INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR LEGAL RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Open Access, Refereed Journal Multi Disciplinary
Peer Reviewed

www.ijlra.com

ISSN: 2582-6433

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ISSN: 2582-6433

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ISSN: 2582-6433

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ISSN: 2582-6433

ENVIRONMENT SUSTAINABILITY OF BLOCKCHAIN

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ABSTRACT

Blockchain technology has emerged as a transformative force across various industries, offering decentralized and secure digital transactions. However, its environmental impact, particularly from energy-intensive consensus mechanisms such as Proof of Work (PoW), has raised significant sustainability concerns. The substantial computational power required for mining cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin results in considerable carbon emissions, placing a strain on global energy resources. In response, sustainable alternatives such as Proof of Stake (PoS), energy-efficient consensus protocols, and carbon-neutral blockchain initiatives have been proposed to mitigate environmental damage. Furthermore, blockchain can enhance sustainability through applications in supply chain transparency, carbon credit tracking, and renewable energy trading. This paper examines the ecological footprint of blockchain, explores emerging green solutions, and evaluates the balance between technological innovation and environmental responsibility. A shift toward energy-efficient consensus mechanisms and integration with sustainable practices is 89essential to ensure the long-term viability of blockchain technology while minimizing its ecological impact.

Key word; Blockchain Technology, **Decentralization**, **Distributed Ledger**, **Transparency**, **Immutability**, Energy **Consumption**.

ISSN: 2582-6433

Introduction;

Blockchain technology has emerged as one of the most transformative innovations of the digital age, revolutionizing industries such as finance, supply chain management, healthcare, and governance. At its core, blockchain is a decentralized and distributed ledger system that ensures transparency, security, and immutability of data without relying on a central authority. While its advantages have driven rapid global adoption, growing attention is now being directed toward its environmental implications. One of the primary concerns surrounding blockchain technology is its significant energy consumption, particularly in networks that utilize the Proof-of-Work (PoW) consensus mechanism. Cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin and early versions of Ethereum require extensive computational power to validate transactions, leading to high electricity usage and increased dependence on fossil fuels. This has raised serious concerns about the carbon footprint of blockchain operations and their contribution to climate change. In addition to energy consumption, blockchain mining activities generate electronic waste due to the rapid obsolescence of specialized hardware. The environmental impact is further compounded by the concentration of mining operations in regions with cheap, non-renewable energy sources. However, the industry is gradually shifting toward more sustainable alternatives such as Proof-of-Stake (PoS), renewable energy integration, and carbon offsetting mechanisms.

Therefore, while blockchain technology offers immense potential for innovation and efficiency, it is essential to balance its growth with environmental sustainability. Addressing these challenges is crucial to ensuring that blockchain evolves as a responsible and eco-friendly technological advancement.

ENVIRONMENT SUSTAINABILITY OF BLOCKCHAIN:

Blockchain technology has revolutionized many industries, from finance to supply chains, and even art, with the rise of cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin. However, as its adoption grows, so do concerns about its environmental impact. The energy-intensive nature of blockchain systems, especially those based on proof-of-work (PoW) consensus mechanisms, has sparked a debate about the sustainability of this technology. This article explores the environmental concerns surrounding blockchain, the efforts to mitigate its carbon footprint, and the future of greener blockchain alternatives1.

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[1] Source: The Block https://share.google/VVHxgXZM8SNmT2ThR

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ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY;

Energy Consumption:

One of the biggest environmental impacts associated with blockchain technology is the energy consumption associated with it. Blockchain technologconsumption associated with it. Blockchain technolog, specifically the Proof-of-Work (PoW) consensus algorithm used in Bitcoin and Ethereum (pre-merge), requires a lot of energy to perform the complex cryptographic calculations necessary to validate transactions and maintain the integrity of the blockchain. For instance, the energy consumption associated with Bitcoin mining alone has been known to surpass the energy consumption of entire countries such as Argentina and the Netherlands. When the energy consumption associated with blockchain technology and other traditional financial networks is compared, the inefficiency associated with the energy consumption of the PoW consensus algorithm becomes evident. While traditional financial networks and banking systems also consume energy to function, the infrastructure associated with them allows a much larger number of transactions to be processed for the same amount of energy. Bitcoin, on the other hand, processes a much smaller number of transactions per second. Hence, the energy cost associated with processing a single transaction on the Bitcoin network is much higher[2]. **M.C. Mehta v. Union of India** A gas leak from a factory in Delhi caused serious environmental and health damage. Who is responsible for environmental harm caused by industrial activities? The Supreme Court introduced the concept of Absolute Liability Industries involved in hazardous activities must be fully responsible for any damage caused, without exceptions. If large-scale crypto mining harms the environment (pollution, energy waste), operators can be held strictly liable under this principal[3] **Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum v. Union of India** Tanneries in Tamil Nadu polluted water sources. How to balance industrial growth and environmental protection? Legal Principle: The court established Sustainable Development Precautionary Principal Polluter Pays Principal Judgment Polluting industries must compensate for environmental damage. Relation to Blockchain Crypto mining companies must adopt eco-friendly methods and may need to pay for carbon emissions[4]. **Subhash Kumar v. State of Bihar** Facts Industrial waste polluted river water affecting public health. Issue Is a clean environment a fundamental right? Legal Principle Right to pollution-free environment under Article 21 (Right to Life). Judgment The court recognized environmental protection as a fundamental right. Relation to Blockchain If mining activities cause pollution or excessive energy use affecting public welfare, it can violate fundamental rights[5].

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[2] https://www.pwc.com/us/en/services/digital-assets/blockchain-environmental-impact.html

[3] M.C. Mehta v. Union of India, (1988) 1 S.C.C. 471 (India).

[4] Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum v. Union of India, (1996) 5 S.C.C. 647 (India).

[5] *Subhash Kumar v. State of Bihar*, (1991) 1 S.C.C. 598 (India).

CARBON FOOTPRINT:

The environmental impact associated with blockchain technology does not stop with energy consumption. Blockchain technology also has a carbon footprint. Most blockchain networks rely on the energy generated by the burning of fossil fuels to function. However, some blockchain networks and mining activities are opting to use alternative energy sources such as hydro, wind, and solar energy to minimize their carbon footprint. Some countries such as Canada and Iceland, where alternative energy is readily available, are becoming preferred locations for green mining activities. In addition, carbon offsetting strategies and energy-efficient mining methods such as POS are becoming popular as alternative, more environmentally friendly options.

Electronic Waste (E-Waste) Generation:

Blockchain mining is also contributing to electronic waste (E-waste) generation due to the short lifespan of mining hardware. Specialized mining devices such as Application-Specific Integrated Circuits (ASICs) are becoming obsolete quickly due to the release of newer, more advanced models. The short lifespan of mining hardware is contributing to E-waste generation, as there is an increased turnover rate of mining hardware. Disposing of mining hardware is also posing another sustainability threat to the environment, as most mining hardware contains hazardous materials. The inability to recycle mining hardware is also contributing to E-waste generation.

Renewable energy integration:

Renewable energy integration in blockchain focuses on reducing the environmental impact of blockchain systems by using clean energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydropower to run mining and validation processes. Instead of relying on fossil fuels, this approach promotes sustainable energy use, especially in energy-intensive systems like Proof-of-Work.

At the same time, blockchain technology can support decentralized energy networks by enabling peer-to-peer (P2P) energy trading[6].

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[6] https://www.mdpi.com/2073-431X/13/4/107

This allows individuals and communities to produce, share, and sell renewable energy directly without intermediaries. As a result, it improves energy efficiency, increases transparency, and helps create a more sustainable and reliable power system while lowering overall carbon emissions.

Blockchain for Environmental Sustainability (Positive Impacts)

Blockchain technology plays an important role in promoting environmental sustainability by improving transparency, efficiency, and trust across various sectors. It helps create reliable systems that support eco-friendly practices and reduce environmental harm.

Supply Chain Transparency:

Blockchain enables end-to-end tracking of raw materials and products. This ensures that resources are sourced ethically and sustainably while also helping to minimize waste and prevent illegal or harmful practices.

Carbon Credit Management:

With blockchain, carbon credit transactions become more transparent and secure. It allows accurate tracking and trading of carbon credits, encouraging companies to reduce their carbon emissions and meet environmental goals.

Peer-to-Peer Energy Trading:

Blockchain supports decentralized energy systems where individuals can directly buy and sell renewable energy such as solar or wind power. This reduces dependency on traditional energy grids and promotes clean energy usage.

Environmental Monitoring:

Blockchain ensures that environmental data, such as pollution levels or climate records, is stored securely and cannot be altered. This increases trust in environmental reporting and supports better decision-making for sustainability.

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SUSTAINABILITY INNOVATION AND SOLUTION:

- **Changes to energy efficiency**:
  Sustainability of Blockchain technology refers that the high level of proof of work (pow) to low level of saving energy
- **Proof of stake (pos) and its benefits:**
  There is no need to usage of technology and the peoples are selected to validator through tokes so it's reduced energy conception and the Ethereum 2.0 was changed and the energy saving was going 99.95%.
- Delegated proof of stake (DPOS):
  The transaction was validated through the persons who are hold the tokens
- Proof of authority (POA):
  It was too fast whether the trusted validators are held for working
- Proof of space time (POST):
  Providing efficient energy alternatives for blockchain applications using leverage storage capacity rather than consumption power.
- Integration of renewable energy in blockchain mining:
  Blockchain mining was held a bad conception for nature so the other options like solar, wind, hydro Mining are innovated to save the energy.
- Solar, wind, Hydro Mining:
  The Texas are using solar mining and Canada; Norway countries are using hydro power for saving the energy.

Case Studies of Sustainable Mining Operations:

- **Hydro-Quebec (Canada**): A mining operation that runs entirely on hydroelectric power, demonstrating a sustainable approach to cryptocurrency mining.
- **Genesis Mining (Iceland**): A large-scale operation using geothermal and hydro energy to mine Bitcoin, reducing reliance on fossil fuels Solar-Powered Bitcoin Mining in Texas: Startups in Texas are using surplus solar energy to power mining rigs, showcasing how blockchain can align with green energy initiatives.
- CARBON OFFSETTING AND GREEN BLOCKCHAIN:
  Carbon neutral projects like chia networks, Algor and, Texas are innovated for held a carbon neutrality for blockchain projects.
- Carbon credit Tokenization:

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The examples like Toucan protocol, kiladar are held for buy, sale of carbon credit in blockchain.it was increasing accountability and transparency

SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES IN BLOCKCHAIN

Scalability vs. Energy Efficiency Trade-Offs:

One of the key challenges in making blockchain technology more sustainable is balancing scalability with energy efficiency. Traditional Proof-of-Work (PoW) blockchains, such as Bitcoin and pre-Merge Ethereum, prioritize security and decentralization but suffer from high energy consumption and limited transaction throughput. Scaling these networks often requires increased computational power, further exacerbating energy demands.

Centralization of mining operations and its impact on sustainability:

If blockchain has to be decentralized means mining costs rate becomes high and it donates only mining farms so the powers are concentrated among few entities

Impacts:

1. Decentralisation becomes low
2. A lot of energy usage in marked places
3. The usage of fossil fuel that makes carbon footprint high
4. Vulnerabilities becomes high when regulatory changes.

Sustainable solutions:

The system changes to Energy-Efficient, The important changes were Proof -of-Work changes to Proof -of-Stake (PoS).

Importance of Proof -of-Stake (PoS):

1. There is no lot of computation.
2. Usage of energy becomes low.
3. The transaction verifies by validators. So, it saves energy and the impact of Environment becomes low.

The conclusion for increasing blockchain technology is need to decrease Energy consumption and protect the decentralization and uses for societal benefit.

The balance is important for Sustainability and technology.

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REGULATORY AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS:

As the use of blockchain technology increases, various governments and regulatory authorities across the globe are formulating policies aimed at addressing the environmental impacts of blockchain technology. These policies are aimed at reducing the energy consumption rate, promoting green mining, and developing industry standards for sustainability. Government Initiatives to Reduce Blockchain's Environmental Impact Various governments across the world are taking steps to regulate and minimize the environmental impacts of blockchain technology[7].

1. **Restrictions and Bans on Mining Activities**:

Some governments in regions facing energy crises have opted for a ban on mining activities due to the high rate of energy consumption. For instance, China banned cryptocurrency mining in 2021 due to its high energy consumption rate. Similarly, the Kazakh government has implemented various regulations on mining activities in the country.

2. **Mandatory Reporting on Sustainability**:

Governments are considering introducing policies that require blockchain projects and mining organizations to reveal information regarding the sources of energy used in the mining processes. For instance, the EU has proposed introducing sustainability assessments in cryptocurrency regulations in accordance with the Markets in Crypto Assets (Mica)

- Data Protection and Privacy in Blockchain

As blockchain technology stores data permanently and transparently, it raises serious concerns regarding data privacy and protection.

[7] https://www.mdpi.com/2073-431X/13/4/107

Governments are framing laws to ensure that personal data is not misused Key poits: Compliance with data protection laws (like GDPR) Right to be forgotten vs immutable blockchain Secure handling of user information

- Financial Regulation and Anti-Money Laundering (AML)

Blockchain and cryptocurrencies can be misused for illegal activities like money laundering

ISSN: 2582-6433

and terrorism financing. Governments enforce strict financial regulations. Key Points: KYC (Know Your Customer) compliance Monitoring crypto transactions Preventing illegal financial activities

- E-Waste and Hardware Disposal Regulations

Blockchain mining requires high-performance hardware, leading to electronic waste. Governments are introducing policies to manage and recycle such waste.Key Points:
Regulation of electronic waste disposalPromotion of recycling practicesReducing environmental harm from mining hardware **Bank of India Internet and Mobile Association of India v. Reserve** In 2018, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued a rule that stopped banks from providing services to cryptocurrency exchanges and traders. Because of this, many crypto businesses could not function properly. The Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) challenged this decision in the Supreme Court.The main question was whether RBI's restriction was valid and whether it violated the fundamental right to carry on business under the Constitution of India The Supreme Court removed the RBI ban[8]. It stated that although RBI has the power to regulate financial systems, the restriction was too strict and not properly justified.The Court found that there was no strong evidence showing that cryptocurrency caused serious harm to the financial system. So, completely blocking banking services was considered excessive and unfair. This case is very important because it allowed cryptocurrency businesses to operate again. It also made it clear that while the government can regulate crypto, it cannot impose unreasonable restrictions without proper justification. Consumer Protection in Blockchain Technology With the growth of blockchain and cryptocurrencies, users face risks such as fraud, hacking, and lack of accountability. Governments are introducing regulations to protect consumers. Protection against crypto scams and fraud Transparency in transactions Accountability of exchanges and platforms

- Cross-Border Regulation and Jurisdiction Issues

Blockchain operates globally, making it difficult for a single country to regulate it. Governments are working on international cooperation and jurisdiction rules. Cross-border crypto transactions Jurisdictional conflicts Need for global regulatory frameworks

[8] Internet and Mobile Association of India v. Reserve Bank of India, (2020) 10 S.C.C. 274 (India).

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Lotus Case (France v. Turkey)

A French ship named Lotus collided with a Turkish ship on the high seas, which led to the death of several Turkish citizens. When the French officer arrived in Turkey, Turkish authorities arrested him and started legal proceedings. The main question was whether Turkey had the legal right (jurisdiction) to take action against the French officer for an incident that happened outside its territory[9]The Court decided that Turkey had the right to exercise jurisdiction. It stated that a country can take legal action unless there is a specific rule in international law that prohibits it.

The Court explained that international law does not strictly limit a country's power unless clearly stated. Since there was no rule stopping Turkey, it could proceed with the case. This case is important because it established that countries have freedom to act in legal matters unless restricted by international law. It is very relevant today for global issues like blockchain, where transactions happen across borders.

FUNDING RESEARCH ON SUSTAINABLE BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY:

Some governments have opted to fund research aimed at developing sustainable blockchain technology. For instance, the U.S. Department of Energy has explored the potential of blockchain technology in improving the efficiency of the energy grid. Similarly, the EU has invested in projects aimed at developing sustainable blockchain technology, including low-energy blockchain technology. Carbon Taxation and Incentives for Green Mining To promote the development of sustainable blockchain technology, some governments have implemented various policies aimed at encouraging the development of green mining Some of these policies include:

- **Imposing Carbon Taxes on Energy Consumption in Mining Activities**:

Some governments have opted for the implementation of various policies aimed at imposing carbon taxes on mining activities. These taxes are intended to discourage the use of fossil fuels and encourage the use of clean forms of energy. • Subsidies and Incentives for Renewable Energy Usage: Governments are providing tax breaks and subsidies for mining operations that use clean forms of energy. For instance, mining operations can enjoy lower tariffs for electricity if they use hydro, wind, or solar power for their operations.

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[8] [9]Internet and Mobile Association of India v. Reserve Bank of India, (2020) 10 S.C.C. 274 (India)

- **Green Certificates for Sustainable Blockchain Projects**:

Some regulatory authorities are introducing green certificates for blockchain projects that meet sustainability standards. This will encourage blockchain companies to develop projects based on environmental sustainability standards. Industry Standards for Sustainable Blockchain Development There are industry standards for developing blockchain technology in a sustainable way.

- **The Crypto Climate Accord (CCA):**

This is a standard for developing blockchain technology in a way that is friendly to the environment. This standard is based on the Paris Climate Accord and seeks to make blockchain technology carbon-neutral by 2030. Most blockchain companies and mining operations have signed up for this standard

- **ISO Standards for Blockchain Sustainability**:

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is developing standards for blockchain technology to promote sustainability in blockchain development. This will promote the development of efficient blockchain technology.

- **Self-Regulation and Corporate Responsibility:**

Most blockchain projects and exchanges are self-regulating and have taken steps to promote sustainability in blockchain development. These include the use of carbon offsets and developing efficient blockchain technology.

Blockchain Frameworks used in Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The most commonly reported blockchain framework used for recording GHG emissions is Ethereum. Other frameworks, such and Hyperledger have also been adopted. However, the reported studies did not provide information about the rationale behind their choice of framework. This lack of information suggests that the availability of blockchain frameworks may play a significant role in making the adoption of blockchain more accessible[10].

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[10] https://share.google/rEBi584c2mrD2NYe6

Supporting Technologies

Given the expansive nature of monitoring GHG emissions, crowd-sourcing approaches have been considered. Additionally, technologies such as 5G links have been utilized to transmit data directly to blockchain repositories, minimizing data exposure Some studies have explored the use of IPFS to store recorded data in large, public off-chain databases, offering enhanced security protection Furthermore, data compression techniques have been employed to reduce storage requirements[7]

Benefits of Blockchain for Sustainability

- Decentralization: Blockchain's decentralized nature empowers all participants to manage the network without reliance on a central authority.
- Immutability: Blockchain's unalterable and permanent structure, supported by a network of nodes, enhances trust and security, ensuring every transaction is tamper-proof.
- Transparency: Public blockchain ledgers offer transparency, enabling users to access and review their transactions openly.
- Security: Blockchain mitigates risks of attacks and fraud through robust cybersecurity frameworks, verification services, and adherence to industry standards.
- Transparency and Accountability: Blockchain technology ensures transparency in all transactions by maintaining an immutable decentralized ledger, accessible to all parties involved, thereby enhancing accountability.
- Resource Management Efficiency: Implementing blockchain technology can significantly improve operational efficiency by enabling companies to source sustainable raw materials, eliminate unnecessary intermediaries, and reduce operational costs.

Collaborations Among Stakeholders: By eliminating intermediaries, blockchain facilitates collaboration among businesses, corporations, NGOs, and governments, fostering strategic partnerships that can reduce carbon footprints and promote sustainable outcomes.Improved Monitoring and Traceability: Blockchain allows individuals and organizations to effectively monitor sustainability metrics such as carbon footprint, energy efficiency, and waste management. Smart contracts can automate evaluations, aiding organizations in achieving

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sustainability goals. Higher Chances of Fair Trade: Blockchain ensures ethical sourcing of raw materials and optimizes production systems, promoting fair trade practices and sustainability.

- Investor Confidence in Green Projects: Blockchain provides verifiable, tamper-proof records that enhance investor confidence in eco-friendly initiatives.

The Future of Blockchain in Environmental Sustainability

The integration of blockchain technology into environmental sustainability efforts is still in its early stages, but the potential is immense.

Future Developments:

Integration with IoT: Combining blockchain with Internet of Things devices for real-time environmental monitoring.Global Standards: Developing international standards for blockchain applications in sustainability. Increased Collaboration: Encouraging partnerships between governments, NGOs, and private sectors to leverage blockchain for environmental goals.

As technology evolves, blockchain is poised to play a significant role in creating transparent, efficient, and trustworthy systems for environmental sustainability[8].

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[11] https://share.google/Zs7s8ZP62qVy0NRIL

CONCLUSION:

Blockchain's future sustainability relies heavily on shifting toward low-energy consensus methods and increasing dependence on renewable power sources for its operations. Although systems like Proof-of-Work currently consume significant amounts of energy and contribute to environmental concerns, the technology itself offers powerful advantages. Its ability to ensure secure, transparent, and tamper-proof records can support better environmental monitoring and responsible resource management. With the right innovations and greener practices, blockchain can play an important role in achieving long-term sustainable development.