

Children's Perception of Nature and Environment

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Abstract:

This research explores how children perceive nature and their surrounding environment in a rapidly urbanizing and technology-driven world. Understanding children's attitudes, emotions, and awareness toward nature is crucial for promoting sustainable thinking and environmental responsibility from an early age. The study highlights the factors shaping children's connection with nature, including family influence, school education, community involvement, and media exposure. It also emphasizes the importance of experiential learning in fostering a lasting bond with the environment.

Keywords: Children's perception, Nature awareness, Environmental education, Sustainability, Eco-literacy, Early learning, Parental influence.

Introduction

In today's fast-paced and urbanized society, children's direct interactions with nature are gradually decreasing. Technology, urban spaces, and busy lifestyles often limit outdoor experiences, reducing children's understanding of ecological balance and environmental care. Developing a positive perception of nature during childhood lays the foundation for responsible environmental behavior in adulthood.

This paper investigates how children interpret their relationship with nature, the role of schools and families in shaping this perception, and the importance of integrating eco-awareness into early education systems.

Related Research Work

Several studies have highlighted the decline in children's nature experiences due to increased screen time and urbanization. Research by Louv (2005) introduced the term "nature deficit disorder" to describe the growing disconnect between children and the natural world. Other works suggest that early exposure to outdoor activities enhances creativity, empathy, and emotional well-being (Wells & Lekies, 2006).

Educational programs focused on environmental learning, such as gardening, field trips, and sustainability projects, have proven effective in fostering environmental stewardship among young learners.

Research Methodology

This qualitative study involved 100 participants aged 8–13 from rural and semi-urban schools. Data were collected using structured interviews, observational studies, and simple questionnaires designed to assess children's thoughts about nature and the environment.

Questions explored their understanding of environmental issues, emotional responses to nature, and participation in eco-friendly practices like recycling, tree planting, or avoiding plastic.

Findings and Discussion

The study revealed that:

1. Children in rural areas showed a stronger emotional attachment to nature due to daily interaction with greenery and open spaces.
2. Urban children exhibited more theoretical knowledge of environmental issues but less direct experience with natural surroundings.
3. School activities such as eco-clubs and environmental awareness campaigns significantly increased children's enthusiasm for sustainability.
4. Parental influence played a key role in shaping environmental values, especially when parents practiced green habits at home.

These findings indicate that both direct experience and educational reinforcement are essential for developing positive environmental perceptions among children.

Conclusion

Children's perception of nature and the environment is deeply influenced by their surroundings, upbringing, and education. Strengthening environmental education through interactive, experience-based learning can nurture future generations who value and protect the planet. Encouraging outdoor exploration, environmental storytelling, and green school initiatives can ensure that children grow with a strong sense of ecological responsibility and empathy toward nature.

REFERENCES:

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