

Indoor plants: Environmental perception and emotional response

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Introduction

More people live and work in urban environments, and people's direct contact with nature surroundings declines. An implication of the Biophilia hypothesis (Wilson, 1993) is that people have an innate affinity and need for living objects such as plants in their immediate and everyday environment. Studies have shown psychological benefits of window view to nature and indoor plants in the office environment (e.g. Dravigne et al. 2008). That plants alone also can alter the perception of an indoor environment has been indicated in previous studies (e. g. Larsen et al. 1998).

The aim of the present study was to explore what qualities the introduction of indoor plants into an everyday office setting adds to the perception and emotional response to the environment.

Method

A randomized between-subjects design with three environmental conditions was used (N=56). Assessments of an office setting with flowering and foliage plants were compared to a decorated condition and a control condition. Open-ended and fixed semantic environmental description measures including perception of fascination, pleasantness and complexity, were utilised. A scenario task introduced a self-report measure of emotional response to the environment.

Results

Between-group analysis revealed differences in perception of the plant and the

control condition. A relation between environmental perception of pleasantness and complexity and positive emotional response to the setting, indicated an indirect effect from plants.

Discussion

The results support the notion that plants can have an indirect effect on positive emotional response through environmental perception. Within the framework of Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989) and Stress Reducing Theory (Ulrich, 1983) plants can be understood as restorative agents in a work environment.

The study indicates that even a modest intervention in the built environment such as plants, may have a positive impact on well-being.

References

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