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Psychosocial perception of wildland fires in the province of Alicante (Spain)

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The concern for the environment is part of the discourse of societies. The Planet is immersed in an ecological crisis in whose nucleus is the human being. The way in which humans are interacting with the natural environment is aggravating environmental deterioration, which is contributing to a breakdown of the global climate balance. The interpretation of the role that the human being occupies in the causality of disasters needs an honest exercise of analysis. Every year, thousands of hectares of forest burn around the world. The emissions of polluting gases into the atmosphere discharged by wildland fires constitute a global environmental problem that causes, directly or indirectly, human and economic losses, as well as a degradation of the air we breathe. In the Mediterranean countries, with Spain and Portugal at the head, 70% of the forest fires in Europe occur. The studies on perception of risks trying to analyze the effective and ethical relationships that a determined community establishes with the environment with which it interacts and lives. The attachment and the value of the place of residence are part of the environmental perception, a topic that is of interest to social psychology. In the present study, we try to analyze how citizens of the province of Alicante perceive the risk of wildland fire. This area of southeastern Spain has been historically punished by fire and in which, according to the surveyed population, 50% of citizens suffer the impact of forest fires every year. Some of our findings determine that the citizens' concern about wildland fires is very high, being perceived as a product of society, an aspect that invites us to reflect. Another outstanding aspect that emerges from our study is the consideration of citizens to establish greater restrictions on the use of fire as a fire prevention measure.

Biography

Psychologist and Environmental Consultant. Chief of Brigade in a Forest Fire Service with more than 20 years of experience. He collaborates with several companies and institutions in the area of training in Psychology in Emergencies and Human Resources. He is Professor at the University of Valencia in the Master in "Intervention and Operational Coordination in Emergencies and Catastrophes" and other postgraduate courses on emergencies. Director and President of the International Scientific-Professional Committee of the National Symposium on Forest Fires (SINIF). He has lectured internationally and has been part of the Organizing Committee of several International Congresses on Earth Sciences and Climate Change. He has published articles on forest fires, stress, psychosocial risks and emotional trauma, mainly in relation to emergency services and natural disasters. Currently, he is assigned to the Research Group on "Climate and Territorial Planning" (University of Alicante), where he researches on the social perception of forest fire risk and behavior in the event of possible disasters.

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