

Exploring the Contrasting Worlds of Urban and Rural Environments: Differences, Similarities and Implications for Human Life

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ABOUT THE STUDY

The environment plays a crucial role in the overall development and survival of all living organisms. It is essential to understand the differences between the urban and rural environments in terms of their impact on human health and survival. Urban environments are characterized by high population densities, industrialization, and infrastructure development, while rural environments are characterized by lower population densities and natural landscapes. In this essay, we will discuss the key differences between urban and rural environments, their impact on human health, and strategies to mitigate environmental damage.

Urban environment

Urbanization is a global phenomenon that has led to significant environmental changes. The urban environment is characterized by high levels of air pollution, noise pollution, heat islands, and water pollution. Air pollution is a major concern in urban areas due to the high levels of vehicular traffic and industrial emissions

Fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) and nitrogen oxides (NO_x) are the key pollutants that contribute to respiratory diseases such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) (World Health Organization [WHO], 2018).

Noise pollution is another significant issue in urban areas due to the high levels of traffic and construction activities. Exposure to high levels of noise can lead to hearing loss, sleep disturbance, and other health problems (WHO, 2011). Heat islands are urban areas that experience higher temperatures than surrounding rural areas due to the absorption and retention of heat by buildings and other infrastructure. Heat islands can lead to heat-related illnesses such as heat stroke, dehydration, and heat exhaustion (EPA, 2019). Water pollution is another significant issue in urban areas due to the discharge of untreated sewage and industrial effluents into water bodies. Contaminated water can lead to the spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera, typhoid, and hepatitis A (WHO, 2019).

Rural environment

The rural environment is characterized by natural landscapes, lower population densities, and agricultural activities. However, rural areas are not immune to environmental problems. Agricultural activities such as the use of pesticides and fertilizers can lead to soil and water pollution, which can impact human health and biodiversity. Exposure to pesticides can lead to acute and chronic health effects such as nausea, dizziness, cancer, and reproductive problems (WHO, 2019). Soil erosion and degradation can also reduce the productivity of agricultural land, leading to food insecurity and poverty. Additionally, rural areas are prone to natural disasters such as floods, droughts, and wildfires, which can cause significant damage to the environment and human health.

Impact on human health

Both urban and rural environments can have significant impacts on human health. Exposure to air pollution, noise pollution, and water pollution can lead to a range of health problems such as respiratory diseases, cardiovascular diseases, and cancer (WHO, 2018). Heat islands can lead to heat-related illnesses such as heat stroke and dehydration, particularly among vulnerable populations such as the elderly and children (EPA, 2019). Pesticide exposure can lead to acute and chronic health effects such as cancer, reproductive problems and developmental disorders (WHO, 2019). Natural disasters such as floods, droughts, and wildfires can lead to injuries, loss of life, and displacement of populations, leading to mental health problems such as anxiety and depression.

Mitigation strategies

To mitigate the negative impacts of both urban and rural environments, several strategies can be implemented. In urban areas, regulatory measures such as emissions standards, zoning regulations, and green building codes can be implemented to reduce air pollution, noise pollution, and heat islands (EPA, 2019). Additionally, investment in public transportation, bike lanes, and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure can reduce vehicular traffic and promote active

transport. In rural areas, sustainable agricultural practices such as organic farming, crop rotation, and integrated pest management can reduce soil and water pollution while increasing productivity (FAO, 2019). Disaster preparedness and management plans can also help mitigate the impacts of natural disasters on human health and the environment.

Both urban and rural environments play a critical role in human health and survival. While urban areas are characterized by high levels of pollution and infrastructure development, rural areas are characterized by agricultural activities and natural landscapes. Both environments can have significant impacts on human health and the environment. However, implementing mitigation strategies such as regulatory measures, sustainable agricultural practices, and disaster preparedness plans can help reduce the negative impacts of both urban and rural environments, leading to a healthier and more sustainable future.

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