

Teachers' Conceptual Knowledge of Wildfire and Human Interaction

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify the teachers' understanding about wildfire and its relationship with humans. Researchers used an anonymous survey method. Data was collected from K-12 educators who are currently working in a classroom as a full-time licensed teacher, a long-term substitute teacher or a practicum/student teacher. Findings indicated that 57% conceptualize wildfire as uncontrolled fire and 35% of respondents mentioned wildfires were always unintentional. Some of them confused wildfire with forest fire. About the cause of wildfire, only 17% mentioned human impacts on climate change or how it affects wildfires and 43% only mentioned accidental causes. Additionally, most of the participants (78%) did not have enough knowledge about the positive effects of wildfires or didn't think to share them. Some of them (22%) knew that wildfires have a positive effect but were not very clear about how wildfires can benefit humans. Future researchers should explore the origin of misconceptions about wildfire and how teacher misconceptions about wildfire and human interaction influence student learning and engagement. Furthermore, this study has broader implications for fostering environmental literacy and resilience within communities

Keywords: Teacher, K-12 educator, Wildfire, Misconceptions, Conceptual knowledge