

PREPARING THE YOUNGER GENERATION TO BECOME ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AMBASSADORS

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Abstract

This article discusses the importance of preparing young people as environmental health ambassadors through education and active involvement in activities that support environmental sustainability. Formal education in schools serves as the main foundation in raising environmental awareness, while the role of community and family strengthens the application of environmental values in daily life. In addition, support from the government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) through training programmes and campaigns is crucial to provide a platform that enables the younger generation to contribute to environmental conservation. With a comprehensive and synergistic strategy, young people can be empowered to become agents of change dedicated to maintaining and improving environmental health.

Keywords: Young Generation, Ambassador, Environmental Health.

Introduction

Environmental health issues are increasingly urgent to deal with. Air pollution, water pollution, soil degradation, and plastic waste are some of the issues that show how critical environmental conditions are today. The impact of this environmental damage is not only detrimental to the ecosystem, but also has serious consequences for human health. Respiratory diseases, skin disorders, and poisoning from hazardous chemicals are some of the health problems that are increasingly common (Harish et al., 2021).

In the midst of this situation, the role of the younger generation is crucial. They will not only be the successors of the nation but also potential agents of change. By utilising this role, they can become the pioneers of the environmentally friendly movement in various sectors. The formal and non-formal education they receive today equips them with knowledge on environmental issues, which in turn, they can apply in their daily lives (Halsall et al., 2022). On a broader scale, young people can be actively involved in environmental campaigns, join non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and develop innovative projects that can provide practical solutions to complex environmental problems (Jurivich et al., 2021).

In addition, the younger generation has a critical role in shaping public opinion and behaviour towards environmental issues. With the power of social media and the ability to communicate effectively, they are able to spread awareness and inspire positive action in maintaining environmental health. Their participation in activities such as clean-ups, tree planting, and recycling programmes not only have a direct impact on the

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environment, but also influence their family, friends, and communities to take part in preserving nature (Christensen et al., 2021). In this way, young people not only contribute to environmental sustainability but also build a strong culture of environmental care for future generations. However, a major challenge is the lack of knowledge and awareness among young people about the importance of maintaining a healthy environment. According to several studies, many teenagers are still ignorant of environmental issues due to lack of proper education and socialisation (Guzman et al., 2022).

Therefore, preparing the younger generation to become environmental health ambassadors is a strategic step. Formal and non-formal education that emphasises the importance of protecting the environment needs to be improved. Training programmes and campaigns that involve young people as the driving force can also be an effective solution to increase awareness and action in maintaining environmental health (Bakshi & Gupta, 2022).

Becoming an environmental health ambassador will give young people not only a theoretical understanding of environmental issues, but also practical skills in taking action. This includes activities such as organising environmental campaigns, greening programmes, environmental clean-ups and recycling projects. Thus, young people not only gain knowledge but also feel a sense of responsibility and concern for environmental sustainability (Veerman, 2023).

Integrating the concept of environmental health ambassadors in primary and secondary education curricula and through youth organisations is a step that should be considered. This aims to ensure that young Indonesians grow up with a mindset and skills that are responsive to environmental health issues. By doing so, we can hope for a healthier and more ecologically sustainable culture change in the future.

As such, this study aims to examine how to prepare the younger generation for this role, the skills and knowledge required and the obstacles that may be faced.

Research Methods

This research uses the literature method. The literature research method, also known as literature study, is a research approach in which the researcher collects and analyses information from various written sources to answer research questions or develop new ideas. (Firman, 2018); (Jelahut, 2022).

Results and Discussion

The relationship between environmental health and human health

Environmental health is a branch of health science that studies and manages environmental factors that can affect human well-being. This definition includes all aspects of the physical, chemical, biological, and social external environment that impact on health. World health organisations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) state that environmental health involves preventing disease and creating an environment that supports health by monitoring and controlling environmental factors (Thompson et al., 2022).

The scope of environmental health is vast and covers various aspects ranging from clean water, sanitation, waste management, air quality, to the control of disease vectors such as mosquitoes. It also includes the management of hazardous chemicals, noise pollution, radiation, and other factors that may pose health risks. In practice, environmental health professionals are often involved in a variety of activities ranging from environmental risk assessment, implementation of public health policies, to advocacy for changes in the social environment that are more favourable to health (Rothhut et al., 2023).

Environmental health plays an important role in disease prevention and health promotion. By identifying and reducing exposure to harmful factors in the environment, we can reduce the prevalence of infectious diseases, respiratory diseases, and various other health conditions influenced by environmental factors. In addition, environmental health is also important in the sustainability of ecosystems and quality of life in general. Education and awareness about environmental health issues can also help people make healthier decisions in their daily activities and support healthier and more environmentally friendly public policies (Leckman et al., 2021).

The environment plays a crucial role in determining human health. Environmental factors such as air quality, clean water, and good sanitation have a direct impact on the physical and mental well-being of individuals and communities. Air pollution, for example, can cause various respiratory health problems such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Water contamination can cause diarrhoeal and other infectious diseases, especially in areas with limited access to adequate sanitation infrastructure (SPÁLOVÁ et al., 2021).

Environmental factors also play a role in the spread of disease. Disease vectors such as mosquitoes can breed in environments that are polluted or have stagnant water, spreading diseases such as malaria and dengue fever. Poor environmental conditions also worsen health conditions due to infectious diseases. For example, densely populated and unhygienic neighbourhoods increase the risk of transmission of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and COVID-19. This suggests that good environmental management is essential for disease prevention and health promotion (Cardarelli et al., 2021).

Improving environmental health can significantly improve quality of life. Efforts to reduce pollution, improve access to clean water and sanitation, and properly manage waste not only lower disease rates but also increase people's productivity and well-being. A healthier environment can also contribute to people's mental health, by providing green spaces and reducing stress from pollution and noise. Investing in environmental health is therefore not just a matter of health policy, but also an important step towards sustainable development and overall improvement in quality of life.

Young Generation as Agents of Change

Today's youth, often known as Generation Z and Millennials, have unique characteristics that set them apart from previous generations. They have grown up in a digital age that provides unlimited access to information and global connectivity, so they are typically more skilled in technology and tend to be more open to change and

innovation. This generation is also known to be highly socially conscious, with a deep concern for issues such as climate change, social justice and human rights (Hatzikiriakidis et al., 2023). In addition, they tend to value experiences over material possessions, show great interest in work-life balance, and seek work that not only provides income but is also meaningful and impactful. With their ability to be adaptive, innovative, and concerned about the future, the younger generation plays an important role as agents of change in modern society (Lim et al., 2022).

Today's young generation has great potential to be agents of change in society. Growing up in the digital age, they have unlimited access to information and the ability to communicate quickly and effectively through various social media platforms. This allows them to voice opinions, form social movements, and influence public policy more easily than ever before. Awareness of global issues such as climate change, social justice and human rights makes them more proactive in responding to the biggest challenges in the world today. They are often involved in initiatives ranging from environmental action to gender equality campaigns, demonstrating their commitment to creating a better world (Jacobs & George, 2022).

In addition, the younger generation is also known to have a strong entrepreneurial spirit and high adaptability. They not only seek meaningful employment, but also create new job opportunities by founding startups and social enterprises. Their innovation and creativity are often centred on sustainable solutions that have a long-term positive impact on society (Situmorang & Herdiansyah, 2022). With a spirit of collaboration and using technology as a key tool, the younger generation is able to implement new approaches that are more effective and efficient in solving problems faced by society. Through active involvement in various sectors, whether economic, political, or social, they not only inspire change but also lead the transformation towards a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Environmental Health Education and Training Model

The environmental health education and training model is a strategic framework designed to equip individuals and communities with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to manage and improve the quality of the environment. One innovative approach in this education model is the use of project-based learning, which allows learners to be directly involved in the identification, analysis and practical resolution of environmental problems. Through real-world projects, learners learn to work collaboratively, develop critical thinking skills, and formulate solutions that can be applied in the real world (Keith, 2021).

Another important component in this model is the integration of technology and digital media in the learning process. The use of digital tools such as simulations, educational games and e-learning platforms can enrich the learning experience and make the subject matter more interactive and engaging. Technology also enables wider and easier access to up-to-date information on global environmental health issues. In addition, online trainings and webinars can be held regularly to ensure that learners stay

updated with the latest from experts in the field of environmental health (Dewa et al., 2022).

Another important aspect of this education and training model is the delivery of materials that focus on natural resource conservation and sustainable public policy development. Knowledge of environmental law, risk management, and ways to mitigate negative impacts on ecosystems is essential. Through a comprehensive and relevant curriculum, learners are facilitated to understand the relationship between human activities and environmental balance and the importance of sustainable resource management (Ramgade & Kumar, 2021).

Finally, collaboration with local communities, non-governmental organisations and the private sector is also an integral part of this model. Through these collaborations, learners can get involved in various tangible environmental health initiatives and programmes, such as hygiene campaigns, greening and recycling. Active participation in community activities not only provides practical experience but also builds social awareness and responsibility. With the involvement of all stakeholders, the environmental health education and training model can achieve a wider and sustainable impact, fostering the creation of healthier and more environmentally responsible communities.

Environmental Health Challenges and Solutions

Environmental health challenges are complex issues involving several factors such as air, water, and soil pollution, climate change, and violations of environmental regulations and standards. One of the biggest challenges is air pollution caused by emissions from motor vehicles, industry and fossil fuel power plants. This air pollution not only adversely affects human health, causing lung and heart disease, but also negatively impacts ecosystems. A significant reduction in air quality can reduce the quality of life of the wider community, especially in dense urban areas (Donger, 2022).

Water pollution is also a serious problem, with agricultural runoff, industrial effluents, and untreated domestic sewage often contaminating water sources. This water contamination can trigger various infectious diseases and other health problems, such as diarrhoea, cholera and even cancer. In addition, poor water quality can harm aquatic ecosystems, reduce biodiversity and undermine the economic benefits that local communities rely on, such as fisheries and tourism (Wang & Miao, 2022).

Climate change is a global challenge that has the potential to worsen many aspects of environmental health. Rising global temperatures, shifting rainfall patterns and increased frequency of natural disasters such as storms and floods can affect human and ecosystem health. Climate change can also extend the seasonality of certain diseases, expand the geographical distribution of disease vectors such as mosquitoes that spread dengue or malaria, and increase the risk of crop failures that impact food security and nutrition in communities (Hayward & Treharne, 2022).

To overcome these challenges, integrated and sustainable solutions are needed. One of them is the implementation of environmentally friendly technologies in the transport and industrial sectors, such as electric vehicles, renewable energy systems, and

cleaner production processes. Strict enforcement of laws and regulations is also needed to ensure compliance with environmental standards. In addition, educating and raising public awareness about the importance of protecting the environment and healthy lifestyles can be a significant preventive measure. Collaboration between the government, private sector, non-governmental organisations and local communities is essential to achieve this goal to create a healthy and sustainable environment for future generations (Lindemann-Matthies et al., 2021).

The importance of waste and litter management is a major concern in environmental health. With population growth and urbanisation, the volume of waste and litter is increasing sharply. Poor waste management, such as accumulation in landfills that do not meet standards, open burning of waste, or uncontrolled waste disposal can pollute air, soil, and water. One important solution is the implementation of an integrated waste management system that includes waste reduction, recycling and reuse. Modern waste treatment technologies, such as environmentally friendly incineration and composting technologies, also need to be expanded (Loury et al., 2021).

Apart from the technical side, leadership and governance aspects also play a crucial role. Governments at all levels need to set an example by adopting policies that support good environmental health practices, such as green policies and sustainable urban planning. Cross-sectoral cooperation between the ministries of health, environment, industry and agriculture is needed to develop a comprehensive strategy. Financial support and incentives for research and development of green technologies will also accelerate solutions to this challenge (Choi et al., 2022).

Equally important is the role of society in maintaining a healthy environment. Education and raising awareness of the importance of a clean and healthy environment are key to behaviour change. Educational programmes ranging from school level to public campaigns can increase community knowledge and engagement. Adoption of sustainable lifestyles such as the use of eco-friendly materials, reduced consumption of single-use plastics, and utilisation of public transport can also have significant positive impacts (Clifford-Clarke et al., 2021).

Thus, complex environmental health challenges require an integrated and multidisciplinary approach to find solutions. From air and water pollution to climate change and waste management, each issue requires specialised attention and action. Effective solutions involve a combination of environmentally friendly technologies, strict regulations, public education and awareness, and co-operation between the various parties involved. Only through the synergised efforts of all components of society can we build a healthier and more sustainable environment for the benefit of current and future generations.

Conclusion

Preparing the younger generation to be ambassadors of environmental health requires attention to education and awareness-raising from an early age. Education on the importance of environmental health should start from primary school, with a curriculum that supports environmental knowledge and sustainable practices. This

teaching needs to be interactive and participatory so that children can internalise environmental values and be motivated to apply them in their daily lives.

In addition to formal education, the role of communities and families is significant in encouraging young people to become environmental health ambassadors. Active involvement in community activities such as environmental clean-up programmes, recycling, and greening projects will foster a sense of responsibility and care for the environment. Families should also set an example by implementing environmentally friendly habits at home, such as reducing the use of single-use plastics, saving energy, and managing waste properly.

Finally, support from the government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is crucial. Training programmes and campaigns supported by the government and NGOs can be a platform for young people to learn more about environmental issues and how to address them. The government should also provide incentives and facilitation for youth-led environmental initiatives, such as scholarship programmes, competitions, and public recognition. With good synergy from various parties, the younger generation can become effective agents of change in the effort to maintain and improve environmental health.

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