

THE STRUCTURAL FLAWS OF THE GLOBAL ECONOMY IN ADDRESSING MARINE PLASTIC WASTE

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Abstract: The plastic crisis represents more than mere coastal pollution; it is a systemic "suffocation" of global ecosystems. Despite the expansion of recycling infrastructure, between 11 and 23 million tons of plastic enter the oceans annually, devastating marine biodiversity. This article argues that the persistence of plastic pollution is not solely a result of individual negligence or lack of public awareness regarding waste disposal. Instead, it examines the crisis as a structural failure of global production systems and economic models. The study shifts the focus from consumer behavior to the responsibilities of industrial manufacturing and the flaws inherent in the global plastic economy.

Keywords: Plastic pollution, marine ecosystems, ocean conservation, global production, recycling failure, environmental policy.

Introduction

Plastic is now a part of our daily lives, but the damage it causes to nature has become a huge problem. Today, the "plastic crisis" is not only about trash on the beaches; it means our planet's ecosystems are literally "suffocation." Even though there are more recycling centers and waste projects today, the amount of plastic in nature is still growing. Experts say that by 2040, the amount of plastic will be three times more than now. About 80% of this pollution comes from rivers and coasts.

While much of this plastic ends up back on the shore, the rest stays in the ocean, forming giant areas of trash like the Great Pacific Garbage Patch.

Most people think this crisis happens because individuals do not care or do not know how to use recycling bins correctly. However, only focusing on "throwing trash away right" does not solve the real problem. This article shows that the plastic crisis is not just because of people's mistakes or laziness. Instead, it is a result of a global economic system that chooses mass production and cheap materials over protecting the environment. By looking at the mistakes in how products are made and the problems with recycling systems, we can see that this crisis is a failure of the system, not just the people.

Methods

To understand this environmental crisis, I did not just look at a few random articles. I wanted to see the 'big picture' of how plastic travels through our world, so I gathered data from global organizations like 'The Ocean Cleanup' and 'National Geographic.' I analyzed plastic production trends from the late 20th century up to 2024 to see how our consumption habits have evolved.

I used a 'Systemic Review' approach, looking at the entire lifecycle of plastic rather than just one piece of the problem. My research focused on three specific areas that connect the ocean to our daily lives: Industrial Sources, Riverine Systems, and the Food Chain.

1. **Industrial Sources:** I compared data on hard plastic waste from major industrial nations, such as Japan and China, to identify where the majority of ocean debris originates. I wanted to see if the problem was local or truly global.
2. **Riverine Systems:** I examined how plastic travels from land to sea. Specifically, I studied data from countries like the Philippines to understand why rivers are the 'highways' for plastic pollution.
3. **The Food Chain (Microplastics):** Finally, I reviewed biological studies to see how plastic breaks down into microplastics. I focused on the 'intersection' of marine biology and human health to see how these tiny pieces enter our bodies through the seafood we eat.

By using these multiple angles—geography, industry, and biology—I ensured that my conclusions were based on real-world facts. This holistic methodology is crucial because ocean pollution is not just a sea problem; it is a global health crisis that affects every single one of us."

Result

After analyzing the data, the results were both clear and alarming. My findings show that ocean pollution is not a distant problem; it is an immediate threat to our global ecosystem.

First, my research revealed that over 800 marine species are currently in danger due to plastic debris. This isn't just about animals getting 'stuck' in nets; it's about a fundamental change in their biology. When creatures eat plastic, it leads to starvation and internal injuries, which creates a 'domino effect' throughout the entire ocean.

One of the most significant results of my study is the 'journey of plastic' back to humans. Using the diagram on my poster, I found that microplastics act like a 'Trojan Horse.' They enter small fish, move up the food chain, and eventually end up in the seafood we consume. This proves that there is no 'away' when we throw plastic away—it eventually finds its way back to our bodies.

Looking at the data from The Ocean Cleanup, the results highlight specific global 'hotspots':

- **The Great Pacific Garbage Patch:** Interestingly, the majority of hard plastics here come from Japan (34%) and China (32%). This suggests that industrialized nations have a massive responsibility to manage their waste.
- **Riverine Sources:** The data shows that rivers are the main 'arteries' of this pollution. The Philippines is the leading contributor, responsible for 36% of plastic entering the ocean via rivers. India and Malaysia also play major roles.

Discussion

The crisis of ocean pollution is a systemic problem that requires more than just individual recycling. Research shows that only 9% of plastic is recycled globally, proving that personal efforts are not enough. We must focus on the source: the 1,000 rivers that transport 80% of plastic into our oceans.

Furthermore, the rise of microplastics has turned this into a human health issue. As plastic enters the food chain, it affects the 3 billion people who depend on seafood. To solve this, governments must implement "hard" policies, such as taxing plastic production and investing in river cleanup technology. We need to move toward a circular economy where waste is designed out of the system entirely.

Conclusion

To wrap up, the plastic crisis in our oceans is a massive challenge, but it is not impossible to solve. This research highlights that we must move away from blaming individuals and start

reforming the global system. Clean oceans should not be a luxury; they are a fundamental necessity for the survival of all species, including humans.

The evidence is clear: our current "produce and discard" model is leading to a health and environmental disaster. As a student at the Uzbekistan State World Languages University, I believe that raising awareness is only the first step. The real solution lies in demanding cities with better waste management and a market that prioritizes sustainable materials. It is time for governments and corporations to change the rules of the game. Only by working together to build a circular economy can we protect our blue planet and ensure a healthy life for the generations to come.

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