Studying Death Rates Caused by Air Pollution

Arnav Gorantla

Introduction

Air pollution represents a pervasive environmental hazard that poses grave risks to human health worldwide. Prolonged exposure to various air pollutants, such as particulate matter (PM), ozone (O3), and other harmful substances, can precipitate the development of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, ultimately contributing to increased mortality rates across diverse populations. This comprehensive study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of air pollution-related death rates across different regions, countries, and socioeconomic development levels, by identifying spatial and temporal trends, as well as key contributing factors, the findings of this research endeavor to inform evidence-based policymaking and guide the implementation of effective mitigation strategies to safeguard public health globally.

Literature Review

Numerous studies have highlighted the negative effects of air pollution on human health, particularly in densely populated urban areas and regions characterized by a lot of industrial activity (Landrigan et al., 2018; Schraufnagel et al., 2019). Exposure to elevated levels of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and ground-level ozone has been associated with increased risks of ischemic heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and lung cancer (Cohen et al., 2017; Burnett et al., 2018). Moreover, indoor air pollution resulting from the use of solid fuels for cooking and heating purposes has been identified as a significant contributor to respiratory infections and adverse birth outcomes (Smith et al., 2014).

While the existing body of literature underscores the grave consequences of air pollution on public health, there remains a pressing need for comprehensive analyses that enable comparisons of air pollution-related mortality patterns across diverse geographical and socioeconomic contexts. This study seeks to contribute to the current understanding by providing a broad and in-depth examination of air pollution-related mortality trends on a global scale, encompassing multiple regions, countries, and development levels.

Methodology

Data Source and Preprocessing

The analysis utilizes a comprehensive dataset containing air pollution-related death rates for various regions, countries, and socioeconomic development levels spanning the period from 1990 to 2017. The dataset encompasses information on total deaths attributed to air pollution, as well as deaths specifically linked to indoor air pollution, outdoor (ambient) air pollution, and ozone exposure. Extensive data cleaning and transformation steps were undertaken, including

handling missing values, creating subsets based on regions and income levels, and aggregating data at different levels to facilitate meaningful comparisons.

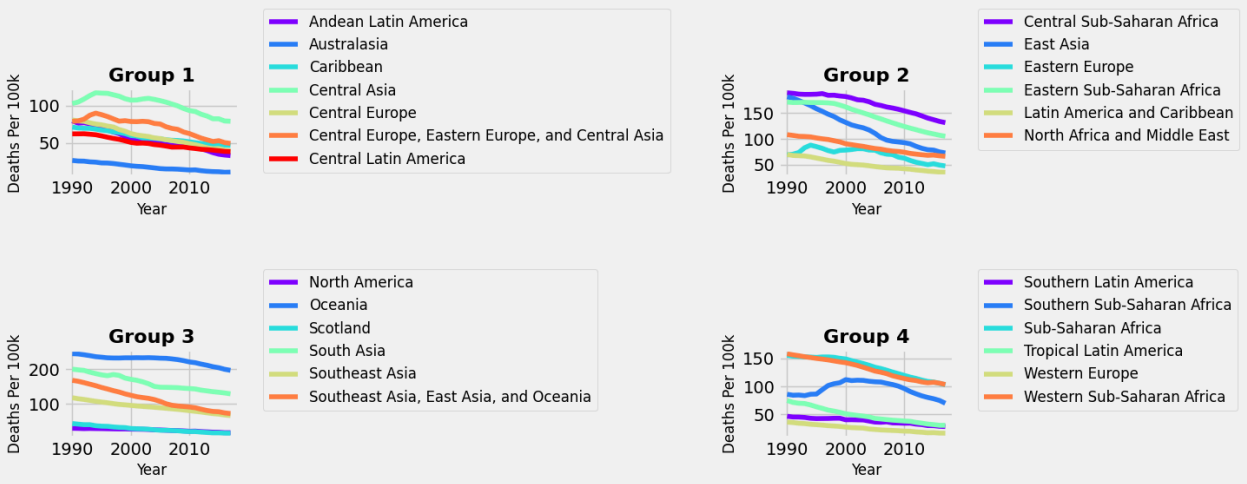
Statistical Analysis and Visualization

To analyze trends in air pollution-related death rates over time, robust linear regression models were employed. Visualizations, such as line plots and subplots, were generated to facilitate the exploration of patterns and enable the comparison of trends across different regions and countries. Additionally, these trained regression models were leveraged to make projections for future air pollution-related death rates, providing valuable insights into potential scenarios.

Results

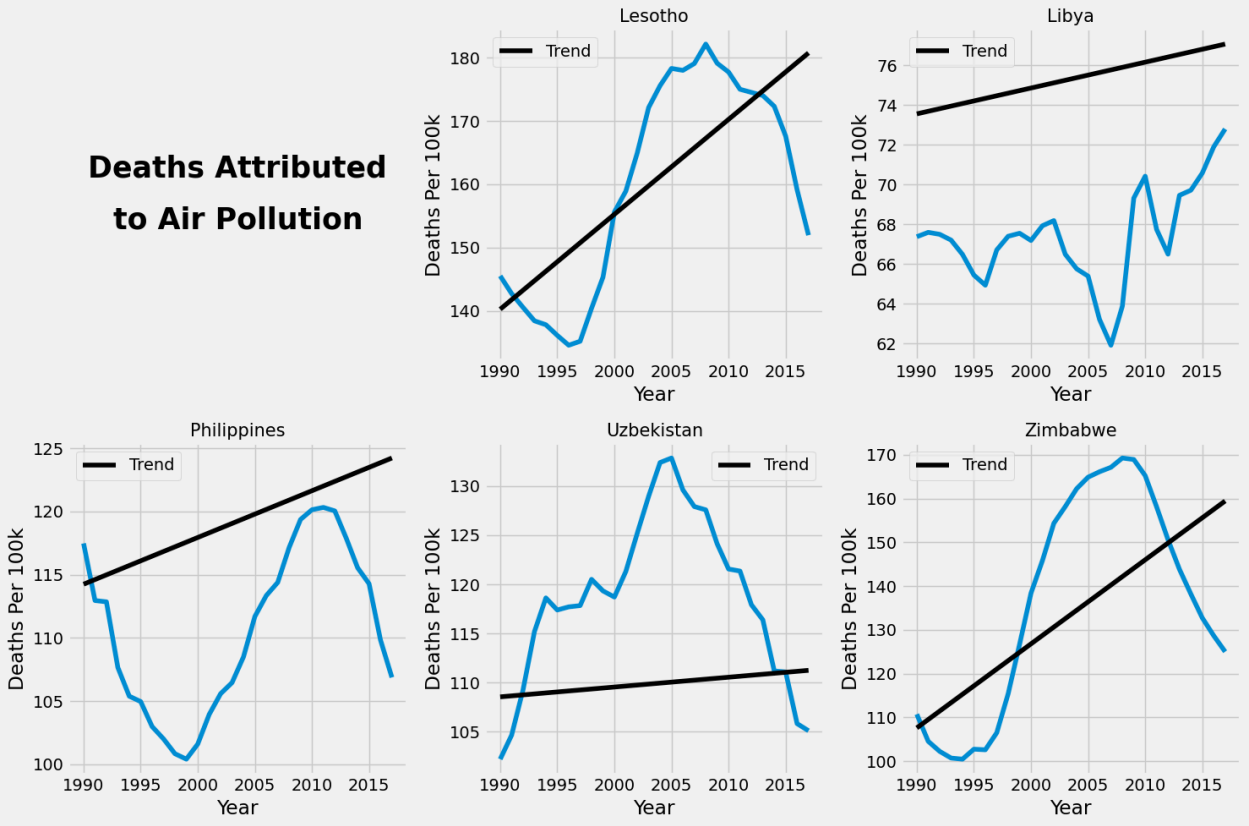
Regional Trends

The analysis revealed significant variations in air pollution-related death rates across different regions. For instance, regions such as Southern Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia exhibited consistently higher death rates compared to other regions like North America and Western Europe (Figure 1). These disparities can be attributed to factors such as differences in urbanization levels, industrialization, and the prevalence of solid fuel use for cooking and heating.



Country-level Analysis

At the country level, the study identified several nations exhibiting increasing trends in air pollution-related deaths. These countries included India, China, Pakistan, and Nigeria. Potential factors contributing to these alarming trends may include rapid urbanization, industrialization, and inadequate environmental regulations, as well as reliance on solid fuels for cooking and heating in some regions. For instance, in India, the air pollution-related death rate increased from 93.3 per 100,000 population in 1990 to 119.5 per 100,000 in 2017 (Figure 2).

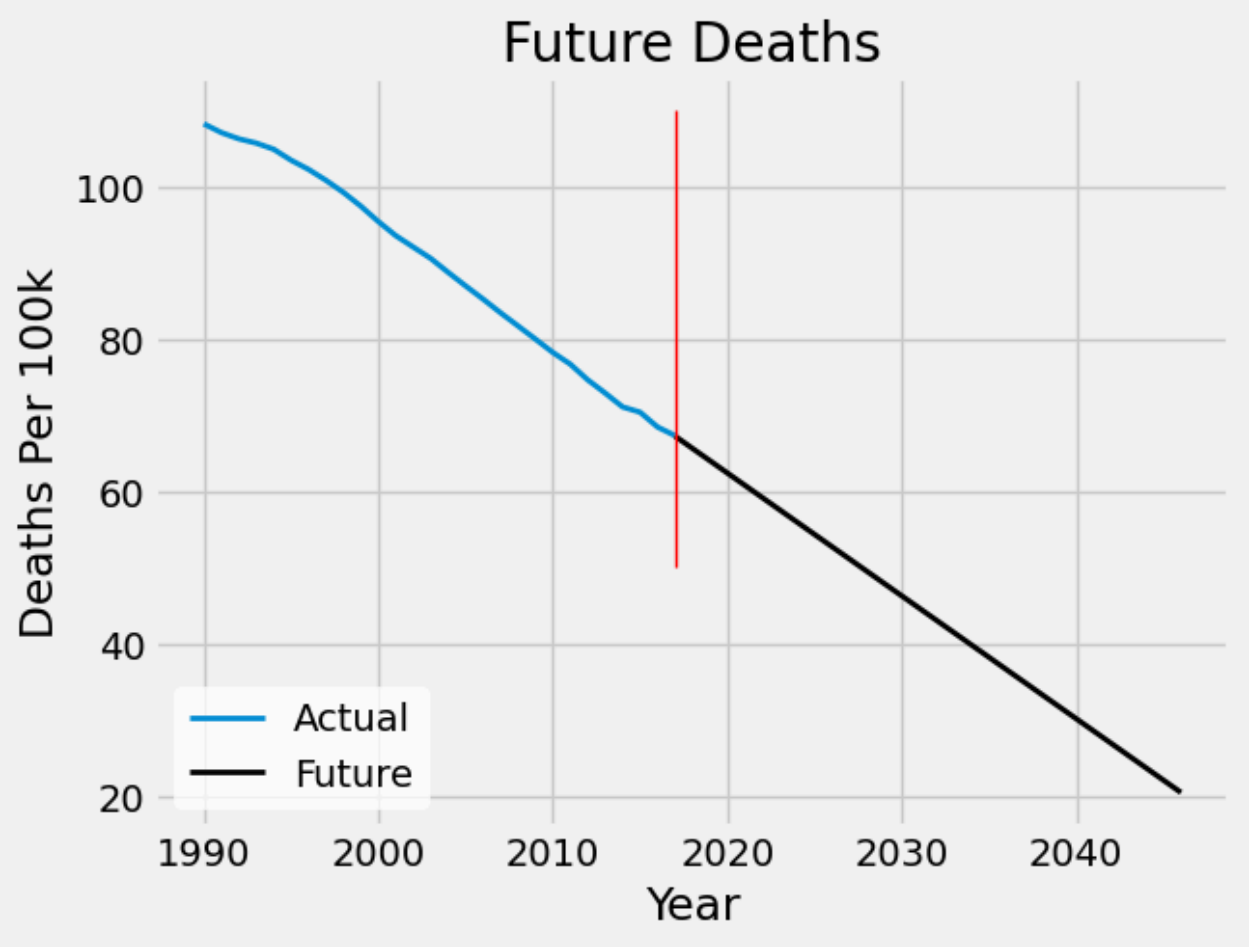


Socioeconomic Factors

The analysis explored the relationship between air pollution-related death rates and socioeconomic development levels, as measured by the Socio-demographic Index (SDI). Findings indicated that countries with lower SDI levels, which reflect lower income and education levels, generally experienced higher air pollution-related death rates. For instance, countries classified as "Low SDI" had an average death rate of 120 per 100,000 population in 2017, compared to 30 per 100,000 for "High SDI" countries. This disparity can be attributed to various factors, including limited access to clean energy sources, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, and lower levels of environmental regulation and enforcement in less developed regions.

Future Projections

Leveraging the trained regression models, projections were made for future air pollution-related death rates up to the year 2068. The analysis revealed an encouraging trend, with death rates projected to continue decreasing until approximately 2058-2059 before nearing zero. (Figure 4). If we continue with this pace for the next 40 years we will see that the death rates will be going down drastically.



OLS Regression Results

Dep. Variable:	y	R-squared:	0.995
Model:	OLS	Adj. R-squared:	0.995
Method:	Least Squares	F-statistic:	5068.
Date:	Fri, 22 Mar 2024	Prob (F-statistic):	2.48e-31
Time:	00:27:11	Log-Likelihood:	-37.831
No. Observations:	28	AIC:	79.66
Df Residuals:	26	BIC:	82.33
Df Model:	1		
Covariance Type:	nonrobust		

	coef	std err	t	P>|t|	[0.025	0.975]
const	3324.9240	45.453	73.151	0.000	3231.494	3418.354
x1	-1.6151	0.023	-71.192	0.000	-1.662	-1.568

Omnibus:	6.349	Durbin-Watson:	0.195
Prob(Omnibus):	0.042	Jarque-Bera (JB):	4.589
Skew:	-0.928	Prob(JB):	0.101
Kurtosis:	3.699	Cond. No.	4.97e+05

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the pervasive and far-reaching impact of air pollution on human health, with significant variations observed across different regions, countries, and socioeconomic development levels. Identifying nations and regions exhibiting increasing trends in air pollution-related deaths, such as India, China, Pakistan, and Nigeria, highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions to address the underlying drivers of this public health crisis.

Rapid urbanization, industrialization, and reliance on solid fuels for cooking and heating have been identified as key contributing factors to the rising air pollution levels and associated mortality rates in many developing and newly industrialized nations. These factors are often compounded by inadequate environmental regulations, limited access to clean energy sources, and insufficient healthcare infrastructure, particularly in low-income regions.

It is crucial to acknowledge the disparities observed across different socioeconomic contexts, as air pollution disproportionately affects vulnerable populations with limited access to healthcare and environmental protection measures. This underscores the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses the sources of air pollution and the underlying social determinants of health, such as poverty, education, and access to clean energy.

The projected zero deaths in global air pollution is around 2059, as revealed by the study's future projections. At this rate, the Earth's pollution will go down and the deaths will reach near zero.

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