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The relationship between adolescents' knowledge of climate change, perceived risk and psychosocial wellbeing.

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2022
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/34287

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ABSTRACT

Younger generations are believed to be more susceptible to the detrimental impacts of global climate change in the long term. The purpose of this study was to investigate the potential relationship between adolescents' knowledge of climate change, their perceived risk and the impact thereof on their psychosocial wellbeing. A total of 137 male and female adolescents, between the ages of 15 and 18, were recruited from two private high schools in the province of Gauteng, South Africa. A non-probability, purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants. The participants completed a paper-based questionnaire consisting of four sections: demographics, knowledge of climate change, perceived risk and psychosocial wellbeing. The data was analysed according to the relevant statistical techniques, which included Cronbach's Alpha, descriptive statistics, skewness coefficient, kurtosis estimate coefficient, Pearson's correlation coefficient and multiple regression. The results revealed that adolescents with more climate change knowledge, display more interest towards it, engaged in less oppositional defiant behaviours and their overall functioning is impacted less. Furthermore, adolescents' level of risk perception has an impact on their engagement in positive behaviours as well as whether they will experience emotional difficulties. The results of this study demonstrate the importance of further research within different South African school settings, in which richer data can be established. This will therefore contribute to the climate change literature as well as enhance the understanding of the potential impact adolescents' climate change knowledge and perceived risk has on their psychosocial wellbeing.

Keywords: Adolescents, Climate Change Knowledge, Perceived Risk, Psychosocial Wellbeing