

Adolescent Risk Research Unit

Rise, and shine.

Spirituality and attitudes towards nature in the Pacific Islands: Insights for enabling climate change adaptation

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Why do this research?

The Pacific Islands region is immediately vulnerable to any changes in sea level, which may or may not be associated with climate change. The Pacific basin, dotted with islands, is home to approximately 10 million people. At this time, however, there is limited understanding of Pacific Islander perspectives regarding climate change and nature, attitudes and spiritual beliefs. Therefore, this study investigates the beliefs, attitudes and concerns of students in the Pacific Islands, the leaders of tomorrow.

What did we do?

An online survey was completed by 1,226 students attending the University of the South Pacific.

What did we find?

Approximately 90% of students reported they were a part of nature, they had a personal connection with the environment, and their welfare was connected to nature. This is consistent with Pacific Island cultural experiences more generally.

Most participants reported that the world's natural environment was 'bad' and approximately half the students rated their home island similarly as being in a 'bad' condition. Most of the participants were worried about climate change, with the vast majority regarding climate change as a 'huge' future problem for Pacific people. Nearly every participant stated that climate change would affect them and their future.

What does it mean?

It is important that interventions to minimise exposure to environmental risk and to support adaptation to climate change in the Pacific Islands region acknowledge the importance of spirituality and connectedness to nature. Traditionally, such interventions do not consider the importance of this connectedness, and this connectedness seems key to ensuring interventions are successful.

Note: These findings informed - [Pacific Islanders' understanding of climate change: Where do they source information and to what extent do they trust it?](#)