

Title

Emotions and coping mechanisms experienced at the coast: A qualitative study

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Abstract

Multiple studies have demonstrated that residential proximity to the coast is associated with a better health and well-being. Research on the suggested pathways linking coastal exposure to well-being has mainly been focused on physical, social, and cognitive dimensions but less so on the emotional dimension. The present study aimed to explore the emotions and coping mechanisms generated through the coastal experience and how they relate to the coast's therapeutic potential. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of eight Belgian coastal residents aged 21 to 25 years old. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, five superordinate themes were identified: psychological restoration, elements of awe, elements of nostalgia, coping mechanisms, and the coast as a 'safe haven'. The study highlights an experience of complex emotions and adaptive coping mechanisms facilitated by the coast's multisensory and symbolic qualities. Considering the impactful role of this experience on coastal residents, the suggested emotions and coping mechanisms should be considered as potential contributors to the coast's therapeutic potential.

Keywords: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, coastal residents, emotions, coping mechanisms, well-being