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"YOUNGER GENERATION'S CONTRIBUTION IN SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH"

J. Rohini (Ph.D Research Scholar), **Dr.T.V. Anandi**

Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Head (Retired)

Department of Commerce with computer Application

St.Antony's College of Arts and Sciences for Women, Thamaraipadi, Dindigul, Tamilnadu.

Abstract

The vital role of the younger generation in addressing the pressing challenge of solid waste management. It highlights their unique perspectives, innovative ideas, and potential to drive sustainable waste management practices. By fostering environmental awareness, promoting sustainable consumption habits, and developing innovative waste management technologies, the younger generation can significantly contribute to a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable future for all.

Key Words; Solid Waste, Sustainability, Waste Management

Introduction

The younger generation plays a crucial role in solid waste management by driving awareness campaigns, promoting sustainable practices, advocating for policy changes, and actively participating in waste reduction initiatives, leveraging their digital fluency and passion for environmental issues to create significant change in waste management practices. Solid waste management plays a crucial role in sustainable development by mitigating environmental damage, conserving resources, and promoting economic growth.

Key roles of the younger generation in solid waste management:

Raising awareness:

Utilizing social media and digital platforms to educate peers and communities about the environmental impacts of waste generation, proper waste disposal methods, and the importance of recycling and composting.

Promoting sustainable lifestyles:

Leading by example by adopting practices like reducing single-use plastics, choosing reusable items, mindful consumption, and supporting eco-friendly businesses.

Community engagement:

Organizing clean-up drives, waste segregation campaigns, and educational workshops to involve local communities in active waste management.

Policy advocacy:

Lobbying for stricter waste management regulations, promoting extended producer responsibility (EPR) policies, and advocating for improved recycling infrastructure.

Innovative solutions:

Developing creative approaches to waste management, such as upcycling projects, waste-to-energy initiatives, and new recycling technologies.

Environmental activism:

Participating in protests and demonstrations to raise awareness about the urgency of addressing waste pollution issues.

Why the younger generation is important in solid waste management:

Future leaders:

As the future generation, they will be most impacted by the environmental consequences of poor waste management practices.

Technological fluency:

They are adept at using digital tools to spread messages and mobilize action on environmental issues.

Passion and commitment:

Young people often have a strong passion for environmental protection and are willing to actively work towards sustainable solutions.

Examples of youth-led initiatives in solid waste management:

School recycling programs:

Implementing recycling systems within schools to educate students about proper waste segregation.

Community clean-up drives:

Organizing volunteer clean-up activities in local neighborhoods

Social media campaigns:

Using platforms like Instagram and TikTok to raise awareness about waste reduction and recycling

Challenges faced by the younger generation in promoting sustainable waste management:

- **Lack of awareness and participation from older generations:** Bridging the gap between young activists and older communities is vital for widespread change.
- **Policy implementation gaps:** Ensuring that government policies are effectively implemented and enforced to support sustainable waste management practices.
- **Access to resources and infrastructure:** Limited access to proper waste collection facilities and recycling infrastructure can hinder efforts.

Solid Waste Management and Sustainable Growth

- **Environmental Protection:**
  - **Reduced Pollution:** Proper SWM prevents pollution of air, water, and soil by minimizing the release of harmful substances from landfills and incinerators.
  - **Habitat Preservation:** Landfills and improper waste disposal can damage ecosystems and harm wildlife. Sustainable SWM practices help protect natural habitats.
  - **Climate Change Mitigation:** Methane emissions from landfills contribute to climate change. Sustainable SWM techniques like anaerobic digestion can capture methane and use it as a renewable energy source.
- **Resource Conservation:**
  - **Recycling and Reuse:** Sustainable SWM emphasizes recycling and reusing materials, reducing the need for virgin resources and conserving natural resources like forests and minerals.
  - **Waste-to-Energy:** Technologies like incineration with energy recovery can convert waste into electricity, reducing reliance on fossil fuels.
- **Economic Benefits:**
  - **Job Creation:** Implementing sustainable SWM practices can create jobs in waste collection, recycling, composting, and waste-to-energy sectors.
  - **Resource Recovery:** Recycling and waste-to-energy initiatives can generate revenue and reduce the costs associated with waste disposal.
  - **Improved Public Health:** Proper waste management reduces the spread of diseases and improves public health, leading to increased productivity and economic growth.

Key principles of sustainable SWM include:

- **Reduce:** Minimizing waste generation at the source through responsible consumption and product design.
- **Reuse:** Extending the lifespan of products through repair, reuse, and sharing.
- **Recycle:** Processing materials into new products, diverting them from landfills.
- **Recover:** Extracting energy from waste through technologies like anaerobic digestion and incineration with energy recovery.
- **Dispose:** As a last resort, disposing of waste in a safe and environmentally sound manner.

Conclusion:

Reuse is better than recycling, so considering whether a business can donate any materials that would otherwise go to waste is a great way to improve sustainability. This could be overstocked foods in stores and restaurants, old hardware from offices, out-of-promotion goods from non-food stores, or even materials from renovations.

Waste management can be sustainable in both businesses and homes if the right framework is implemented. But more importantly, the consequences, if waste is left unchecked, are too great not to consider.

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