

Exploring People's Perceptions of Indoor Plants through the Lens of Para-Social Relationships Theory

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Abstract : Despite significant research on the positive effects of houseplants on human life, we know almost nothing about how people perceive plants and their attitudes toward them. The following study seeks to fill this void by applying para-social relationships (PSRs) theory to analyze individuals' perceptions of houseplants. We reveal how people form and maintain PSRs with indoor plants using 15 semi-structured in-depth interviews with Russian-speaking university students who had a close bond with their indoor plants when the study was conducted. The findings indicate that the process of forming PSRs is influenced by factors such as exposure and homophily. Students develop a sense of companionship with their indoor plants, which contributes to establishing a PSR. Participants reported engaging in various activities, such as regular care, communication, and interaction with their plants. The insights gained from this research have implications for horticultural therapy, environmental psychology, and indoor gardening practices.

Keywords : para-social relationships, plants, people-plant interaction, indoor plants, qualitative research

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