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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN JAMMU KASHMIR AND LADAKH: ASSESSING PROGRESS, TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENT GAPS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the progress of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh, emphasizing their distinct socio-economic and environmental challenges. The SDGs aim to promote sustainability by addressing social, economic, and environmental priorities. The analysis utilizes the SDG India Index to evaluate trends from 2018 to 2023-24, providing a temporal overview of the regions' developmental trajectories post-bifurcation in 2019. Using the SDG India Index framework, which classifies regions into tiers—"Aspirant," "Performer," "Front Runner," and "Achiever"—it compares progress in Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh against national averages. India has shown notable progress in achieving SDGs, as reflected in the SDG India Index, which tracks the performance of states and union territories. In Jammu Kashmir, key advancements are observed in poverty reduction, healthcare, education, infrastructure development and sustainable cities and communities; however, persistent challenges remain in areas such as inequality, urban sustainability, and climate resilience. Meanwhile, Ladakh excels in gender equality, renewable energy adoption and decent work and economic growth, but faces challenges in reducing inequalities, urban sustainability, responsible consumption and production and climate action. By comparing regional performances with national benchmarks, this study identifies critical gaps and highlights the need for tailored policy interventions to address these disparities. This study underscores the ongoing developmental needs of these regions, providing insights to guide localized policies for sustainable development.

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INTRODUCTION

The drive for development has disrupted ecological balance, depleted natural resources, and deepened economic inequalities globally (Bhati&Saxena, 2024). The complete range of human needs and desires can be accommodated by a sustainable development framework, guaranteeing everyone a life of dignity (Singh 2016). Sustainable development offers a framework to address these issues, ensuring a dignified life for all while balancing social welfare, economic growth, and environmental conservation. Built on three pillars—social justice, environmental stewardship, and economic sustainability—the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were introduced by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda. These 17 goals aim to address critical global challenges like poverty, inequality, and climate change, advancing the earlier Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which witnessed advancements but left poverty and inequality as worldwide issues (Kumar et al., 2023). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent an ambitious advancement in sustainability by adopting a broader perspective than ever before, though practical challenges like implementation persist (Fleming et al., 2017). India, as a key signatory, has made considerable progress toward the SDGs, particularly in poverty alleviation, clean energy, and sanitation. The SDG India Index was created by the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) to assess state-level performance and to track the country's progress toward the SDGs (Ghosh & Chakravarty, 2024). The NITI Aayog-led SDG India Index tracks this progress at the state and union territory levels, providing policymakers with data to identify areas needing attention and encouraging competitive improvement among regions. Despite these advances, challenges like gender disparity, inequality, and the impacts of climate change persist, highlighting the need for tailored approaches across diverse regions. Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh present a unique case for sustainable development due to their distinctive socio-economic contexts and geographical diversity. In analyzing the SDG indicators from the past few years, the report finds that the cities of Jammu and Kashmir have been steadily achieving the SDGs, with an increasing trend (Goswami& Panda 2023). The bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019 into two Union Territories has further reshaped their developmental trajectories. Jammu and Kashmir have focused on enhancing agricultural

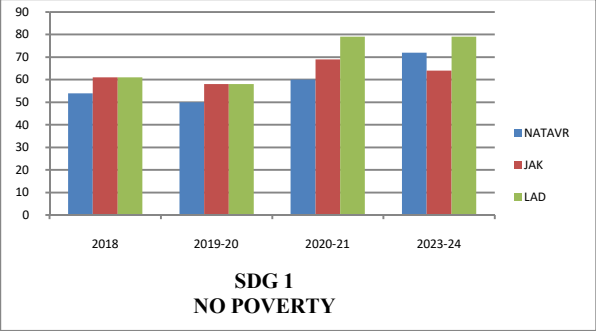
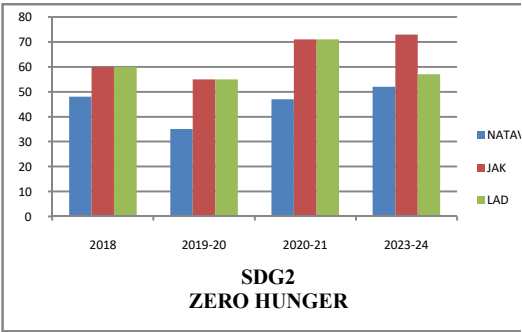
productivity, improving potable water access, and fostering environmentally friendly travel. Ladakh, with its fragile ecosystem, has emphasized renewable energy and sustainable livelihoods, though it faces significant challenges in climate action and urban sustainability. This study aims to bridge the gap in regional analyses by providing a trend-based evaluation of SDG index scores from 2018 to 2023-24 for Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh. While national and state-level assessments are available, there is limited research on these regions' specific SDG progress over time. By examining shifts in SDG index scores, this research seeks to identify areas of achievement and persistent challenges, offering insights into how socio-political and environmental changes have influenced sustainable development in these territories. The findings aim to guide policy interventions that align with the evolving developmental needs of Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh, fostering inclusive and region-specific growth.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

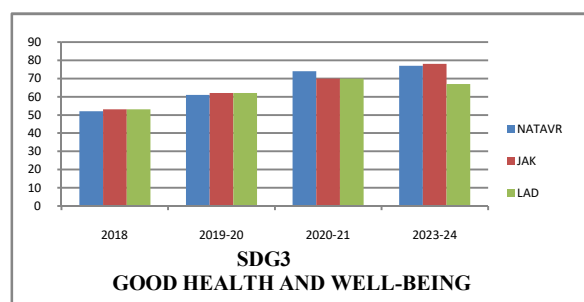
Methodology: The SDG India Index, developed by NITI Aayog, provides a comprehensive evaluation of each state's progress across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Parekh 2023). It calculates a composite score by averaging the goal-specific scores, which reflect performance on key indicators for each SDG. This composite score enables comparisons across states and over time, offering insights into areas requiring targeted policy interventions to improve sustainable development outcomes. To facilitate analysis, states are categorized into four performance tiers based on their SDG India Index scores, which range from 0 to 100: Aspirant (0–49), representing states that require significant improvements to meet SDG targets; Performer (50–64), reflecting moderate progress with scope for further development; Front Runner (65–99), indicating strong performance with substantial progress toward SDG targets; and Achiever (100), representing exemplary achievement of SDG objectives. This classification helps identify region-specific challenges and opportunities for sustainable development. This study adopts the SDG India Index framework to analyze the progress of Jammu Kashmir (J&K) and Ladakh, comparing their performance to the national average. The analysis utilizes the most recent SDG Index scores for these regions and presents them alongside the national average to visually represent their relative progress. This approach highlights achievements, identifies areas for improvement, and provides a basis for aligning their development trajectories with national standards. To ensure consistency, the 2018 SDG Index score—representing the shared developmental status of the unified J&K state—was uniformly applied to both Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh, as they were a single administrative entity at that time. Post-bifurcation in 2019, the data from Jammu Kashmir was provisionally extended to Ladakh due to the lack of separate datasets for the newly formed Union Territory, but from the next time periods, a separate index score data was collected and published for the Ladakh. While this approach ensures continuity in analysis, it is acknowledged that developmental trajectories of Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh may diverge due to their unique geographical, demographic, and administrative characteristics. Potential discrepancies arising from this assumption are addressed through contextual analysis, emphasizing the provisional nature of the extended data. This highlights the importance of future data collection specific to Ladakh to enhance the accuracy of its development assessment. The study underscores that findings for Ladakh post-2019 should be interpreted as indicative rather than definitive. By leveraging the SDG India Index as a standardized and robust framework, this study provides a longitudinal analysis of development trends in Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh from 2018 to 2023-24. It identifies progress and gaps, offering a better understanding of their performance and opportunities for targeted interventions in alignment with national and global SDG benchmarks.

Progress and Performance: The study tracks progress from the baseline year of 2018 to 2023-24, providing a longitudinal perspective on development trends. By analyzing data across this period, the study highlights both immediate improvements and long-term shifts in the SDG performance of these regions. The bifurcation of Jammu Kashmir into two Union Territories presents a unique research gap, offering an opportunity for a comparative analysis of SDG progress between the two regions post-reorganization. This study examines each UT's performance independently to understand how their development trajectories have diverged since 2019. The SDG India Index offers a detailed evaluation of each state's performance across multiple indicators, providing insights into their strategies for advancing sustainable development. This comprehensive analysis supports tailored policy recommendations to enhance SDG outcomes and address regional disparities.

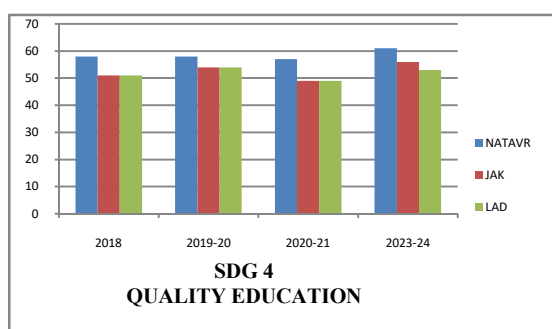
Goal wise performance of JammuKashmir (J&K) and Ladakh

 SDG 1 NO POVERTY	SDG 1 (No Poverty) progress from 2018 to 2023-24 highlights consistent national improvement, J&K's alignment with national trends post-2018, Ladakh's superior performance after bifurcation, and the emergence of regional disparities by 2023-24, with Ladakh outperforming and J&K lagging behind.
 SDG2 ZERO HUNGER	SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) progress from 2018 to 2023-24 shows steady national improvement, J&K's consistent outperformance, Ladakh's post-bifurcation rise, a narrowing gap between the regions by 2023-24, and insights into regional strengths, particularly J&K's rise.

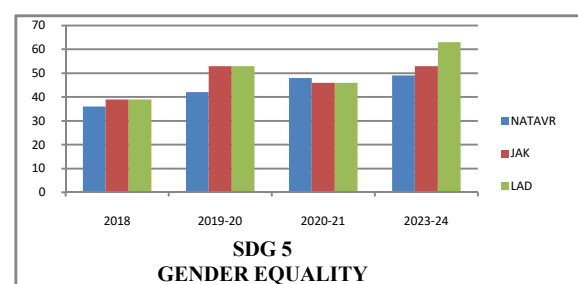
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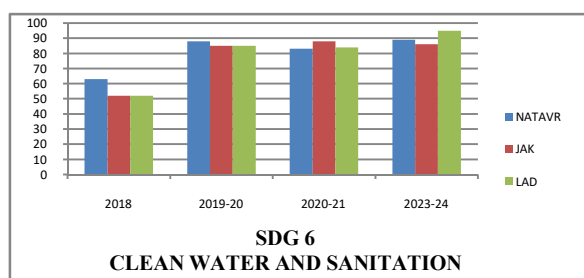
SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) progress from 2018 to 2023-24 highlights steady national improvement, J&K's early lead with significant growth in 2020-21, Ladakh's remarkable post-bifurcation progress, and by 2023-24, J&K surpassing both the national average and Ladakh, suggesting stronger regional health initiatives while Ladakh shows areas for further intervention.



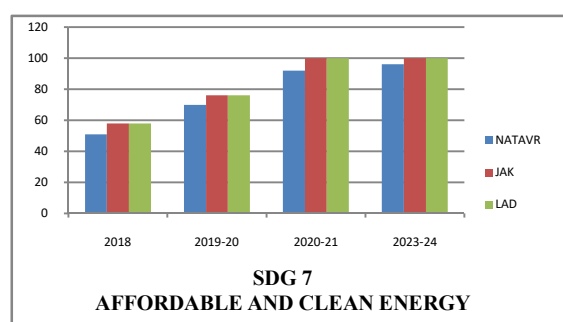
SDG 4 (Quality Education) progress from 2018 to 2023-24 indicates steady, incremental improvement for Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), Ladakh, and the national average. In 2018, J&K led slightly, with both regions exhibiting gradual progress by 2019-20. This progress remained consistent through 2020-21. However, by 2023-24, Ladakh showed a notable lag in its advancement compared to J&K and the national average.



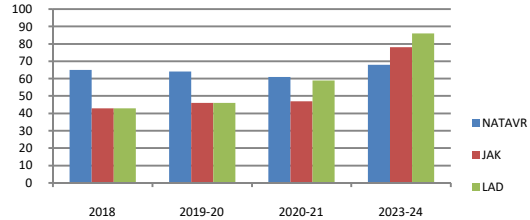
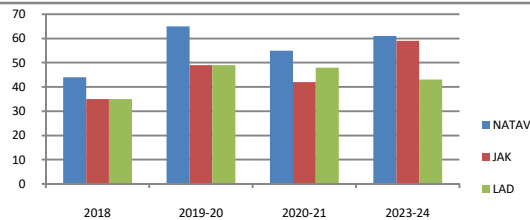
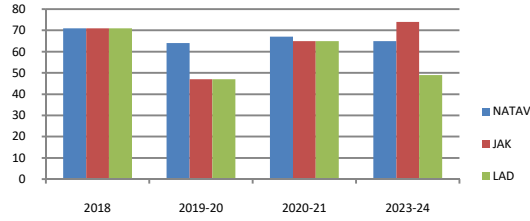
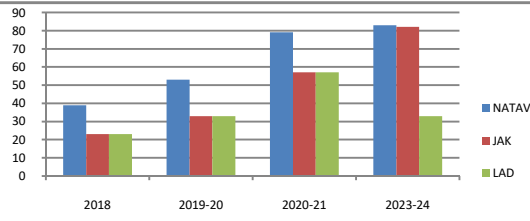
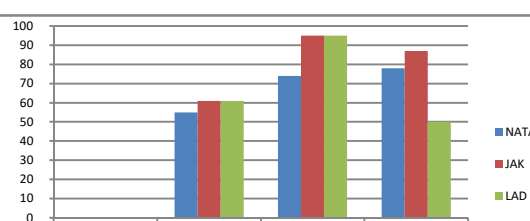
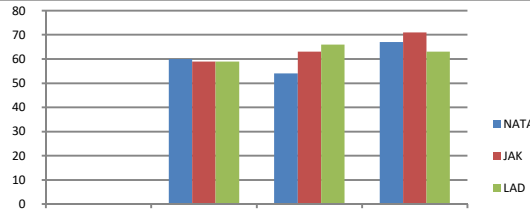
SDG 5 (Gender Equality) progress from 2018 to 2023-24 reveals consistent improvement for J&K, Ladakh, and the national average, with J&K leading early on, Ladakh narrowing the gap by 2020-21, and Ladakh surpassing both J&K and the national average by 2023-24, highlighting the transformative impact of regional initiatives and targeted governance.



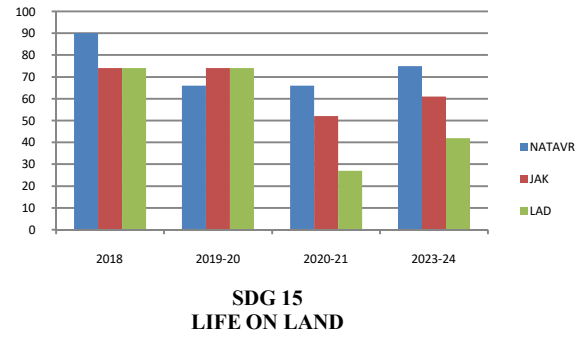
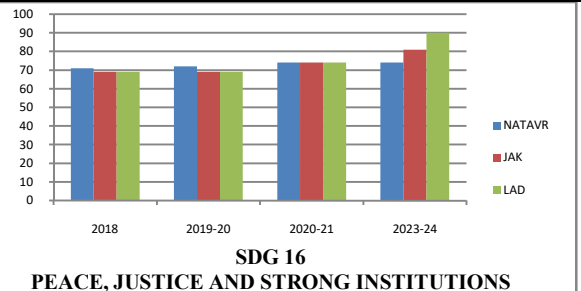
SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) progress from 2018 to 2023-24 shows substantial improvements for J&K, Ladakh, and the national average, with Ladakh initially lagging behind, J&K very close to the national average by 2019-20, and Ladakh making a significant leap by 2023-24, reflecting the impact of targeted interventions and regional strategies.



SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) progress from 2018 to 2023-24 highlights growing alignment for J&K and Ladakh with the national average, marked by significant improvements by 2019-20, near-parity by 2020-21, and strong alignment by 2023-24.

 SDG 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	SDG 1 (No Poverty) progress from 2018 to 2023-24 highlights consistent national improvement, J&K's alignment with national trends post-2018, Ladakh's superior performance after bifurcation, and the emergence of regional disparities by 2023-24, with Ladakh outperforming and J&K lagging behind.
 SDG 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) progress from 2018 to 2023-24 shows both regions initially lagging behind the national average, with J&K trailing the national level by 2019-20. Ladakh showed steady, though slower, progress throughout the period. By 2023-24, J&K had gained a significant lead, while Ladakh, despite improvements, remained slightly behind.
 SDG 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES	SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) progress from 2018 to 2023-24 shows both regions initially lagging behind the national average, with J&K surpassing the national level by 2023-24 and maintaining its lead, while Ladakh showed slower but steady improvement with fluctuations around the trend.
 SDG 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) progress from 2018 to 2023-24 shows both regions significantly below the national average in 2018, gradual improvements by 2019-20, J&K coming closer to the national level by 2023-24, while Ladakh demonstrated steady progress, remaining below the national average
 SDG 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) progress from 2018 to 2023-24 shows both regions initially close to the national average in 2019-20, J&K surpassing the national level by 2020-21 and maintaining its lead through 2023-24, while Ladakh also exceeded the national average in 2020-21 but slightly fell below it by 2023-24.
 SDG 13 CLIMATE ACTION	SDG 13 (Climate Action) progress from 2018 to 2023-24 shows no data available in 2018. By 2019-20, scores aligned across all three. Ladakh outpaced both J&K and the national average in 2020-21, showing stronger progress. By 2023-24, all three regions improved further, converging near a score of 70, reflecting steady and consistent advancements in climate action.

Continue ...

 SDG 15 LIFE ON LAND	SDG 15 (Life on Land) progress from 2018 to 2023-24 shows the national average very high in 2018 compared to both J&K and Ladakh. By 2019-20, both J&K and Ladakh improved to align with the national average. In 2020-21, the national average rose again, J&K's score slightly declined, and Ladakh showed minimal progress. By 2023-24, the national average reached its highest level, J&K showed moderate growth, and Ladakh's performance stagnated.
 SDG 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) progress from 2018 to 2023-24 shows similar scores for all three entities in 2018 and 2019-20, with negligible differences. By 2020-21, steady progress was observed across all, with comparable improvements. By 2023-24, Ladakh showed significant advancement, surpassing both J&K and the national average.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review is structured into three comprehensive categories: Global Trends, which examine the overarching patterns and challenges in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the international level; India's Progress, focusing on the country's initiatives, achievements, and ongoing challenges in aligning with SDG commitments; and Regional Perspectives, highlighting localized insights and disparities within different states and regions, emphasizing specific progress and challenges in achieving SDGs at the sub-national level.

Global Trends: The ongoing and increasing exploitation of natural resources poses a serious threat to human life and the environment, with Fransson and Gärling (1999) highlighting the frequent ineffectiveness of efforts to bring about lasting changes in harmful ecological behaviors. Jimmy (2023) explains that the pursuit of economic growth has exacerbated global warming, climate change, resource depletion, ecological disruption, and economic inequalities, emphasizing the need for sustainable development to ensure growth conserves natural resources for future generations. Griggs *et al.*, (2014) indicate that humanity's substantial impact on Earth's life support systems poses a risk to long-term prosperity and poverty eradication goals, given the trade-offs between a growing population, increasing living standards, and the management of production and consumption's effects on the global environment. Swain (2018) suggests that industrialized nations should prioritize social and environmental policies, while developing nations may focus more on economic and social policies in the short term, though environmental regulations are essential for sustainable development. Esquivel and Sweetman (2016) emphasize prioritizing human dignity, well-being, peace, governance, and institutions, as well as implementation strategies for addressing gaps. Moyer and Hedden (2020) project that global progress toward SDGs from 2015 to 2030 will be slow, with only 53 percent of indicators expected to reach target values by 2030, stressing the need for substantial changes in aid policies. Biermann *et al.*, (2022) argue that while SDGs have influenced discussions on sustainable development, substantial impacts like legislative changes have been limited. Liu *et al.*, (2023) find that open-source big data is valuable for assessing SDG progress, especially in smaller cities, highlighting the need for accelerated progress in smaller communities. Leal Filho *et al.*, (2019) report that SDGs present opportunities for advancing economic empowerment and equal opportunity. Fonseca *et al.*, (2020) analyze the linkages between SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 3 (good health and well-being), and other SDGs, finding negative associations between SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy) and SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), and highlighting the need for enhanced energy efficiency and sustainable consumption. Soto (2023) finds that lower-income countries have seen a decline in their SDG index trends, while higher-income countries show improvements. Halkos and Gkampoura (2021) note that while SDGs 8 (decent work and economic growth), 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure), and 12 (responsible consumption and production) have made progress, more efforts are needed for SDG 11 (sustainable cities), SDG 4 (education), and particularly SDG 13 (climate change), which require more aggressive international action. Trane *et al.*, (2023) identify environmental challenges associated with SDGs 13, 7, 6, 12, and 15, while highlighting a lack of research on social issues related to SDGs 4, 5, and 10, emphasizing the need for integrated research approaches. Huan *et al.*, (2019) find fluctuations in SDG performance in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan over an 18-year period, suggesting limited SDG progress in Central Asia. Mally (2021) uses data from Slovenian regions to show progress in socio-economic aspects of sustainability, despite environmental deterioration. Ionescu *et al.* (2024) assess EU Member States' progress toward SDG 11, revealing advancements but raising concerns about meeting 2030 targets, underscoring the need for corrective actions and early interventions to prevent irreversible consequences. Costanza *et al.*, (2014) and Mahdy *et al.*, (2021) provide foundational insights into the global evolution of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Costanza *et al.*, emphasize the importance of shared goals and monitoring mechanisms, while Mahdy *et al.*, present the SDGs as a universally recognized framework comprising 17 goals and 169 targets, addressing broad economic, social, and environmental challenges. David (2018) highlights global concerns around climate change, resource depletion, and ecological harm driven by unsustainable economic growth, underscoring the critical need for green development practices. Similarly, Rybalkin (2022) explores the role of green economy initiatives in advancing SDGs, particularly in European Union countries, showcasing the potential for economic development to align with environmental preservation.

India's Progress: According to Thampi (2019), despite rapid economic growth in India, structural reforms and job creation have not kept pace, and while progress has been made in reducing poverty and improving education, these gains are threatened by ongoing employment and agricultural challenges. Chandran and Sandhya (2020) highlight that the SDGs aim to sustain the momentum from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to eliminate deprivation by 2030, requiring efforts to enhance inclusive economic growth, access to social services, infrastructure investment, and women's empowerment in India. Kumar *et al.*, (2022) note that the Indian government is committed to achieving the SDGs through flagship initiatives such as the National Nutrition Mission, National Health Protection Scheme, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, and the Aspirational Districts Program. Pandey (2024) emphasizes the government's focus on key SDG sectors like gender equality, clean energy, healthcare, education, poverty eradication, and sustainable production and consumption. Bajpai and Biberman (2020) reveal that Kerala and Tamil Nadu have made the most significant progress, while several northeastern and mountainous states have performed well on environmental goals, while the northern states of the Gangetic Plain have made the least progress. Tiwari and Krishna (2020) assess geographical disparities in sustainability, finding southern and western districts outperform northern and eastern counterparts but noting insufficient attention to environmental issues. Roy *et al.*, (2022) show significant regional disparities across 56 Indian cities, with 18% of localities facing challenges in translating environmental gains into socioeconomic progress, and 55% performing below state standards, suggesting the need for integrating environmental factors into development initiatives. Bangera and Gandhi (2021) report that five Indian states did not improve their SDG ratings by 2019, with SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) being major challenges. Subramanian *et al.*, (2023) find that over 75% of districts are off-target, particularly in certain states like Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, and Odisha, and India is off-target for 19 of the 33 SDG indicators, with critical areas including access to basic services, child malnutrition, anemia, child marriage, and contraceptive access. Ramanujam *et al.*, (2019) argue for integrating distributive justice into development plans to address structural barriers. Sivakumar and Manimekalai (2022) highlight Tamil Nadu's progress in improving access to energy, clean water, communication technology, and reducing poverty, violence, and mortality rates, while enhancing education and women's participation in the workforce. Sharma *et al.*, (2023) emphasize that the SDGs aim to promote holistic development by addressing environmental, social, and economic issues in the context of emerging technologies. Mehta *et al.*, (2018) underscore the importance of inclusive growth, increased public spending on services like health and education, and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions to align SDG commitments with India's domestic priorities. Parida *et al.*, (2023) advocate for a balanced approach emphasizing people, prosperity, and partnerships to holistically address India's economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainability. Pipersenia *et al.*, (2019) discuss the challenges of localizing SDGs in India, highlighting the roles of NGOs and elected officials in raising awareness, promoting transparency, and ensuring inclusion in governance. The study emphasizes the need for robust monitoring systems to strengthen grassroots-level SDG implementation.

Regional Perspectives: According to Chatterjee (2018), Assam has made significant progress since 2015 toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by adopting a comprehensive, participatory strategy and fostering partnerships, but continued success will require institutional reforms, innovation, and support from national and global partners to address resource and capacity gaps. Roy and Pramanick (2019) examined the relationships among health (SDG 3), poverty reduction (SDG 1), and water and sanitation (SDG 6) in India, finding that improvements in sanitation-related metrics are positively correlated with increases in per capita GDP. Amanpreet Kaur (2024) examines Punjab's demographic dynamics, finding that while the working-age population positively influences sustainable development, the growing proportion of younger dependents (0–14 years) poses challenges to achieving SDG targets.

Critical Analysis and Research Gap: The reviewed literature reveals methodological and contextual gaps in SDG research. While global studies provide overarching trends, they lack actionable insights for localized challenges. Indian studies highlight regional disparities but often omit union territories like Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh. This study addresses this gap by analyzing SDG trends in Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh post-bifurcation, offering a granular understanding of their progress. By focusing on the interplay of political, social, and economic factors, this study contributes to bridging the gap between national frameworks and region-specific realities. Moyer and Hedden (2020) forecast slow global progress on SDGs, with only 53% of indicators expected to meet targets by 2030. This aligns with Biermann *et al.*, (2022), who critique the minimal legislative impacts of SDGs, despite their influence on global governance discourse. Highlighting methodological innovation, Liu *et al.*, (2023) utilize big data to assess SDG progress in smaller Chinese cities, identifying the need to bridge data gaps for balanced sustainability. Halkos and Gkampoura (2021) identify inconsistent progress in SDGs, with notable advancements in decent work (SDG 8) and infrastructure (SDG 9) but lagging efforts on climate change (SDG 13). Trane *et al.*, (2023) spotlight environmental challenges and weak interdisciplinary research on social issues like education (SDG 4) and gender equality (SDG 5), suggesting the need for more integrated studies. Regional analyses by Huan *et al.*, (2019) and Mally (2021) provide methodologies for assessing SDG performance, but their findings, especially in Central Asia and Slovenia, highlight fluctuations and insufficient progress. Griggs *et al.* (2014) caution that humanity's impact on Earth's systems threatens poverty eradication goals, emphasizing the trade-offs between rising living standards and sustainable production.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SDG Progress of Jammu and Kashmir: In this section, we provide a brief overview of the SDG progress report. However, the study offers a detailed analysis of the achievements and advancements based on the official records provided by the relevant authorities. The comprehensive analysis explores deeply into the data, offering a thorough assessment of the progress made in each SDG, as documented in the official reports. This study specifically focuses on the SDG Index scores for the Union Territory

(UT) of Jammu and Kashmir, illustrating its progress from 2018 to the latest available data. In 2018, Jammu and Kashmir was classified as an "Aspirant" in four SDGs, a "Performer" in six SDGs, and a "Front Runner" in three SDGs, with data unavailable for two SDGs. By contrast, the most recent SDG Index report for 2023-24 reveals significant progress: Jammu and Kashmir is now classified as a "Performer" in five SDGs, a "Front Runner" in nine SDGs, and an "Achiever" in one SDG. Notably, no SDG in the UT has an index score below 50, a threshold that previously classified the region as "Aspirant." This marks the highest level of achievement recorded in the region. When compared to the baseline, Jammu and Kashmir has shown substantial improvements across most SDGs, with the exception of SDG 16, where the index score has declined, the index scores for all other SDGs have seen an upward trajectory. Moreover, when compared to the national average, Jammu and Kashmir surpasses the national index score in nine SDGs, underscoring the considerable progress made in these areas.

SDG Progress of Ladakh: For simplicity and to provide a comprehensive overview of the SDG progress in Ladakh, this study will present a detailed analysis of various SDGs. The report will differentiate the progress based on the categorization provided by NITI Aayog, which divides states and Union Territories into four distinct categories: Aspirant, Performer, Front Runner, and Achiever. This classification will help in presenting a clearer picture of the SDG progress across regions.

SDG Progress Report of Ladakh: An Analysis Based on Index Scores	
Baseline 2018	Based on the available data on SDGs for the Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh, as presented in the study, the findings indicate that Ladakh is classified as an Aspirant in 4 SDGs, a Performer in 6 SDGs, and a Front Runner in 3 SDGs. Additionally, no data was available for 2 SDGs.
2019-2020	The second report on SDG progress for the Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh shows a slight improvement compared to the previous period. In this report, Ladakh is classified as an Aspirant in 4 SDGs, a Performer in 7 SDGs, and a Front Runner in 4 SDGs.
2020-2021	During this period, the Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh is classified as an Aspirant in 4 SDGs, a Performer in 2 SDGs, a Front Runner in 8 SDGs, and an Achiever in 1 SDG. Notably, for the first time, Ladakh has achieved the target score of 100 in one of the SDGs. However, in the same period, it recorded its lowest score of 27 for one of the goals.
2023-24	According to the most recent report, the Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh is classified as an Aspirant in 4 SDGs, a Performer in 5 SDGs, a Front Runner in 5 SDGs, and an Achiever in 1 SDG, reflecting a decline compared to the previous report. On a positive note, Ladakh is performing above the national average in 7 SDGs. However, it continues to lag behind the national average in 8 SDGs.

Findings from the 2022 SDG Progress Report for Jammu and Kashmir: The following section presents detailed information regarding the progress of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Jammu and Kashmir, including targets and achievements as reported by the Planning, Development, and Monitoring Department of the Jammu and Kashmir Government. The data reflects the most recent report, which was published in 2022. This information pertains specifically to the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, as no official reports on the SDG progress for the Union Territory of Ladakh have been provided by the authorities. Consequently, conducting a similar analysis for Ladakh is challenging.

SDG 1: NO POVERTY
Jammu and Kashmir has shown remarkable SDG progress with poverty reduced to 12.58% (2020-21) compared to 25.01% nationally, 99.76% employment under MGNREGA (2020-21) versus 88.40% nationally, 90% population benefiting from PMMVY (2021-22), 57.92% rural population accessing piped safe drinking water (2021-22) compared to 52.74% nationally, universal access to electricity and clean cooking fuel, 183 SHGs linked to bank credit (2020-21), 86.31% population receiving health insurance cards with universal coverage up to ₹5 lakh per family, government spending on essential services increasing to 27.04% (2021-22) from 22.67% (2015-16), and NPS coverage rising to 2.37 lakh (2021-22) from 1.52 lakh (2015-16).
SDG2: ZERO HUNGER
Jammu and Kashmir has advanced in agriculture and allied sectors with wheat productivity increasing to 1985 kg/ha (2020-21) from 1933 kg/ha (2015-16), though rice productivity declined to 1861.97 kg/ha; TDPS beneficiary coverage reached 99.61% (2021); horticulture production grew by 8.50% (2021-22), contributing 57.35% to agriculture (up from 54.24% in 2015-16); 41% of mandis are now part of e-markets; 100% of farmers received soil health cards by 2020-21; and agricultural R&D expenditure rose to 2.10% of GVA (2021-22) from 1.52% (2015-16).
SDG3: GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
Jammu and Kashmir has made notable improvements in health indicators, with the maternal mortality rate (MMR) dropping from 97 (2014-16) to 77 (2017-19) compared to 103 nationally, institutional births rising to 92.40% (2019-21) from 85.60% (2015-16) versus 88.60% nationally, under-5 mortality rate (USMR) falling from 28 (2015) to 21 (2019) against 35 nationally, and neonatal mortality rate (NMR) reducing from 20 (2015) to 15 (2019) compared to 22 nationally. Immunization coverage increased to 96.50% (2019-21) from 84.40% (2015-16), births attended by skilled health personnel rose to 95.10% (2019-21) from 87.50% (2015-16) against 89.40% nationally, government health spending grew to 3.83% of GDP (2021-22) from 2.46% (2015-16), and its share of total government spending rose to 7.63% from 5.87%.

Continue

SDG 4: QUALITY EDUCATION

Jammu and Kashmir has shown progress in education with NER at 81.70% for primary and 47.10% for upper primary levels (2020-21), GER at 32.10% for tertiary education, and teacher training covering 85.31% of teachers across all levels in 2021-22. Drinking water facilities were available in 97.13% of schools, handwashing facilities in 95.70%, and electricity access improved to 73.78% (2020-21) from 29.34% (2015-16). Learning outcomes met minimum proficiency for 80% of students in grades 3, 5, and 8, while grade completion rates were 88.90% (5th), 96.97% (8th), and 66.94% (10th). Gender Parity Index stood at 1.02 (primary), 1.01 (upper primary), and 0.96 (higher secondary) in 2020-21, with government spending on education at 14.57% of total expenditure (2021-22).

SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY

Jammu and Kashmir has achieved advancements in gender equality with the sex ratio at birth rising from 906 (2014-16) to 910 (2017-19), the crime rate against women declining to 53.7% (2020) from 57.05% (2015), and 31.56% of local self-government seats held by women (2019). The female labor force participation rate reached 43.4% (2020-21), surpassing the national average of 32.5%, while exclusive women SHGs accounted for 13.36% of bank-linked SHGs, exceeding the national 8%. Physical violence against women dropped significantly to 5.5% (2020), far below the national level of 17%.

SDG 6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Jammu & Kashmir has made significant progress in water and sanitation with 57.9% of the rural population receiving safe drinking water through piped supply (2020-21) and the UT being declared Open Defecation Free. Per capita water storage stood at 236 cum/person, higher than the national average of 185.02 cum/person, and no over-exploited blocks/mandals/talukas were reported. Groundwater withdrawal was only 21.03% of availability, significantly below the national average of 61.60%. Additionally, 100% of households had access to toilet facilities, and 89.71% of schools provided separate toilets for girls, slightly below the national figure of 97.32%.

SDG 7: AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Jammu & Kashmir showcases remarkable progress in the energy sector with 100% household electrification and over 90% of households using clean cooking fuel. Renewable energy accounted for 95.30% of the total installed electricity generation, and the per capita installed renewable electricity capacity was 245.36 W in 2020-21, significantly exceeding the national average of 118.45 W.

SDG 8: DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Jammu & Kashmir demonstrates notable economic growth with a 7.30% increase in per capita GSDP (2021-22), slightly below the national average of 7.6%, and sectoral growth rates of 1.28% in agriculture and 2.51% in manufacturing. The tourism sector saw remarkable growth, with a 40.73% increase and a 348.20% surge in tourist footfall. Unemployment decreased to 3.30% (2020-21), outperforming the national average of 4.20%, while average monthly wages stood at Rs. 27,712 for males and Rs. 10,066 for females. Social protection coverage under MGNREGA marginally rose to 50.37% (2020-21), and banking infrastructure includes 34 outlets and 20 ATMs per 100,000 people.

SDG 9: INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Jammu & Kashmir demonstrates significant infrastructural and technological advancements with 96.60% of habitations connected by all-weather roads (2021-22), internet subscriptions rising to 47.87% of the population (from 24.30% in 2015-16), and broadband subscribers increasing to 4,614 per 10,000 population (from 906 in 2015-16). Manufacturing employment grew to 9.20% of total employment in 2020-21, up from 7.41% in 2017-18.

SDG 10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Jammu & Kashmir highlights significant advancements in social welfare with 415,957 pre-matric and 62,281 post-matric scholarships provided in 2021-22, and around 6 lakh poor households receiving health insurance coverage. Pension schemes benefited 143,154 individuals, while 33.56% of Panchayati Raj seats were reserved for women. The coverage of PradhanMantriMatritvaVandanaYojana (PMMVY) rose to 89.10% of the eligible population in 2021-22, up from 2.89% in 2015-16. Government spending on the social sector increased from 2.60% in 2015-16 to 4.85% in 2021-22, with 49.32% of funds allocated to the Tribal Sub Plan and 35.00% to BADP Funds.

SDG 11: SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Jammu & Kashmir reveals improvements in urban and waste management with 20% of cities having a master plan (compared to 35.84% nationally) and 84% of wards covered by door-to-door waste collection, reaching 100% in August 2022. Waste processing increased to 36% in 2022 from 2% in 2016, and 26.59% urban and 40.26% rural houses have been completed under PMAY by February 2022. Road accidents saw a decline, with fatalities per 1 lakh population decreasing from 7.48 in 2015 to 5.98 in 2021, and injuries falling from 6,684 to 5,101. Additionally, per capita expenditure on heritage preservation rose to Rs. 1.89 in 2021-22, slightly higher than the national level of Rs. 1.84.

SDG 12: RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Jammu & Kashmir reported a per capita food grain availability of 170 kg per year, slightly lower than the national average of 180.30 kg in 2018-19. Post-harvest losses, including storage and transportation, were minimal at 0.05% each, with storage losses increasing and transportation losses decreasing. Around 20% of horticultural produce was processed, while cold storage capacity rose significantly to 74% from 13.45% in 2018-19. Waste source segregation techniques were implemented in 41% of wards, up from 9% in 2019, and all municipal corporations successfully banned single-use plastic.

SDG 13: CLIMATE ACTION

Jammu & Kashmir has developed an action plan to enhance its adaptive capacity in response to extreme weather events. The number of deaths due to extreme climate events per 1 lakh population decreased slightly from 0.23 in 2016-17 to 0.22 in 2020-21. Additionally, the share of renewable energy in the total installed electricity generation in the UT reached 95.30% in 2020-21, significantly higher than the national average of 31.64%.

SDG 15: LIFE ON LAND

In Jammu & Kashmir, 13,500 hectares were covered under afforestation schemes in 2018-19. The forest and tree cover accounted for 54.32% of the total geographical area in 2021, significantly higher than the national average of 29.84%, with forest area making up 39.15% of the UT's geographical area compared to the national level of 21.71%. The protected area under forests was 8.74%, surpassing the national figure of 5.26%. As of August 2022, Ramsar sites covered 8.33% of the total wetlands, and tree cover constituted 6.43% of the geographical area, compared to 2.91% nationally. Forest vegetative cover in hill districts increased by 0.02% from 2019-21, in contrast to a 0.32% decrease at the national level. Four cases were registered under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 in 2021.

SDG 16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

In Jammu & Kashmir, the number of victims of intentional homicide per lakh population remained constant at 1.37 from 2005 to 2020. The number of courts per lakh population increased to 2.36 in 2021, compared to 1.99 in 2016, surpassing the national average of 1.84. The number of judges per lakh population rose to 1.89 in 2021 from 1.72 in 2016, higher than the national figure of 1.47. Cases under the Prevention of Corruption Act decreased to 0.53 per lakh in 2020, down from 0.79 in 2015. Birth registration stood at 74.60% in 2019, lower than the national average of 92.70%, while Aadhaar coverage reached 81.61% in 2021. The number of missing children dropped to 230 in 2020, compared to 414 in 2015.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive assessment of the progress toward Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh, highlighting both their distinct challenges and achievements. Using the SDG India Index to evaluate state and union territory performance across 17 SDGs, the research analyzes regional progress from 2018 to 2023-24. The findings underline significant hurdles faced by both regions in sustainable development, alongside notable successes in areas such as poverty alleviation, healthcare, education, and infrastructure. The 2019 bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories introduced a unique dimension to this analysis, enabling an independent evaluation of the developmental trajectories of Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh. To establish a baseline, the study assigns a shared 2018 SDG index score to both regions, facilitating post-reorganization progress assessment. The analysis reveals that Jammu Kashmir has achieved steady progress in sectors like infrastructure development, renewable energy adoption, and gender equality. However, it continues to face challenges in addressing climate action and inequality. Conversely, Ladakh has attained "Front Runner" status in several SDGs, achieving a perfect score in one. Yet, it remains below the national average in critical areas like climate action, urban sustainability, and inequality. Ladakh's unique geographical constraints, coupled with infrastructure deficits and environmental vulnerabilities, necessitate targeted interventions. The findings emphasize the need for localized policies tailored to the specific developmental needs of Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh.

This requires a focus on governance improvements, sustainable infrastructure development, and inclusive social programs. While both regions have made significant strides, sustained efforts are required to ensure equitable growth, enhance resilience to climate change, and improve social welfare. To enhance the progress of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh, the study recommends strengthening governance through improved administrative efficiency, policy transparency, and accountability, while building the capacity of local officials to align policies with SDG priorities. Sustainable infrastructure development should be prioritized, focusing on renewable energy, water and sanitation systems, connectivity, and sustainable agriculture, with attune strategies for Ladakh's unique terrain and ecosystem. Addressing climate change and social welfare gaps is crucial, including regional climate adaptation plans for Ladakh to mitigate vulnerabilities like glacial melt and water scarcity, alongside targeted programs to reduce inequality and empower marginalized communities. Finally, robust data collection and monitoring mechanisms are essential to track SDG progress accurately and support evidence-based policymaking. Together, these recommendations provide a roadmap for sustainable and inclusive development, aligning regional efforts with national SDG targets and fostering resilience and equity in both regions.

Limitations and Future Research: This analysis is constrained by data unavailability for Ladakh prior to 2019, which limits the ability to establish a long-term baseline. Additionally, the absence of separate progress reports for Ladakh by the authorities has hindered a more significant understanding of its progress. In contrast, the administration of Jammu and Kashmir has published progress reports twice since the bifurcation, providing valuable insights into the region's advancements and improvements across various goals. Furthermore, certain qualitative aspects, such as the impacts of regional governance, remain underexplored, highlighting the need for a deeper investigation into these dimensions. Future studies should explore the influence of climate change policies on SDG progress in both regions, with a focus on adaptation strategies and their socio-economic implications. Additionally, assessing the role of local governance and participatory planning in advancing sustainable development in these territories could provide valuable insights. The findings emphasize the need for targeted policy interventions, including strengthening governance, prioritizing sustainable infrastructure, addressing climate adaptation, and improving social equity. Robust data collection and monitoring mechanisms are essential for tracking progress and refining strategies. By addressing these challenges and gaps, J&K and Ladakh can better align with national SDG targets, fostering resilient and inclusive development.

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