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### Unit 1 Essay

**Question:** Does the lack of sufficient water supplies affect public health?

The lack of sufficient water supplies is extremely detrimental to public health, both mentally and physically, and our global efforts are not extensive enough. However, this is only true for the minority population, and solutions are at hand to at least curb the problem.

Serious health problems result from consuming water that hasn't been properly sanitized, and many people are forced to drink this water because they lack access to sufficient potable water. According to the CDC in 2014, "Approximately 88% of deaths due to diarrheal illness worldwide are attributable to unsafe water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene." The CDC is America's primary public health organization, whose main goal is to provide helpful research and information on controlling and preventing illnesses worldwide. However, since the CDC is based in America, their knowledge of foreign diseases may be more limited. This quote represents the idea that, not only is this problem worldwide, but that the majority of this real problem faced by humanity is caused by the water crisis. Until a solution is found or these countries are helped, people will continue to die from water-borne diseases that reside in unsanitary water. Another example of the death and disease brought on by the water crisis comes from the United Nations, which states that, as of 2015, "Together, unclean water and poor sanitation are the world's second biggest killer of children." The United Nations, a global organization "...committed to maintaining international peace and security; developing friendly relations among nations; promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights," is a particularly reliable source for this topic considering not only its global nature but the fact that it relates to better living standards and human rights, and the water crisis affects both. However, since this article lacked a listed author, there is no way to gauge the full extent to which this information can be trusted. This claim brings to light the fact that this problem, which affects the population as a whole, is also harming important future generations. The fact that the water crisis is killing so many children is not only disheartening, but it also decreases our chances that a future generation will be able to solve the problems of today.

The lack of sufficient water supplies affects physical health, but many do not realize it has a detrimental impact upon mental health. Human dignity, which ties into mental health and affects our self-confidence, is beaten down by the water crisis. This claim is supported by a statement made by the Swedish FAO Committee, which states that, "Human rights set the

framework for societies to strive towards dignity and function as moral imperatives... Without water and access to it, there is no food security and no human dignity.” According to the source, human dignity begins with human rights. This is true because when people lack the ability to apply to a standard or to make a living instead of spending their days gathering what is probably unclean water, it comes as no surprise that they do not take pride in their lifestyle. Until a solution is reached, dignity and self-confidence will be scarce. This source, which comes from the Swedish FAO Committee, a branch of the UN, is a tried and true source from which to gain information about global crises. Nonetheless, the fact that this particular committee is Sweden-based brings down its ability to fully understand the problems of developing countries, which are affected most by this crisis. Another assertion to support this idea comes from UNESCO (a branch of the United Nations) in 2014. “Water cooperation is about human dignity as much as it is about development – the two cannot be separated... This is about fighting poverty and saving children from disease. It is about allowing girls to go to school instead of walking kilometers to fetch water.” This quote proves the initial assertion that the lack of a sufficient water source has a detrimental effect on human dignity, which is applicable to mental health. It goes to show that when people are forced to do unsanitary things that others don’t have to, it reduces self-confidence, pride, and dignity. This is a quote by Irina Bokova, the director-general of UNESCO, who has served many vital political positions in Europe and stands for gender equality, improved education and preventing funding for terrorism. She has many years’ experience with humanitarian work on a global scale; however her lack of experience relevant to water and developing countries specifically may bring down her validity in this area. Her assertion that human rights are followed by human dignity is further proven by her expertise in the humanitarian field, and it validates the initial claim that water is a human right and thus affects dignity levels when it is not available.

If the water crisis was not already daunting enough, it certainly does not help that the efforts being made to halt the problem are proving to be highly ineffective. For example, the World Resources Institute published an article in 2015, in which it said,

“Rapidly growing populations will drive increased consumption by people, farms and companies. More people will move to cities, further straining supplies. An emerging middle class could clamor for more water-intensive food production and electricity generation” (World Resources Institute, 2015).

A huge amount of factors is causing the water crisis to grow increasingly worse as the years pass, which all put a strain on the amount of water supplies being consumed and demanded. As population grows and more people move into cities, the demand for water will skyrocket and make it difficult to compensate. These factors cause all global efforts to seem like they are to no avail, because with every one step forward, we travel two steps back. This quote is from an article written by Andrew Maddocks, Robert S. Young, and Paul Reig, who are three expert journalists who work for the World Resources Institute. They are each backed by many degrees, years of experience in the field, and expertise in humanitarianism and the water crisis; however

several of them are no longer on staff, which means there is no information about them on the website. Yet another source, Supriya Kumar in 2013, is at hand to defend the same point, stating that, “It is estimated that by 2025 fully 1.8 billion people will live in countries or regions with absolute water scarcity, with almost half of the world living in conditions of water stress.” Supriya Kumar, who was a communications associate with the Nourishing the Planet Project and holds a degree in international relations with a focus on international development and economics, is a reliable enough source considering her expertise in the field of international development and her research on some aspects of the water crisis. However, her focus is primarily economics, which raises some doubts about whether or not she is completely adept to write about the subject as much as she has. This source lists reasons that the water crisis will only worsen with every passing year, and predicts that by just 2025, the majority of the world will be water-stressed. This is staggering, and prompts the reader to take any sort of action they can to prevent such chaos. 2025 is less than ten years from the present, and it is terrifying to think that humans have wrecked the planet so much.

However, although the water crisis may be extremely intimidating, it only affects the minority population. “783 million people do not have access to clean water,” according to the United Nations as of 2013. If 783 million people in the world do not have access to clean water, then that means 6.7 billion people DO have access. 783 million is the minority population, and this source represents the fact that the water crisis might not be as dire or as global as we may believe. The United Nations is an incredibly trustworthy source for this particular topic, not just due to the global reach of the crisis but also because of the international peace application, but once again the lack of listed authors inhibits the ability to judge its full reliability. A secondary source, *The Guardian*’s Katherine Purvis, says in 2015 that, “91% of the global population uses an improved water source – one that protects water from external contamination – up from 76% in 1990.” Katherine Purvis is an exceptional source for the water crisis considering she has written about global development, commissioned for and written about tropical health and malaria, access to water and sanitation, humanitarianism, and more. She has had many writing internships in places that focus on global issues, and she holds bachelors and masters degrees. However, the fact that she has only worked in the field for two years does not leave her with much experience. If 91% of people today use an improved water source, that means that only 9% do not. If this is the case, then the water crisis cannot possibly be as global or threatening in nature as many sources would have us believe.

Not only does the water crisis only affect the minority population, but there are also solutions at hand. “In response to the drought, the Zimbabwe Red Cross Society is rehabilitating boreholes to give communities improved access to potable water” (IFRC, 2015). The IFRC is a branch of the Red Cross that provides global help to countries in need of things like clean water and proper sanitation, and its humanitarian experience makes it a very reliable source for this topic. However, this source in particular is focused solely in Zimbabwe, which makes it less reliable to generalize to a global study. Many organizations are implementing programs in water-

poor countries to hopefully assist in the water crisis. These measures are important steps to a possible eventual solution to the problem at hand. “By learning how to tend to the wells and maintain cleanliness, the villagers can be more self-reliant and develop a sustainable, clean water source. LDS Charities is happy to be a part of a project that facilitates such self-reliance” (LDS Charities, 2016). LDS Charities is a reliable source when referring to the global water crisis due to their enormous global outreach. In 2015 alone, in their clean water initiative, they served 32 countries and 680,000 people. However, their lack of years to back them makes them slightly less valid. LDS Charities and many others are currently building wells and spreading knowledge about hygiene and sanitation. These measures will make communities that are stricken with this problem more self-sufficient and less disease and death-ridden, which lessens the detrimental effect of the water crisis on public health.

The lack of sufficient water supplies can be extremely detrimental to public health, both mentally and physically, and our global efforts cannot possibly be extensive enough. However, this severe lack of potable or available water only affects the minority population, and there are many viable solutions at hand to curb the problem.

This research, time-consuming and lengthy as it was, has taught me much about the water crisis and proven that it is, in fact, quite a serious issue. I started this research not knowing anything about this topic, and by the end of it, I was worried about the future of the world’s water. However, I also found hope in the wide variety of solutions being utilized globally, and the fact that this crisis only affects a small percentage of the earth. I believe that, although the water crisis is worsening as the years pass, there are still many things we can do to at least curb, and maybe even halt, the deterioration of public health and sufficient water. I hope that as technology progresses and people realize the gravity of the situation, the likelihood of mass water scarcity will drop.