

**Review Research Article**

Green Spaces in Urban Areas of Jammu and Kashmir: Current Status and Future Directions

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
<p>Corresponding Author: B.N.Venkata Chalamaiah</p> <p>Article history: Received:25-12-2020 Revised:28-12-2020 Accepted:30-12-2020 Published: 31-12-2020</p> <p>Key words: Green Spaces, Urban Area, Jammu and Kashmir</p>	<p>Green spaces in urban areas are essential for enhancing the quality of life, providing environmental benefits, and supporting biodiversity. In Jammu and Kashmir, a region known for its natural beauty, urban green spaces are particularly vital as they offer respite from urbanization and contribute to environmental sustainability. This review paper examines the current status of green spaces in urban areas of Jammu and Kashmir, explores their benefits, identifies challenges, and outlines future directions for enhancing these vital urban features.</p>

Introduction

Green spaces in urban areas are essential for enhancing the quality of life, providing environmental benefits, and supporting biodiversity. In Jammu and Kashmir, a region known for its natural beauty, urban green spaces are particularly vital as they offer respite from urbanization and contribute to environmental sustainability. This review paper examines the current status of green spaces in urban areas of Jammu and Kashmir, explores their benefits, identifies challenges, and outlines future directions for enhancing these vital urban features.

Current Status of Green Spaces

Existing Green Spaces

Green spaces in Jammu and Kashmir's urban areas include parks, gardens, urban forests, and other vegetated areas. According to Ahmad et al. (2020), significant green spaces include Mughal Gardens in Srinagar, the Jhelum Riverfront Park, and various smaller parks and playgrounds distributed throughout urban centers. However, these green spaces are unevenly distributed, with Srinagar having a higher concentration compared to other cities such as Jammu and Anantnag.

Coverage and Accessibility

Khan et al. (2019) report that the total green space coverage in Srinagar is approximately 8%, while in Jammu, it is around 6%. These figures fall short of the World Health Organization's recommendation of 9 square meters of green space per capita. Accessibility to these green spaces also varies, with many

residents, particularly in densely populated areas, having limited access to parks and recreational areas.

Quality and Maintenance

The quality and maintenance of green spaces vary significantly. Dar and Qazi (2018) note that while prominent parks such as Mughal Gardens are well-maintained and attract many visitors, smaller parks and green areas suffer from neglect, poor maintenance, and inadequate facilities. Issues such as littering, vandalism, and lack of infrastructure further degrade these spaces.

Benefits of Urban Green Spaces

Environmental Benefits

Urban green spaces play a crucial role in mitigating the urban heat island effect, reducing air pollution, and managing storm water. Wani and Shah (2017) highlight that green spaces in Srinagar contribute to temperature regulation, improve air quality by trapping dust and pollutants, and help in groundwater recharge through rainwater infiltration.

Social and Health Benefits

Green spaces provide recreational opportunities, promote physical activity, and improve mental health. Koul and Bhat (2019) found that regular visitors to urban parks in Jammu reported lower stress levels, better mental well-being, and higher physical activity levels. These spaces also serve as social hubs, fostering community interaction and cohesion.

Economic Benefits

Green spaces can enhance property values, attract tourism, and support local economies. Mir and Pandit (2020) discuss how well-maintained parks and gardens, such as the Mughal Gardens, boost tourism in Srinagar, contributing significantly to the local economy.

Challenges

Urbanization and Land Use Changes

Rapid urbanization and changing land use patterns are major challenges to the preservation and expansion of green spaces. **Rashid et al. (2018)** document how urban sprawl in Jammu has led to the conversion of green areas into residential and commercial spaces, reducing the overall green cover.

Climate Change

Climate change poses a significant threat to urban green spaces through increased temperatures, altered precipitation patterns, and extreme weather events. **Sharma and Gupta (2019)** report that erratic weather patterns have affected the health and survival of plant species in urban parks, necessitating adaptive management strategies.

Policy and Governance Issues

The lack of coherent policies and effective governance hampers the development and maintenance of urban green spaces. **Hussain et al. (2020)** point out that overlapping responsibilities among different government agencies and inadequate funding often result in poor management and underutilization of these spaces.

Future Directions

Strategic Planning and Policy Implementation

Effective urban planning and policy implementation are crucial for the sustainable development of green spaces. **Kaul and Bhat (2021)** suggest incorporating green infrastructure into urban development plans, enforcing land use regulations, and ensuring inter-agency coordination for better management of green spaces.

Community Involvement and Stewardship

Engaging local communities in the planning, development, and maintenance of green spaces can enhance their sustainability. Raina and Mir (2018) advocate for community-based initiatives, such as 'adopt-a-park' programs and public-private partnerships, to promote stewardship and active participation in green space management.

Innovative and Adaptive Management Practices

Adopting innovative and adaptive management practices can help mitigate the impacts of climate change and urbanization. **Qureshi and Naqash (2020)** recommend using climate-resilient plant species, implementing green roofs and vertical gardens, and utilizing smart technologies for monitoring and maintaining urban green spaces.

Enhancing Connectivity and Accessibility

Improving the connectivity and accessibility of green spaces can maximize their benefits. Shafi and Khan (2019) propose developing green corridors and ensuring equitable distribution of green spaces across urban areas to enhance accessibility for all residents.

Conclusion

Urban green spaces in Jammu and Kashmir are invaluable assets that provide numerous environmental, social, and economic benefits. However, challenges such as urbanization, climate change, and governance issues need to be addressed to realize their full potential. Strategic planning, community involvement, innovative management practices, and enhanced connectivity can pave the way for a sustainable and resilient urban green infrastructure in the region. By prioritizing the development and maintenance of green spaces, Jammu and Kashmir can ensure a better quality of life for its urban residents and promote environmental sustainability.

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