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Global warming refers to the steady increase in the temperature of the earth and its oceans. Global warming is as a result of both natural factors and human activities. Research indicates that there is a correlation between the rising temperatures and the increase in the levels of gases such as carbon dioxide, methane, and chlorofluorocarbons in the earth’s atmosphere (Haugen, Musser and Lovelace, 5). The levels of these gases continue to increase due to human activity. This increase results in the Greenhouse effect. The Greenhouse effect significantly contributes to global warming. The effects of global warming include changing weather patterns, higher temperatures within the earth’s atmosphere, melting of glaciers and rising ocean levels. These consequences pose a threat to human lives as well as continuity of ecosystems.

In 2005, the average temperature of the earth rose at the greatest rate in history. Coal burning and automobile industries are the largest contributors to human activities that enhance global warming. Technological advances play a significant role in aiding to minimize the effects of global warming. Modern vehicles run on clean and burn fewer gases. Developments in the energy industries result in the generation of electricity using non-polluting sources. When discussing global warming, it is critical to understand the following terms. The atmosphere, ecosystem, climate, climate system, environment, fossil fuel, glacier, greenhouse effect, greenhouse gas, habitat and industrial revolution

Atmosphere refers to the composition of the mixture of gases surrounding the earth. The volume of gases in the atmosphere consists of about 79% of nitrogen, 20.9% of oxygen, 0.036% of carbon dioxide and the remaining amount comprises of other gases. Climate refers to the average weather (weather for at least 30 days) of a given location at a particular period. The climate system is composed of the atmosphere, the oceans, the biosphere, the cryosphere and the geosphere. An ecosystem is a biological community of organisms and their habitat. An environment is a combination of physical, chemical and biotic factors that affect an organism or an ecological system and determines the form of survival of an organism. Fossil fuel is the fuel that forms in the earth from animal and plant remains. Coal, oil and natural gas are examples of fossil fuels. A glacier is a massive body of ice that moves or spreads down a slope or on a land surface. The greenhouse effect is the effect that is realized when solar radiations pass through greenhouse gases to the earth’s atmosphere, but the gases cannot be reflected out of the earth’s atmosphere through the greenhouse gases. Greenhouse gases can absorb infra-red radiations in the earth’s atmosphere. Habitat is an environment where an animal naturally lives, or a plant naturally grows. Industrial revolution refers to rapid changes in the economy as a result of the discovery of power driven machines.

Every living organism on the earth is affected by global warming in one way or another. Classification of stakeholders of global warming into four groups is possible. These groups are losers of global warming, gainers of global warming, perpetrators of global warming and managers of global warming. These categories are not mutually exclusive. An individual can belong to one or more groups. Losers are stakeholders who are adversely affected by global warming. Global warming negatively affects their health, economic status, social lives, and cultures. Every human being is a loser of global warming. Scientists estimate that if the current trends in global warming are not addressed, the human species is at risk of extinction. The effects of global warming might not be felt as they happen. However, they are gradual and severe.

Global warming considerably reduces the world’s forest cover. Global warming reduces winters. Pests, such as the pine bark beetle survive the harsh conditions during these short winter periods. The parasites then infect the trees and kill them resulting in declining forest cover. High temperatures trigger forest fires in the summer. The trees that died during the short winter periods act as fuel to the forest fires. Declining forest covers have severe economic and environmental impacts. Persons who rely on forests for their livelihoods are the most affected. For example, carpenters and medicine men, the environmental impacts of reducing forest covers include soil erosion, loss of water catchment areas and the destruction of the natural habitat of some species.

Global warming has adverse effects on the earth and its inhabitants. These effects are a manifestation of the indirect or direct emission of greenhouse gases from human activities. The evidence of global warming is the increasing temperatures of land and water bodies such as seas and oceans. The effects of global warming are worse in the Polar Regions. Between the 20th and the 21st century, the global average surface temperature has increased by 1.1 degrees Fahrenheit (0.6 degrees Celsius). The most visible evidence of global warming is the melting of glaciers and sea ice, shifting precipitation patterns and migration of animals.

Ice melting is prominent in the Polar Regions of the earth. The Arctic sea ice, mountain glaciers and ice sheets extending from West Antarctica to Greenland are melting as a result of global warming. Glaciers play a fundamental role in cooling the earth. The glaciers hold most of the drinking water in the land. They are also a natural habitat for different species of animals. The continuous melting of glaciers has diverse effects. Ice melting results in rising sea levels. Rising sea levels increase the probability of occurrence of disasters such as tsunamis which threaten the existence of life on earth.

Global maps show that about 70% of the earth comprises of water. 1.7% of this water is fresh water. Glaciers hold up to 69% of the fresh water (Knight, 54). Glaciers melting reduces the earth’s supply of fresh water. When glaciers melt, the fresh drinking water mixes with sea water. The resulting mixture is no longer suitable for drinking. This result affects human beings, animals, and plants thus adversely impacting on the ecosystem. An in depth analysis reveals that the melting of glaciers enhances global warming. When there are no more glaciers, rivers that draw water from glaciers dry up. Hydroelectric power generation (a clean source of energy) is impossible when rivers dry up. This situation necessitates alternative power generation techniques which may lead to the emission of greenhouse gases.

The physical impacts of melting of glaciers as a result of global warming are devastating. The rate at which sea levels are rising is alarming. Scientists estimate that sea levels are rising between 1mm and 2 mm annually. Floods are a direct consequence of rising sea levels. Persistent flood can force the relocation of coastal areas. Soil erosion also occurs as a result of increasing sea levels. Soil erosion can lead to the formation of new coastal lines. This configuration changes the standard geographical mapping of the world. The melting of glaciers displaces some species from their natural habitats. Glacial water plants are likely to die. Fish that rely on the plants also die due to malnutrition. Birds that feed on the fish die due to lack of food. Declining numbers of fish affect the economic and cultural lives of persons who depend on fish for livelihoods and cultural practices. The melting of glaciers is just one of the many effects of global warming. As seen, this melting has adverse effects. The length of these paper does not allow me to exhaust all the effects of global warming to show that it is a negative phenomenon.

Despite the adverse effects of global warming, some individuals and organizations benefit from it. The argument of the beneficiaries of global warming is that it leads to enhancements in technology. They suggest that the main developments in technology, especially in the energy production sector have been motivated by the need to minimize the effects of global warming, the gainers’ state that the world would not achieve its current technological status without global warming. Some people find employment and additional income from the effects of global warming. For example, governments may purchase private properties from an individual to set up a proposed low-level radioactive waste disposal facility. The owners of the properties earn some revenue through the sales. In most cases, these properties are not prime as they are in isolated areas. Persons who find employment in such facilities are also beneficiaries of global warming. Hence, they argue that global warming is beneficial to their personal lives.

As a citizen of the world, I have felt the effects of global warming. I come from a remote village where we rely on forests for most aspects of our lives. The forest provides us with shelter and food. We often use firewood as our source of energy and lighting. Most of our cultural practices are based on the forest. Recent forest fires and tree infections as a result of global warming have significantly changed my life. It is now difficult to find food as animals are seeking alternative shelter away from the forest. The forest fires are steadily displacing my family when we move to find safe places to live.

Global warming has devastating effects. It adversely affects the cultural, health and financial status of both individuals and communities. Although the effects of global warming are not immediately felt, they are gradual and severe. It is necessary for human beings to monitor their activities to ensure they do not contribute to the emission of greenhouse gases. Governments and legal institutions should enforce laws that restrict environmental degradation. Human beings must work together to address the issue of global warming before it is too late.

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