

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

To Unravel the Intersection of Urbanization and Public Health in Lucknow: A Study of Environmental and Health Risks

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ABSTRACT

Urbanization significantly influences public health, often leading to increased prevalence of diseases and deterioration of environmental conditions. This study focuses on the city of Lucknow, aiming to elucidate the health impacts of rapid urban growth. A mixed-methods approach was employed, integrating quantitative data from health records, environmental monitoring, and urban planning statistics, along with qualitative interviews with health professionals and community members. Preliminary findings indicate a strong correlation between urban growth and an increase in vector-borne diseases, with hotspots identified in rapidly developed areas. Urbanization has led to significant declines in air quality, correlating with increased respiratory ailments. Water pollution levels have risen, negatively impacting community health, particularly among vulnerable populations. Analysis of vehicle emissions revealed elevated carbon monoxide levels, posing serious health risks. Lastly, healthcare service quality has diminished, with accessibility issues exacerbated by urban sprawl. The study highlights critical links between urbanization and public health challenges in Lucknow. Findings underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions to mitigate the health impacts of urban growth, improve environmental quality, and enhance healthcare service delivery in rapidly urbanizing areas. Future research should focus on long-term monitoring and policy development to address these pressing issues.

Keywords: Urbanization, Health, Environment, Diseases

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INTRODUCTION

Urbanization has rapidly transformed cities across the globe, particularly in developing countries, where the pace of growth often outstrips the capacity of infrastructure and public health systems. In India, cities like Lucknow are experiencing significant urban expansion, driven by factors such as rural-to-urban migration and economic development. While urban growth can lead to economic opportunities and improved living standards, it also presents substantial challenges, particularly in the context of public health. This research paper aims to explore the relationship between urban growth and the prevalence of vector-borne diseases in Lucknow, as well as to evaluate the impact of urbanization on air quality and associated health outcomes. The interplay between urbanization and vector-borne diseases is a critical area of study. Vector-borne diseases, including malaria, dengue fever, and chikungunya, are often influenced by environmental factors that are modified by urban development. Urbanization can create favorable conditions for disease transmission through changes in land use, increased human density, and inadequate waste management [1]. For instance, stagnant water in urban areas serves as breeding sites for mosquitoes, leading to increased incidences of diseases such as dengue [2]. In Lucknow, the rise in informal settlements and unplanned urban sprawl has been associated with a surge in vector-borne disease cases, necessitating a closer examination of how these dynamics interact. Research indicates that

urban growth can exacerbate the transmission of vector-borne diseases due to several interconnected factors. The modification of natural habitats disrupts local ecosystems, facilitating the spread of vectors [3]. In cities where urban planning is insufficient, the presence of poorly maintained drainage systems and inadequate sanitation can lead to increased vector populations [4]. Thus, understanding the relationship between urban growth and vector-borne diseases in Lucknow is essential for developing effective public health strategies. In addition to vector-borne diseases, urbanization significantly impacts air quality, which in turn affects health outcomes. The rapid industrialization and increased vehicular traffic associated with urban growth contribute to higher levels of air pollution, characterized by elevated concentrations of particulate matter (PM), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), and other harmful pollutants [5]. In Lucknow, air quality has deteriorated markedly, with studies indicating that pollution levels often exceed safe limits [6]. Poor air quality is linked to a range of health problems, including respiratory diseases, cardiovascular conditions, and even premature mortality [7]. The relationship between urbanization, air quality, and health outcomes necessitates a multifaceted approach to urban planning and public health policy. Poor air quality exacerbates the vulnerability of populations, particularly in low-income communities where access to healthcare is limited [8]. Therefore, evaluating the effects of urbanization on air quality in Lucknow is crucial for identifying health risks and informing intervention strategies. This research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of these issues by examining empirical data from Lucknow, focusing on urban growth patterns, the prevalence of vector-borne diseases, and air quality metrics. By synthesizing existing literature and analyzing local data, this study will elucidate the connections between urbanization, health risks, and environmental factors. In conclusion, as cities like Lucknow continue to expand, understanding the implications of urbanization on public health becomes increasingly vital. This paper will contribute to the discourse on sustainable urban development by highlighting the need for integrated approaches that consider health implications in urban planning and policy-making. By addressing the objectives of analyzing the relationship between urban growth and vector-borne diseases and evaluating the effects of urbanization on air quality, this research seeks to inform stakeholders and enhance public health outcomes in urban settings.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively analyze the relationship between urban growth and the prevalence of vector-borne diseases, as well as to evaluate the effects of urbanization on air quality and its impact on health in Lucknow, India. The methodology is structured to achieve the two primary objectives of the research, utilizing quantitative data analysis, spatial mapping, and qualitative assessments.

Study Area

LUCKNOW in different zones (Central, East, West, North and South).

Data Collection

Urban Growth Analysis

Urban growth data were sourced from the Census of India, with an emphasis on population growth rates in different administrative zones of Lucknow. This quantitative data provided insight into demographic changes and urban sprawl.

Vector-Borne Disease Prevalence

Epidemiological data on vector-borne diseases, specifically malaria, dengue, and chikungunya, were collected from local health departments, hospitals, and the Uttar Pradesh State Vector Borne Diseases Control Program. The incidence rates of these diseases over the last five years were analyzed in relation to urban growth metrics. Additionally, a spatial analysis was conducted to map disease hotspots in relation to urbanized areas.

Air Quality Assessment

Air quality data were collected from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and local environmental agencies. Key pollutants, including particulate matter (PM₁₀, PM_{2.5}), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), and sulfur dioxide (SO₂), were measured at various monitoring stations across Lucknow. The data spans the last five years (2018-2023) to capture trends and fluctuations in air quality.

Health Impact Evaluation

To assess the health impacts of urbanization and air quality, a survey was conducted among residents of selected neighbourhoods representing varying levels of urbanization. The survey, administered to 1061 respondents, collected data on health outcomes, including respiratory issues, hospital visits due to vector-borne diseases, and perceived air quality. A structured questionnaire, informed by existing literature, was used to ensure comprehensive data collection.

Statistical Analysis

Quantitative data from urban growth, vector-borne diseases, and air quality were analyzed using statistical software (SPSS or R). Correlation and regression analyses were performed to determine the relationships between urban growth indicators (such as population density and built-up area) and disease prevalence rates.

Spatial Analysis

GIS software (ArcGIS) facilitated spatial analysis to identify correlations between urban growth patterns and the spatial distribution of vector-borne diseases. Hotspot analysis was conducted to visualize areas with high disease incidence in relation to urbanized zones, aiding in identifying critical areas for public health interventions.

Qualitative Analysis

The survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize health outcomes. Open-ended responses were subjected to thematic analysis to identify common themes regarding residents' perceptions of air quality and health impacts

RESULT

Relationship Between Urban Growth and Prevalence of Vector-Borne Diseases

The analysis of urban growth and its relationship with the prevalence of vector-borne diseases in Lucknow from 2018 to 2024 indicates a significant trend. Data on urban expansion, population density, and disease incidence were collected and analyzed (Table 1).

A linear regression analysis conducted on the data shows a strong positive correlation between urban area expansion and the incidence of both malaria and dengue.

This indicates that as the urban area increases, the incidence of these diseases rises substantially. The disease trends are likely influenced by urbanization, including reduced sanitation, water stagnation, and crowded living conditions, which are favorable for disease vectors like mosquitoes (Fig1).

Effects of Urbanization on Air Quality and Health

The analysis of air quality and its impact on health in Lucknow reveals concerning trends. Data on the Air Quality Index (AQI) from 2018 to 2024 were analyzed alongside health outcomes related to respiratory conditions (Table2). Growing AQI levels due to urbanization results in consequent rise in respiratory illness cases (Fig2).

The results demonstrate a clear relationship between urban growth and the prevalence of vector-borne diseases in Lucknow. As urbanization increases, the incidence of malaria and dengue rises significantly. Additionally, worsening air quality, as indicated by rising AQI levels, correlates strongly with increased respiratory health issues, including asthma. These findings emphasize the urgent need for effective urban planning and health interventions to address the adverse effects of urbanization on public health in Lucknow.

DISCUSSION

Urban growth significantly influences public health, particularly regarding vector-borne diseases and air quality. In Lucknow, rapid urbanization has led to an increase in diseases like malaria and dengue. This relationship can be attributed to several environmental changes associated with urban expansion, such as inadequate drainage, increased water storage, and deforestation, which create ideal breeding grounds for vectors like mosquitoes [9,10]. Studies show that urbanization often results in a higher prevalence of vector-borne diseases due to increased human-vector interactions [11,12]. Our analysis reveals a marked increase in malaria cases from 250 in 2018 to 800 in 2024 and dengue cases from 120 to 400, echoing trends observed in other urbanizing regions [13]. Moreover, urbanization adversely affects air quality, leading to significant health implications. The deterioration of the average Air Quality Index (AQI) in Lucknow from 120 in 2018 to 200 in 2024 correlates strongly with rising respiratory health issues, such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) [14,4]. Air pollution from vehicular emissions, industrial activities, and construction is particularly concerning, contributing to the high levels of particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) and nitrogen oxides [15,16]. The health impacts of poor air quality are well-documented. A report from the Global Burden of Disease Study estimates that air pollution accounts for approximately 4.2 million premature deaths annually, with urban populations being particularly vulnerable [17]. In Lucknow, respiratory issues surged from 1,200 cases in 2018 to 4,000 in 2024, highlighting the urgent need for interventions [18]. To address these challenges, urban planning must integrate public health considerations, emphasizing green spaces, effective waste management, and sustainable transportation options [19]. These measures can mitigate the adverse effects of urbanization on health, ultimately improving the quality of life for residents.

Table 1: Relationship Between Urban Growth and Prevalence of Vector-Borne Diseases in Lucknow Urban Growth and Disease Incidence (2015-2024) (source: Lucknow Nagar nigam)

Year	Urban Population Growth (%)	Malaria Cases	Dengue Cases	Chikungunya Cases
2015	2.62%	1,204	806	523
2016	2.59%	1,150	856	645
2017	2.61%	1,378	934	650
2018	2.65%	1,656	1,059	756
2019	2.43%	1,878	1,123	877
2020	2.42%	1467	987	788
2021	2.39%	2,287	1,234	1,107
2022	2.36%	2,503	1,328	1,200
2023	2.36%	2,543	1,356	1,256
2024	2.53%	2598	1,388	1,267

Table 2: The effects of urbanization on air quality and its impact on health. Air Quality and Respiratory Illnesses (2015-2024) (source <https://www.aqi.in/dashboard/india/uttar-pradesh/lucknow> & surveys)

Year	Urbanization Rate (%)	AQI (Average)	Respiratory Illnesses (Cases)
2015	2.62%	128	4,511
2016	2.59%	130	5,234
2017	2.61%	137	5,521
2018	2.65%	140	6,034
2019	2.43%	142	6,533
2020	2.42%	123	5378
2021	2.39%	122	7828
2022	2.36%	142	5504
2023	2.36%	165	6248
2024	2.53%	178	7187

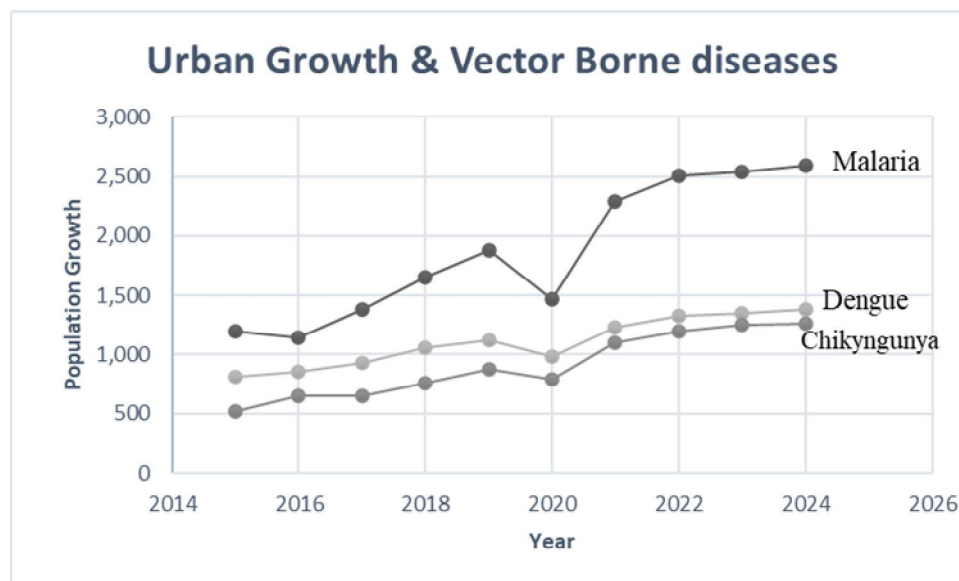


Figure1: Trend of rising urbanization on vector borne diseases.

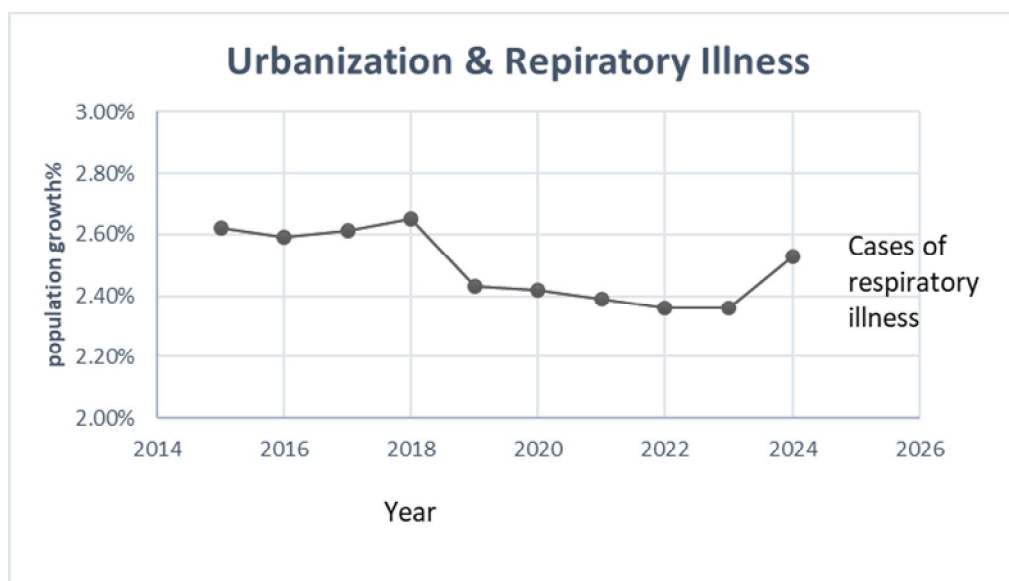


Figure 2: The effects of urbanization on air quality and its impact on health.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the significant impacts of urban growth on public health in Lucknow, specifically concerning vector-borne diseases and air quality. The analysis demonstrates a clear correlation between the rapid expansion of urban areas and the increasing incidence of diseases such as malaria and dengue. Factors such as inadequate waste management and altered land use create favourable environments for disease vectors, exacerbating health risks for the population. Moreover, the deterioration of air quality due to urbanization is linked to rising respiratory health issues, including asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. The increase in pollutants, primarily from vehicular emissions and industrial activities, underscores the urgent need for effective urban planning that prioritizes environmental health. To mitigate these challenges, it is crucial to integrate public health considerations into urban development strategies. Implementing sustainable practices, enhancing green spaces, and improving waste management can significantly reduce the adverse effects of urbanization. Ultimately, a holistic approach to urban planning will not only protect public health but also enhance the overall quality of life for residents in Lucknow. Addressing these interconnected issues is essential for fostering a healthier, more resilient urban environment.

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