Abstract

Industrial development in India has rarely been studied through the perspective of environmental justice (EJ) such that the association between industrial development and significant economic and social inequalities remains to be examined. Our article addresses this gap by focusing on Gujarat in western India, a leading industrial state that exemplifies the designation of India as an “emerging economy.” We link the geographic concentration of industrial facilities classified as major accident hazard (MAH) units, further subdivided by size (large or medium/small) and ownership (public or private), to the socio-demographic composition of the population at the subdistrict (taluka) level. Generalized estimating equations (GEEs) are used to analyze statistical associations between MAH unit density and explanatory variables related to the economic and social status of the residential population at the subdistrict level. Our results indicate a significant relationship between presence of socially disadvantaged populations (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) and density of all types of MAH units, except those associated with the public sector. Higher urbanization and lower home ownership are also found to be strong predictors of MAH unit density. Overall, our article represents an important step towards understanding the complexities of environmental inequalities stemming from Gujarat’s industrial economy.

Keywords: environmental justice, industrial pollution, toxic chemicals, economic development, emerging economy, India