Learning Environmental Issues Through Documentaries: Exploring the Perceptions of University Students

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Documentaries are a dominant media that can create an awareness of environmental issues. Despite existing studies on the use of media such as documentaries in tertiary education, there is limited scholarly literature on the use of documentaries, specifically for an educational setting. By employing a qualitative study, the researcher attempts to explore the students' perception of the use of documentaries in engaging them with environmental issues. This research involved an in-class research project with 37 third-year and fourth-year undergraduate students from various faculties in a university in Kuala Lumpur. The findings indicated that students expressed positive viewpoints about the use of the "Home" documentary in this assignment. Three themes emerged: (i) documentaries evoke students' environmental awareness, (ii) documentaries connect students to current environmental issues, and (iii) documentaries may enhance students' learning experience. The study also suggests that using documentaries to expose students to real issues develops the students' pro-environmental disposition.

Key words: documentary films, environmental education, higher education.

Introduction

Our natural environment is facing a significant threat. Global warming, ozone depletion, haze, the greenhouse effect, and rising sea levels are already affecting our lives (Arslan et al., 2012; Buchanan, Pressick-Kilborn, & Maher, 2019; Ekborg & Areskoug, 2012; Wigley, 2018). Issues such as plastic waste and habitat destruction have already reached a global scale (Van Sebille et al., 2015). Such changes and problems demand increased collective and