

Migration, Poverty, and Urban Marginality in India's Frontier City: Insights from Slum Communities in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan

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Abstract:

This study examines the socio-economic conditions and migration patterns of slum residents in Jaisalmer District, Rajasthan, with a focus on the settlements of Transport Nagar (Gandhi Nagar) and Jethiwai Road (Kishan Ghat). Using a qualitative research design and purposive sampling, data were collected from 50 households, representing 421 individuals, during February and March 2025. The analysis combines qualitative approaches supported by descriptive statistics to assess household demographics, access to essential services, and migration histories.

The results indicate that migration to slum areas in Jaisalmer is primarily motivated by religious insecurity, poverty, limited employment opportunities, and insufficient rural infrastructure. Most households occupy kutchra or semi-pucca dwellings with restricted ownership rights, which demonstrates ongoing structural and economic marginalization. Access to basic services is severely limited: 60% of households lack electricity, 66% rely on public taps for drinking water, and 66% do not have toilet facilities. The predominant use of traditional fuels such as firewood and cow dung highlights persistent affordability and accessibility barriers. Additionally, the absence of formal waste collection or management systems exposes residents to significant environmental and public health hazards.

In summary, the study demonstrates the intersection of migration, poverty, and urban exclusion in shaping the experiences of slum residents in Jaisalmer. The findings emphasize the necessity for inclusive urban governance, equitable infrastructure provision, and the creation of sustainable livelihood opportunities. Enhanced policy measures in water, sanitation, energy, and housing are essential to improve living conditions and advance progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) concerning poverty alleviation, access to clean water, and sustainable urban development.

Keywords: Living Conditions, Migration, Poverty, Slum Settlements, Urban Marginality.

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1. Introduction

Rapid urbanization in India has exacerbated socio-economic disparities, leading to the proliferation of slum settlements and presenting a significant challenge for urban development. Despite the implementation of government initiatives such as the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), and Basic Services to the Urban Poor (BSUP), millions of urban residents continue to face inadequate housing, poor sanitation, and limited access to essential services. These persistent conditions underscore deficiencies in urban governance and highlight the unequal distribution of development benefits across social groups and geographic regions.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set a target to improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020 (United Nations, 2006). For many marginalized families in India, migration to urban areas serves primarily as a survival strategy rather than an avenue for opportunity. The Census of India (2001) recorded approximately 52.4 million slum residents in 1,743 towns with populations exceeding 20,000, representing 23.5% of the urban population in these areas. Subsequent estimates by the Dr. Pronab Sen Committee raised this figure to nearly 75 million, underscoring the scale of the urban housing crisis and the persistence of informal settlements.

Within this broader context, the city of Jaisalmer in Rajasthan represents a distinctive case. Despite its predominantly rural character and location in an arid desert region, Jaisalmer has experienced a steady influx of migrants seeking livelihood opportunities and social security. The 2011 Census reported an urban population of 89,025, constituting 13.3% of the district's total population. Migration, often driven by poverty, religious insecurity, unemployment, and inadequate rural infrastructure, has contributed to the expansion of informal settlements marked by kutcha or semi-pucca housing, limited water supply, and inadequate sanitation facilities.

A pronounced contrast exists between the city's expanding tourism-driven affluence and the deprivation experienced by its slum communities. While luxury hotels and commercial establishments thrive, thousands of slum dwellers face daily struggles to secure basic necessities, including clean water, electricity, and hygienic living conditions. This growing disparity illustrates entrenched inequalities in access to urban resources and governance structures.

Understanding the socio-economic conditions and migration experiences of slum residents in Jaisalmer is essential for assessing the impact of migration on urban poverty and for informing inclusive policy interventions. This study aims to examine how



migration, economic vulnerability, and inadequate infrastructure intersect to shape the daily realities of slum dwellers, thereby contributing to ongoing discussions on urban marginality, sustainable development, and social justice within India's rapidly evolving urban landscape.

A. Scope and Significance of the Study:

This study examines the socio-economic conditions of slum and borderline-slum communities in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, an urban frontier region near the Indo-Pakistan border with a fragile ecology and a history of migration. The research includes two major informal settlements, Transport Nagar (Gandhi Nagar) and Jethiwai Road (Kishan Ghat), which represent both newly established and long-standing slum clusters. The use of qualitative methods supported by descriptive statistics enables analysis of the relationships among migration, poverty, and urban marginality within Jaisalmer's unique geopolitical and cultural context.

The research scope includes a multidimensional assessment of living conditions, such as housing quality, water and sanitation, energy access, waste management, and civic infrastructure, in addition to demographic profiling. The study also investigates the influence of religious identity, security concerns, and citizenship status on migration decisions and settlement patterns. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of both migrant and non-migrant experiences and reveals disparities in access to urban services and livelihood opportunities.

This study contributes to the limited empirical research on small and medium-sized frontier cities in South Asia, which are frequently overlooked in favour of metropolitan-focused urban studies. By positioning Jaisalmer within the broader context of urban informality and migration governance, the research provides insights into the effects of structural inequalities, policy neglect, and border-related insecurities on urban poverty. The findings highlight the need for inclusive housing strategies, participatory urban governance, and equitable access to basic services, offering guidance for policymakers, urban planners, and development practitioners.

The study aims to connect local realities with national policy frameworks by documenting the strategies vulnerable communities use to address urban exclusion in peripheral urban areas of India. These findings support progress toward Sustainable Development Goals focused on poverty reduction, clean water and sanitation, affordable energy, and inclusive urban development (SDGs 1, 6, 7, and 11).



-Objectives of the Study :

1. To analyze the primary drivers of migration and settlement formation among slum and borderline-slum dwellers in Jaisalmer, with a specific focus on economic, religious, and citizenship-related factors.
2. To assess the socio-economic characteristics of migrant and non-migrant households, including income levels, employment patterns, and household composition.
3. To examine the living conditions in slum settlements, focusing on housing quality, access to drinking water, sanitation, energy resources, and waste management practices.
4. To compare the challenges and livelihood vulnerabilities faced by migrant and non-migrant households in slum and borderline-slum areas.
5. To evaluate the influence of local and national urban policies on migration patterns, civic service delivery, and quality of life in informal settlements.

-Methodology :

1) This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the socio-economic conditions, migration experiences, and daily challenges faced by slum residents in the Jaisalmer district of Rajasthan, India. The qualitative approach was chosen to capture the depth of lived experiences, social dynamics, and contextual realities, prioritizing understanding over statistical representativeness, with descriptive statistics providing contextual support that quantitative measures alone may not fully reveal.

2) Study Area and Sampling Procedure

The research was conducted in two major slum settlements in Jaisalmer: Transport Nagar (also known as Gandhi Nagar) and Jethiwai Road (near Kishan Ghat). These locations were purposively selected based on their demographic diversity, settlement age, and proximity to the city's economic and transport hubs. The choice of these areas allowed the study to represent both older, more stabilized slum clusters and newer, transitional settlements influenced by recent migration waves.

A total of 50 households, comprising 421 individuals, were included in the study. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring the inclusion of households from diverse backgrounds—migrant and non-migrant, male- and female-headed, and representing various employment types and housing conditions. This

approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic and cultural diversity within the slum communities.

3) Data Collection Methods

Primary data were collected in February and March 2025 using in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation. Semi-structured interview schedules addressed migration history, relocation motivations, access to civic amenities, livelihood challenges, and perceptions of social identity and security. Interviews lasted 30 to 60 minutes and were conducted in Hindi or the local dialect according to participant preference. Informal conversations and field observations were systematically recorded in field notes to enhance contextual understanding of community life.

4) Data Processing and Analysis

Qualitative data were transcribed, translated, and analyzed thematically using a coding framework based on study objectives and field-derived themes. This analysis identified patterns concerning migration motivations, livelihood challenges, housing conditions, and access to essential services.

Tables and charts were generated using Microsoft Excel to visually represent key descriptive patterns, while narrative excerpts were used to illustrate the lived realities and subjective experiences of the respondents.

5) Ethical Considerations

All ethical protocols were rigorously adhered to during the research process. Informed consent was secured from each participant before conducting interviews. Respondents were assured that their identities would remain confidential and anonymous. Participation was voluntary, and respondents maintained the right to withdraw from the study at any point.

-Limitations of the Study

This study offers significant insights into migration, poverty, and urban marginality among slum communities in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan. Several limitations, however, must be considered when interpreting these findings.

First, the cross-sectional research design involved data collection over two months (February–March 2025). Although this approach captures socio-economic conditions at a specific point in time, it does not account for the seasonal variability of migration and employment opportunities, nor for changes in living conditions during extreme summer temperatures, the monsoon season, or periods of tourism-driven



economic activity. As a result, the findings may not fully represent the dynamic experiences of migrant and non-migrant households throughout the year.

Second, the study primarily relied on self-reported data obtained through interviews. Such information is vulnerable to social desirability bias, as respondents may underreport sensitive issues such as informal employment, legal or citizenship status, land tenure insecurity, or intra-community conflicts. Despite efforts to establish rapport and ensure confidentiality, the potential for response bias remains.

Third, the study's geographical scope is limited. Data were collected from 50 households in two selected slum settlements in Jaisalmer, a frontier city with unique socio-economic, environmental, and geopolitical characteristics. Therefore, these findings are context-specific and should not be generalized to slum populations in other regions of Rajasthan or India without further comparative research.

Finally, while the sample size was sufficient to meet the study's objectives, the research does not explicitly justify the sample size using the principle of data saturation, which is critical in qualitative research. Providing a clearer explanation of how saturation was achieved would have enhanced methodological rigour and increased confidence that the diversity of participants' experiences was adequately captured.

Future research could address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs, conducting multiple rounds of data collection across different seasons, expanding the geographical scope to other urban centres, and using triangulation with administrative or observational data to minimize response bias, as well as incorporating comparative analysis with non-slum populations to distinguish challenges unique to Jaisalmer's frontier context.

-Findings:

6) Duration of Residence in the Slum Areas

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of households according to the number of years they have resided in the slum areas of Jaisalmer. The data reveal a diverse temporal pattern of settlement. This reflects both long-term and relatively recent habitation. Approximately 24% of the families have been living in the slums for 11–15 years, and an equal proportion for 16–20 years. This indicates that nearly half of the respondents have resided in these areas for over a decade. Around 18% of households have lived in the settlements for less than 10 years. This suggests a steady influx of newer migrants. A smaller share, about 10%, reported a residence period of 21–25 years.

Meanwhile, 16% have remained for 26–30 years, showing that a portion of the community has developed long-term stability. Only a very small proportion, 4% each, have lived in the area for 31–35 years and 36–40 years. This reflects the limited presence of the earliest settlers. Overall, the data suggest that the slums of Jaisalmer have gradually evolved into semi-permanent settlements. They now accommodate both established and recently arrived households.

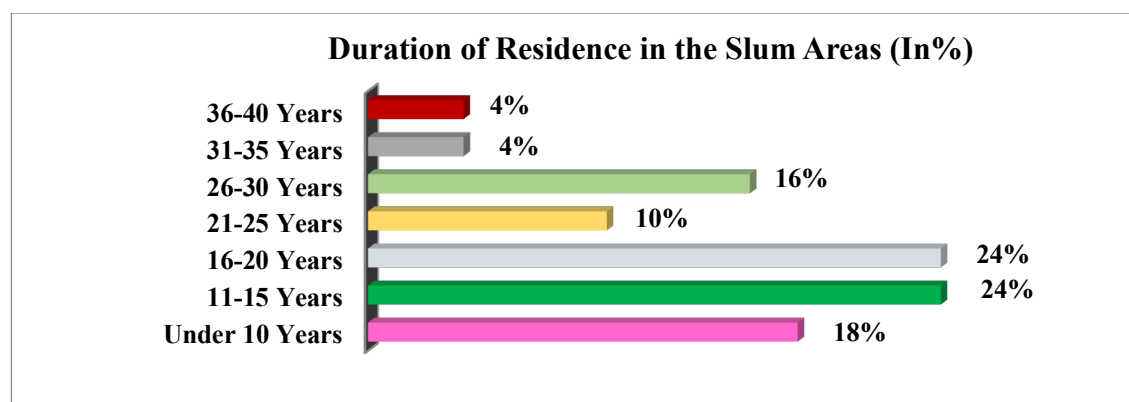


Figure 1: Duration of Residence in the Slum Areas

7) Place of Origin of Slum Dwellers

The data on the origin of slum dwellers in Jaisalmer, shown in Figure 2, illustrate a diverse migratory profile, affirming the city's position as a magnet for both internal and cross-border migration. Of all respondents, 40% hailed from Pakistan, representing international migrants who relocated to Jaisalmer owing to historical, religious, or political motivations. About 16% of participants were born in the Jaisalmer district, reflecting intra-district movement often tied to displacement, livelihood instability, or local housing shortages. An additional 24% arrived from neighbouring Rajasthan districts, including Jaipur, Jodhpur, Barmer, and Bikaner, suggesting that regional flows were spurred by economic prospects and environmental pressures. Furthermore, 20% of households originated from other Indian states, such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Punjab, indicating patterns of long-distance migration.

Overall, these findings highlight that both internal and international migration significantly contribute to the growth and demographic complexity of Jaisalmer's slum communities, resulting in a socially and culturally diverse urban population.

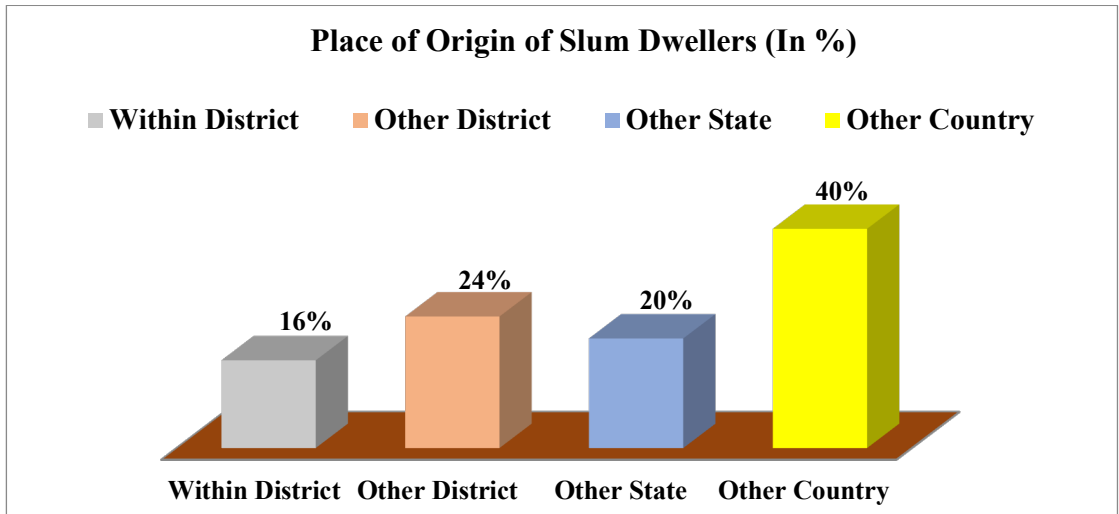


Figure 2: Place of Origin of Slum Dwellers

8) Main Reasons for Migration

Figure 3 demonstrates that migration to the slum areas of Jaisalmer results from a multifaceted combination of social, economic, and political factors. Religious issues were identified as the leading cause of migration, accounting for 22% of cases, underscoring the impact of cross-border and intra-national religious tensions on population movements in the region. Employment opportunities were the second most frequently cited factor, reported by 18% of respondents, which suggests that economic necessity is a significant motivator for relocation to urban slum settlements.

Additional factors influencing migration include lack of security (10%), citizenship-related concerns (10%), refugee migration (10%), and poverty (8%), each representing distinct aspects of vulnerability. Seasonal migration (8%) and social conflicts (4%) also contribute to periodic and forced displacements, especially among marginalized populations. Approximately 10% of respondents were non-migrants, indicating families with long-term residence in the area.

Overall, the data indicate that religious insecurity and the pursuit of livelihood opportunities are the dominant drivers of migration into Jaisalmer's slums. These patterns highlight how social exclusion, political marginalization, and economic hardship collectively shape urban settlement processes in India's border regions.

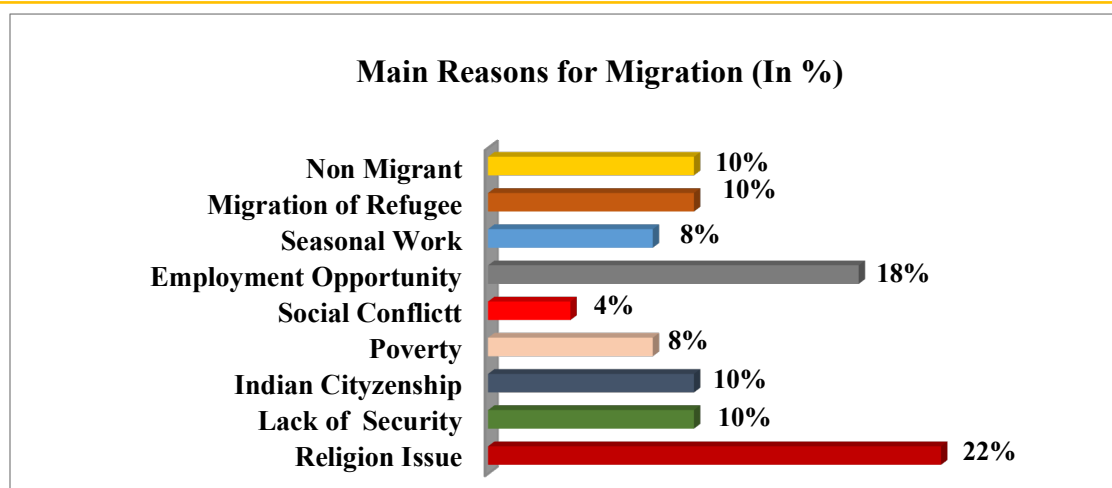


Figure 3 : Main Reasons for Migration

9) Housing Type, Ownership Status, and Electricity Access

Table 1 presents data on housing characteristics among slum residents in Jaisalmer, revealing substantial disparities in shelter quality and access to essential utilities. The majority of households (54%) reside in Kutchha houses constructed from mud, thatch, or other temporary materials. Approximately 40% live in Semi-Pucca structures, and only 6% occupy Pucca houses built with brick and cement, indicating restricted access to durable housing.

Regarding housing tenure, 32% of households own their homes, and 24% reside in rented accommodations. Approximately 26% occupy government-allotted housing, which reflects partial state involvement in shelter provision. Additionally, 18% live on encroached land, demonstrating the prevalence of informal tenure arrangements.

Electricity access remains another major concern; 60% of respondents reported no access to electricity, relying on alternative or informal sources of lighting, whereas only 40% have a formal electricity connection. The data underscore the precarious housing conditions and infrastructural deprivation characterizing the slum communities of Jaisalmer.

Table 1:
Housing Type, Ownership, and Electricity Access

π	Sub-category	Percentage (%)
Type of House	Kutcha (Mud/Thatched)	54%
	Semi-Pucca	40%
	Pucca (Brick and Cement)	6%
Ownership Status	Owned	32%
	Rented	24%
	Government Allotment	26%
	Encroached Land	18%
Electricity Access	Access to Electricity	40%
	No Electricity Access	60%

10) Distribution of Room Numbers in Slum Households

Table 2 presents data on room distribution among slum households in Jaisalmer, revealing limited living space and prevalent overcrowding. The majority of families, 72 per cent, reside in two-room dwellings, which suggests constrained yet shared household arrangements. Twelve per cent of households occupy single-room houses, indicating acute space shortages and high residential density. In contrast, 16 per cent of households live in three-room houses, providing comparatively more space. No households reported having four or more rooms, underscoring the scarcity of adequate housing infrastructure and the widespread spatial deprivation within these slum settlements.

Table 2:
Distribution of Room Numbers among Slum Households

Number of Rooms per Household	Percentage (%)
1 Room	12%
2 Rooms	72%
3 Rooms	16%
4 or More Rooms	0%

11) Sources of Drinking Water among Slum Households

Access to safe and reliable drinking water remains a significant challenge for slum residents in Jaisalmer. Table 3 shows that 66% of households rely on public taps as their main drinking water source, indicating a strong dependence on shared community infrastructure. In contrast, 34% of households obtain water from private tankers, which are typically more expensive and provide an inconsistent supply. No households reported using hand pumps, borewells, or private taps, highlighting the lack of independent or secure water sources in these settlements.

These findings highlight the prevalence of water insecurity in the slum areas of Jaisalmer, where residents are compelled to rely on inconsistent and often unsafe public or commercial sources. The situation reflects both infrastructural deficits and systemic inequities in urban water distribution.

Table 3:
Sources of Drinking Water

Source of Drinking Water	Percentage (%)
Public Tap	66%
Purchased from Tankers	34%
Hand Pump	0%
Borewell	0%
Private Tap	0%

12) Access to Toilet Facilities

The study identifies a substantial deficit in sanitation infrastructure among slum households in Jaisalmer. Table 4 indicates that only 34% of surveyed households have access to a toilet facility, whereas 66% lack such access. This inadequate sanitation infrastructure highlights ongoing infrastructural neglect and poses significant public health risks, particularly in densely populated and water-scarce areas.

The findings demonstrate that inadequate sanitation increases vulnerability to waterborne diseases, environmental contamination, and social marginalization. Women and children are particularly affected due to heightened challenges regarding privacy and safety.

Table 4:
Access to Toilet Facilities

Access to Toilet Facility	Percentage (%)
Toilet Facility Available	34%
No Toilet Facility	66%

13) Energy Sources Used for Household Cooking

The findings presented in Table 5 indicate that slum households in Jaisalmer primarily rely on traditional biomass fuels for their cooking needs. As illustrated in Table 5, a substantial 74% of families use firewood as their primary energy source, reflecting dependence on locally available but environmentally unsustainable materials. Additionally, 24% of households utilize cow dung cakes, which remain a common alternative among economically constrained communities. In contrast, only 2% of respondents reported access to Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), highlighting the limited penetration of modern, clean cooking technologies in these settlements.

The near absence of kerosene or other energy sources underscores the persistence of energy poverty and the lack of infrastructural support for transitioning to clean energy. These findings point to a broader socio-economic reality in which affordability, accessibility, and policy outreach remain critical barriers to achieving energy equity and environmental sustainability in slum areas.

Table 5:

Energy Sources Used for Cooking

Type of Energy Source	Percentage (%)
Firewood	74%
Cow Dung Cakes	24%
LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas)	2%
Kerosene/Other Sources	0%

14) Household Waste Management Access

Table 6 demonstrates a total lack of organized waste management services in the surveyed slum areas of Jaisalmer. All households reported no access to formal waste collection or disposal systems, which reflects significant infrastructural neglect and insufficient municipal outreach.

The absence of waste management infrastructure results in unsanitary living conditions, environmental degradation, and increased public health risks due to the accumulation of solid waste in open areas. These findings highlight the urgent need for policy intervention and investment in essential urban services to enhance environmental health and living standards in marginalized settlements.

Table 6:

Access to Household Waste Management Services

Access to Waste Management Services	Percentage (%)
Access to Organized Waste Collection	0%
No Waste Management Access	100%

15) Waste Disposal Practices in the Community

Table 7 demonstrates that waste disposal practices among slum dwellers in Jaisalmer are exclusively informal and lack management. All surveyed households reported no access to formal waste collection systems, which necessitates independent waste management. Open dumping in vacant plots or along roadsides is the predominant disposal method, resulting from the lack of municipal waste services.

This situation exemplifies the broader challenge of urban service exclusion, in which informal settlements are not included in structured waste management policies.

These informal disposal practices degrade the environment and elevate risks of vector-borne diseases, water contamination, and air pollution. Addressing this gap necessitates targeted improvements in solid waste infrastructure, enhanced community education, and increased municipal accountability.

Table 7:
Waste Disposal Practices among Slum Households

Waste Disposal Method	Percentage (%)
Formal Municipal Collection	0%
Independent Disposal (Open Dumping)	100%

B. Discussion:

The findings of this study provide an in-depth understanding of the socio-economic and living conditions of slum residents in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, and reflect the broader structural challenges associated with urban poverty, informal settlements, and rural–urban migration in India’s semi-arid frontier regions. The study highlights the intertwined dynamics of migration, housing insecurity, inadequate infrastructure, and socioeconomic marginalization that shape the daily lives of slum dwellers.

The results indicate that migration is the defining feature of slum formation in Jaisalmer, with 40% of respondents originating from Pakistan and an additional 20% from other Indian states. This aligns with studies emphasizing the role of cross-border and internal displacement in shaping urban informal settlements in western India (Kundu, 2017; Dupont, 2019). The high proportion of international migrants underscores the enduring legacies of partition and subsequent religious and political tensions that continue to influence mobility patterns across the Indo-Pak border (Tiwari & Hooja, 2020). Religion-based migration, which accounts for 22% of respondents, highlights how ethno-religious insecurity remains a driver of forced migration, often accompanied by statelessness and precarious livelihoods.

The predominance of Kutcha and Semi-Pucca housing, accounting for 94 percent of dwellings, demonstrates persistent housing vulnerability and limited asset accumulation among slum residents. Comparable patterns have been documented in other regions of Rajasthan and urban India, where informal housing structures are indicative of both poverty and exclusion from formal housing initiatives (Patel & Mitlin, 2018; Bhan, 2019). Additionally, the absence of electricity in 60 per cent of households highlights infrastructural neglect and energy poverty, which restricts access to education, employment, and health improvements. Home ownership is limited to 32 per cent of respondents, indicating insecure tenure and heightened risk of eviction, consistent with trends in similar urban peripheries (Banerjee & Dey, 2022).



Access to essential services, including drinking water, sanitation, and waste management, remains severely limited. Approximately two-thirds of households rely on public taps for water, while one-third depend on private water tankers, indicating both resource scarcity and unequal distribution. The complete absence of household waste collection and the prevalence of open dumping create significant public health hazards and environmental threats. These challenges reflect systemic failures in urban governance, as identified in UN-Habitat's (2023) analysis of secondary Indian cities, where informal settlements are frequently excluded from urban planning processes. Limited sanitation coverage, with only 34 per cent of households having access, exacerbates health risks, particularly for women and children, as documented in comparable urban contexts such as Ahmedabad and Jaipur (Joshi et al., 2020).

The predominant use of firewood and cow dung for cooking, used by 98 per cent of households, demonstrates significant economic deprivation and persistent energy insecurity. The minimal adoption of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), at only 2 per cent, suggests that government energy initiatives have not sufficiently reached marginalized populations in Jaisalmer. Reliance on biomass fuels contributes to deforestation in Rajasthan's arid ecosystem and exacerbates indoor air pollution, posing substantial risks to respiratory health (Smith et al., 2021). Collectively, these results underscore the necessity for comprehensive energy access interventions in informal settlements, as recommended by the World Bank (2022) and the International Energy Agency (IEA, 2023).

Data on years of residence indicate that Jaisalmer's slums function as semi-permanent settlements. Nearly half of the respondents have resided in the area for more than 15 years. This evidence challenges the prevailing stereotype of slums as temporary occupations and instead identifies them as enduring urban forms. Such persistence reflects shortcomings in formal housing policies and ongoing marginalization. These findings align with recent scholarship that highlights the stabilized informality of Indian slums (Desai, 2021; Roy, 2019), where informal settlements develop into permanent urban neighbourhoods without sufficient state recognition or investment.

The findings of this study indicate the need for a comprehensive reassessment of urban policy in frontier districts such as Jaisalmer. Migration management policies should address the complex relationships among religion, citizenship, and livelihood insecurity. Local governance bodies are encouraged to incorporate slum upgrading into urban planning by adopting participatory frameworks that promote tenure security, equitable access to services, and livelihood support. Additionally, targeted interventions in clean energy provision, sanitation infrastructure, and waste management are critical

for improving living standards and environmental sustainability. These priorities are consistent with India's commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 6, 7, and 11) and may provide a model for fostering inclusive urban resilience.

The study's main argument is that slum conditions arise from structural inequality and policy neglect, rather than merely from poverty. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, the research demonstrates how historical displacement, socio-political exclusion, and inadequate infrastructure combine to produce urban marginality in desert regions like Jaisalmer. The study concludes that effectively addressing these issues requires not only improved physical infrastructure but also inclusive governance and social justice frameworks to empower marginalized communities and enable them to claim their right to the city.

C. Major Findings:

1. The slum communities of Jaisalmer demonstrate significant migratory diversity, with residents originating from international, regional, and interstate locations. Most households have lived in these settlements for more than ten years. This pattern indicates that migration has driven both the expansion and stabilization of slum areas, transforming them into established residential communities over time. These findings illustrate the process by which migratory influxes become permanent urban margins.
2. The findings show that most households live in Kutcha or Semi-Pucca structures, which points to poor construction quality and insecure housing. Few families own their homes; many live in government-allotted, rented, or encroached spaces. Access to electricity is also limited, as many households lack power connections. This highlights major gaps in urban infrastructure and basic services.
3. The majority of slum households in Jaisalmer live in two-room dwellings, indicating limited living space and significant overcrowding. Such spatial limitations result from economic constraints and land scarcity, leading to reduced privacy and adverse health outcomes.
4. The study shows that most households depend on public taps (66%) or purchased tanker water (34%), with no access to private or borewell connections. This high dependence on shared and commercial water sources exposes households to water insecurity, irregular supply, and financial strain, reflecting systemic inequities in urban water provision.
5. Only 34% of slum households have access to toilets, while 66% remain without proper sanitation facilities. This scarcity poses severe public health and hygiene



challenges, increasing the risk of transmissible diseases and undermining residents' dignity and well-being. The dearth of adequate sanitation infrastructure highlights ongoing policy and implementation failures in achieving basic urban health standards.

6. The data reveal a strong dependence on traditional fuels such as firewood (74%) and cow dung cakes (24%), while only 2% of households use LPG. This dependence on biomass contributes to indoor air pollution, environmental degradation, and gendered labour burdens. Limited access to clean energy underscores both economic hardship and policy gaps in ensuring energy equity in low-income urban communities.
7. None of the surveyed households have access to formal waste management systems, resulting in self-managed disposal through open dumping. This unregulated waste handling leads to environmental pollution, health risks, and deteriorating living conditions. The dearth of municipal waste services reflects critical urban governance deficiencies and the exclusion of informal settlements from public infrastructure planning.

D. Policy Implications and Recommendations:

The study identifies substantial socio-economic and infrastructural challenges faced by slum communities in Jaisalmer, which are influenced by historical migration, persistent poverty, and inadequate urban governance. To mitigate these challenges and advance inclusive urban development, the following policy implications and recommendations are presented:

1. Strengthening Urban Governance and Slum Integration

Municipal and state authorities are encouraged to implement a participatory urban governance framework that incorporates slum settlements into formal city planning processes. Key components include mapping informal settlements, recognizing tenure rights, and formulating localized urban infrastructure plans. Decentralized governance models that empower ward-level committees and community-based organizations can improve accountability and service delivery within marginalized neighborhoods.

2. Improving Basic Infrastructure and Civic Amenities

Investments in affordable housing, sanitation, electricity, and water supply are critical to enhancing the quality of life in the slums of Jaisalmer. Upgrading Kutcha and Semi-Pucca houses into safe and durable structures through community-led housing improvement schemes should be prioritized. Furthermore, initiatives such as the Pradhan

Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) and the Smart Cities Mission should be expanded to encompass informal settlements located near border towns.

3. Enhancing Access to Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

In response to severe water insecurity and sanitation deficits, local governments should prioritize Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) infrastructure by ensuring a regular public water supply, constructing community toilets, and implementing decentralized waste treatment systems. Aligning these initiatives with Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) can facilitate adherence to global standards and enhance access to funding opportunities.

4. Promoting Clean and Affordable Energy Alternatives

Persistent reliance on biomass fuels highlights the need to advance clean cooking technologies through targeted subsidies, public awareness initiatives, and credit-based liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) access programs. Expanding the reach of schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana in low-income urban communities can enhance energy equity and mitigate health risks associated with indoor air pollution.

5. Establishing Solid Waste Management Systems

In the absence of organized waste management, urban authorities should implement community-based systems for solid waste collection and segregation. The promotion of public-private partnerships (PPP) and local entrepreneurship models for recycling and waste collection can enhance both sustainability and employment opportunities. Integrating these initiatives with Sustainable Development Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) supports the development of cleaner and more resilient urban environments.

6. Addressing Migration and Border Vulnerabilities

The presence of cross-border migrants highlights the necessity for inclusive migration and citizenship policies. The government must ensure migrants, regardless of their origin, have equitable access to housing, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities. Enhancing social cohesion programs and implementing community dialogue initiatives may reduce tensions resulting from religious or identity-based displacement.

7. Integrating Livelihood and Poverty Alleviation Strategies

Urban poverty reduction initiatives should prioritize skill development, micro-enterprise promotion, and improved access to formal credit for both migrant and non-migrant populations. The establishment of urban livelihood centres within or adjacent to slum areas can facilitate employment training and link informal workers to local markets.

1) *Overall Policy Direction*

An integrated, multi-sectoral urban development approach that combines infrastructure improvements, social inclusion, and environmental management is essential to transforming Jaisalmer's slum settlements into sustainable, dignified living environments. Implementing these recommendations aligns with India's National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 6, 7, and 11), thereby advancing inclusive and equitable urban growth.

8. *Conclusion:*

This study investigates the socio-economic conditions, infrastructural deficiencies, and migration dynamics of slum communities in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, a distinctive urban area situated along India's western frontier. The results demonstrate how migration, poverty, and urban marginality intersect to shape the daily experiences of slum residents. Most inhabitants, who come from varied regional and international backgrounds, have progressively converted these settlements into semi-permanent habitats, despite ongoing substandard living conditions.

Across dimensions of housing, water, sanitation, and energy access, the study reveals a consistent pattern of deprivation. Most households live in kutchra or semi-pucca dwellings, with limited ownership rights and unreliable access to electricity. Drinking water is predominantly sourced from public taps or purchased through private tankers, while sanitation and waste management infrastructure remain grossly inadequate. Furthermore, dependence on traditional fuels such as firewood and cow dung underscores both economic vulnerability and limited policy outreach in the area.

The findings collectively demonstrate the systemic exclusion of informal settlements from urban development frameworks, highlighting broader challenges related to governance and service delivery in peripheral cities of India. The lack of basic urban services perpetuates poverty cycles and presents substantial public health and environmental risks.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and inclusive urban policy framework that integrates informal settlements into formal planning mechanisms, ensures equitable access to basic amenities, and prioritizes sustainable solutions for housing, energy, and sanitation. This approach would improve living conditions in Jaisalmer's slums and advance the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7, and 11, which focus on clean water, clean energy, and sustainable urban communities.

9. References:

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