

Environmental and Sustainable Development Policies to Address the Pollution Catastrophe in India

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Abstract: Although the environment, crops, water, air, food and fiber, control the weather, and supply oxygen, its air, water, and soil are polluted too. Humans have altered about 75% of the earth, reducing wildlife and nature's space and harming the environment. Industrialisation, urbanisation, population growth, and globalisation have affected people and the environment. This study aims to investigate the environmental and sustainable development-focussed policies to address the pollution catastrophe. The study is a content analysis of prominent online newspaper media reports from January 1, 2020, to November 30, 2022, on legal, environmental, and sustainable issues to reduce pollution and advocate an Indian environmental and sustainable development policy. Since pollution and environmental degradation pose significant threat to humanity, ecosystems, and sustainable living are at risk. Despite national and international legislative and regulatory actions, the environment remains a significant issue. An environmental strategy that encourages sustainable development for future generations is the need of the times. It was found that there were legal and environmental offenses, the management of unscientific treatment procedures, the lack of fundamental education about existing court orders, and fatality-induced health problems. Therefore, India needs an environmental and sustainable development policy to limit environmental concerns' fatality and protect the earth from pollution.

Key words: Environment, pollution, India, policy, sustainable development.

Introduction

India is blessed with a rich variety of biodiverse ecozones, including deserts, high mountains, highlands tropical and temperate forests, swamplands, plains, grasslands, areas surrounding rivers, and an island archipelago. Multiple regulated human activities disrupt the transparency of these diverse ecological zones. Water, air, soil, light, noise, trash, climate change, and biodiversity loss contribute to high health-related mortality rates. Commercial, industrial, and domestic air pollution are all issues. About 87% of the world's population lives in countries with high air pollution, according to the World Bank and Institute for Health

Metrics and Evaluation (2016). Air pollution affected 90% of low- and middle-income nations in 2013. The study found high mortality from air pollution. Greenpeace reports that none of India's 168 cities in 24 states have WHO-compliant clean air (Dahiya et al., 2017).

Untreated sewage, industrial effluent, and other wastes pollute major rivers worldwide. Since the 1990s, water contamination in Latin America, Africa, and Asia has escalated (UNEP, 2016). India's surface water is contaminated by 80% (Dey, 2015). According to the Central Contamination Control Board, untreated residential waste causes 75–80% of water pollution in India. Industry pollutes groundwater. Groundwater

contains arsenic, fluoride, nitrate, iron, bacteria, phosphates, and metals. In addition to this, the groundwater is also contaminated with overused fertilisers, herbicides, insecticides, septic tanks, underground gas tanks, and landfills. Data suggest that most states' groundwater is polluted. Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Assam, Manipur, and Karnataka have 68 arsenic-contaminated districts. Parliamentary records found uranium and arsenic in groundwater. West Bengal peasants drank arsenic-laced water (Biswas & Hartley, 2017). Groundwater misuse has depleted India's water table (Zaveri, 2017).

Noise has increased. Noise pollution causes harmful hearing loss (Grey, 2017). A 2017 study shows that Guangzhou and New Delhi have the most noise pollution. Mumbai is the fourth-loudest. Noise pollution causes hearing loss, disease, and discomfort. WHO estimates that 360 million people, including 32 million children, have hearing loss. New Delhi and Mumbai have the most hearing loss globally (Skribanowitz and Clark, 2017). About 55% of people have hearing loss, and 900 million will be affected by 2050 (Skribanowitz 2020).

Environmental issues include soil degradation. Chemicals contaminate the soil. Excess fertilisers, pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, farming methods, antibiotics in animal manure, sewage, rubbish dumping, and industrial and mining activities that leak chemicals into the soil create soil contamination. One-third of the world's soils have degraded, and agriculture loses billions of tonnes annually (FAO, 2017). "State of India's Environment 2017" estimates that 40-70% of India's land is decertified. India has salinised soil (Tripathi, 2019).

Unregulated human activity and population increase domestic, commercial, and industrial rubbish and ineffective waste management. Waste comes from solid trash, plastic, construction, biomedical, e-waste, hazardous, commercial, sewage, untreated industrial, and atomic waste. Untreated waste harms the environment. Land, air, and water waste plague China and India. Climate change affects humans, ecosystems, and animals. Global air temperature rose 1.8°F from 1901 to 2022. Climate change is the global temperature rise and its effects, such as melting poles and glacier retreats. Humans impact biodiversity. Habitat loss, soil degradation, climate change, pollution, and overexploitation have reduced biodiversity (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005). Biodiversity impacts ecosystems, livelihoods, health, and poverty.

International Environmental Disaster Response

The 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm led to various global sustainability projects. Stockholm Declaration established environmental legislation and protected air, water, soil, flora, animals, ecosystems, wildlife, dangerous substances, and ocean pollution. Rio 1992 addressed pollution, global warming, deforestation, and ozone depletion. UN Framework Conventions on Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Desertification followed the Declaration. 1992 legalised the Biological Diversity Convention. It uses and preserves biodiversity. Sustainable biosafety is stressed. Climate change is humanity's most prominent environmental issue. Greenhouse gas stabilisation fights climate change. The 1989 Basel Convention reduces toxic waste and improves waste management. The Convention promotes hazardous waste management.

National Environmental Disaster Solutions

India has taken various environmental pollution-fighting legal and policy steps. The 1972 Wildlife (Protection) Act and 1974 Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act established India's environmental laws. India has passed several environmental laws, including the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1981, the Environment (Protection) Act of 1986, the Wild Life (Protection) Act of 1972, the Forest Conservation Act of 1980, the Biological Diversity Act of 2002, and the National Green Tribunal Act of 2010. The 1974 Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution), 1981 Air Pollution Prevention, and 1986 Environment Protection Act to safeguard the environment. India has strict environmental legislation (Central Pollution Control Board, 2022). The 2016 biomedical waste management and plastic waste management rules promote sustainable development.

Global and national environmental activities sought sustainable country development. The nation's environmental issues prevent sustainable development, which "satisfies the present without compromising future generations' ability to satisfy their own needs" (Brundtland and Khalid, 1987). Unchecked commercial and economic interests degrade society's sustainability. Most newspapers produce 100 items annually—consisting of articles about big cities. Significant media also ignores suburban and rural news. India's pollution is severe despite regulations. Pollution could not be notified immediately under Covid 19.

India has environmental issues. Pollution like this harms the globe's ecosystem. The nation must suffer a tsunami or other natural disaster. Environmental and environmental research preceded Covid 19. No environmental or sustainable pollution mitigation measures were taken during or after Covid 19. Online newspaper report suggests legal, environmental, and sustainable development answers to India's pollution crisis. Pollution-related sustainable development issues are also discussed.

Materials and Methods

Newspaper content analysis addresses air pollution, water, light, noise, soil, climate change, biodiversity loss, and trash generation. "Environmental challenges," "pollution," "air," "water," "light," "noise," "soil," "climate change," "biodiversity loss," and "waste generation" were searched for. Online English-language articles from respected newspapers and news reports based on India's news were used for the investigation. Below is a list of articles and website data. Title, newspaper, author, newswire, results, environmental issue, and publication date are listed in publications. Reports and articles were examined. News reports on environmental issues based on legal and environmental violations connected to pollution, unscientific treatment procedure-based pollutions, the absence of court order information, and mortality-related health issues were covered.

Environmental issues were covered in 428 newspaper articles in the database. These items were rated. Ninety-eight articles were excluded from the study due to their title, word count, and a preview of the first three lines. An extra 189 articles were removed because they did not meet the title and preview criteria. The author read 141 articles in total. After reading these articles, he analysed that 81 were duplicates or did not meet the inclusion criteria, leaving 60 for the final analysis (Huey and Apollonio, 2018). Figure 1 depicts the screening procedure.

Results

The study found news reports from 16 of India's 28 states and 2 out of 8 union territories. The data is tabulated in Table 1 and Figure 2. Figure 2 shows these reports sorted according to zone: south, north, east, and west. South Indian states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana account for 47% of India's environmental issues like biodiversity

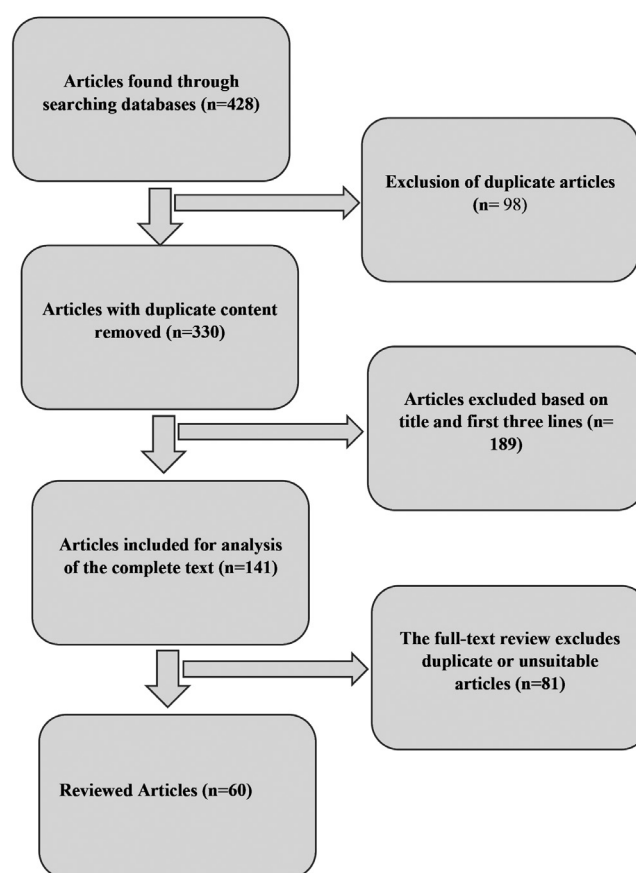


Figure 1: Prisma model of sorting articles on environmental challenges.

Table 1: State-wise coverage of online news reports

State	Number of Reports
Kerala	8
Karnataka	8
Tamil Nadu	4
Telangana	5
Andhra Pradesh	2
Maharashtra	4
Madhya Pradesh	1
Orissa	2
Gujarat	2
West Bengal	2
Assam	1
Himachal Pradesh	1
Punjab	1
Uttarakhand	1
Rajasthan	1
Haryana	1
New Delhi	15
Puducherry	1
16 states + 2 Union Territories	60

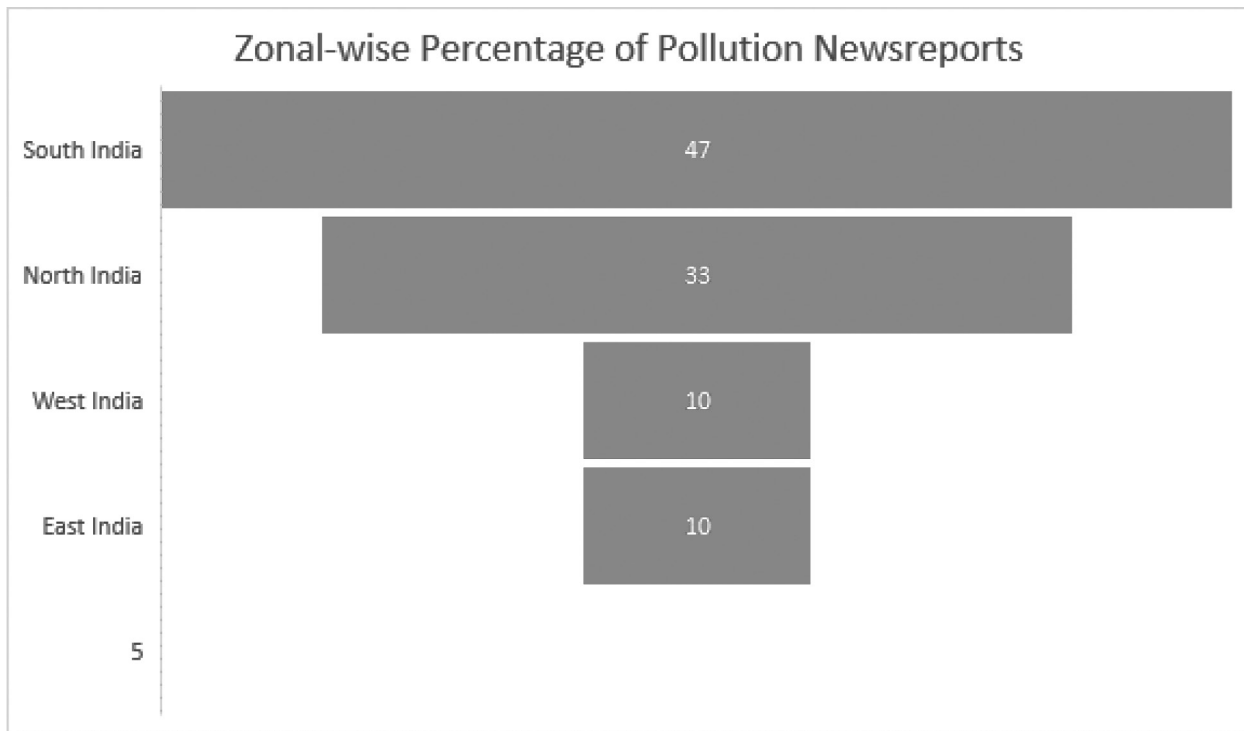


Figure 2: Zonal-wise percentage of the pollution news report.

loss, waste generation, climate change, and pollution of water, air, soil, light, and noise. About 16 Indian states cited environmental issues. This shows that the South Indian Community must adopt a sustainable lifestyle.

The printed media news report covers most of 2020–2022. News reports occurred throughout the COVID-19 pandemic's most challenging period. The media report includes the latest information. The analysis found 25%, 22%, and 53% of news stories in 2020, 2021, and 2022.

This analysis included The Times of India, The Hindu, Hindustan Times, Deccan Herald, The New Indian Express, Financial Express, The Economic Times, Deccan Chronicles, Central Chronicle, The Indian Express, and Mathrubhoomi. The Hindu and Hindustan Times cover the south and north, whereas most states print The Times of India. The Hindu, Times of India, and The New Indian Express provided much of the study's content. Indian newspapers published this. These newspapers are widely circulated in India's major cities.

Most press coverage analyses the world's biggest environmental challenges. These include water, air, noise, soil, light pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, and waste generation. Today's most prominent environmental issues are water, air, soil, and noise pollution. Light pollution, biodiversity loss, climate

change, and rubbish production are as serious as severe pollution complaints. Table 2 refers to this fact.

The study's most important findings and their percentages are shown in Figure 3. The investigation revealed violations of laws and environmental regulations, treatment practices that lacked scientific rigor, familiarity with previously issued court decisions, and health issues brought on by fatalities. In the headings that follow, it is clear that this is mentioned.

Table 2: Environmental challenges reported in the online news papers

<i>Environmental challenges reported</i>	<i>Number of media reports</i>
Water	13
Noise	10
Soil	13
Air	10
Light	3
Waste Generation	4
Loss of Biodiversity	3
Climate Change	4
	60

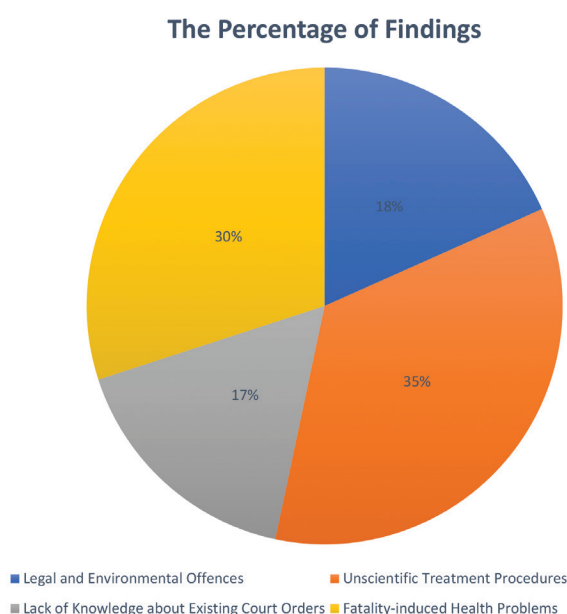


Figure 3: Pie chart of the percentage of findings.

Unscientific Treatment Procedures

Newspaper reports say incorrect remediation causes 35% of contamination. Due to their commercial or industrial origins, pollution rules and control treatment processes look unempirical. Pollution benefits industry and business. Raw sewage is dumped into the river without metropolitan oversight (Rout, 2022). Heavy metals were shockingly high in urban soils. These cities had high lead, mercury, and cadmium levels because urbanisation polluted nature. Construction is growing as the built-up area rose from 85 square kilometers in 2000 to 195 square kilometers in 2020. Over the decade, Earth's average temperature has risen 2°C. Heavy metal pollution in cities is caused by improper solid waste management and wastewater discharge (Rout, 2022; Suresh, 2022).

Fatality-Induced Health Problems

Pollution kills 30% of people. Millions of sewage effluent are produced daily, and 79% of local waterways contain Coliform bacteria. Septic tank wastes are polluted. The effluents contain harmful microbes, viruses, lead, chromium, cadmium, and zinc. Mercury exists. Urban industrial zones have high air and water pollution, causing skin illnesses, cancer, and respiratory infections. Artificial lighting hurts the country's ecosystem, animals, birds, and wildlife. Light pollution impairs human vision, harming living things.

These pollutants are not regulated. One billion horn honks daily threaten public health, the environment, and deafness. Farms used black plastic. They burnt or recycled plastic sheets on farmland or roadsides (Agarwal, 2021).

Legal and Environmental Offences

When looking at the reports in the newspapers, the analysis found that 18 percent of the reports confirm that environmental and legal offenses are the causes of the pollution catastrophe. According to the study's findings, the urban environment is filled with significant background noise caused by vehicles. Vehicles' honking and metallic sounds were the most significant contributors to illegal high-decibel horns. Construction-related activities also aggravate the high ambient noise level. During the festive season, people are more likely to engage in the illegal practice of bursting crackers. The rise of chemical factories not only degrades the air and groundwater quality but also causes a rise in the incidence of illnesses and other adverse health effects. Illegal discharge of untreated sewage from oil tanks and other chemical industries contributes more to polluting rivers and lakes than feces (Bandyopadhyay, 2022; Chaitanya, 2020; Krishnakumar, 2022).

Lack of Knowledge about Existing Court Orders

The pollutant disaster was caused by a lack of court order understanding, according to 17% of the reports. According to several news outlets, the accused corporations did not know about the court rulings. According to the findings, corporations who pollute ignore national green tribunal warnings and orders. Construction activities like borewell digging, JCB digging, stone drilling, slab works, and others continue well after midnight in major metropolitan cities, causing severe noise pollution (Times News Network, 2022). These activities are also done as permitted. Are these active construction projects violating court orders intentionally or due to ignorance? The police and other legal authorities sometimes ignore illiteracy. The public can also participate in pollution-reduction education programs offered by pollution management and regulation officials. Several of the state's High Courts have ordered the state governments to immediately issue directions to the police and the State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) to take action against the use of amplifiers and loudspeakers in religious places, which violates noise pollution laws and the apex court's directives.

Discussions

One thousand sixty-four days of news since 2020. Four hundred twenty-eight newspapers cover pollution. Unreported rural pollution exists. Pollution catastrophe rises. Thus, the ecological system is nearing collapse. Pollution reduction requires sustainable development and individual action. SDGs will be met by 2030. Green laws can end this environmental crisis.

National and international environmental laws, policies, and programs are researched. Humans need the environment. India's environmental laws and programs prioritise conservation. Humans disrupt nature. This conflict limits national and environmental growth. The nation fails to teach sustainable development. This causes pollution crises nationwide. This environment requires sustainable development education.

Sustainable development reduces environmental issues. Sustainability is novel. Thus, academics prefer it over the public sector. Leaders must teach sustainable development to schoolchildren and education stakeholders. Sustainability will alter human and environmental behaviour. According to the study, public ignorance of court judgments is a major environmental risk. People think pollution laws, rules, and court judgments are unknown. Green policies and goals must be rewarded and punished.

According to a previous study, newspaper reporting is low-quality and anecdotal. Instead, the analysis found that media coverage was outstanding and based on anecdotal and scientific evidence. "Unscientific Treatment Procedures" and "Fatality-induced Health Problems" scored highest in content analysis. This shows that the articles focused on pollution and that the country needs environmental and sustainable development strategies. Most articles included pollution catastrophe statistics.

Air, water, soil, light, and noise pollution cause long-term illnesses in people and other animals. Sustainable development is delayed. Despite sporadic scientific waste treatment methods, most water bodies and soils are irreversibly destroyed. Uncontrolled human activity harms sustainable growth and future generations.

According to the experts, industrialisation, politicisation, globalisation, urbanisation, population expansion, etc., limit sustainable development in the country and cause environmental disasters. Violation of the right to life, economic development without environmental protection for future generations, new development projects without an environmental impact

assessment study, etc., cause pollution catastrophes that impair sustainable development.

The data show that the stated environmental catastrophe inhibits the nation's sustainable social growth. Sustainable development requires environmental, economic, and social sustainability. The economy and society will collapse if ecology is abused for human welfare and news reports support this. Environmental contamination from human exploitation of the environment endangers human and animal health. This means that environmental pollution primarily lowers life expectancy and causes death. The main findings reveal improper treatment, legal and environmental infractions, and no current court orders, which are caused by multiple sources. Economic and multi-motives drive the preceding conclusions. Environmental exploitation for profit is unethical and antisocial. The second explanation for these findings is insufficient education—the government produces laws, policies, and court orders for significant environmental infractions.

Thus, current laws need environmental education. The study concludes that environmental degradation inhibits sustainable progress and destroys peace on Earth. Sustainable development and environmental protection policies must be implemented to reduce pollution disasters.

The environment must be protected. Uncontrolled human activity pollutes water, air, light, soil, and noise. Climate change, biodiversity loss, and waste increase environmental problems. India's extensive statutory regulations, guidelines, and initiatives can only be used for interim environmental catastrophe responses. Since 2015–2030 is the era of sustainable development goals, the nation requires a sustainable development and environmental policy to address the pollution crisis.

Conclusion

Pollution is one of humanity's biggest problems. However, human error causes this danger. The disaster threatens ecosystems and all life on earth. The worldwide community has signed accords and established environmental agencies to address these issues. Many nations, including India, have environmental legislation. Despite several environmental laws and programs, the problem persists. A pollution bombshell will destroy millions unless the nation acts quickly and aggressively. Thus, pollution mitigation requires environmental and sustainable development policy.

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