

Harmful Effects of Polluted Environment on Social Life: A Sociological Study

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Abstract

The environment is the natural environment, encompassing all of Earth's biotic and abiotic components, including temperature. The natural world and the environment created by humans or constructed for survival. Even economic activities are part of the environment. It is the aggregate of all physical elements provided by nature, and to understand this, the branch of geography known as environmental geography studies the interactions between humans and the natural world. The study of the environment is essential in sociology because a polluted environment affects every aspect of society. And large-scale civilized human or even ordinary human

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interventions pollute the environment. For example, water contamination can lead to diseases like hepatitis B, hepatitis A, and hepatitis C, which can lead to social distancing, which can lead to discrimination and alter the behavior and morality of those affected, leading to social evils. Ultraviolet rays from the sun cause diseases like cancer. It is the aggregate of all physical elements provided by nature, and to understand it, the branch of geography called environmental geography studies the interactions between humans and the natural world. The study of the environment is essential in sociology because a polluted environment affects every aspect of society. A polluted environment alters the behavior and morality of affected individuals, leading to social evils. Ultraviolet rays from the sun cause diseases like cancer, and polluted air causes asthma, which leads to social discrimination. Discrimination is a social aspect that sociologists need to study. Global warming affects human life, from climate change to occupational changes that foster feelings of superiority and inferiority, as most occupations depend on the weather.

Keywords

Environment, social awareness, global warming, climate change and human health

Introduction

The environment includes the surroundings we live in, featuring all living and non-living elements necessary for our survival. It consists of living organisms like plants and animals, along with non-living parts such as soil, air, and water.

The Environmental Protection Act of 1986 defines the environment as “the sum total of water, air, and land, and the interrelationships among them and with human beings, other living beings, and property.”

Environmental sociology started as a separate branch of sociology about 25 years ago. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, sociologists, especially in Western countries, began to see the growing significance of environmental issues. They started to research the natural environment, which led to the formation of specialized research

groups and sections focusing on environmental sociology within major sociological associations.

Giuliani (1998) points out that sociology began with a view that separated society from nature. This idea is often seen as a key aspect of modernity. Buttel (1992) also talks about the complicated and sometimes conflicting relationships between early sociology and the natural sciences. Even though early sociological ideas borrowed heavily from scientific concepts, the field sought legitimacy by moving away from oversimplified explanations rooted in biological or geographic determinism. From the “1960s onward”, sociologists started to recognize the importance of environmental issues, though they did this in different ways. This growing awareness pushed environmental concerns into the spotlight for governments, international organizations, social movements, and businesses. It became clear that environmental problems were real and not just fleeting concerns or exaggerated claims by activists or extreme scientists, such as the early political ecologists of that time. Since then, “environmental sociology” has been vital in exploring the conflicts, debates, and varying interpretations of nature. It has also looked into the causes and extent of environmental problems among different social groups. This field gained significant traction in the “mid-1980s”, marking a time of renewed theory and greater academic recognition. This growth was largely driven by the rise of environmental movements and an increased global awareness of ecological risks. The prior period, from the “1970s to the early 1980s”, while filled with scattered contributions, nonetheless established important foundations for the discipline’s development.

Significance of environmental studies

In today’s world, rapid industrial growth and population growth have led to the overuse of natural resources and significant environmental damage caused by human activities. As a result, protecting the environment has become a crucial global priority. This responsibility doesn’t fall solely on the government; it also requires the active participation of every individual. Taking preventive action is much more effective and cost-efficient than trying to fix environmental harm after it happens. Mass media, including newspapers, radio, and

television, plays an important role in raising public awareness about environmental issues. Many institutions are also working to promote environmental education and awareness. Some of the most notable are the “Botanical Survey of India (BSI, founded in 1890)”, the “Zoological Survey of India (ZSI, founded in 1916)”, and the “Wildlife Institute of India (WII, established in 1982)”. These organizations focus on conservation and help people better understand the natural world.

Importance of Environmental Sociology

“Environmental sociology” plays an important role in understanding and tackling today’s environmental challenges. Sociology provides a useful lens for this analysis because it looks at how “social institutions, cultural practices, and collective behavior” affect human interactions with the environment. It does not just focus on individual traits. Many people see environmental problems as purely “technical issues” that experts like biologists, chemists, physicists, or engineers can solve. However, sociologists point out that these issues are deeply “social in nature”. Environmental challenges arise from societal structures, cultural values, and patterns of collective behavior. Thus, a “sociological perspective” is vital for creating sustainable and socially informed solutions. Environmental sociologists greatly enhance our understanding of the “social dimensions of environmental issues”. They influence “policy-making” and help governments design effective interventions. By examining the “social factors” that contribute to environmental harm and inequality, policymakers can create more “equitable and effective environmental policies”. Moreover, environmental sociology studies “human–environment relationship”, improving our understanding of the “complex interactions between society and nature”. It looks at how “sociocultural and economic factors” influence environmental attitudes and behaviors. This approach encourages “sustainable lifestyles”, increases “environmental awareness”, and fosters a sense of “collective responsibility” for environmental conservation and management.

Human Health and environment

The topic of emerging issues in population, environment, and health is very important at global, national, regional, and local levels.

From the United Nations Charter and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to the Earth Summit Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), down to the realities of a small village in India, these issues are of great significance and concern to everyone. I want to recognize the G.B. Pant Institute of Social Sciences for organizing this seminar and inviting experts and scholars to share their insights. As we start discussing this important theme in the historic and culturally vibrant city of Prayagraj, the Triveni Sangam, the sacred meeting point of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati, symbolizes unity and harmony. This holy site, rich in the legacy of India's freedom struggle, reminds us of our valuable heritage and offers renewed hope and inspiration. According to Indian scriptures, the three rivers—Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati—stand for purity (Shuddhi), devotion (Bhakti), and knowledge (Gyan). For centuries, these rivers have given spiritual, cultural, and ecological support to millions, forming the foundation of our lives. Our continent is a living example of biological diversity and cultural variety. Our lives, jobs, health, and happiness, along with ecological and economic security, are all connected within what "Fritjof Capra" called the "web of life."

Climate change

Climate change refers to the long-term changes in average weather patterns throughout the Earth's history, often looked at over many geological periods. These changes can happen because of natural processes or as a result of human activities. In particular, the greenhouse effect and global warming are mainly connected to human actions, especially those that began after the Industrial Revolution. This period led to a significant rise in greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Over the years, scientists have repeatedly warned about the serious and wide-ranging effects of climate change on both the planet and human societies.

Objective of the study

1. To know how can we relate environment and sociology
2. To access the relation between health and environment

Methodology

This research paper uses a descriptive research approach and relies entirely on a detailed analysis of secondary data. The secondary information was gathered from a variety of published sources, including academic journal articles, books, magazines, and trustworthy websites. To collect, examine, and interpret the data in a systematic way, the study used the content analysis method. This approach provided a clear understanding of existing literature and offered valuable insights into the research topic.

Review of literature

Sunil, Kumar et...al (2022) The analysis has been done through using secondary data. They find their research explaining how we should protect our environment and contribute to reducing the impact of climate change so that we do not have to face natural disasters in the future.

Ashvani, sahu et...al (2021) they used secondary data Through this research, he demonstrates how sociology is important for environmental studies. This review is crucial for understanding and addressing current environmental issues. Sociologists are crucial to addressing the pressing environmental challenges of our time.

D, Mwende et...al (2024) His research has been done by secondary data on how environmental factors, including air pollution, water pollution, and soil pollution, affect human health, contributing to numerous diseases and climate change, which is detrimental to the environment. This could lead to a variety of future challenges for humans, such as sudden changes in weather due to global warming, and melting glaciers due to extreme heat.

Balasubramanian, M. et...al (2012) they used secondary data. Climate change impacts human life in many ways, including capital, ecosystems, disease, and migration. Meaningful development involves at least a shift from an agricultural to a non-agricultural economy, thereby reducing dependence on agriculture. Since India relies heavily on agriculture—approximately 70%—for livelihoods and employment, both directly and indirectly. Only when this sector

becomes more productive and ensures food self-sufficiency will it provide the labor and capital needed for the manufacturing and service sectors. Climate change not only causes temperature rise, water table rise, floods, and cloudbursts, which leave people homeless, but also significantly impacts agriculture.

Üstün, B. et al. (2007) found that people in European Turkey often display a strong sense of concern for the environment in their daily lives. In contrast, residents of Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia typically show less interest in environmental issues and caring for their community, indicating lower environmental awareness. These differences are clear in their lifestyles.

Danielraja, R. (2019) conducted research using both primary and secondary data. The study showed that while students had strong scientific attitudes, their performance in environmental awareness was comparatively lower. This gap might come from limited exposure to concrete scientific literature in earlier education stages, which made it harder for them to engage with more abstract scientific concepts later on.

Pramita Fenny et al. (2023) stress the essential role of environmental education and awareness. The study points out that a lack of understanding leads to serious problems like pollution, environmental damage, rising temperatures, flooding, extreme heat, and unpredictable weather. It highlights the need to promote environmental responsibility to protect the environment and create a clean, healthy living space. The research also notes that public awareness of environmental issues is generally low, and there is an urgent need to improve it. Overall, the study reinforces the importance of environmental knowledge in preserving nature and ensuring a sustainable future.

Kumari, Meenakshi (2014) She found that the environment has a significant impact on social life. Expanding factories, transportation, urbanization, the flow of chemical waste, contaminated river water, and changes in natural processes are all causes of pollution. This is giving rise to serious diseases, including cancer and asthma, as well as storms and earthquakes. To prevent these, considerable efforts are being made at the national and international levels.

Nayak, dilip kumar (2020) He found through secondary data that environmental pollution can be controlled. Environmental pollution is becoming a major problem in India. The government is committed to addressing it, but unless we ourselves make a resolution, solving this problem will be impossible. Our minds will not be prepared to tackle this problem. Environmental pollution is harmful not only to humans but also to other animals, birds, and plants.

Suggestion

We should keep the environment clean and hygienic. The responsibility of keeping the environment clean is not only the government's responsibility, but it is the duty of every citizen of society to keep their environment clean. We should minimize the use of chemicals and maximize the use of organic materials. Every person should plant a tree. The government celebrates Environment Day every year on June 5th to educate and educate citizens about the environment. Regarding trees, deforestation increases global warming, leading to disasters like floods and temperature rise. Therefore, planting trees is essential. If we still don't become environmentally conscious, we could face significant risks in the future.

Conclusion

The above study reveals how the environment impacts humans and their health. Environmental events give rise to social phenomena. Social phenomena, such as the rise in disease and the spread of unemployment due to seasonal unemployment, are also examples of these. Undesirable weather fluctuations lead to various problems in society. Therefore, as sociologists, it becomes essential to highlight the impacts and negative impacts of the environment so that everyone in society becomes aware of the environment and contributes to keeping it clean. Environmental pollution leads to climate change, which can lead to global warming, increased temperatures, floods, storms, and excessive rainfall. Rising water levels can lead to loss of housing and loss of life and property. Rehabilitation is also a social problem. Environmental impacts are also seen in agriculture. The use of chemical pesticides, which not only kills pests but also damages crops and agricultural land, results in a loss of diversity, which impacts the entire ecosystem.

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