Overpopulation: Literary Review

To What Extent Can The Planet Cope With Overpopulation?

Literature Review

Overpopulation is a global issue that heavily impacts the planet today. Environmental activists recognise the problem and understand that climate change, pollution etc cannot be sufficiently tackled without confronting the neglected issue that is overpopulation. If noticeable progress is going to be achieved then this issue must be urgently dealt with so other global issues can be addressed.

Baus, 2017, Overpopulation and the Impact on the Environment, https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2929&context=gc_etds

This thesis written at the City University of New York argues how the planet cannot sustain the current and projected population levels. It also explains in depth how this situation came about. It has been cited multiple times in media and other research papers and is widely acknowledged by environmental advocates. However, some controversial opinions arise but are analysed from all viewpoints. The writer makes it clear that they think it is up to us to prevent the issue of overpopulation from reaching a point of no return. The thesis states that a large proportion of scholars believe that ‘the planet will be able to overcome the crisis as it has done with other environmental events in the past’. However, a commonly ignored fact is that, for the world to sufficiently deal with these previous issues, such as the five mass extinctions in the past, nature has been forced to make irreversible turns that inevitably affect all living organisms. The main focus in this research paper is the growing population and how it impacts the environment in a multitude of ways. It then begins to analyse the origins of the global population bomb, how we can start to control the population through different methods, some of which are controversial, and what consequences might follow if we don’t tackle the situation promptly. Furthermore, this source uses real life application with use of China and India case studies. This helps to demonstrate effects that take place in two very densely populated countries that are the main contributors to the global population.

Bloom, 2011, 7 Billion and Counting, https://science.sciencemag.org/content/333/6042/562

This is a research paper on how the world is about to reach the ‘greatest demographic upheaval in human history’ and how the increasing population will be detrimental to the planet as a whole. It clearly explains the journey that was taken that led us to a population of more than 7 billion and where we are likely to go from this point. This source has been used as a resource for a study on overpopulation that was carried out at Harvard University. It is a reliable paper that includes figures and data to back up its evaluation of the topic. The author displays connections and differences between countries that demonstrates what we are doing wrong and what we need to change to improve the issue at hand. However, this paper has been criticised for being alarmist and many academics prefer education on unstable topics to be through gentle

and manageable explanation. The format of this paper definitely proves the urgency of the matter at hand but may include occasional exaggeration in the description of how the planet will end up without swift action being taken. The underlying theme of this paper is how we must pay attention to demographic indicators and act proactively on their determinants and consequences as this will offer us considerable potential to promote human well-being in the future.

Cafaro et al, 2018, Ageing Human Populations

This is a research article which explores whether, or not, the ageing human population is good for us and for the earth. This paper was commissioned in 2018 by three authors who are professors at the University of Queensland, University of Gothenburg and Colorado State University. Its purpose is to help with public education and further research this particular topic. It explains that, although there is an ongoing environmental crisis driven by human population increase, a large percentage of academics are instead focusing on demographic changes as a more prominent challenge. Some even go as far as suggesting that population growth should be rekindled to combat it. The paper also analyses why rapid population decrease may be a negative matter as abrupt changes aren't ever beneficial to the environment and our economies. Lastly, it includes reliable, real life data and figures to demonstrate changing trends which helps with the validity of the source.

The Overpopulation Project, 2019, Solutions to Overpopulation, https://overpopulation-project.com/solutions-to-overpopulation-and-what-you-can-do/

This source was published by the Overpopulation Project for general education. The organisation is formed of international professors, authors and senior researchers that produce reliable information for public dissemination. This article in particular lists how changes can be made on an individual, community, national and global level that can be implemented into our lives which will undoubtedly make the future more sustainable. The writers acknowledge that many environmental trends are grim but can be easily fixed with comprehensive cooperation. One of the main agendas of this article is to help calm those who are alarmed by these global issues by indicating a multitude of ways than can bring aid to our daily lives. However, many of the suggestions only have real application to less economically developed countries as they don't yet match many of the standards of more economically developed countries yet. This means that those suggestions that are harder to achieve will be unrealistic to try to implement in developing countries in the near future. This does not mean that they are not valid but that a larger timeframe will be needed to get them in place.

Cumming, 2016, How Many People can our Planet Really Support?, http://www.bbc.co.uk/earth/story/20160311-how-many-people-can-our-planet-really-support

This is an article from the BBC that was written by Vivien Cumming, a scientist, writer and photographer who aims to 'capture the beauty and fragility of the world in order to inspire sustainability, conservation and understanding of Earth processes'. The article debates how many people the planet can support and whether or not it is necessarily overpopulated. It also explores whether the current population of more that 7 billion is remotely sustainable and if not, what the limit is. The writer then explains why the issue may not be the number of people on the

planet but actually the number of consumers and the scale and nature of their consumption. Fundamentally, the writer expresses that without immediate attention to the transpositions of our manner of living it could take centuries for any meaningful reductions to surface. The author's intention is clear. He is encouraging readers to recognise the excessive consumption of the affluent West and explore the possibility of changing their lifestyles. As it has been released by the BBC, this article has been read and commented on by an exceptionally large audience. Although this does not prove its validity, it demonstrates its impact and success as a commentary on the subject.

https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/aa7541

This is a research paper on the climate mitigation gap, written by a PHD student at the University of Columbia and reviewed by a professor from the Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies. It explains how climate change, is one of the main consequences of overpopulation; it is a product of billions of individuals over-consuming resources who are, in turn, negatively affected by climate change everyday. The writer considers a wide range of lifestyle choices that have the potential to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions in developed countries. Most solutions suggested are widely applicable and have the ability to contribute to systemic change and substantially reduce annual personal emissions. The writer bases the paper on 148 scenarios from 39 sources. This means that many academic views have been taken into account for the final verdict which aids the reliability of the paper. Furthermore it was produced in 2017 meaning it is recent enough for most, if not all of the information, to still be applicable in the worlds current environmental condition.

The Renewable Resources Coalition, 2016, Overpopulation: The Causes, Effects and Potential solutions, https://www.renewableresourcescoalition.org/overpopulation-causes-effects-solutions/

This is a research and educative article written by the Renewable Resources Coalition about the causes, consequences and possible solutions to overpopulation. The writer explains how overpopulation is one of the main contributors to various global environmental issues that we face today. It is distinctly explained that the issue of overpopulation is compounded by the difficulty of providing solutions that will be adopted by individuals, communities, nations and governments and how the causes and consequences are commonly misunderstood by the public. The article then continues to give multiple examples of what what we are doing wrong and how we can improve. The writer then backs up the arguments by citing/linking different websites that further develop the arguments that are initially portrayed. The organisation released this article to help educate people about one of the largest issues we face today as they believe that there is little in the way of education or dialog relating to the issue, particularly in schools. This helps proves that the article lacks any government propaganda that usually tries to dim or mislead the public anxiety showing that it plainly exhibits unbiased information to the public.

Bierkens, 2012, Groundwater Used Faster Than it can Replenish, https://www.dw.com/en/groundwater-used-faster-than-it-can-replenish/a-16166344

This is an environmental awareness report by DW on how groundwater is being used faster than it can replenish. The source depicts how a study carried out at Utrecht University by Dr.

Marc Bierkens, a professor of hydrology, reveals that almost a quarter of the world's population lives in places where groundwater is being used up far too quickly. The professor indicates that this overconsumption of groundwater, especially in landlocked and developing countries, is directly proportional to overpopulation. Additionally, the writer of this report from DW expands on the professors arguments and suggests what can be done to sustainably use groundwater now and into the future. The agenda of this source is to bring light to the fact that we may loose a vital source of fresh water if we continuously deplete our reserves. Although this source was was written in 2012 most of the research is still relevant as we have experienced sharp levels of growth so the demand for groundwater will have risen in the past years. The only issue is that the data for this study may be incorrect and misleading due to changing global statistics.

Nichols, 2020, How Does Overpopulation Affect the Environment, https://schooledbyscience.com/overpopulation-effect-environment/

This is a recently published informative article on how overpopulation negatively affects the environment by Megan Ray Nichols, a STEM writer and ‘regular contributor to The Naked Scientists, Thomas Insights & IoT Evolution. She develops points about how we have created the idea of overpopulation and how we will need to take manageable steps to resolve to issue. The source then explains how overpopulation is the product of our medical achievements of the past few decades and how science has the increased birth rate, lowered the overall mortality rate and improved life expectancy in most countries around the world (excluding defective figures due to war). The rest of the source goes into detail about 5 causes of overpopulation and then another 5 ways we can reverse those effects. The text is proven to be reliable as other articles, research papers and government reports are cited to support the authors initial reasoning. Furthermore, the author updated her work during May of 2019 to direct the information provided towards more current affairs.