



Review Research Article

Problems and Prospects of Urban Environment in Jammu and Kashmir: A Review

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ABSTRACT

The urban environment in Jammu and Kashmir, an area that is characterized by fast urbanization and distinctive socio-political dynamics, is the subject of this review article, which investigates the difficulties and opportunities associated with Urban Environment. The analysis focuses on important topics such as the deterioration of the environment, the lack of suitable infrastructure, the instability of the sociopolitical system, and the scarcity of housing. According to the findings of the study, urbanization has a number of severe negative effects on the environment, including pollution and the destruction of forests. In addition, it analyzes the deficiencies in infrastructure, particularly in the areas of transportation and energy supply, as well as the effects of sociopolitical instability on the development of metropolitan areas. Despite these obstacles, the report highlights that there are opportunities for sustainable urban growth through the implementation of legislative reforms, improvements in governance, and more community participation. In addition, the Smart Cities Mission and the possibilities of renewable energy, notably solar power, are being investigated as potential paths for improving urban infrastructure and living conditions. This all-encompassing analysis highlights the necessity of a collaborative approach that involves the government, the corporate sector, and civil society in order to cultivate a sustainable and resilient urban future for Jammu and Kashmir.

Introduction

The term "urban environment" refers to the entirety of the natural, built, and socio-economic elements that are present in urban surroundings. The high population density, substantial infrastructure, and complex mix of residential, commercial, and industrial activity that characterize these environments are the defining characteristics of these environment types. The interaction of these factors has a considerable impact not only on the physical environment but also on the quality of life for those who live in urban areas. As part of the process of comprehending the urban environment, it is necessary to investigate its physical, social, and economic aspects.

Key Components of the Urban Environment

1. **Built Environment:** Infrastructures such as buildings, roads, bridges, parks, and other things that contribute to the physical layout of metropolitan areas are included in this category. According to Gandy (2013), the design and upkeep of these structures play a significant role in defining the efficiency, attractiveness, and environmental impact of urban environments.
2. **Natural Environment:** Even within the confines of metropolitan environments, natural features such as parks, rivers, and green spaces are of critical importance.

According to Pauleit et al. (2005), these spaces offer opportunities for leisure activities, contribute to the reduction of the effects of urban heat islands, and support biodiversity.

3. **Socio-Economic Environment:** A variety of elements, including housing, employment, income levels, and access to services, contribute to the formation of the socio-economic environment in metropolitan areas. Disparities in socioeconomic status can have a substantial impact on the quality of life of residents as well as the environmental sustainability of their communities (UN-Habitat, 2020).

Challenges of Urban Environments

There are several environmental difficulties that urban regions face, including the following:

- **Pollution:** There is a significant amount of pollution in the air, water, and soil all across urban places. On the other hand, insufficient waste management can lead to contamination of water and soil (WHO, 2016). Air pollution is caused by a combination of factors, including automobiles, factories, and household activities.

- **Climate Change:** Cities not only add to the problem of climate change but also suffer from its effects. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), metropolitan areas are especially susceptible to the consequences of climate change, such as extreme weather events, and high energy consumption, which is primarily derived from fossil fuels, leads to a rise in greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Resource Management:** It is essential to have an effective management system in place for resources such as water, electricity, and materials. Urban regions frequently experience difficulties in the sustainable utilization of resources, which can result in problems such as a lack of available water and difficulties in the management of waste (UNEP, 2013).

Sustainable Urban Development

Practices that promote sustainable urban development are absolutely necessary in order to overcome these difficulties. Among the most important strategies are:

- **Green Infrastructure:** According to Benedict and McMahon (2006), the incorporation of green roofs, urban forests, and permeable pavements can improve the resilience of urban areas and minimize their negative effects on the environment.
- **Public Transportation:** According to Cervero (1998), the development of effective public transportation networks has the potential to lessen the amount of traffic congestion and minimize emissions of greenhouse gases.
- **Smart Cities:** According to Hollands (2008), the utilization of technology and data in order to enhance urban administration and services can result in a more effective utilization of resources and an improvement in the quality of life for people.

The urban environment is a dynamic and complex system that calls for integrated approaches in order to be managed and maintained. In order to achieve sustainable development and improve the quality of life for those who live in urban areas, it is essential to address the issues that exist within urban regions and to capitalize on the opportunities that exist there.

The region of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), which is located in the northern section of India, is renowned for the distinctive geographical and socio-political landscape that it possesses. The unique cultural legacy and historical significance of this region have had an impact on the urban environment in this region, which reflects a blend of traditional and modern characteristics. In this introduction, the urban environment of Jammu and Kashmir is investigated, with a particular emphasis placed on its most important characteristics, difficulties, and measures aimed at achieving sustainable urban growth.

Literature Review

In the 21st century, urban areas are confronted with a wide variety of issues as well as several opportunities. Rapid urbanization has resulted in a number of serious issues, such as the urban heat island effect, insufficient waste management, and air pollution, all of which have a negative influence on public health and quality of life (Chen et al., 2020; UN-Habitat, 2022). Furthermore, social problems such as a lack of available housing and socioeconomic disparities are widespread in a number of cities (Paddison, 2019). Nevertheless, there is the potential for advancement with the implementation of forward-thinking urban design and environmentally responsible development techniques.

According to Gill et al. (2007), green infrastructure, which includes environmental features like parks and green roofs, has the potential to reduce environmental issues and improve urban resilience.

Furthermore, according to Harrison et al. (2010), smart city efforts that use technology and data have the potential to enhance how urban administration and service delivery are carried out. If these tactics are effectively applied, they have the potential to change urban landscapes into spaces that are more sustainable and livable.

Methodology

This review work is based on secondary sources, both primary and secondary. Information that has been published and information that has not been published is gathered, retrieved, and displayed.

Results

Key Characteristics of the Urban Environment in J&K

1. **Geographic and Climatic Features:** J&K is distinguished by its diversified topography, which consists of a variety of features such as rivers, valleys, and mountains. According to Naseer and Tabasum (2021), the climate varies from subtropical in the Jammu region to temperate in the Kashmir Valley, which has an effect on the formulation of urban planning and the development of infrastructure.
2. **Cultural Heritage:** There is a significant amount of cultural legacy in the urban areas of Jammu and Kashmir, such as Srinagar and Jammu. According to Pandit and Bhat (2014), the architecture and urban layout frequently reflect historical influences. Some examples of these influences are Mughal gardens, traditional wooden houses (Kashmiri Pandit houses), and religious places.
3. **Socio-Economic Diversity:** The urban population in Jammu and Kashmir is multicultural, consisting of people from a variety of religious, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds. This variety is reflected in the economic activities, which include anything from tourism and traditional handicrafts to contemporary industries (Bhat, 2013).

The urban environment of Jammu and Kashmir, which is an area that is distinguished by its varied topography and distinctive socio-political setting, has been going through a period of rapid change and transformation. This review study investigates the most significant difficulties that are currently being faced by the urban regions in this region and investigates alternative options for the development of sustainable urban environments. In addition to analyzing the prospects for enhancing the urban landscape, key challenges such as environmental deterioration, inadequate infrastructure, socio-political instability, and shortcomings in urban planning are also taken into consideration.

Problems

Environmental Degradation

Within the metropolitan regions of Jammu and Kashmir, environmental degradation is a big problem that has to be addressed. Deforestation, the loss of biodiversity, and an increase in pollution have all developed as a result of rapid urbanization. According to Rashid et al. (2017), the rate of deforestation in the region has been significantly increasing, which has led to the destruction of habitats and the erosion of soil. The levels of pollution in metropolitan centers, particularly in bodies of water

such as the Jhelum River, have increased as a result of the discharge of untreated sewage and effluents from industrial processes (Ahmad & Dar, 2018).

Inadequate Infrastructure

In the metropolitan districts of Jammu and Kashmir, the infrastructure is frequently insufficient to fulfill the ever-increasing demands of the increasing population. Poor road networks, inadequate public transportation, and an unstable supply of electricity are all problems that plague the region. Jammu & Kashmir has one of the lowest road densities in India, according to a report published by the World Bank in 2019. This low road density makes it difficult for people to obtain key services and hinders economic operations. A further disruption to daily living and the expansion of industry is caused by frequent power outages.

Socio-political Instability

The sociopolitical instability that exists in Jammu and Kashmir has had a significant impact on the development of urban areas. Investment is discouraged and development projects are slowed down when ongoing conflicts and security issues are included. The quality of life is also negatively impacted by this instability, which might result in migration and a loss of intellectual capital (Bhat & Parveen, 2014). These problems are made much worse by the frequent implementation of curfews and the suspension of communication, which creates a climate that is difficult for urban expansion.

Housing and Urban Planning

There is a big problem in Jammu and Kashmir with regards to housing shortages as well as inadequate urban planning. There has been a proliferation of informal settlements and slums as a result of rapid urbanization, notably in places such as Srinagar and Jammu. According to the findings of Bhat et al. (2016), more than thirty percent of the urban population resides in informal housing, which is devoid of fundamental conveniences like clean water and sanitation. A comprehensive urban planning framework has not been implemented, which has led to expansion that is both unplanned and haphazard, which has exacerbated both environmental and social problems.

Prospects

Sustainable Urban Development

There are opportunities for enhancing the urban environment in Jammu and Kashmir through the use of sustainable urban development methods, notwithstanding the challenges that have been previously mentioned. A reduction in environmental degradation can be achieved through the use of renewable energy and green construction technology. Considering the high solar insolation of the region, the implementation of solar energy has the potential to alleviate the problem of electricity shortages (Sharma & Kumar, 2015). Public transportation and other modes of mobility that do not include motorization can help minimize pollution and congestion.

Policy Reforms and Governance

When it comes to solving urban issues in Jammu and Kashmir, it is essential to implement policy reforms that are effective and to enhance governance. In order to promote development initiatives and attract investment, strengthening institutions and ensuring that governance is both transparent and accountable are both important requirements. According to Raina (2017), policies that prioritize inclusive growth and equitable resource allocation have the potential to enhance living conditions for those who live in metropolitan areas.

Infrastructure Development

Making investments in the development of infrastructure is absolutely necessary for the growth of the region. The enhancement of road networks, public transportation, and utility systems has the potential to improve both the quality of life and economic activities. The Smart towns Mission, which was initiated by the Government of India, presents an opportunity to transform Srinagar and Jammu into model towns that are equipped with cutting-edge infrastructure and services (Smart Cities Mission, 2020).

Community Participation

It is possible to get outcomes that are more effective and sustainable by involving local people in the processes of urban planning and development activities. It is through the participation of the community that development initiatives are brought into alignment with the requirements and goals of the residents. Creating a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the urban environment can be accomplished through the adoption of initiatives that involve citizens in the decision-making and implementation processes (Mir & Khan, 2018).

Conclusion

The urban environment in Jammu and Kashmir is confronted with a multitude of obstacles, some of which include environmental deterioration, inadequate infrastructure, socio-political instability, and housing issues. However, there are tremendous opportunities for improvement that can be realized through the implementation of sustainable urban development, legislative reforms, investments in infrastructure, and the participation of the community. In order to develop a sustainable and resilient urban future for Jammu and Kashmir, it is necessary to address these concerns through a collaborative strategy that involves the government, the corporate sector, and civil society.

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