

Community Empowerment in Addressing Waste and Environmental Issues: Students' Experiences Learning Together

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Abstract

Introduction: Waste management and environmental sustainability remain critical challenges for communities worldwide. Community empowerment through collaborative learning has emerged as an effective strategy to enhance public awareness, engagement, and collective action in environmental management. This approach aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **Method:** A community-based learning program was implemented using workshops, group discussions, and field-based practical activities. The methodology emphasized active participation, knowledge exchange, and co-identification of problems and solutions in waste management. Participatory learning principles guided the process, ensuring all community members contributed insights and developed locally relevant interventions. **Result:** The program led to increased community understanding of the environmental impacts of waste and enhanced capacity for waste segregation and management. Community-led initiatives, including recycling, composting, and cleanliness campaigns, were established. Participation rates reached approximately 80%, demonstrating the effectiveness of the collaborative learning approach in fostering environmental awareness and proactive behavior. **Discussion:** Community-based learning proved effective for empowerment by promoting social responsibility, collaboration, and local innovation. The program not only improved environmental conditions but also strengthened community decision-making capacities, supporting sustainable practices in alignment with SDGs. Long-term success depends on sustained engagement and institutional support. **Conclusion:** Collaborative learning is an effective strategy for community empowerment in addressing waste and environmental challenges. This model facilitates the achievement of SDGs by enhancing awareness, participation, and practical actions for sustainable environmental management.

Keywords: community empowerment; collaborative learning; waste management; environmental sustainability; SDGs.