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GEOGRAPHICAL DIMENSIONS OF DISEASE IMPACT AND HEALTH SERVICE PROVISION IN URBAN HARYANA

Neha*1, Dr. Sheeba Faridi *2
**1 (Research Scholar Geography Department Sunrise University, Alwar, India)*
**2 (Professor & Research Guide Geography Department Sunrise University, Alwar,India)*

Abstract: This research paper undertakes a comprehensive geographical analysis of human diseases in urban areas of Haryana, investigating their dual impact on the physical and socioeconomic environments and the spatial patterns of their occurrence. Focusing on a selection of prevalent diseases, the study examines their intricate relationships with specific urban environmental factors and assesses the current capacity and geographical variations in health service provision by the state health department. Employing a multi-faceted research methodology, combining quantitative spatial analysis using GIS with qualitative assessments of health infrastructure and policy implementation, this study aims to reveal critical geographical disparities in disease burden and healthcare access. Expected findings include distinct spatial clustering of chosen diseases influenced by urban environmental stressors, significant variations in health service availability across different urban centers, and a reciprocal relationship where disease prevalence impacts local socioeconomic conditions. The paper aims to provide actionable geographical insights to inform targeted public health interventions, optimize healthcare resource allocation, and foster more resilient and equitable urban health systems in Haryana.

Keywords: Medical Geography, Urban Health, Haryana, Spatial Epidemiology, Health Services, Environmental Health, Socioeconomic Impact, GIS, Disease Clustering, Public Health Policy.

Introduction

The rapid urbanization witnessed in Haryana, characterized by burgeoning city populations, evolving land use patterns, and infrastructure development, presents a complex interplay of opportunities and challenges for public health. While urbanization often brings improved access to healthcare and amenities, it can also concentrate environmental stressors and exacerbate health disparities. Human diseases, whether communicable or non-communicable, do not merely represent individual health crises; they possess significant geographical dimensions, impacting the physical environment through waste generation and ecological alterations, and profoundly influencing the socioeconomic fabric of communities.

This research paper delves into the geographical dynamics of human diseases within selected urban centers of Haryana. It seeks to move beyond simple disease mapping to explore the reciprocal relationship between disease occurrence and the urban geoenvironment, simultaneously evaluating the spatial efficiency and equity of existing health service provisions. A geographical lens is crucial for understanding how specific urban environmental characteristics contribute to disease epidemiology, how disease burdens manifest spatially, and how health services are distributed and utilized across varying urban contexts. Such an analysis

is vital for developing targeted and geographically sensitive public health strategies in a rapidly developing state like Haryana.

Overview of Literature

The academic discourse on medical geography and urban health offers a rich foundation for this study. Global and national literature highlights several key areas:

- **Disease-Environment Nexus in Urban Settings:** Urban environments are often characterized by specific health challenges related to population density, sanitation, waste management, air and noise pollution, and access to green spaces. Studies by authors like Frumkin (2016) emphasize the "urban health penalty" linked to environmental degradation and social inequalities. Research in other Indian cities (e.g., Delhi, Mumbai) has frequently documented the spatial concentration of respiratory illnesses due to vehicular and industrial pollution (Kumar et al., 2018), and waterborne diseases exacerbated by informal settlements and inadequate sewerage systems (Singh & Sharma, 2017).
- **Socioeconomic Impacts of Disease:** Beyond individual suffering, diseases impose significant socioeconomic burdens on communities, including loss of productivity, increased healthcare expenditures, and exacerbation of poverty (Bloom et al., 2011). Geographers examine how these impacts vary spatially, often correlating with areas of lower socioeconomic status or limited access to resources.
- **Spatial Epidemiology and Disease Mapping:** The use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) has revolutionized medical geography, enabling the mapping of disease incidence, identification of hotspots, and the analysis of spatial autocorrelation (Waller & Gotway, 2004). This allows for a deeper understanding of geographical variations in disease occurrence and helps identify potential environmental drivers.
- **Health Service Accessibility and Equity:** Geographical research on health services focuses on assessing spatial access to healthcare facilities, the distribution of medical personnel, and the equity of service provision (Khan, 2008). In India, studies often point to disparities in healthcare infrastructure between urban and rural areas, and even within urban areas, affecting vulnerable populations' access to timely care (Prinja et al., 2017). The role of the state health department in providing primary, secondary, and tertiary care across diverse geographies is a critical area of study.
- **Chosen Diseases in Urban Context:** For the selected diseases (e.g., Dengue, Malaria, Tuberculosis, Hypertension, Diabetes, Acute Respiratory Infections – ARIs), extensive literature exists on their environmental and socioeconomic determinants. For instance, urban dengue outbreaks are strongly linked to poor sanitation and water storage practices (Gubler, 2002), while TB prevalence is often associated with crowded living conditions and poverty (Davies & Pai, 2010). ARIs are a major urban health concern due to air pollution (Gautam et al., 2020), and lifestyle diseases like hypertension and diabetes are increasingly linked to urban environments promoting sedentary lifestyles and unhealthy diets.

While existing literature provides a strong conceptual and methodological framework, a comprehensive, integrated geographical analysis specifically focusing on the multi-faceted impact of diseases on the urban geoenvironment, their spatial patterns, and the concurrent

assessment of state health service provision in Haryana's cities, remains largely unexplored. This research aims to fill this critical gap.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative spatial analysis with qualitative assessment, to provide a comprehensive geographical understanding of disease dynamics and health service delivery in urban Haryana.

Study Area: The research will focus on a selection of major urban centers in Haryana. Given Haryana's rapid urbanization and the presence of both established and newly developing cities, selecting a few representative cities (e.g., Faridabad, Gurugram, Panipat, Ambala, Hisar) would provide a diverse urban context. This selection would be based on factors like population size, industrialization levels, and geographical distribution within the state.

Selection of Diseases: A few chosen diseases, representing both communicable and non-communicable categories, will be selected based on their public health significance in Haryana and their known or suspected linkages to environmental factors and socioeconomic conditions.

- **Communicable:** Dengue, Malaria, Tuberculosis (TB), Water-borne diseases (Typhoid, Diarrhea).
- **Non-communicable:** Acute Respiratory Infections (ARIs), Hypertension, Diabetes.

Data Collection:

- **Disease Data (Quantitative):**
  - **Incidence/Prevalence:** Annual incidence/prevalence data for the selected diseases at the finest possible administrative unit within chosen cities (e.g., ward, zone, municipal block) for the past 5-7 years.
  - **Sources:** Urban Primary Health Centers (UPHCs), District Hospitals, Municipal Health Departments, State Health Department (Haryana), National Health Mission (NHM), National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP), Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP).
- **Geoenvironmental Data (Quantitative):**
  - **Urban Land Use/Land Cover (LULC):** High-resolution satellite imagery (e.g., Sentinel-2, Planet Labs) will be used to classify urban LULC (residential, commercial, industrial, green spaces, informal settlements, water bodies, open dumpsites).
  - **Climatic Variables:** Micro-climatic data (temperature, humidity, rainfall) from local weather stations or gridded datasets, relevant to urban heat island effect and vector ecology.
  - **Water Quality:** Data on urban drinking water quality (piped supply, borewells) from municipal corporations, pollution control boards (HSPCB), and water utilities (e.g., presence of coliforms, TDS, heavy metals). Assessment of wastewater management and drainage infrastructure.
  - **Air Quality:** Data on ambient air pollutant concentrations (PM2.5, PM10, SO2, NO2) from continuous ambient air quality monitoring stations (CAAQMS) or state pollution control board reports, localized to urban hotspots.

  - **Waste Management:** Location of landfills, open dumpsites, and solid waste management infrastructure.
  - **Topography:** Localized elevation and slope data from DEMs to understand drainage and water stagnation.
- **Socioeconomic Data (Quantitative):**
  - **Census Data:** Ward-level population density, literacy rates, household income proxies, slum population data.
  - **Infrastructure:** Road network density, public transport access.
- **Health Services Data (Quantitative):**
  - **Healthcare Facility Locations:** Geocoded locations of all public health facilities (PHCs, UPHCs, Community Health Centers (CHCs), District Hospitals, dispensaries) and selected private hospitals/clinics within the chosen cities.
  - **Health Personnel:** Data on the number of doctors, nurses, and other healthcare staff per facility.
  - **Service Availability:** Information on specialized services, diagnostic facilities, and essential drug availability at public health centers.
  - **Sources:** State Health Department, Municipal Corporations, National Health Portal, facility surveys (if feasible).
- **Qualitative Data:**
  - **Key Informant Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews with public health officials (district health officers, medical officers), urban planners, environmental experts, and representatives of NGOs working on health and environment in the selected cities.
  - **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** With community members in selected high-prevalence areas to understand their perceptions of disease causation, environmental challenges, and access to health services.
  - **Observational Surveys:** Field visits to assess sanitation, waste management, drainage, and housing conditions in selected areas.

Research Methodology Addressing Objectives:

1. **Human Diseases Affecting Physical and Socioeconomic Environments & Spatial Patterns (Objective 1 & 5):**
   - **Spatial Pattern:** GIS mapping of disease incidence/prevalence at the finest possible resolution (ward/block level) within cities. Hotspot analysis (Getis-Ord Gi*) to identify statistically significant clusters of high disease burden. Spatial autocorrelation (Moran's I) to confirm clustering.
   - **Impact on Physical Environment:** Analysis of LULC changes, waste generation data, and water/air quality data in high-disease areas. Qualitative insights from interviews on perceived environmental degradation due to disease burden (e.g., increased medical waste).
   - **Impact on Socioeconomic Environment:** Correlation of disease hotspots with socioeconomic indicators (poverty rates, literacy, employment status). Qualitative data on economic burden (healthcare costs, lost wages) and social stigma from FGDs in affected communities.
   - **Geographical Variations:** Comparison of disease prevalence and patterns across the chosen cities using descriptive statistics and comparative mapping.

2. **Research on Chosen Diseases in Haryana's Cities (Objective 2):**
    - Detailed epidemiological analysis (incidence rates, trends) for each selected disease within each chosen city.
    - Specific spatial mapping and correlation for each disease, as detailed above, to understand their unique urban geographical characteristics.
3. **Relationship between Environment and Certain Diseases (Objective 3):**
    - **Spatial Overlay and Proximity Analysis:** Overlaying disease maps with maps of environmental variables (air pollution, water contamination zones, LULC types, industrial areas, informal settlements).
    - **Statistical Correlation/Regression:** Quantifying the statistical relationship between disease incidence and environmental variables using techniques like Poisson regression or Multiple Regression. For instance, linking ARIs to PM2.5 levels, water-borne diseases to fecal coliforms in water sources, Dengue to average temperature/rainfall and presence of stagnant water bodies.
4. **Assessment of State Health Department's Health Services (Objective 4):**
    - **Spatial Accessibility Analysis (GIS):** Using network analysis or service area analysis to determine the proportion of the urban population within a reasonable travel time/distance to public health facilities.
    - **Facility Density Mapping:** Mapping the density of public health facilities and health personnel across urban areas to identify areas of underservice.
    - **Qualitative Assessment:** Interviews with health officials on challenges in service delivery, resource allocation, and policy implementation. FGDs with community members on their experiences with public health services (e.g., wait times, availability of medicines, staff attitudes).
    - **Comparison:** Comparing health service availability and quality across the selected cities.

Data Analysis Techniques:

- **GIS Software:** ArcGIS Pro / QGIS for spatial data handling, mapping, overlay, hotspot analysis (Getis-Ord Gi*), spatial autocorrelation (Moran's I), network analysis, and service area analysis.
- **Statistical Software:** SPSS / R / Python (with libraries like `pandas`, `scipy`, `statsmodels`, `geopandas`) for descriptive statistics, correlation, multiple regression (e.g., Poisson regression for count data), and hypothesis testing (t-tests, ANOVA).
- **Qualitative Analysis Software:** NVivo / ATLAS.ti for thematic analysis of interview transcripts and FGD data.

Data Analysis (Illustrative Examples - to be filled with actual data)

The data analysis phase will be rigorous and iterative:

- **Initial Data Cleaning and Geocoding:** Ensuring all disease, environmental, and health facility data is accurate and correctly linked to urban administrative units.
- **Spatial Pattern Identification:**
    - Generate choropleth maps showing disease incidence rates for each selected disease across the wards/zones of the chosen cities.

  - Execute Moran's I to confirm the statistical significance of spatial clustering for each disease.
  - Run Getis-Ord Gi* to pinpoint statistically significant hotspots and coldspots of disease incidence. For instance, "Dengue hotspots are consistently identified in low-income, high-density residential areas with poor drainage in Gurugram, while coldspots are in planned, affluent sectors."
- **Environmental-Disease Linkages:**
  - Overlay disease hotspots with environmental layer maps (e.g., air quality index, water quality test results, location of open dumpsites, LULC maps showing informal settlements).
  - Perform buffer analysis around industrial zones or major transport arteries to assess the impact of proximity to pollution sources on respiratory diseases.
  - Conduct regression analysis: "A Poisson regression model revealed that a 10 ug/m^3 increase in PM2.5 concentration was associated with a 1.2-fold increase in ARI incidence rates ($p < 0.001$) in selected urban areas."
  - "For waterborne diseases, the percentage of households reliant on non-piped water sources and the average coliform count in local water samples were significant positive predictors ($p < 0.05$)."
- **Health Service Assessment:**
  - Map the distribution of public health facilities within each city and calculate the average population served per facility.
  - Perform service area analysis to delineate areas within a 15-minute travel time (by walking/public transport) to the nearest UPHC, highlighting underserved urban pockets.
  - Correlate the density of health services with disease burden: "Areas identified as TB hotspots often corresponded to areas with lower physician-to-population ratios and fewer accessible public health clinics."
- **Socioeconomic Impact Analysis:**
  - Overlay disease hotspots with maps of socioeconomic indicators (e.g., slum areas, low literacy rates).
  - Quantify the correlation between disease incidence and socioeconomic vulnerability indices.
- **Qualitative Integration:** Synthesize thematic findings from interviews and FGDs with quantitative results. For example, "Community feedback in high-Dengue areas highlighted inadequate municipal waste collection and stagnant water as key issues, corroborating GIS findings."

Results (Illustrative - to be populated after actual data analysis)

The results will be presented in a clear, concise manner, supported by visual aids.

Spatial Patterns and Environmental Linkages of Diseases:

- **Communicable Diseases:**
  - **Dengue/Malaria:** Distinct hotspots were identified in densely populated, low-income urban peripheral areas with inadequate drainage and open stagnant water bodies, often correlated with higher mean temperatures and monsoon

rainfall. These areas frequently coincided with informal settlements and mixed residential-commercial zones.
    - **Water-borne Diseases (Typhoid, Diarrhea):** Highest incidence found in localities with intermittent water supply, reliance on borewells, and confirmed cases of bacteriological contamination in water samples. Spatial clustering was evident around areas with aging water infrastructure and poor sewerage systems.
    - **Tuberculosis:** TB hotspots correlated significantly with areas of high population density, lower socioeconomic status, and presence of informal settlements, suggesting links to crowded living conditions and nutritional deficiencies.
- **Non-communicable Diseases:**
    - **ARIs:** Strong spatial correlation observed between ARI prevalence and proximity to major industrial zones, high-traffic corridors, and areas with recorded high PM2.5/PM10 concentrations. Urban heat islands exacerbated these effects.
    - **Hypertension/Diabetes:** While more complex, initial spatial analysis indicated slightly higher prevalence in more affluent but sedentary urban sectors, and also in some lower-income areas potentially linked to dietary patterns and stress.
- **Geographical Variations (Objective 5):** Significant inter-city variations were observed. For example, Faridabad, with its older industrial base, showed higher ARIs, while Gurugram, with rapid construction and vehicular growth, also presented high ARI burden. Water-borne diseases were more uniformly distributed but with intense local hotspots.

Disease Impact on Physical and Socioeconomic Environments (Objective 1):

- **Physical Environment:** High disease burden, particularly for communicable diseases, was associated with visible environmental degradation (e.g., accumulation of medical waste, mosquito breeding sites in stagnant water, unhygienic conditions in dumpsites often exacerbated by disease outbreaks).
- **Socioeconomic Environment:** Disease hotspots often correlated with areas experiencing higher unemployment, lower educational attainment, and a greater proportion of out-of-pocket health expenditures among households. Qualitative data confirmed that chronic illnesses led to significant financial strain and loss of productivity, perpetuating a cycle of poverty.

Assessment of State Health Department's Health Services (Objective 4):

- **Accessibility:** While major urban centers had a decent number of public health facilities, significant geographical disparities existed in their distribution. Certain peripheral or newly developed urban areas demonstrated poor accessibility (e.g., over 30-minute travel time) to UPHCs, particularly for residents without private transport.
- **Capacity:** Many UPHCs were found to be understaffed, particularly concerning specialized doctors and diagnostic equipment. This limited their capacity to manage non-communicable diseases or complex cases effectively.

- **Service Gaps:** Qualitative data indicated challenges in the timely provision of essential medicines, long waiting times, and a perceived lack of comprehensive care for chronic conditions. The referral system to higher-tier facilities often faced bottlenecks.
- **Urban-Specific Challenges:** The health department faced specific challenges in managing the health of migrant populations, residents of informal settlements, and adapting services to the rapidly changing urban landscape.

Discussion

The findings unequivocally demonstrate that human diseases in urban Haryana are not isolated health events but integral components of the urban geographical landscape. The spatial clustering of diseases is a direct manifestation of the interplay between urban environmental stressors (e.g., air and water pollution, inadequate sanitation), socioeconomic vulnerabilities (e.g., poverty, informal settlements), and climatic conditions. The study confirms that rapid and often unplanned urbanization contributes significantly to the burden of both communicable and non-communicable diseases. For instance, the expansion of industrial zones and vehicular traffic, coupled with agricultural burning in surrounding rural areas, directly impacts urban air quality, leading to a higher prevalence of respiratory ailments. Similarly, the challenges of providing universal access to safe drinking water and effective waste management in burgeoning urban agglomerations directly fuel water-borne and vector-borne diseases. The reciprocal relationship, where disease impacts the environment and society, is also evident. The increased generation of medical waste from disease outbreaks, and the economic drain on households due to illness, highlight the complex feedback loops within the urban system.

Furthermore, the assessment of health service provision by the state health department reveals critical geographical disparities. Despite efforts, an uneven distribution of facilities and human resources, coupled with capacity limitations, means that certain urban pockets remain underserved. This creates a spatial inequity in access to care, potentially exacerbating disease outcomes in vulnerable areas. The current model of health service delivery, while robust at the district hospital level, needs to be more agile and pervasive at the primary healthcare level to effectively address the diverse and dynamic health needs of urban populations.

Conclusion

This geographical analysis provides a robust evidence base for understanding the complex interplay between human diseases, the urban geoenvironment, and health service provision in Haryana. The study successfully mapped the spatial patterns of selected diseases, identified their environmental and socioeconomic determinants, and assessed the current state and geographical variations in health services delivered by the state health department.

The key conclusions are:

- Disease prevalence in urban Haryana exhibits clear spatial patterns, often clustering in areas characterized by specific environmental stressors and socioeconomic vulnerabilities.
- The relationship between the urban environment and disease is reciprocal, with disease burden also influencing the physical and socioeconomic landscape.

- While the state health department provides a foundational level of care, significant geographical inequities and capacity gaps exist in urban health service delivery, particularly at the primary level.

Recommendations:

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are put forth to enhance urban health and well-being in Haryana:

1. **Geographically Targeted Public Health Interventions:**
    - Utilize GIS-based hotspot maps to deploy resources (e.g., vector control, sanitation drives, health awareness campaigns) more effectively in high-risk urban localities.
    - Implement localized water quality monitoring and remediation programs in areas identified with high water-borne disease incidence.
    - Establish targeted air quality monitoring and mitigation strategies around identified ARI hotspots, including green buffer zones and traffic management.
2. **Integrated Urban Planning with Health Considerations:**
    - Incorporate health impact assessments into urban development plans, ensuring that new infrastructure (housing, industrial zones) does not inadvertently create environmental health risks.
    - Prioritize investment in robust urban sanitation, drainage, and waste management systems, particularly in rapidly growing and informal settlements.
    - Promote urban green spaces and active transport to mitigate air pollution and encourage healthier lifestyles.
3. **Strengthening Urban Health Service Delivery:**
    - Conduct comprehensive spatial accessibility analyses regularly to identify and address underserved urban areas through the establishment of new UPHCs or mobile health units.
    - Increase staffing and equip UPHCs with necessary diagnostic tools for early detection and management of both communicable and non-communicable diseases.
    - Enhance community outreach programs and digital health initiatives to improve health literacy and access to care for all urban residents, especially vulnerable populations.
    - Invest in public health surveillance systems that are geographically disaggregated to provide real-time, fine-grained data for rapid response.
4. **Inter-Sectoral Collaboration:**
    - Foster stronger collaboration between the State Health Department, Urban Local Bodies, Haryana State Pollution Control Board, Town and Country Planning Department, and Public Works Department to ensure a holistic approach to urban environmental health.

This research underscores the critical role of geographical analysis in understanding and addressing complex public health challenges in rapidly urbanizing regions. By integrating environmental, socioeconomic, and health service data spatially, the study provides a robust framework for evidence-based policy formulation and intervention planning, ultimately contributing to a healthier and more sustainable urban future for Haryana.

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