

Sustainability | Individual communication

IC - (21027) - A FREE WORD ASSOCIATION ANALYSIS OF GERMAN LAYPEOPLE'S PERCEPTION OF BIODIVERSITY AND ITS LOSS

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Background and objectives

In light of the urgent biodiversity crisis, it is crucial to gain an understanding of how people perceive biological diversity and its loss. This study has three objectives: (1) we aim to capture the naive associations of the German population to the terms "biological diversity" and "biological diversity loss". (2) We attempt to validate a newly developed scale to capture biodiversity loss perception. (3) We investigate to what extent the positive and negative framing by the association test affects the perception of biodiversity loss.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

Data collection was performed in September 2021 using an online questionnaire to assess participants' associations with the terms "biodiversity" ($n = 131$) and "biodiversity loss" ($n = 130$) using a free-word association test. In addition, we used a newly developed and validated biodiversity loss perception scale to examine whether the positive ("biodiversity") or negative framing ("biodiversity loss") of the association test influenced biodiversity loss perceptions. We additionally surveyed biodiversity loss perceptions of a control group that did not previously perform an association test ($n = 143$).

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

For the term "biological diversity", we most frequently identified associations related to animals, whereas species extinction was most frequently associated with "loss of biological diversity". As expected, the naive associations diverged from the scientific concept of biodiversity. We are currently working on creating an association network, validating the biodiversity loss perception scale by assessing factor structure using an EFA, assessing the reliability of the subscale's using Cronbach's alpha and we are assessing the convergent validity. Lastly, we will examine the framing effects, using an ANOVA.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

The study will provide first indications on the extent to which positive/negative framing is suitable to influence the perception of biodiversity loss. Furthermore, both the association test and the biodiversity loss perception scale are easy-to-apply instruments that could be used in other countries and contexts.

Palavras-chave : free word associations, biological diversity, perception of biodiversity loss, framing, scale validation