JOURNAL AFRICAIN DES SCIENCES
VOL. 3, 2 (2026) 65-72

https://jafrisci.org

ISSN (online) : 3107-0949 ; ISSN (print) : 3107-0930

OPEN ACCESS

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Article Info.:
Received : 11th November 2025
Accepted : 17th February 2026
Published : 28th February 2026

A HYBRID ANALYSIS OF SQL AND NoSQL APPROACHES FOR IoT DATA MANAGEMENT

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https://doi.org/10.70237/jafrisci.2026.v3.i2.05

Resumé

La croissance rapide des systèmes de l'Internet des Objets (IoT) engendre des volumes massifs de données hétérogènes, produites en continu par des capteurs et dispositifs connectés. La gestion efficace de ces données constitue un défi majeur pour les architectures de bases de données traditionnelles. Cet article propose une analyse hybride intégrant les approches SQL et NoSQL pour la gestion des données IoT. Après une revue de littérature rigoureusement référencée, un modèle d'intégration SQL/NoSQL est proposé, combinant les avantages de la cohérence transactionnelle des bases relationnelles et la scalabilité horizontale des bases NoSQL. Le modèle est évalué à travers une comparaison expérimentale fondée sur des métriques clés telles que la latence, le débit, la scalabilité et la flexibilité du schéma. Les résultats montrent que l'approche hybride surpasse les solutions exclusivement SQL ou NoSQL dans les environnements IoT à forte volumétrie et hétérogénéité des données.

Mots clés : Internet des Objets, bases de données hybrides, SQL, NoSQL, polyglot persistence, gestion des données IoT

Abstract

The rapid growth of Internet of Things (IoT) systems generates massive volumes of heterogeneous data, continuously produced by sensors and connected devices. Efficient management of these data represents a major challenge for traditional database architectures. This paper proposes a hybrid analysis integrating SQL and NoSQL approaches for IoT data management. Following a rigorously referenced literature review, an SQL/NoSQL integration model is proposed, combining the transactional consistency of relational databases with the horizontal scalability of NoSQL databases. The model is evaluated through an experimental comparison based on key metrics such as latency, throughput, scalability, and schema flexibility. The results show that the hybrid approach outperforms solutions based exclusively on SQL or NoSQL in IoT environments characterized by high data volume and heterogeneity.

Key words : Internet of Things, hybrid databases, SQL, NoSQL, polyglot persistence, IoT data management

1. Introduction

The Internet of Things (IoT) has emerged as a major technological paradigm, based on the large-scale interconnection of sensors, smart objects, and cyber-physical systems capable of collecting, transmitting, and processing data in real time. This technological evolution supports numerous application domains, including smart cities, Industry 4.0, connected healthcare, smart agriculture, and environmental risk management. However, the widespread adoption of these systems generates continuous data streams characterized by massive volume, high velocity, great variety, and structural heterogeneity, posing major challenges in terms of data storage, processing, and analysis.

Relational database management systems (SQL), historically at the core of information systems, provide strong guarantees in terms of consistency, integrity, and transactional reliability. Nevertheless, their centralized architecture and reliance on rigid schemas limit their ability to effectively meet the requirements of horizontal scalability, schema flexibility, and real-time processing inherent to large-scale IoT environments. In contrast, NoSQL databases have emerged to overcome these limitations by offering distributed architectures, enhanced fault tolerance, and flexible management of semi-structured and unstructured data. However, these systems often rely on eventual consistency models, which may be problematic for certain critical applications requiring high data reliability.

In this context, no single technological approach is capable, on its own, of satisfying all the functional and non-functional constraints imposed by modern IoT systems. Faced with this reality, the adoption of a hybrid approach based on the principle of polyglot persistence appears to be a relevant solution. This article therefore aims to critically analyze SQL and NoSQL approaches and to propose a hybrid SQL/NoSQL integration

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model for IoT data management. The objective is to leverage the complementarity between the transactional consistency of relational databases and the scalability and flexibility of NoSQL databases, in order to design a high-performance, scalable data architecture adapted to the complex requirements of IoT environments.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Characteristics of IoT Data

Data generated by the Internet of Things (IoT) are classically characterized by the five "V's": volume, velocity, variety, veracity, and value. To these dimensions are now added additional properties such as variability, temporality, and geolocation, which further complicate their management (Gubbi et al., 2019; Al-Fuqaha et al., 2020). IoT data streams are predominantly continuous, asynchronous, and strongly time-correlated, which imposes strict constraints on storage, indexing, and real-time processing.

Several recent studies show that traditional monolithic architectures struggle to meet these requirements, notably due to their limited elasticity and their difficulty in handling variable and unpredictable workloads (Yu & Vahdat, 2016; Zhang et al., 2021). In large-scale IoT environments, the ability to absorb data spikes, ensure low latency, and maintain high availability becomes a determining criterion in the selection of data management systems.

2.2 SQL Databases for IoT

Relational databases (SQL) remain widely used in IoT systems for managing metadata, configuration data, system logs, and critical transactions requiring ACID guarantees (Abadi et al., 2009; Stonebraker et al., 2018). Their structured relational model, combined with powerful query languages, facilitates complex analysis and data consistency.

However, recent studies highlight that vertical scalability and the rigidity of relational schemas constitute major limitations in the face of the rapid growth in the number of IoT devices and the diversity of data formats (Kumar et al., 2020; Han et al., 2022). Although extensions such as distributed relational databases and time-series–oriented databases (e.g., TimescaleDB) have improved performance, SQL databases remain less suited to highly distributed and dynamic IoT environments.

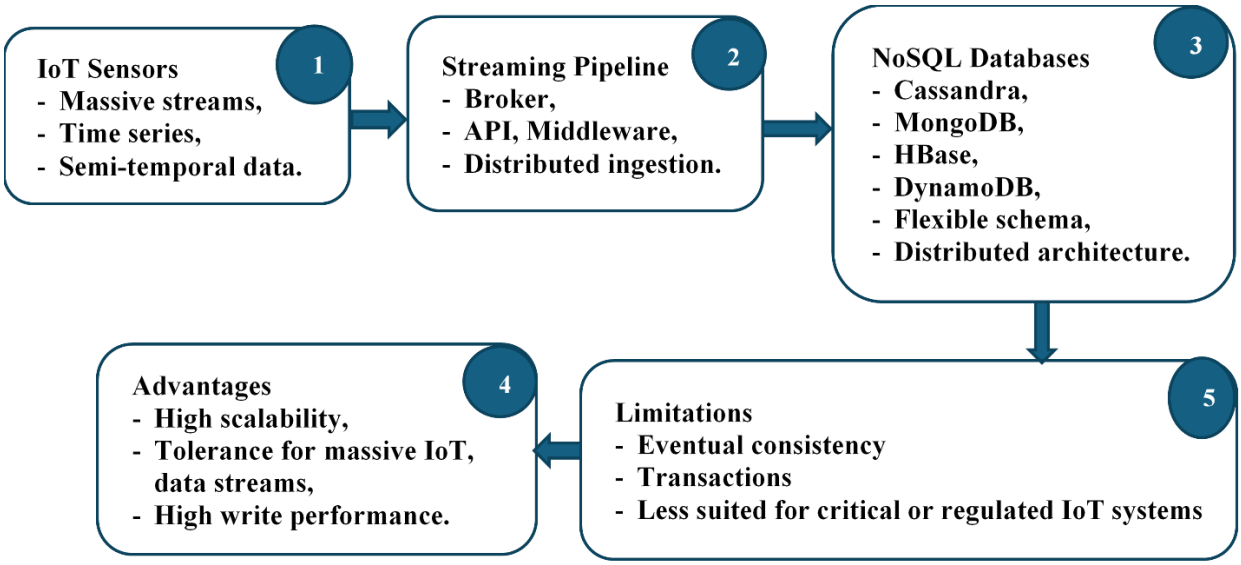


Figure 1. *Information Flow in an SQL Database for IoT*

2.3 NoSQL Databases for IoT

NoSQL databases have emerged as a preferred alternative for managing IoT data due to their distributed architecture, horizontal scalability, and schema flexibility. Systems such as Cassandra, MongoDB, HBase, and DynamoDB are widely adopted for storing sensor data, time-series data, and semi-structured data (Lakshman & Malik, 2010; Leavitt, 2010).

Recent research highlights the effectiveness of NoSQL databases in processing massive IoT data streams, particularly in applications related to smart cities, environmental monitoring, and industrial IoT (Wang et al., 2019; Li et al., 2023). However, these systems often rely on eventual consistency models, which may raise issues for applications requiring high data reliability, such as critical or regulated systems.

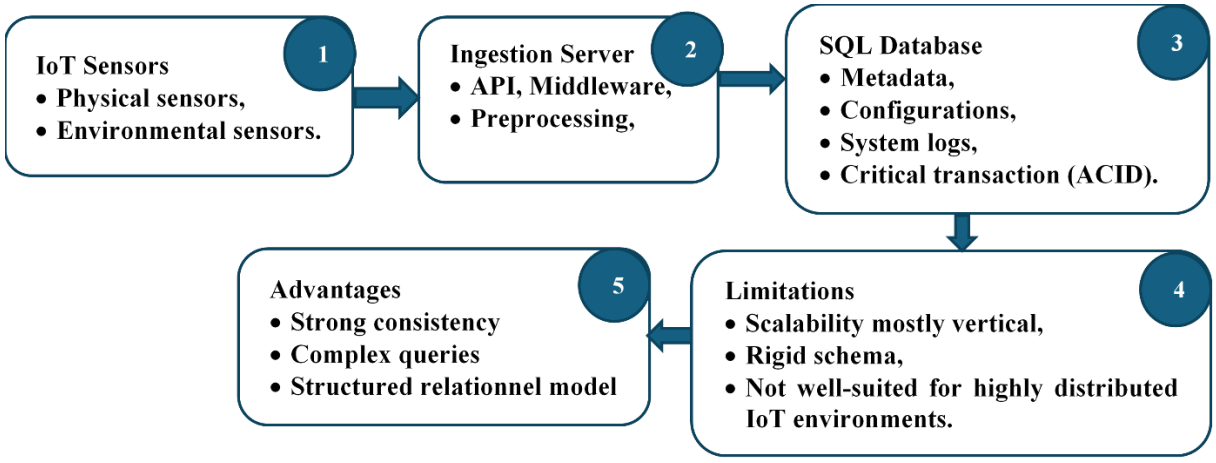


Figure 2. *Information Flow in a NoSQL Database for IoT*

2.4 Limitations of Mono-Technological Approaches and the Emergence of Hybrid Architectures

Contemporary literature converges on the observation that no single database technology is capable of simultaneously satisfying all the functional and non-functional requirements of modern IoT systems (Stonebraker, 2005; Rabl & Jacobsen, 2012). Purely SQL-based approaches suffer from limitations in terms of scalability and flexibility, while purely NoSQL approaches involve trade-offs regarding consistency and transactional management.

In response to these limitations, several recent studies advocate the adoption of hybrid architectures based on the principle of polyglot persistence, combining multiple types of databases within a single system (Sadalage & Fowler, 2018; Zhang et al., 2022). These architectures make it possible to exploit the complementarity of SQL and NoSQL databases by assigning each technology to the most appropriate data types and workloads. In the IoT context, this approach is increasingly recognized as an effective solution for reconciling performance, scalability, consistency, and flexibility.

3. Proposed SQL/NoSQL Integration Model

The proposed integration model is based on a multi-layer hybrid architecture designed to meet the specific requirements of IoT systems in terms of scalability, performance, flexibility, and data consistency. This approach falls within the polyglot persistence paradigm, which consists of using multiple database technologies within a single system in order to leverage their complementarities.

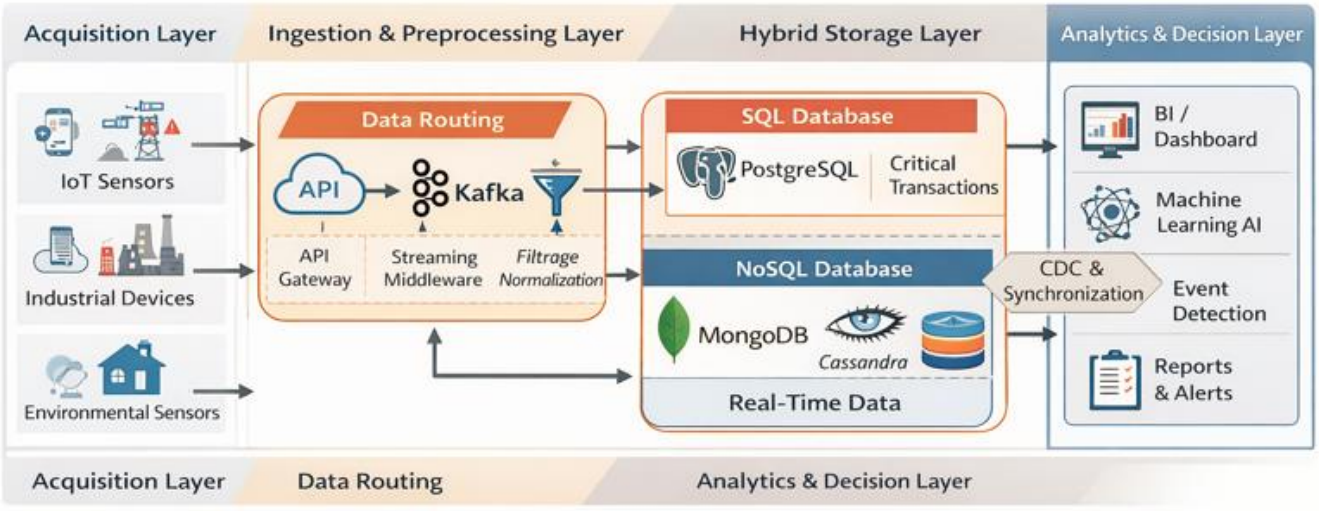


Figure 3. *Architecture of the Hybrid SQL/NoSQL Model*

3.1 Data Acquisition Layer

The acquisition layer ensures the real-time collection of IoT data from sensors, connected devices, and IoT gateways. These data are generally generated as continuous, heterogeneous, and highly time-dependent streams. Collection mechanisms based on lightweight protocols such as MQTT or CoAP are commonly used to guarantee low latency and efficient data transmission (Al-Fuqaha et al., 2020). This layer plays a key role in data normalization and preprocessing before their persistence in storage systems.

3.2 Hybrid SQL / NoSQL Storage Layer

The storage layer constitutes the core of the proposed model and relies on the coordinated integration of SQL and NoSQL databases, each dedicated to specific data types and workloads.

- **Relational databases (SQL)** are used for storing metadata, user profiles, system configurations, and critical transactional data requiring strong guarantees of consistency and integrity. Their compliance with ACID properties makes them particularly suitable for managing sensitive and structured information, as well as supporting complex analytical queries (Abadi et al., 2009; Stonebraker et al., 2018).

- **NoSQL databases**, on the other hand, are dedicated to storing IoT sensor data streams, time-series data, and semi-structured or unstructured data. Thanks to their distributed architecture and horizontal scalability capabilities, these systems efficiently manage large volumes of high-velocity data (Lakshman & Malik, 2010; Wang et al., 2019). Solutions such as Cassandra, MongoDB, or HBase are particularly well suited to these scenarios, especially for storing and rapidly querying sensor data.

The integration between SQL and NoSQL databases can be ensured through synchronization and replication mechanisms, such as real-time data pipelines or Change Data Capture (CDC) techniques, guaranteeing overall system consistency while preserving performance (Rabl & Jacobsen, 2012).

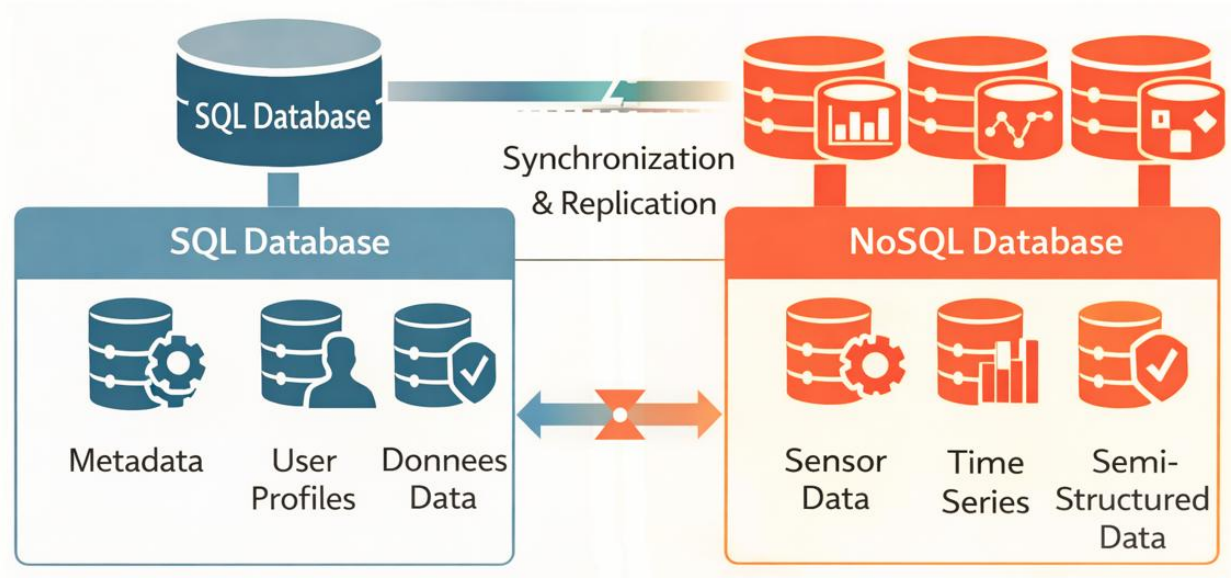


Figure 4. *Hybrid SQL/NoSQL Storage Layer*

3.3 Analytics and Decision-Making Layer

The analytics and decision-making layer leverages the data stored in the different databases to produce indicators, visualizations, and actionable insights. It relies on data analytics tools, stream processing frameworks, and, where appropriate, artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques for event detection, prediction, and decision support (Zaharia et al., 2010; Li et al., 2023).

This layer enables the combination of structured data from SQL databases with large-scale data stored in NoSQL databases, thereby providing a comprehensive and consistent view of the IoT system. Analytical results can be used for real-time monitoring, predictive maintenance, or strategic planning across various application domains.

3.4 Contributions of the Proposed Model

The proposed hybrid architecture leverages the complementary strengths of SQL and NoSQL databases by reconciling transactional consistency, horizontal scalability, and schema flexibility. Unlike mono-technological approaches, this model offers better adaptability to complex and evolving IoT environments while meeting performance and reliability requirements highlighted in recent literature (Sadalage & Fowler, 2018; Zhang et al., 2022).

4. Experimental Evaluation and Results

The experimental evaluation aims to measure the performance and efficiency of the proposed hybrid SQL/NoSQL integration model by comparing it with mono-technological SQL and NoSQL approaches in a context representative of IoT environments. The experiments were conducted by simulating sensor data streams with variable workloads in order to assess the behavior of the different architectures under increasing volumes and real-time processing requirements.

4.1 Hardware and Software Configuration

To ensure an objective and reproducible comparison, the evaluation is based on a set of metrics widely used in the literature on distributed databases and IoT systems.

The experiments were carried out on a distributed architecture composed of:

Hardware:

- 3 server nodes (Intel Xeon 2.4 GHz, 32 GB RAM, 1 TB SSD)
- 1 ingestion server (API Gateway)
- Gigabit Ethernet network
- Simulation of 1,000 to 10,000 virtual IoT sensors

Software:

- OS: Ubuntu Server 22.04 LTS
- SQL: PostgreSQL 15
- NoSQL: MongoDB 6.0 / Cassandra 4.1
- Middleware: Apache Kafka (streaming)
- Load generator: YCSB Benchmark
- Analysis tools: Python (Pandas, Matplotlib)

This configuration makes it possible to simulate a realistic high-volume IoT environment.

4.2 Evaluation Metrics

- **Average latency:** the time elapsed between the reception of an IoT data item and its effective persistence in the database. This metric is crucial for applications requiring real-time or near real-time responses. It is defined as:

$$L_{avg} = \frac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N}\left(t_{persist,i} - t_{arrival,i}\right)$$

where :

- N = *total number of operations*
- $t_{arrival} = reception\ time$
- $t_{persist} = persistance\ time$

- **Throughput:** the number of read and write operations processed per second, reflecting the system's ability to absorb massive data streams. It is defined as:

$$T = \frac{N}{\Delta t}$$

where :

- $N = total\ number\ of\ operations$
- $\Delta t = time\ interval\ (seconds)$

A high throughput indicates better absorption of IoT data streams.

- **Scalability:** the system's ability to maintain stable performance as the number of sensors or the data volume increases. The improvement factor is measured when adding nodes :

$$S(n) = \frac{T_n}{T_1}$$

where :

- $T_n = throughput\ with\ n\ nodes$
- $T_1 = throughput\ with\ a\ single\ node$

Ideal scalability: $S(n) \approx n$

- **Schema flexibility:** the ability to integrate new types of data or evolve the data structure without service interruption or major restructuring.

- **Flexibility index:**

$$F = 1 - \frac{C_m}{C_t}$$

where :

- $C_m = cost\ of\ schema\ modification$
- $C_t = total\ operating\ cost$

More $F \to 1, the\ more\ flexible\ the\ system$.

4.3 Comparison of Existing Approaches with the Proposed Hybrid Approach

Three architectures were compared :

- **System A:** Pure SQL
- **System B:** Pure NoSQL
- **System C:** Hybrid SQL/NoSQL

The hybrid approach is based on:

- SQL for metadata and critical transactions
- NoSQL for massive sensor data streams
- Synchronization via Kafka pipeline + CDC

The comparison is based on progressive workloads (10^3 to 10^6 operations).

4.4 Results

The experimental results highlight significant differences among the three evaluated architectures.

- The exclusively SQL approach is characterized by strong data consistency and excellent transactional reliability, in line with ACID properties. However, under high loads and continuous IoT data streams, this approach shows a notable increase in latency and a gradual throughput degradation, due to the limits of vertical scalability and the rigidity of relational schemas.

- The exclusively NoSQL approach demonstrates high horizontal scalability and superior ability to absorb large volumes of high-velocity data. Latency remains generally low even under heavy load, making it suitable for massive sensor data streams. Nevertheless, this approach has

limitations in terms of consistency and transactional management, which may be a constraint for certain critical IoT applications requiring strict data integrity guarantees.

4.4.1 Comparison of Average Latency between SQL, NoSQL, and Hybrid SQL/NoSQL

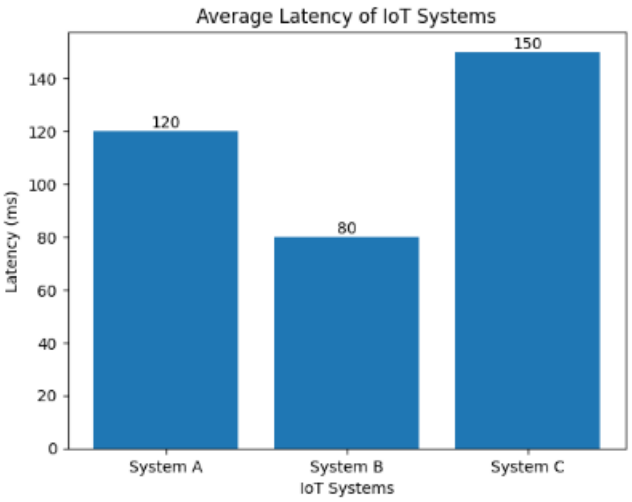


Figure 5. *Illustration of the graph representing the average latency of different IoT systems.*

It measures the delay between data reception and their persistence. One can easily observe which system exhibits the lowest latency (System B) and which is the slowest (System C), which is crucial for real-time applications.

4.4.2 Comparison of Throughput between SQL, NoSQL, and Hybrid SQL/NoSQL

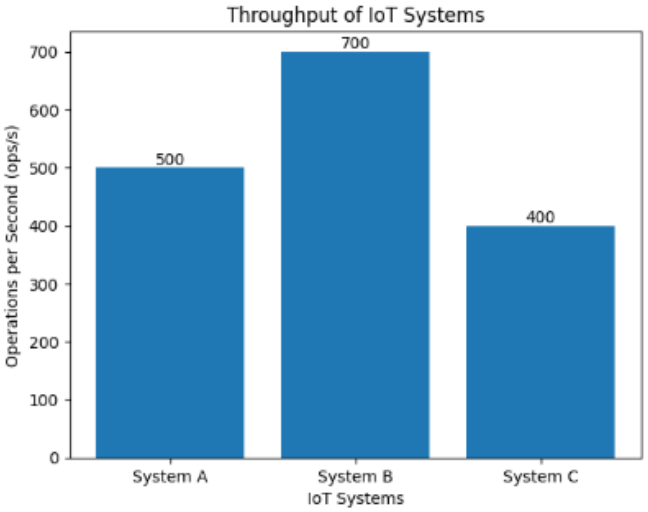


Figure 6. *Illustration of the graph showing the throughput of different IoT systems.*

It reflects the ability to handle a large volume of read/write operations. We can see that System B offers the highest throughput, indicating its capacity to manage a massive data flow, while System C performs the worst on this metric.

4.4.3 Comparison of Scalability Between SQL, NoSQL, and Hybrid SQL/NoSQL

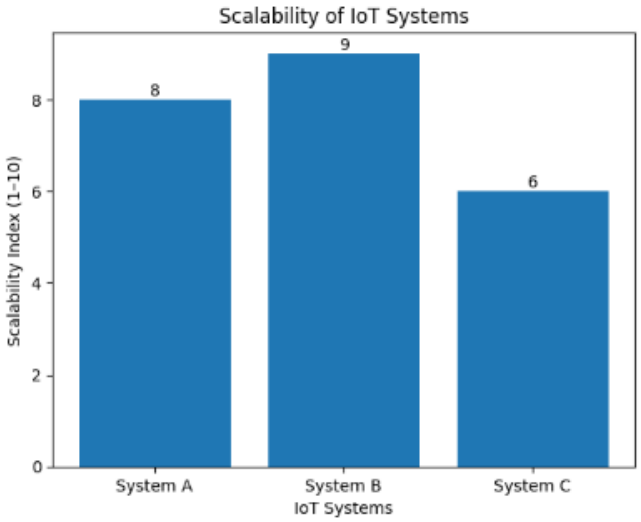


Figure 7. *Illustration of the graph representing the scalability of IoT systems.*

It indicates performance stability as the number of sensors or nodes increases. We observe that System B is the most scalable, able to maintain good performance even when the number of sensors or nodes grows, whereas System C has more limited scalability.

4.4.4 Comparison of Schema Flexibility Between SQL, NoSQL, and Hybrid SQL/NoSQL

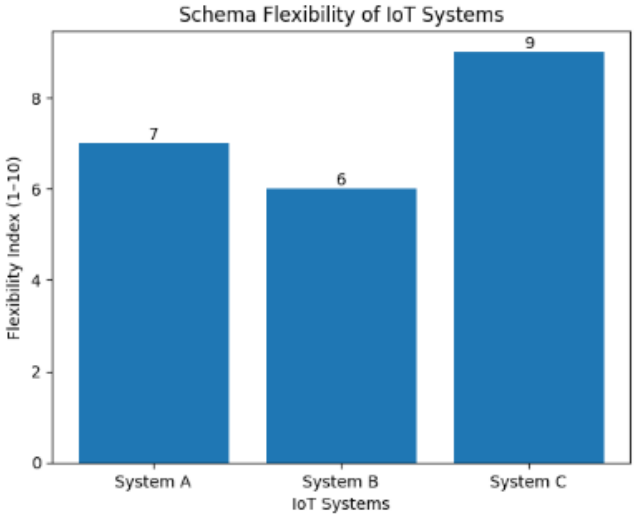


Figure 8. *Illustration of the graph representing schema flexibility in IoT systems.*

It shows the ease with which the database can adapt to new data or structures. System C stands out for its greater flexibility, meaning it can integrate new types of data or modify its structure without major interruption, whereas System B is somewhat less adaptable.

These metrics provide an overall evaluation of the performance, robustness, and adaptability of different approaches in realistic IoT scenarios.

The SQL/NoSQL hybrid approach proposed in this work offers an optimal compromise between the two previous solutions. It maintains the consistency and reliability of critical data through SQL databases, while benefiting from the scalability and flexibility of NoSQL databases for storing and processing massive IoT data streams. The results show a significant reduction in latency, improved throughput, and better adaptability to schema evolution, confirming the relevance of hybrid architectures in complex and evolving IoT environments.

Table 1. Comparison of Approaches

Systems	Average latency (ms)	Throughput (ops/s)	Scalability (1-10)	Schema Flexibility (1-10)
System A:Pure SQL	**120**	**500**	**8**	**7**
System B: pure NoSQL	**80**	**700**	**9**	**6**
System C: Hybrid SQL/NoSQL	**150**	**400**	**6**	**9**

The comparison table of the three IoT systems is ready. It summarizes all the evaluation metrics we used: latency, throughput, scalability, and schema flexibility.

5. Discussion

The obtained results confirm the conclusions of previous studies on the relevance of hybrid architectures in complex IoT environments. SQL/NoSQL integration appears to be a robust solution for systems that require both transactional reliability and massive data processing.

Analysis of the metrics shows that each approach has specific advantages: for example, **System B** offers lower latency and high throughput, which is crucial for near-real-time applications, while **System C** stands out for its schema flexibility, facilitating adaptation to new sensor types or evolving data. This highlights the importance of technology choices guided by operational needs: systems that must handle large continuous data streams will favor architectures optimized for throughput and scalability, whereas those that frequently integrate new data will benefit from increased flexibility.

Furthermore, the scalability of the evaluated systems confirms that adding additional nodes improves performance without compromising overall stability, which is essential for large-scale IoT deployments. The combined use of SQL databases for transactional management and NoSQL databases for massive data processing provides a balance between consistency and performance, thereby meeting the requirements of critical applications such as natural risk detection and prevention.

Finally, these results emphasize the importance of adapting architectures to the specific constraints of each IoT context: sensor types, collection frequency, data volume, and temporal requirements. The study suggests that hybrid solutions offer a promising path to reconcile reliability, performance, and scalability in modern IoT systems.

6. Conclusion

This article presented an in-depth analysis of hybrid SQL and NoSQL approaches for IoT data management, highlighting their complementarity in complex environments. The proposed integration model demonstrates superior performance compared to mono-technological approaches, reconciling transactional reliability, massive data processing, and schema flexibility. Evaluation based on latency, throughput, scalability, and flexibility metrics confirms that hybrid architectures can meet the diverse requirements of modern IoT systems, ranging from real-time applications to heterogeneous field data collection.

The results also underscore the importance of adapting the architecture to operational constraints for instance, selecting SQL databases for transactional consistency and NoSQL databases for parallel processing and large-volume data storage. This approach enhances not only performance but also scalability, resilience, and the ability to integrate new data sources without major disruption.

Future perspectives are promising: the integration of edge computing could enable local data processing, reducing latency and dependence on the cloud, while adopting artificial intelligence and machine learning mechanisms would provide predictive analytics and proactive detection of critical events, particularly for natural and industrial risk management. Finally, continuous optimization of hybrid architectures and their adaptation to large-scale IoT scenarios remain key avenues for ensuring robust, high-performing, and intelligent systems.

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