The Interconnectedness of Environmental Issues and Social Well-being

An Overview

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The North-South Teaching Network

North-South Teaching Network is in pursuit of fostering a collaborative and enriching educational network, a tool to consolidate resources contributed by esteemed partner universities from the Global South and North. This collaborative effort is integral to the development and implementation of an international strategic plan focusing on curriculum enrichment, personnel development, and the positioning of universities within the global community. NOST endeavors to serve as a valuable resource for research, documentation, and publication activities on an international scale. This network brings together academics and students who not only possess expertise in their respective fields but also actively engage as practitioners on three continents. Their dual role as resource persons in digital teaching and as contributors to research and evaluation activities is a cornerstone of NOST's mission. We envision NOST as a strategic and enduring forum, ensuring a network of cooperation that transcends boundaries and contributes to the collective advancement of teaching and learning on a global scale.

Understanding the Intertwined Relationship between Environment and Society

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What is an environment?

Environment is **"the sum total of all conditions and influences that affect the development and life of all organisms"** - Dr. T.N. Khoshoo

Environment is an aggregate of **all those external conditions and effects which regulate the life and development of organisms**.
- Sir E.J. Ross

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What is an environment?

-Environment is the totality of one's surroundings

-Biophysical + social aspects

Understanding the Intertwined Relationship between Environment and Society

a. An introduction to environmental social work and its significance in addressing global challenges

Environmental social work

A field of practice that recognizes the interconnectedness between human well-being and the natural environment.

It focuses on:

-addressing environmental issues that disproportionately impact vulnerable populations;

-promoting sustainable practices that enhance the quality of life for all

Understanding the Intertwined Relationship between Environment and Society

a. An Introduction to environmental social work and its significance in addressing global challenges

Environmental social work

-Social workers bridge the gap between social and environmental concerns, advocating for policies that protect the environment and supporting communities in adapting to environmental changes.

Understanding the Intertwined Relationship between Environment and Society

a. An Introduction to environmental social work and its significance in addressing global challenges

Addressing Global Challenges Through Environmental Social Work

Environmental social work plays an important role in addressing some of the most pressing global challenges including:

Climate change

-engage with communities affected by climate change;
-providing support and resources to adapt to rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and disruptions in agriculture and food security.

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Addressing Global Challenges Through Environmental Social Work

Environmental degradation
-Social workers can collaborate with environmental organizations to address deforestation, pollution, and biodiversity loss, promoting sustainable land-use practices and waste management systems.

Sustainable development
-Social workers can promote education and awareness about sustainable practices, encouraging individuals and communities to adopt environmentally friendly behaviors

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Addressing Global Challenges Through Environmental Social Work

Social inequality and environmental justice

-Social workers can advocate for policies that address environmental racism and ensure that marginalized communities have equal access to clean air, water, and green spaces.

Understanding the Intertwined Relationship between Environment and Society

B. Exploration of the interconnectedness between environmental issues and social well-being

Environmental Impacts on Social Well-being
- Destructive environmental practices, such as deforestation, pollution, and climate change, have a direct and detrimental impact on human health and well-being.

- Environmental degradation also undermines food security and nutrition.

  - Destruction of natural habitats, such as forests and coral reefs, disrupts ecosystems that provide essential food and income sources for local communities.

Understanding the Intertwined Relationship between Environment and Society

B. Exploration of the interconnectedness between environmental issues and social well-being

Social Inequality and Environmental Injustice

- Environmental problems are not evenly distributed; affect marginalized communities
- Low-income communities often reside in areas with higher levels of pollution, less access to clean water and sanitation, and increased exposure to environmental hazards.

Key Environmental Science Concepts and Their Impacts

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a. **An Introduction to Fundamental Environmental Science Principles**

   i. **Resource depletion and its impact on energy security, economic growth, and sustainable development**

     Resource depletion

       -growing concern for humanity; we rely increasingly on non-renewable resources to sustain our energy needs and economic growth.

        1. Resource Depletion and Energy Security

          -Energy security, the ability of a nation to meet its energy needs at affordable prices and without disruptions, is a critical aspect of economic stability and national resilience.

          -Resource depletion poses a significant threat to energy security as it can lead to increased scarcity, higher prices, and supply disruptions.

Key Environmental Science Concepts and Their Impacts

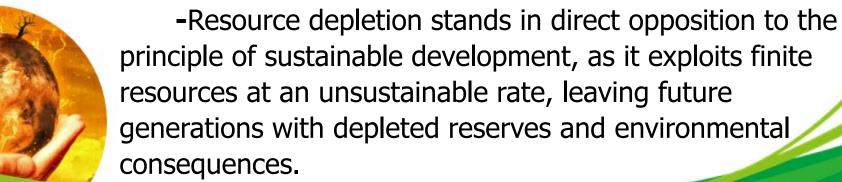**a. An Introduction to Fundamental Environmental Science Principles:**

    i. Resource depletion and its impact on energy security, economic growth, and sustainable development

2. Resource Depletion and Economic Growth

    -Extraction and processing of natural resources are often an important sector of the economy, providing jobs, tax revenue, and raw materials for industries;

    -overexploitation can lead to resource scarcity, reduced productivity, and higher production costs, ultimately hindering economic growth.

3. Resource Depletion and Sustainable Development

-Resource depletion stands in direct opposition to the principle of sustainable development, as it exploits finite resources at an unsustainable rate, leaving future generations with depleted reserves and environmental consequences.

Key Environmental Science Concepts and Their Impacts

a. An Introduction to Fundamental Environmental Science Principles:

ii. Ecosystems and their role in maintaining biodiversity, regulating climate, and providing essential services

1.Maintaining Biodiversity

- Biodiversity, the incredible variety of life on Earth, is the cornerstone of healthy ecosystems. It encompasses the diversity of species, genes, and ecosystems, each playing a unique role in maintaining the delicate balance of nature.

2. Regulating Climate

-Ecosystems play a critical role in regulating the Earth's climate, influencing factors such as carbon sequestration, air quality, and rainfall patterns.

-Forests act as natural carbon sinks, absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and storing it in their biomass and soils.

Key Environmental Science Concepts and Their Impacts

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3. Providing Essential Services

-Provisioning services: These services provide us with the resources we need to survive, such as food, water, timber, and medicines.

-Regulating services: Ecosystems regulate the natural environment, controlling water flows, purifying air and water, and mitigating climate change.

-Supporting services: These services provide the foundation for the functioning of ecosystems, such as nutrient cycling, soil formation, and pollination.

Cultural services: Ecosystems provide us with non-material benefits, such as aesthetic beauty, spiritual inspiration, and opportunities for recreation and leisure.

The Role of Environmental Social Work in Addressing Environmental Concerns

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a. Core Principles of Environmental Social Work

Social justice: Recognize that environmental problems are often caused by social inequities and that marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by environmental hazards. They work to address these inequities and to promote environmental justice for all.

Sustainability: Believe that human well-being is linked to the health of the environment. Promote sustainable practices that meet the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The Role of Environmental Social Work in Addressing Environmental Concerns

a. Core Principles of Environmental Social Work

Human-environment relationship: Environmental social workers understand that humans and the environment are interconnected and that their well-being is interdependent.

Community empowerment: Environmental social workers work with communities to develop their own solutions to environmental problems. They recognize the power of community-based organizing and participatory approaches to environmental action.

Intersectionality: Environmental social workers recognize that environmental problems are often interconnected with other social issues such as poverty, racism, and sexism. They work to address these issues in a holistic and integrated way.

The Role of Environmental Social Work in Addressing Environmental Concerns

b. Exploring the roles of social workers in:

    i. Disaster preparedness and response, addressing the social and psychological impacts of environmental hazards

<u>Assessment and triage</u>

-assess the needs of individuals and families affected by disasters, identifying those who may need additional support.

<u>Crisis intervention and counseling</u>

-provide crisis intervention and counseling to individuals and families experiencing trauma and stress.

The Role of Environmental Social Work in Addressing Environmental Concerns

b. Exploring the roles of social workers in:

   i. Disaster preparedness and response, addressing the social and psychological impacts of environmental hazards

Community organizing and mobilization

-work with communities to organize and mobilize resources in the aftermath of disasters.

Policy advocacy and education

-advocate for policies and practices that reduce the risk of disasters and improve the effectiveness of disaster response efforts.

-educate communities about disaster preparedness and response, helping them make informed decisions to protect themselves.

The Role of Environmental Social Work in Addressing Environmental Concerns

b. Exploring the roles of social workers in:

ii. Advocacy and policy development for environmental justice and equitable access to environmental resources

<u>Raise awareness</u>

-Social workers educate communities about environmental hazards, and their impacts on marginalized groups.

-facilitate community forums, workshops, and media outreach to amplify the voices of affected communities.

<u>Build community power</u>

-Empower communities to organize and advocate for their right to a healthy environment.

-Support community-based organizations, facilitate leadership development

The Role of Environmental Social Work in Addressing Environmental Concerns

b. Exploring the roles of social workers in:

ii. Advocacy and policy development for environmental justice and equitable access to environmental resources

Collaborate with allies

-Social workers collaborate with environmental organizations, legal advocacy groups, and other allies to form a united front in the fight for environmental justice. They work together to develop joint campaigns, research initiatives, and policy proposals.

Challenge discriminatory practices

-Social workers challenge environmental policies and practices that perpetuate inequities and harm marginalized communities. They conduct research to document disparities in environmental exposure and advocate for policy changes that address these injustices.

The Role of Environmental Social Work in Addressing Environmental Concerns

b. Exploring the roles of social workers in:

iii. Capacity building and community empowerment for sustainable resource management and resilience building

Capacity Building

Provide training and education: Offer training and education on sustainable resource management practices. Provide training on community organizing, leadership development, and conflict resolution skills to empower communities to take action.

The Role of Environmental Social Work in Addressing Environmental Concerns

b. Exploring the roles of social workers in:

    iii. Capacity building and community empowerment for sustainable resource management and resilience building

Community Empowerment

Foster social cohesion and collective action: Helping communities build trust, identify common goals, and develop strategies for collaborative problem-solving.

Support community leadership development: Providing opportunities for individuals to develop their skills and confidence in leading community initiatives.

Challenge power dynamics and promote equity: Ensuring that the voices of marginalized communities are heard and their needs are considered in decision-making processes.

Short Activity and Sharing (Choose one)

a.What environmental challenges affected your community?

b.What environmental challenges have you encountered during your practical semester? How did you overcome those challenges?