Nigerian Research Journal of Chemical Sciences (ISSN: 2682-6054)
Volume 13, Issue 2, 2025

Addressing Challenges in Borehole Drilling for Environmental Sustainability - A Review

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Accepted: August 30, 2025. Published Online: September 9, 2025

ABSTRACT

Environment sustainability refers to the responsible management of resources and ecosystems to ensure their availability and health for the future generations. It involves balancing ecological, economic and social needs to reduce environmental harm and promote long-term resilience. Borehole drilling is a critical aspect of various industries, ranging from water resource management to geotechnical exploration. This paper delves into the multifaceted landscape of challenges encountered in borehole drilling processes such as geological complexities, formation fluids, well contamination and depletion of aquifer. The study went further to discuss the environmental impacts of the challenges and explores effective remedies to enhance overall efficiency and success rates through adherence to stringent regulations, environmentally friendly drilling fluids, and community engagement initiatives to foster a collaborative approach. The paper recommended that by prioritizing collaboration among stakeholders, investing in research and development, and embracing innovation and adhering to regulatory requirements and promptly reporting any contamination events to relevant authorities. it is evident that borehole drilling presents significant challenges, from geological complexities to depletion of aquifer. However, through a comprehensive understanding of these challenges and the implementation of appropriate remedies, such as advanced drilling technologies, proper site assessment, and community engagement, these obstacles could be effectively addressed.

Keywords: Aquifer, borehole drilling, environmental sustainability, geology

INTRODUCTION

Borehole is a narrow shaft bored in the ground either vertically or horizontally. A borehole may be constructed for different purposes including the extraction of water (drilled water well and tube well), other liquids (such as petroleum), or gases (such as natural gas) [1]. Water borehole drilling is a form of water well drilling. Essentially, it involves drilling a hole deep into the ground to access the water below. Installing steel casing and a borehole pumping system that enables extraction of natural water directly from the ground. A properly sunk borehole can provide a quality source of water for geological exploration, environmental monitoring, household, commercial and agricultural uses even during a drought, and for environmental sustainability.

Environmental Sustainability

It refers to the responsible management of resources and ecosystems to ensure their availability and health for the future generations. It involves balancing ecological, economic and social needs to reduce environmental harm and promote long-term resilience. Environmental sustainability focuses on conserving natural resources, reducing pollution and protecting ecosystems. Examples include renewable energy use, sustainable farming, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and water conservation.

Borehole Drilling

Borehole drilling stands as a critical technique for accessing groundwater, Among the most important logistics before drilling a borehole is choosing the ideal location [2]. The site selection should be made carefully. [3] noted some of the key factors that should influence decision when selecting the suitable bore site are slope of the land, proximity from other bores, power supply and groundwater level.

Water borehole drilling generally starts with a hydro-geologist visiting the site for an assessment. They can identify where water is, if any, and the best way to access it. After mapping the site and planning the borehole, drilling proceeds with hydro-geologists recommendations. The borehole is reinforced with a cast steel, polyvinyl chloride (PVC) or both to securely maintain its structure through challenging outdoor condition. A test pump is installed which is used to run a series of tests on a range of variables. The results will reveal how the drilled borehole will impact the water level and which measures are required to control these changes. This will inform the final choice of water pumping system to install. Lastly, the appropriate pipe work and pump is

installed in the water borehole. Also the water borehole head is installed at the ground or above ground level in a protective chamber.

However, the water borehole drilling is riddled with multifaceted challenges that hinder its effectiveness and sustainability. Understanding these challenges and identifying appropriate remedies or solution is crucial to ensure the continued availability and access to clean and good quality water.

Challenges in Borehole Drilling

These are some of the common problems in borehole drilling

Geological complexities

The variability of geological formations poses a significant challenge in drilling operations. Variations in rock types, formations and water-bearing layers often complicate the process, leading to increased drilling time and costs. Geological complexities present substantial challenges during drilling operations. These complexities arise due to variations in subsurface formation such as changes in rock types, faults, unexpected voids, fractures, or unpredictable pressures. These factors lead to drilling difficulties like stuck pipes, lost circulation or unexpected fluid influxes, reduced drilling speed, equipment wear and tear**,** borehole instability and directional drilling challenges**.**

Formation fluids

It presents a significant challenge during drilling. When encountered unexpectedly, these fluids (such as water, oil, gas) can cause instability in the well bore, leading to various issues like kicks, blowouts or collapse of the drilling structure. Managing formation fluids involves using proper drilling fluids, casing and cementing techniques to control the pressure and flow of these, ensuring well stability and preventing environmental hazards. Additionally, advanced sensing and monitoring technologies are employed to anticipate and manage the influx of formation fluids during drilling operation.

Well contamination

It refers to the unintended introduction of undesirable substances into the wellbore or surrounding formations during drilling operations. This issue poses serious environmental and operational concerns. Contaminants can include drilling fluids, chemicals, or even natural substance like formation fluids which if not controlled might compromise the integrity of the well or surrounding

groundwater. Wells can also be compromised if there are nearby latrines or sewage systems. Industrial wastes can also pose danger.

Depletion of aquifer

The depletion of aquifer is a significant concern associated with borehole drilling especially in regions heavily reliant on groundwater for various purposes like drinking water, agriculture, or industrial needs. When borehole drilling occurs without proper monitoring or understanding of the aquifer's capacity, it can lead to over-extraction, causing the aquifer to deplete. Over-pumping or excessive extraction from the aquifer can lower the water table, reduce water availability and potentially lead to long-term environmental consequences such as land subsidence, saltwater intrusion or irreversible damage to the aquifer itself. Depletion of aquifers not only affects immediate water availability but also disrupts the natural balance of the ecosystem that depends on this water source.

Environmental impacts

- Geological complexities wield substantial influence on borehole drilling, Geological complexities introduce unforeseen risks including encountering high-pressure zones, faults or unpredictable geological structures. These pose safety hazards to workers and the environment necessitating rigorous safety protocols and risk assessment throughout the drilling process [4]

-: Formation fluids which include various types of water, oil, gas and other substances found within geological formation, have significant effects on borehole drilling; formation fluids especially if they contain hazardous substances, pose environmental risks if not properly managed [5]. Accidental spills or leaks can contaminate groundwater or surface water, necessitating stringent environmental protection measures.

- Well contamination during drilling poses significant consequences: Contaminated well water poses health hazards to individuals and communities relying on it for drinking, agricultural and industrial purposes. Exposure to pollutants, heavy metals or harmful chemicals can lead to various health issues including gastrointestinal problems, skin conditions or even long-term health complications. It can lead to environmental degradation. Spills of drilling fluids, chemicals or other contaminants can seep into surrounding soil or water sources, affecting ecosystems, aquatic life and potentially contaminating groundwater reserves. Contamination of well can compromise the quality of the extracted water. This is especially critical in water supply wells where pollutants

introduced during drilling can render the water unfit for consumption or industrial use, posing health risks to communities or affecting industrial processes [6].

- Aquifer depletion occurs when groundwater extraction exceeds the natural recharge rate. It has a profound effect on borehole drilling and water supply. Aquifer depletion can lead to ecological disturbances. Depletion affects surface water bodies, wetlands and ecosystem that rely on groundwater discharge, potentially causing habitat loss and impacting flora and fauna. Also**,** excessive withdrawal of groundwater can lead to land subsidence or sinking, particularly in areas with compressible soil or rock formations. This subsidence can damage infrastructure, alter landscapes and poses risks to buildings and other structures.

Strategies for Sustainable Borehole Drilling

- Remedying geological complexities during drilling involves strategic planning, innovative techniques and adaptive approaches to navigate challenging formations. It also involves Advanced site surveys and modelling: Specialized drilling techniques and equipment: Collaboration and expertise :Innovative technologies Formation stabilization and control.:

- Addressing formation fluids during drilling involves strategies to manage and control their influx into the wellbore. These methods are drilling fluid management, casing and cementing practices. Drilling optimization and real-time monitoring, Managed Pressure Drilling (MPD) Wellbore stability techniques, risk assessment and contingency planning.

- Well contamination remedying during drilling is crucial to ensure the protection of groundwater resources and maintain the integrity of the wellbore. These remedies are effective casing and cementing: Drilling fluid management like Implementing drilling fluids that are environmentally friendly and minimize the risk of contamination, regularly testing and monitoring drilling fluid properties to detect any potential contaminations early in the process. containment and recovery, Water treatment technologies: such as utilizing advance water treatment technologies such as membrane filtration or activated carbon adsorption to remove contaminants from recovered fluids and bio-remediation techniques: applying bioremediation methods to enhance the natural degradation of contaminants in groundwater. Community engagement and reporting [7].

- Remedying aquifer depletion during drilling involves conducting educational programs to raise awareness about the importance of aquifer conservation and sustainable water management and

training for drilling personnel [8]. Advanced drilling technologies, artificial recharge techniques and sustainable pumping practices [9].

CONCLUSION

It is evident that borehole drilling presents significant challenges, from geological complexities to aquifer depletion. However, through a comprehensive understanding of these challenges and the implementation of appropriate remedies, these obstacles could be effectively addressed. Sustainable access to clean water through borehole drilling can be ensured, thereby improving livelihoods and fostering socio-economic development worldwide.

Recommendations

- By prioritizing collaboration among stakeholders, investing in research and development, and embracing innovation
- Adhering to regulatory requirements and promptly reporting any contamination events to relevant authorities.
- Implementing sustainable water management practices, adopting innovative technologies and ensuring regulatory compliance. [10]

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