines, and provide incentives for private sector participation. Ensure policy stability and long-term commitment to attract investments and foster a conducive environment for electrification projects.

7.7 Data Collection and Monitoring: Establish robust data collection and monitoring systems to track the progress and impacts of rural electrification initiatives. Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the projects, identify challenges, and adapt strategies accordingly [27].

7.8 Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration: Facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, academia, and industry. Promote the exchange of best practices, lessons learned, and technological innovations to accelerate the pace of rural electrification and avoid duplication of efforts.

7.9 Environmental Sustainability: Prioritize environmental sustainability in rural electrification projects. Promote energy efficiency measures, use clean technologies, and minimize the environmental impacts of electrification interventions [28].

7.10 Access to Information and Energy Services: Emphasize the importance of access to information and energy services in rural areas. Explore the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to deliver energy-related information, support education and healthcare services, and foster social and economic development [29-30].

By implementing these policy recommendations, policymakers can enhance the effectiveness and impact of rural electrification initiatives in developing countries. This will contribute to improving the quality of life, fostering economic development, and achieving sustainable development goals in rural communities.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of renewable energy on society are substantial and multifaceted. The transition to renewable energy sources has the potential to bring about positive transformations in various aspects of society.

From a socioeconomic perspective, renewable energy deployment has created new employment opportunities, particularly in the renewable energy industry and related sectors. This job creation stimulates local economies, contributes to poverty reduction, and enhances social well-being. Additionally, the shift towards renewable energy sources has the potential to improve energy access and affordability, particularly in underserved areas, thereby promoting social equity and inclusion.

Furthermore, the adoption of renewable energy technologies has the potential to enhance energy security and reduce dependence on fossil fuel imports. This can have positive macroeconomic impacts, including decreased trade deficits and increased energy

independence. Moreover, renewable energy can foster innovation and technological advancements, driving economic growth and competitiveness in a rapidly evolving global energy landscape.

In terms of environmental impacts, renewable energy significantly reduces greenhouse gas emissions compared to conventional fossil fuel-based energy generation. This contributes to mitigating climate change and addressing air pollution, leading to improved air quality and public health benefits. Additionally, renewable energy technologies have a lower environmental footprint in terms of resource extraction and land use compared to fossil fuel extraction.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the deployment of renewable energy also presents challenges and trade-offs. These include intermittency issues, grid integration challenges, and the need for energy storage solutions. Environmental considerations such as the impact on wildlife habitats and ecosystems, as well as land-use conflicts, require careful planning and management.

To maximize the positive socioeconomic and environmental impacts of renewable energy on society, policymakers should prioritize the development of supportive policy frameworks, incentives, and regulations. Long-term commitments, stakeholder engagement, and collaboration among governments, industry, academia, and civil society are crucial for fostering sustainable renewable energy transitions. Additionally, investment in research and development to drive technological advancements and cost reductions in renewable energy technologies is essential.

In conclusion, the widespread adoption of renewable energy sources offers immense potential to address societal challenges, drive economic development, and mitigate climate change. By carefully managing the socioeconomic and environmental aspects of renewable energy deployment, societies can reap the benefits of a sustainable, clean, and inclusive energy future.

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