Advancements in Solar-Based Charging Stations and Power Management for Sustainable Electric Vehicle Integration: A Comprehensive Review

[1]Shishu Pal, [2]Mrs. Madhu Upadhyay

[1]Department of Electrical Engineering, NRI Institute of Research & Technology, Bhopal India,

[2]Department of Electrical Engineering, NRI Institute of Research & Technology, Bhopal India,

Email [1]shishupaljatav@gmail.com, [2]madyant44@gmail.com

* Corresponding Author: Shishu Pal

Abstract: *This study explores the critical aspects of designing solar-based charging stations for electric vehicles (EVs). It covers site selection, solar panel configuration, and energy storage integration, EV charging infrastructure, smart charging, grid integration, scalability, user experience, sustainability, regulatory compliance, and maintenance. By addressing these elements, designers can create efficient and sustainable charging stations, promoting the growth of the EV market and the transition to cleaner energy sources. Furthermore, within this comprehensive exploration of solar-based charging station design, the review paper underscores the pivotal role these stations play in the global shift towards sustainable mobility and renewable energy adoption. As EVs become increasingly central to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating the effects of climate change, the effective design and deployment of solar-based charging stations emerge as a linchpin in this transition. These stations not only offer an eco-friendly and efficient means of charging EVs but also act as distributed energy resources, contributing to grid stability and promoting the utilization of clean energy. By addressing the multifaceted aspects detailed in this paper, designers and stakeholders are better equipped to shape the future of transportation, making it more environmentally responsible and energy-efficient while advancing the integration of renewable energy sources into our daily lives.*

Keywords: *Solar-based charging stations, Electric vehicles (EVs) Design, Site selection, Solar panel configuration, Energy storage integration, EV charging infrastructure.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The automotive industry has become one of the most important world-wide industries, not only at economic level, but also in terms of research and development. Increasingly, there are more technological elements that are being introduced on the vehicles towards the improvement of both passengers and pedestrians' safety. In addition, there is a greater number of vehicles on the roads, which allows for us to move quickly and comfortably. However, this has led to a dramatic increase in air pollution levels in urban environments (i.e., pollutants, such as PM, nitrogen oxides (NOX), CO, sulfur dioxide (SO2), etc.).

In addition, and according to a report by the European Union, the transport sector is responsible for nearly 28% of the total carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions, while the road transport is accountable for over 70% of the transport sector emissions [1].

Electric vehicles (EVs) have the potential to contribute to the decarbonization of transportation and the emergence of low-carbon cities due to the benefits of energy-efficient technology and low pollution. Thus, it has become one of the development trends of interest in the automotive industry [2,3]. However, the EV industry's future success is highly reliant on technological innovation [4,5]. The most important reason is that, at present, environmental issues are becoming increasingly serious. Vehicle exhaust gas emissions have become the most significant source of air pollution, particularly in densely populated areas. In order to overcome the environmental and energy crisis issues that conventional vehicles contribute to, hybrid electric vehicle (HEV) technology has been developed and applied over the past few years. HEV technologies provide a fuel economy improvement and enable HEVs to exhaust fewer emissions compared to conventional internal combustion engine vehicles (ICEVs), but HEVs cannot completely resolve the abovementioned issues. Thus, vehicle technology has improved to produce pure electric vehicles (PEVs). As a result, PEV technology could reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and particulate matter (PM2.5) air pollution as the world is suffering from dangerously high levels and poses a major environmental risk to human health [6].

II. OVERVIEW OF SOLAR-BASED CHARGING STATIONS

The electrical power and transportation networks are beginning to integrate in a way that was before imaginable thanks to the EV's environmental, technical, and economic potential. The main link between the two is the batteries, which power its EV's traction, control, lights, and air conditioning system. Charging the EV from the power grid, however, places additional load on the utility, especially during high demand hours. Prompting the charge of renewable energy sources is one method to mitigate the grid's negative impact [7]. The use of these clean energy sources is meant to reduce negative environmental consequences while also increasing the overall efficacy of the charging system [8].

Solar energy is becoming widely accepted as a competitive energy source of supplementing the grid due to the ongoing decline in photovoltaic (PV) module prices [9]. In addition, the PV system requires very low maintenance in terms of labor & fuel [10]. The development of energy converting technology, battery management systems, improved installation methods, & design standards have all helped to significantly improve the application for PV to charge EVs (i.e., PVEV charge) [11].

Clean energy resources and related technologies have been developed to mitigate these problems. Although technological advancements have significantly reduced greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, about one-quarter of these emissions come from the sector [12]. According to Outlook (2010) [13], the growing population and freight movements will contribute to a 77% increase in transportation by 2055. Due to the above reasons, research and adoption of electric vehicles (EV) deserve exorbitant attention. By emitting very low or no tailpipe emissions and making very little noise, electric vehicles significantly reduce traffic congestion and contribute to a healthier living environment. As a result of this transition to zero-emission vehicles, the automotive industry is switching to zero-emission vehicles. Approximately 1.5 million new battery electric vehicles (BEV) have been added to the global fleet of BEVs (Martins et al., 2021) in 2019, with approximately 4.8 million BEVs in use globally [14].

Figure 1 Electric Vehicle charging station

(Source: https://yourstory.com/2019/06/niti-aayog-emobility-electric-vehicles-india)

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to **Pattnaik, S., et al. (2022)** the global initiative of decarbonization has led to the popularity of renewable energy sources, especially solar photovoltaic (PV) cells and energy storage systems. However, standalone battery-based energy storage systems are inefficient in terms of the shelf and cycle life, reliability, and overall performance, especially in instantaneous variations in solar irradiance and load. In order to overcome this, a combination of a supercapacitor and battery-based hybrid energy storage system (HESS) is considered as an emerging and viable solution. The present work proposes an optimally tuned tilt-integral (TI) controller to develop an efficient power management strategy (PMS) to enhance the overall system performance. The controller parameters are tuned by optimization of the time-domain design specifications using a gradient-free simplex search technique. The robustness of the proposed TI controller is demonstrated in comparison to PI and fractional-order PI (FOPI) controllers. Furthermore, extensive experimentation was carried out to analyze the effectiveness of the proposed approach for DC bus voltage stabilization and state-of-charge (SOC) management under varying operating conditions such as solar irradiance, load, temperature, and SOC consumption by battery.

Muhamad Zalani Daud et al. (2014) presents an evaluation of an optimal DC bus voltage regulation strategy for grid-connected photovoltaic (PV) system with battery energy storage (BES). The BES is connected to the PV system DC bus using a DC/DC buck-boost converter. The converter facilitates the BES power charge/discharge to compensate for the DC bus voltage deviation during severe disturbance conditions. In this way, the regulation of DC bus voltage of the PV/BES system can be enhanced as compared to the conventional regulation that is solely based on the voltage-sourced converter (VSC). For the grid side VSC (G-VSC), two control methods, namely, the voltage-mode and current-mode controls, are applied. For control parameter optimization, the simplex optimization technique is applied for the G-VSC voltage- and current-mode controls, including the BES DC/DC buck-boost converter controllers. A new set of optimized parameters are obtained for each of the power converters for comparison purposes. The PSCAD/EMTDC-based simulation case studies are presented to evaluate the performance of the proposed optimized control scheme in comparison to the conventional methods.

In Renewable Energy (RE) integrated DC Microgrid (MG), the intermittency of power variation from RE sources can lead to power and voltage imbalances in the DC network and have an impact on the MG's operation in terms of reliability, power quality, and stability. In such case, a battery energy storage (BES) technology is widely used for mitigating power variation from the RE sources to get better voltage regulation and power balance in DC network. In their study, a BES based coordinated power management control strategy (PMCS) is proposed by **Al sumarmad K et al. (2023)** for the MG system to get effective utilization of RE sources while maintaining the MG's reliability and stability. For safe and effective utilization of BES, a battery management system (BMS) with inclusion of advanced BES control strategy is implemented. The BES control system with optimized FOPI controllers using hybrid (atom search optimization and particle swarm optimization (ASO-PSO)) optimization technique is proposed to get improved overall performance in terms of control response and voltage regulation in DC network under the random change in load profile and uncertain conditions of RE sources in real time.

With the popularization and popularization of electric vehicles, the interaction between electric vehicles and power grid and transportation networks is getting deeper and deeper. Considering the multi-data fusion characteristics of dynamic driving behavior and random charging behavior of electric vehicles and the complexity of multi-system modeling, **Chen, L., et al. (2021)** proposes a charging navigation strategy for electric vehicles based on Datadriven mode and deep reinforcement learning. Firstly, the actual operation data of electric vehicles collected by "electric vehicle cluster optimization energy storage cloud platform" are modeled and mined to obtain the driving, charging data and urban charging station data of electric vehicles. Secondly, the charging navigation model is established by introducing deep reinforcement learning method. The real-time data of "electric vehicle-charging station traffic network" is used as the state space of deep Q-network algorithm, and the allocation of charging stations is regarded as the executive action of agent. The optimal action-value function is calculated by establishing the reward mechanism of driving on the way and after arriving at the station, so as to recommend the optimal charging station of return value and plan the driving path for vehicle owners. Finally, a multi-scene simulation example is designed to verify the feasibility and effectiveness of the proposed method.

Communication infrastructure is one of the fundamental elements in realizing the real-time monitoring and control of electric vehicle (EV) charging. **Ahmed, M. A., & Kim, Y.-C. (2017)** aims to design communication network architecture for remote monitoring and control of EV charging stations in a residential grid. A communication network consists of three levels: device level, communication network level, and application level. The device level comprises EVs, charging stations, electric power connections and meters. The communication network is responsible for data exchange between different entities. The application level is responsible for the management and control of EVs' charging. The types of monitoring data, traffic volume, communication requirements and network ownership are defined and discussed. We develop a communication network simulator for EV charging stations by using OPNET Modeler. Two scenarios are considered: vehicle-to-building and a case study of charging stations in Suwon City, South Korea. The network performance is evaluated and discussed with regard to end-to-end delay in the scenarios.

IV. THE ROLE OF AI IN POWER QUALITY CONTROL AND OPTIMIZATION

Charging an EV can be performed either using a charging cable, where the EV is plugged into a power outlet, or through wireless charging with no cables attached [20][21][22]. Wired charging requires direct physical connectivity between the EV and the charging socket, thereby imposing an electrocution hazard to the EV user, particularly during harsh weather conditions. To overcome this hazard, effective electrical isolation is required between the EV body, the EV supply equipment (EVSE) and the mains power grid, using high-frequency isolation transformers [23] or other isolation techniques. These transformers, however, are costly to implement and maintain, and they impact the switching operation of the EV chargers. This impacts the convenience to EV users, as it limits the locations at which an EV can be charged to those compatible and/or interoperable with the EV connector.

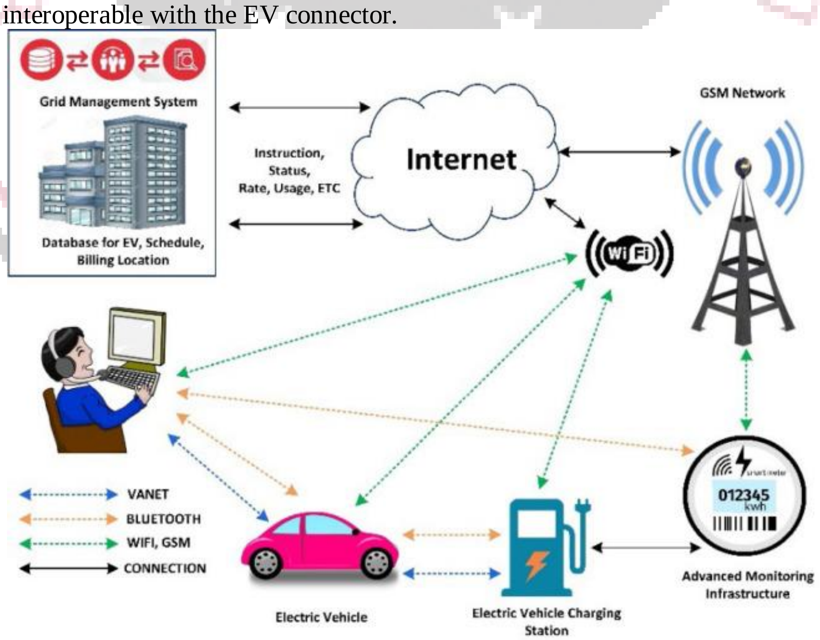

Figure 2 Communication network for electric vehicle charging systems [24].

A. Designing Solar-Based Charging Stations

Electric vehicles (EVs) are becoming increasingly popular due to their environmental benefits and the growing need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As the EV market continues to expand, so does the demand for efficient and sustainable charging infrastructure. Solar-based charging stations have emerged as a promising solution to meet this demand while harnessing renewable energy sources. In this section, we will delve into the critical aspects of designing solar-based charging stations for EVs.

Site Selection and Solar Resource Assessment- The first step in designing a solar-based charging station is selecting an appropriate site. A thorough site assessment is essential to determine the availability of solar resources. Factors such as solar irradiance, shading, and weather patterns should be considered. Advanced tools and software can help in accurately predicting the energy production potential of solar panels at the chosen location.

Solar Panel Configuration-Selecting the right solar panel configuration is crucial to maximize energy generation. Factors like panel type (monocrystalline, polycrystalline, thin-film), orientation, and tilt angle play a significant role. Depending on space availability and budget, designers can choose between fixed-tilt or tracking systems to optimize energy capture.

Energy Storage Integration- To ensure uninterrupted charging even during periods of low solar irradiance or at night, energy storage devices such as lithium-ion batteries can be integrated into the system. These batteries store excess solar energy during the day and release it when needed, providing a reliable source of power for EV charging.

EV Charging Infrastructure- The charging infrastructure at a solar-based station must cater to various types of EVs. Designers need to consider the power levels (Level 1, Level 2, or DC fast charging), connector types (e.g., CCS, CHAdeMO, Type 2), and the number of charging points to meet the station's expected traffic and user needs.

Smart Charging and Grid Integration- Smart charging technology is essential for efficient operation and grid integration. It allows for dynamic load management, demand response, and peak shaving. Additionally, grid-tied systems enable surplus solar energy to be fed back into the grid, potentially earning revenue or reducing electricity costs.

Scalability and Expansion- Designing for scalability is essential to accommodate future growth in EV adoption. Stations should be designed with modular components and the ability to add more solar panels, energy storage, and charging points as demand increases.

User Experience and Amenities- A positive user experience is crucial for EV charging stations. Designers should consider user-friendly interfaces, comfortable waiting areas, and amenities like Wi-Fi, restrooms, and food options to attract and retain customers.

Sustainability and Environmental Impact- Sustainability should be at the core of the design process. Using recycled materials, employing energy-efficient lighting, and implementing eco-friendly landscaping can reduce the station's environmental footprint.

Regulatory Compliance- Compliance with local and national regulations, safety standards, and permitting requirements is paramount. Designers should work closely with regulatory authorities to ensure that the station meets all necessary criteria.

Maintenance and Monitoring- Proper maintenance and monitoring are essential to keep the charging station running efficiently. Regular inspections, cleaning of solar panels, and monitoring of energy storage system health are critical for long-term performance.

The designing solar-based charging stations for EVs involves a multidisciplinary approach that considers solar resource assessment, panel configuration, energy storage, charging infrastructure, smart technology, scalability, user experience, sustainability, regulatory compliance, and ongoing maintenance. By carefully addressing these aspects, designers can create sustainable and efficient charging stations that contribute to the growth of the EV market and the transition to clean and renewable energy sources. Due to depleting fossil fuel reserves coupled with a climate crisis, sustainability is gaining ground, and electric vehicles (EVs) are emerging to be the new face of this field. However, the idea of EVs will be genuinely sustainable only if they are charged using renewable energy. **Singh, A., et al. (2021) [25]** presents results from the design of a solar-powered EV charging station for an Indian context. PVsyst 7.2 software has been used for the system design. The analysis, based on the number of cars charged annually, the monthly variation in energy generation, the investment cost, and the decrease in carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions using different module technologies for six Indian cities, has been deliberated. The results indicate that an off-grid 8.1 kWp system with two days of battery autonomy has the fewest unused energy losses, with a good performance ratio (PR). It can completely charge around 414 vehicles of 30 kWh battery capacity annually. This would help to reduce annual CO2 emissions by approximately 7950 kg. For cities near the equator, maximum energy is produced during March or January, and for cities near the Tropic of Cancer, energy production maximizes during May–June. The overall system has better energy generation and economy when monocrystalline modules are used.

Electric vehicles (EVs) are an emerging type of mobile intelligent power consumption devices in Smart Grid as new green transport tools. In order to provide a powerful automation and intelligence support for wide area electric vehicles energy service network, **Gao, D., et al. (2013) [26]** analyzed the network infrastructure and communications demands of various terminals, devices and monitoring systems distributed in wide area electric vehicle energy service network. According to interactive user services scenarios and energy operations intelligent monitoring, we propose multimode communication integration architecture for wide area electric vehicle energy service network by means of the fusion of the Internet of Things (IoT) technology. Then, we design different networking schemes in access networks and backbone transmission networks meeting multi-scene and multi-operation interaction requirements. The networking schemes will provide efficient technical support to implement intelligent, cross-regional, interactive energy services for electric vehicle users.

B. Components and Architecture

Integration of Energy Storage Devices

Energy storage devices play a pivotal role in enhancing the performance, reliability, and efficiency of solar-based charging stations for electric vehicles (EVs). These devices enable the capture and utilization of surplus energy, ensuring a consistent power supply for charging, even during periods of low solar irradiance or at night. In this section, we will explore the importance of integrating energy storage devices into solar-based charging stations and the various technologies commonly employed for this purpose.

DC Bus Voltage Balance Optimization Techniques

In solar-based charging stations for electric vehicles (EVs), maintaining a stable and well-balanced DC bus voltage is critical for the safe and efficient operation of the charging infrastructure. An imbalance in the DC bus voltage can lead to equipment damage, reduced charging efficiency, and increased energy losses. To address this challenge, a range of optimization techniques have been developed to ensure the voltage balance across the DC bus. In this section, we will explore these techniques and their significance in solar-based charging station design.

Voltage Monitoring and Feedback Control- One fundamental approach to DC bus voltage balance optimization is continuous monitoring and feedback control. Voltage sensors placed at various points within the charging station collect data on the voltage levels. Feedback control systems then adjust the operation of power electronics components, such as DC/DC converters, to maintain the desired voltage balance.

Passive Balancing Techniques- Passive balancing techniques are designed to redistribute energy among the battery cells or energy storage units to equalize their voltage levels. These techniques often use passive components like resistors or capacitors to create discharge paths for cells with higher voltages, transferring excess energy to cells with lower voltages. While effective, passive techniques may dissipate some energy as heat.

Active Balancing Techniques- Active balancing techniques take a more dynamic and energy-efficient approach to voltage balance optimization. These methods use active components, typically in the form of power electronics, to actively redistribute energy among the cells or storage units. Active balancing can be more precise and responsive than passive techniques, minimizing energy losses.

State of Charge (SoC) Management- Voltage balance is closely related to the state of charge of individual battery cells. Managing the SoC of cells ensures that they operate within a specified voltage range. Charging algorithms and management systems can be designed to control the charging and discharging rates of cells to maintain voltage balance.

Topology Selection for DC/DC Converters- The choice of DC/DC converter topology can significantly impact voltage balance. Multi-phase DC/DC converters, such as interleaved converters, can distribute power more evenly among the converter phases, helping to maintain voltage balance across the DC bus.

Advanced Control Algorithms- Advanced control algorithms, often guided by artificial intelligence and optimization techniques, can predict voltage imbalances and proactively adjust system parameters to prevent them. These algorithms consider factors like load variations, solar energy generation, and energy storage conditions to make real-time adjustments.

Modular Design for Scalability- Modular design approaches allow for easy scalability of the charging station. When additional charging points or energy storage units are added, the optimization system can be adapted to accommodate the changes in the system's topology, ensuring voltage balance is maintained.

Fault Detection and Diagnostics- To address voltage balance issues arising from equipment faults or component degradation, fault detection and diagnostics systems can be integrated. These systems continuously monitor the performance of key components and trigger maintenance or replacement when issues are detected.

Communication and Grid Integration- Charging stations can benefit from communication with the grid and other charging stations. Grid integration allows for the exchange of information about grid conditions and the availability of renewable energy sources, enabling more informed decisions regarding voltage balance optimization.

Maintaining a well-balanced DC bus voltage is essential for the reliable and efficient operation of solar-based charging stations for EVs. A combination of voltage monitoring, passive and active balancing techniques, advanced control algorithms, and modular design approaches can help achieve and maintain voltage balance, ensuring a seamless charging experience for EV users while promoting system longevity and energy efficiency. As these optimization techniques continue to evolve, solar-based charging stations will become even more reliable and sustainable.

V. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

A. Real-World Applications of Solar-Based Charging Stations

The real-world deployment of solar-based charging stations for electric vehicles (EVs) has demonstrated their feasibility and effectiveness in various settings. These applications showcase the practicality and benefits of integrating renewable energy sources into EV charging infrastructure. Some noteworthy examples include:

B. Urban Environments:

Solar charging stations have been installed in urban areas, offering convenient EV charging for city dwellers. These stations often feature solar canopies in parking lots or along roads, providing shade for vehicles while harnessing solar energy.

C. Remote Locations:

Solar-based charging stations are invaluable in remote or off-grid locations where access to traditional power sources is limited. They can serve as essential charging points for EVs in remote industrial sites, rural areas, and off-road adventure destinations.

D. Tourism and Recreation:

Popular tourist destinations and recreational areas have embraced solar charging stations to cater to the growing number of eco-conscious travelers. These stations enable visitors to charge their EVs while enjoying outdoor activities.

E. Public Transit:

Public transportation agencies have adopted solar-based charging infrastructure for electric buses and trams. These systems reduce operating costs and contribute to cleaner urban transit.

F. Commercial Fleets:

Businesses with electric vehicle fleets have incorporated solar charging stations into their operations. This approach not only reduces fuel and maintenance costs but also aligns with corporate sustainability goals.

G. Residential Use:

Solar-based charging stations are increasingly being integrated into residential properties. Homeowners can use excess solar energy to charge their EVs, reducing their carbon footprint and energy bills.

VI. SUCCESS STORIES IN POWER QUALITY CONTROL AND OPTIMIZATION

Several success stories highlight the impact of advanced power quality control and optimization strategies in solar-based charging stations:

- Grid Integration: Charging stations equipped with smart grid integration have demonstrated improved grid stability and reduced peak load demand. These stations can participate in demand response programs, benefiting both station operators and grid operators [27].
- Fast Charging Efficiency: Advanced control algorithms and power electronics have significantly improved the efficiency of fast-charging stations. EV drivers experience shorter charging times, making EV adoption more attractive.
- Battery Life Extension: Power quality control strategies have been instrumental in extending the life of energy storage devices used in charging stations. This results in reduced operational costs and enhanced sustainability.
- Dynamic Load Management: Stations with dynamic load management capabilities optimize charging rates based on grid conditions, energy prices, and user preferences. This flexibility benefits both station owners and EV drivers.
- Central Management Schemes in Action
- Centralized management schemes for solar-based charging stations are being actively deployed, enhancing operational efficiency and user experience [28]:
- Fleet Management: Centralized platforms enable the efficient management of charging stations across a fleet of vehicles. Fleet operators can monitor charging status, schedule charging times, and optimize energy use.
- User Accessibility: Centralized systems provide users with a seamless experience by offering mobile apps or web portals for locating, reserving, and paying for charging services at multiple stations.

- Energy Optimization: Centralized management allows for real-time monitoring of solar energy generation, grid conditions, and energy storage levels. This data informs decisions on when and how to charge vehicles, maximizing the use of clean energy.
- Maintenance and Diagnostics: Remote diagnostics and maintenance scheduling through central management platforms ensure that charging stations remain operational, minimizing downtime.

VIII. FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND RESEARCH CHALLENGES

The future of solar-based charging stations and power management is poised for exciting developments but also faces notable challenges. Firstly, ongoing research endeavors aim to enhance solar panel efficiency and energy storage systems' capacity to meet the surging energy demands of electric vehicles (EVs). Advances in battery technologies are set to be instrumental in expanding the reach and effectiveness of solar-based charging stations. Additionally, the integration of these stations into the grid presents a complex challenge, demanding seamless grid integration solutions to accommodate their increasing numbers while ensuring grid stability. Standardization efforts to create common components and communication protocols are imperative to foster interoperability and bolster industry growth. Furthermore, environmental concerns drive research into minimizing the environmental footprint of solar panels and station components. Lastly, user experience enhancements, encompassing improved payment methods, user interfaces, and charging infrastructure reliability, maintain a top priority for continued success in this dynamic field.

As advancements continue and research challenges are addressed, solar-based charging stations will play a vital role in the sustainable transition of transportation and energy systems, contributing to a cleaner and more sustainable future.

IX. CONCLUSION

This comprehensive review highlights the crucial technical contribution solar-powered charging stations constitute the development of sustainable transportation. It explains the many facets of their design, ranging from careful site selection and solar panel configuration to complex energy storage integration and the establishment of effective EV charging infrastructure. The technical foundations of smart charging and seamless grid integration, which permit dynamic load management and support grid-tied systems, are also particularly stressed in the review. The technical approach to scalability emphasizes the modularity of parts and flexible system designs. Technical factors like intuitive interfaces and the incorporation of amenities help to improve the user experience. Utilizing recycled materials, installing energy-efficient lighting, and using environmentally friendly landscaping are some technical ways that sustainability is addressed. Regulatory compliance is defined within the context of adhering to technical standards and permitting requirements, while maintenance and monitoring are viewed as essential technical tasks for ensuring long-term operational efficiency. Finally, the review acknowledges that ongoing technological advancement, particularly in areas such as power quality control, energy storage, and central management, will propel the continuous evolution of solar-based charging stations, making them even more technologically advanced, efficient, and crucial to the realization of a cleaner and more sustainable future for transportation and energy systems.

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