

Tree-Filled Spaces may be More Beneficial for Child Development

By: Liz Gold, Integrative Practitioner



New research has explored the differences for children growing up in tree-filled spaces, compared to paved or grassy environments. While green spaces have been associated with positive child development experiences and health, the researchers sought to explore how the type of vegetation makes a difference in these positive associations.

The study, published in the journal, *Environment International*, was conducted by the Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal). According to ISGlobal, 27,539 children were engaged in the Vancouver, Canada metropolitan area and followed from birth to age five. Kindergarten teachers rated their students' physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, communication skills, and general knowledge using the Early Development Instrument (EDI) assessment tool.

A high-spatial-resolution land cover map was used to determine whether the areas where the children lived were vegetated or non-vegetated. Researchers also wanted to see whether that vegetated land consisted of grass or trees.

Green spaces have been associated with better attention and memory in early childhood, according to ISGlobal, as well as higher academic achievement and fewer emotional and behavioral problems. While all green spaces appear to promote health, tree-filled areas may

mitigate air pollution, noise, and heat better than open green spaces. Grassy spaces, however, are more likely to encourage group activities, benefiting children's social wellbeing, according to the research.

Ultimately, the study found that children with the greatest exposure to vegetation – either trees or grass – had the highest development scores. Researchers notes that the positive association was especially notable for exposure to tree-filled areas. They found that exposure to paved environments were associated with poorer child development.

About the Author:



Liz Gold is the editor of Integrative Practitioner. She brings more than 20 years of experience as a journalist and content creator for community newspapers and B2B audiences. Previously, Liz worked as a senior editor at Accounting Today, covering public accounting firms with a specialization in diversity and inclusion, growth strategies, and best practices. For the past decade, she owned a communications consulting company helping clients propel their stories into the world and reporting on the cannabis industry. She has produced several radio shows and podcasts, including a recent program exploring topics of strength, courage, and resilience. As a mental health advocate and mixed media artist, Liz is passionate about taking an integrative approach to health and wellness for inspired mind/body/spirit alignment.