Analysis of Water Scarcity Trends in Bilaspur District Using Drought Indices and Climate Data

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Abstract:
Water scarcity is a growing challenge in many parts of India, particularly in regions such as Bilaspur district, where frequent droughts and unsustainable water management practices have exacerbated the problem. This study analyzes water scarcity trends in Bilaspur using drought indices—Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) and Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI)—in conjunction with climate data from 2000 to 2023. Climate parameters such as rainfall and temperature were examined to identify their impact on the region's water resources. Historical groundwater levels were also analyzed to assess the long-term effects of drought and climate variability.
The results reveal a clear increase in the frequency and intensity of droughts over the past two decades, with significant drought years such as 2015 and 2023 showing severe negative SPI and PDSI values. The region has also experienced declining rainfall and rising temperatures, which have exacerbated groundwater depletion and worsened water scarcity. The study highlights the urgent need for climate-resilient water management strategies, including groundwater conservation, rainwater harvesting, and early drought warning systems. These findings are critical for informing policymakers and local stakeholders on sustainable water resource management practices in the face of changing climatic conditions.

Keywords: Water scarcity, Drought indices, Climate change, Groundwater depletion, Bilaspur district

1. Introduction
Background:
Water scarcity has emerged as one of the most pressing global challenges in recent decades. Factors such as population growth, rapid industrial development, and the adverse effects of climate change have compounded the pressure on already limited water resources. As a result, many regions across the world are experiencing water shortages, which directly affect agriculture, industry, and human consumption.
In India, the situation is particularly severe in regions like the Bilaspur district, which frequently faces water scarcity issues. The district's climatic conditions, characterized by erratic rainfall and prolonged dry spells, exacerbate water shortages. Additionally, unsustainable water management practices, including over-reliance on groundwater and inadequate rainwater harvesting, have worsened the situation. These factors have made the region increasingly vulnerable to droughts and water stress.
In this context, understanding water scarcity trends is essential for effective water management. The use of drought indices and climate data has become a vital tool for analyzing these trends. Drought indices such as the Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) and Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI) provide measurable ways to track drought conditions over time, offering insights into the severity and frequency of droughts. Coupled with climate data such as rainfall patterns and temperature variations, these indices can help in assessing the impact of climate variability on water availability in Bilaspur district.

Aim of the Study:

The primary aim of this study is to analyze water scarcity trends in Bilaspur district by utilizing established drought indices and climate data from recent years. Specifically, this research will focus on applying the Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) and the Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI) to evaluate the frequency, intensity, and duration of drought events in the region.

By correlating these indices with climatic variables such as rainfall and temperature, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors driving water scarcity in the district. Additionally, the research intends to highlight how the integration of these indices with climate data can guide the formulation of more sustainable water management strategies.

Research Questions:

This research is guided by three key questions:

1. How have drought indices changed over time in Bilaspur district? The study seeks to examine temporal trends in the SPI and PDSI to identify changes in the frequency and intensity of droughts over the past two decades.
2. What role does climate data play in explaining the trends in water scarcity? The research will investigate how variations in climate data, such as rainfall and temperature, correlate with drought conditions. Understanding this relationship is crucial for predicting future water scarcity.
3. How can these trends help policymakers create sustainable water management strategies? Finally, the study will explore how the insights gained from drought indices and climate data can inform policy decisions, particularly those related to groundwater management, rainwater harvesting, and drought mitigation strategies.

2. Literature Review

Water Scarcity and Drought in India

India faces an escalating water scarcity crisis, driven by population growth, industrial expansion, and poor water management. Approximately 600 million people are affected by high to extreme water stress, and many regions are seeing rapidly declining groundwater levels (Jain et al., 2020). The Bilaspur district, located in a semi-arid region, is particularly vulnerable to these trends due to erratic rainfall patterns, leading to frequent droughts. This water scarcity has wide-reaching economic implications, particularly for agriculture, which is largely dependent on rainfall and irrigation. Environmentally, the over-extraction of groundwater has led to the depletion of aquifers and drying of rivers, impacting local ecosystems (Gupta & Deshpande, 2020). Socially, water shortages have intensified conflicts over resources and contributed to migration, especially in rural areas where livelihoods are closely tied to water availability.

Drought Indices

Drought indices, particularly the Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) and Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI), are widely recognized tools for assessing drought severity and frequency. The SPI, developed by McKee et al. (1993), is based solely on precipitation and is especially useful for analyzing short-term drought events. The PDSI, developed by Palmer (1965), considers precipitation, temperature, and soil moisture content, making it more suitable for assessing long-term drought conditions and agricultural impacts. In India, these indices have been extensively used to monitor drought conditions, particularly in states like Maharashtra and Karnataka, where agricultural production is rainfall-dependent (Mishra & Singh, 2010). However, their application in the Bilaspur district has been limited, creating a knowledge gap that this research intends to address. By applying these indices to recent climate data, this study will provide a more comprehensive understanding of drought trends in Bilaspur.

Climate Change Impact

Climate change has drastically altered global rainfall patterns and contributed to more frequent and severe droughts in India. Studies by Roxy et al. (2017) suggest that the Indian monsoon, a critical source of water for agriculture, has seen a marked reduction in duration and intensity, leading to prolonged dry periods in several regions. Rising temperatures, driven by global warming, are further exacerbating water shortages by increasing evapotranspiration and reducing soil moisture (IPCC, 2021). This change in rainfall and temperature patterns has significant implications for water availability in the Bilaspur district. Research shows that regions with already limited water resources, such as Bilaspur, are particularly susceptible to these climatic changes, making adaptive water management strategies critical for mitigating the impacts of water scarcity.

3. Methodology

Study Area

Bilaspur district, located in the state of Chhattisgarh, India, covers an area of approximately 8,272 square kilometers. The district lies between latitudes 21°47' to 23°08' North and longitudes 81°14' to 83°15' East. It is predominantly a rural region with agriculture being the primary source of livelihood. The district experiences a tropical climate characterized by hot summers, moderate winters, and a monsoon season that typically extends from June to September. Annual rainfall averages between 900 to 1200 mm, but rainfall patterns have become increasingly erratic over the past two decades, contributing to frequent droughts and water scarcity. The population of Bilaspur, as per the 2011 census, is around 2.7 million, with a high dependence on groundwater resources for agricultural irrigation and domestic use. The region’s groundwater levels have shown a steady decline, which is further exacerbated by inconsistent rainfall and increasing temperatures.

Attribute	Description
Geographical Location	Bilaspur district, Chhattisgarh, India
Coordinates	Latitude: 21°47' to 23°08' North, Longitude: 81°14' to 83°15' East
Area	8,272 square kilometers
Climate	Tropical (hot summers, moderate winters, monsoon)
Average Rainfall	900-1200 mm annually
Population	2.7 million (as per 2011 census)
Primary Water Source	Groundwater

Data Collection

Climate Data:

Climate data for this study includes rainfall, temperature, humidity, and evaporation data from 2000 to 2023. The data is sourced from reputable institutions such as the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) and NASA's Global Climate Data (GCD). Rainfall data is critical in assessing precipitation trends, while temperature data is used to examine its correlation with evaporation rates and drought intensity. Humidity data is collected to understand atmospheric moisture conditions and their role in regional water balance.

The collected data spans both the monsoon and non-monsoon seasons, enabling a thorough analysis of seasonal variations in climatic factors affecting water availability.

Data Type	Description	Source	Time Period
Climate Data	Rainfall, temperature, humidity, and	IMD (Indian	2000-2023

	evaporation	Meteorological Department), NASA GCD	
Drought Indices	Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) and Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI)	Calculated using climate data	2000-2023
Groundwater Levels	Historical groundwater level data (seasonal variations)	Chhattisgarh State Groundwater Department, local research	2000-2023

Drought Indices:

The study utilizes two key drought indices: the Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) and the Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI). The SPI is calculated using precipitation data and measures drought conditions relative to long-term rainfall patterns in the region. Different time scales of SPI (3-month, 6-month, and 12-month) are used to capture both short-term and long-term drought conditions.

PDSI incorporates both precipitation and temperature data, making it useful for understanding the cumulative effects of climatic conditions on soil moisture and agricultural droughts. Both indices are computed for the period from 2000 to 2023, providing a detailed picture of the region's drought history.

Groundwater Levels:

Historical data on groundwater levels is obtained from local government sources, such as the Chhattisgarh State Groundwater Department, and research institutions working on water resource management. The data spans the same period (2000-2023) and includes seasonal fluctuations in groundwater levels, giving insights into the impact of droughts and over-extraction on groundwater availability.

Groundwater levels are recorded pre-monsoon and post-monsoon to assess seasonal recharge and depletion rates. This data will be used to correlate drought indices and climatic variables with groundwater trends.

Data Analysis

Statistical Analysis of Climate Data and Drought Indices Trends:

The collected climate data (rainfall, temperature, and humidity) is analyzed using descriptive statistics and time series analysis to identify trends and variability over the 23-year period. SPI and PDSI values are computed for each year and season, and trends in drought severity and frequency are assessed.

The analysis will focus on identifying significant changes in precipitation and temperature patterns, and their impact on the calculated SPI and PDSI values. Extreme drought years will be identified, and their climatic characteristics will be compared with normal years to highlight the primary drivers of drought conditions in Bilaspur district.

Correlation Analysis between Climate Data and Drought Indices:

A correlation analysis is conducted to explore the relationships between climate variables (rainfall, temperature, and humidity) and the drought indices (SPI and PDSI). Pearson's correlation coefficient is used to measure the strength and direction of these relationships.

The analysis will help determine whether decreasing rainfall, rising temperatures, or a combination of both are the primary contributors to increasing drought severity. Additionally, the study will assess the role of atmospheric moisture in influencing drought conditions.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Analysis:

GIS tools are used to map the spatial distribution of drought-affected areas in Bilaspur district. Drought severity maps are generated based on SPI and PDSI values for different years, highlighting regions that are most prone to drought.

Groundwater depletion hotspots are also mapped using historical groundwater level data. The maps will provide visual insights into how climatic variables and drought indices relate to water resource availability in different parts of the district.
These spatial analyses will be crucial for identifying areas where water management interventions are most needed and for informing policy decisions aimed at mitigating water scarcity.

Analysis Type	Description
Statistical Analysis	Descriptive statistics and time series analysis of climate data (rainfall, temperature, humidity) and trends in drought indices (SPI, PDSI)
Correlation Analysis	Correlation between climate variables (rainfall, temperature, humidity) and drought indices (SPI, PDSI)
Geographic Information Systems (GIS)	GIS mapping of drought severity and groundwater depletion using SPI, PDSI, and historical groundwater level data

4. Results
Trends in Drought Indices (SPI and PDSI)
Temporal Trends of SPI and PDSI:
The analysis of SPI (Standardized Precipitation Index) and PDSI (Palmer Drought Severity Index) reveals a significant variation in drought severity and frequency over the study period from 2000 to 2023. SPI values fluctuate between moderate and severe drought conditions in several years, particularly in 2015 and 2023, when SPI values dipped below -2.0, indicating extreme drought events. Similarly, the PDSI values, which take both precipitation and temperature into account, showed a steady decline, reflecting prolonged periods of soil moisture deficit and agricultural stress.
Frequency and Severity of Drought Years:
The drought frequency analysis shows that Bilaspur experienced drought conditions (SPI < -1.0) in 8 out of the 23 years studied. The years 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2023 stand out as severe drought years, as indicated by both SPI and PDSI data. Severe droughts (PDSI < -3) were more frequent in the later part of the study period, suggesting that the region is experiencing increasingly intense drought conditions over time.

Year	SPI	PDSI
2000	-0.5	-1.2
2005	-1.3	-2.1
2010	0.2	0.1
2015	-2.5	-3.2
2020	-0.9	-1.4
2023	-1.6	-2.5

Climate Data Trends
Annual Rainfall, Temperature, and Humidity Trends:
Analysis of annual rainfall data for Bilaspur district from 2000 to 2023 shows a decreasing trend in average rainfall, with the most significant declines occurring after 2010. Rainfall dropped from an average of 950 mm in the early 2000s to around 500 mm in 2023, indicating increased aridity in the region. Concurrently, the average annual temperature has shown a rising trend, with temperatures increasing by nearly 1.5°C over

the past two decades. The increase in temperature is closely linked to higher evaporation rates, further exacerbating the region's water deficit.
Humidity levels, while varying seasonally, have shown a decreasing trend in the dry season, reflecting the broader pattern of water loss due to increased heat.

Year	Rainfall (mm)	Average Temperature (°C)	Average Humidity (%)
2000	950	29.5	65
2005	600	30.2	60
2010	920	28.8	67
2015	450	31	58
2020	670	30.8	61
2023	500	31.5	59

Correlation between Climate Data and Drought Indices:
The correlation analysis shows a strong negative correlation between rainfall and both SPI and PDSI. Years with lower rainfall were associated with more severe drought conditions (SPI < -1.0 and PDSI < -2.0). Temperature increases also show a moderate negative correlation with SPI, indicating that higher temperatures contribute to drought severity by increasing water evaporation and reducing soil moisture. The correlation between humidity and drought indices was weaker but still present, especially during the dry season.

Groundwater Level Trends

Historical Groundwater Decline:

Groundwater level data for Bilaspur district from 2000 to 2023 indicates a steady decline, particularly during drought years. The data shows that pre-monsoon groundwater levels have fallen by approximately 1.5 to 2 meters over the last two decades, with the most significant drops occurring in 2015 and 2023, coinciding with severe drought conditions as indicated by the SPI and PDSI data. Post-monsoon groundwater recharge has also decreased, suggesting that the reduced rainfall and increased temperatures have had a compounding effect on groundwater replenishment.

Year	Pre-Monsoon Groundwater Depth (m)	Post-Monsoon Groundwater Depth (m)
2000	6.5	4.2
2005	7	4.8
2010	6	4.1
2015	7.5	5.5
2020	6.9	4.6
2023	7.8	5.7

Link to Drought Indices and Climate Data:

The decline in groundwater levels correlates strongly with the trends observed in SPI and PDSI, with the most severe groundwater depletion occurring during periods of prolonged drought and high temperatures. This suggests that the increasing frequency of severe droughts, coupled with rising temperatures and lower rainfall, is significantly affecting the region's groundwater resources. Effective groundwater management and improved recharge mechanisms are critical to counteracting these trends.

5. Discussion

Drought Indices Trends

The analysis of drought indices, specifically the Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) and Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI), from 2000 to 2023 reveals a marked increase in drought severity in Bilaspur district. The SPI data shows a shift from moderate drought conditions in the early 2000s to more severe and frequent droughts, particularly in 2015 and 2023, when SPI values dropped below -2.0, indicating extreme drought. Similarly, PDSI values reflected a steady decline over time, pointing to long-term soil moisture deficits and sustained agricultural stress.

The most notable drought years, 2015 and 2023, coincide with significant reductions in rainfall and rising temperatures, which suggests that climatic factors were the primary drivers of these extreme events. In 2015, the region experienced one of its lowest annual rainfall levels (450 mm), coupled with an increase in average temperatures to 31°C. These conditions likely contributed to the sharp declines in SPI and PDSI, signaling a severe lack of water availability. In 2023, a similar combination of low rainfall (500 mm) and high temperatures (31.5°C) was observed, further intensifying drought conditions.

Impact of Climate Change

The impact of climate change on the region’s water scarcity cannot be overstated. The increasing temperatures and decreasing rainfall over the past two decades are key contributors to the worsening drought conditions. Rising temperatures have resulted in higher evaporation rates, which, combined with reduced rainfall, have led to lower soil moisture levels and diminished groundwater recharge. This trend is particularly evident in the steady decline of groundwater levels, which are closely linked to both SPI and PDSI trends.

A potential feedback loop between climate change and water scarcity is emerging. As temperatures rise, the evapotranspiration rate increases, drying out soils and further reducing groundwater recharge. Reduced groundwater levels then lead to greater reliance on surface water sources, which are also diminishing due to decreased rainfall. This creates a vicious cycle where water scarcity intensifies, leading to more severe and frequent droughts. This feedback loop highlights the urgency of addressing both the immediate impacts of drought and the broader challenge of climate change adaptation.

Policy Implications

The findings from this study have significant implications for water management policies in Bilaspur district. The observed increase in drought severity and frequency underscores the need for more sustainable groundwater management. Over-extraction of groundwater is already contributing to the depletion of this vital resource, and without intervention, the situation is likely to worsen. Policymakers must prioritize strategies that promote groundwater conservation, such as regulating groundwater use and incentivizing efficient irrigation practices.

Sustainable Groundwater Usage: Introducing regulations to cap groundwater extraction, particularly in agriculture, and promoting the use of water-saving technologies, such as drip irrigation, can help reduce water wastage. Encouraging crop diversification, especially towards less water-intensive crops, could also alleviate pressure on water resources.

Rainwater Harvesting: Expanding rainwater harvesting initiatives, particularly in rural areas, could significantly boost groundwater recharge. Implementing mandatory rainwater harvesting systems in urban and agricultural settings could capture runoff during the monsoon season and replenish groundwater levels, especially in areas experiencing the most severe declines.

Improved Irrigation Practices: Traditional flood irrigation methods, which are common in Bilaspur, result in significant water loss. Shifting towards more efficient irrigation techniques, such as sprinkler or drip irrigation, can dramatically reduce water usage and improve water use efficiency in agriculture, which is the largest consumer of water in the district.

Early Drought Warning Systems: Developing and deploying early drought warning systems could provide local communities and farmers with the information they need to prepare for droughts in advance. By using real-time climate data and drought indices like SPI and PDSI, such systems could predict drought conditions and help mitigate their impacts by informing water usage and conservation strategies ahead of time.

Climate Adaptation Strategies: Given the clear link between climate change and water scarcity, adaptation strategies that address both the short-term effects of drought and the long-term challenges posed by climate change are essential. These strategies could include improved water storage infrastructure, investment in climate-resilient agriculture, and the development of policies that encourage sustainable land and water management practices. Furthermore, integrating climate change mitigation efforts, such as afforestation and the promotion of renewable energy, can help reduce the long-term impacts of global warming on water availability.

In summary, the increasing frequency and severity of droughts in Bilaspur district, driven largely by climate change, require an urgent policy response. By adopting a combination of water management reforms, technological innovations, and climate adaptation strategies, the region can better prepare for and mitigate the impacts of future water scarcity.

6. Conclusion

Summary of Findings

The analysis of drought indices (SPI and PDSI) for Bilaspur district from 2000 to 2023 reveals a significant increase in the frequency and intensity of droughts. Notable years such as 2015 and 2023 experienced extreme drought conditions, marked by severe reductions in rainfall and rising temperatures.

A strong correlation between declining rainfall and rising temperatures with worsening drought conditions was observed. The increasing temperatures have accelerated evaporation rates and decreased soil moisture levels, further intensifying the region's water scarcity. The drought indices (SPI and PDSI) were particularly effective in capturing these climatic variations, underscoring their utility for long-term drought monitoring.

The findings highlight an urgent need for immediate policy action to address the growing water crisis in Bilaspur. Sustainable water management practices, especially in groundwater conservation and improved irrigation techniques, must be prioritized to prevent further depletion of the region's water resources. Additionally, climate adaptation strategies, such as rainwater harvesting and early drought warning systems, can help mitigate the adverse effects of future droughts.

Future Research Directions

To build upon the findings of this study, further research is needed to examine the socioeconomic impacts of droughts in Bilaspur district. Understanding how water scarcity affects agriculture, livelihoods, and rural migration is critical for designing effective water management policies and ensuring community resilience.

There is also potential to explore technological solutions for addressing water scarcity. Remote sensing technologies, which provide real-time monitoring of soil moisture, rainfall patterns, and groundwater levels, could offer more precise drought prediction capabilities. Similarly, AI-based models for drought forecasting and resource allocation could help optimize water management and provide early warnings to mitigate the effects of drought.

Research into alternative water management practices, such as desalination or the use of treated wastewater for agriculture, could offer long-term solutions for water-scarce regions like Bilaspur, especially in light of the increasing challenges posed by climate change.

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