

ENVIRONMENTAL TRAUMA AND IT'S PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT IN THE NOVEL THE HUNGER GAMES: A STUDY OF DYSTOPIAN SURVIVAL

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Abstract

This paper looks at how environmental trauma affects people's mental health, using Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* as the main example. It draws from ecopsychology and trauma theory to explain how characters—particularly Katniss Everdeen—are affected by environmental destruction, since they are compelled to relocate, and to survive in a cruel world. The study shows that environmental trauma can lead to serious issues like anxiety, PTSD, emotional numbness, and moral confusion. This study shows how the series talks about how hurting nature can cause problems for people and their communities. The analysis shows that *The Hunger Games* talks about environmental trauma in a thoughtful way and portray's who people are, how they feel, and how they get along with others.

Keywords: *Environmental Trauma, Psychological impact, Mental health, environmental degradation.*

INTRODUCTION

The *Hunger Games*, a novel by Collins Suzanne, is an example of dystopian literature. It shows a made-up world where the leaders are cruel, and people suffer and lose what makes them human. They often take place in the future and has the elements of science fiction. It talks about today's world—like who has power, rich and poor people, machines, and how we treat nature. People's bond with nature has become more complicated over time, due to climate change and environmental damage grow. These problems don't just affect the planet—they also impact our mental and emotional health. The idea of *environmental trauma*, which means the emotional pain caused by natural disasters or big changes in the environment, has gained attention in recent years (Kaplan, 1995).

A good example is the *The Hunger Games* trilogy by Suzanne Collins. In the broken world called Panem, we see how ruining nature and being greedy hurt people badly. The main character, Katniss Everdeen, goes through a lot—like living in a damaged place, being moved from her home, and always being watched. Her journey shows how these problems make life really hard for people. Collins's story gives ideas about staying alive, fighting back, and how people suffer when nature is hurt. That's why *The Hunger Games* is a great example to talk about damage to the environment.

Environmental trauma is a vast concept that covers different types of ecological harm, such as natural disasters, pollution, and the destruction of habitats. The effects of environmental trauma can be quite

serious, results in anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and even a sense of moral disillusionment (Herman, 1992). The *Hunger Games* books show how people feel and think after nature is damaged. Katniss and others go through a lot of stress and pain. This study uses the story to understand how damage to the environment affects people's minds. It looks at three main things:

1. How environmental trauma is shown in *The Hunger Games*.
2. How it affects the thoughts and emotions of Katniss Everdeen and other characters.
3. What this means for mental health and overall well-being.

By breaking this down, the study adds to growing research on how environmental damage can hurt people emotionally, and highlights the importance of understanding and dealing with these human impacts.

Literature Review:

Environmental trauma means the emotional and mental pain people feel when nature is damaged—due to pollution, climate disasters, or being forced to leave their homes. Experts like Judith Herman and Cathy Caruth have studied how trauma from violence and loss can affect people's memories, feelings, and sense of self. More recently, ecopsychology has looked at how changes in the environment can hurt people's mental health, showing that our well-being is closely connected to the health of the planet.

In books and stories, especially dystopian fiction, writers often explore these ideas. *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins novel is seen as a strong example of this. Brianna Burke says the series shows how greed and damage to nature can cause suffering for people. Bland and Strotmann also point out that the story uses the destruction of nature to talk about power, control, and how people fight back.

Research Methodology:

This study looks at how damage to the environment affects people's mental health in *The Hunger Games* books by Suzanne Collins. It uses ideas from trauma theory to understand how characters like Katniss, Peeta, and Finnick show signs of stress, fear, and sadness—such as bad memories, feeling numb, or feeling guilty for surviving. It also uses ecopsychology, which is the study of how changes in nature can hurt people's feelings and minds.

The research carefully reads important parts of the story to see how the characters are affected by things like hunger, being forced to move, and living in dangerous places. It also looks at big ideas in the story, like trying to stay alive, losing your home, and how nature is used to hurt people.

Other books and articles are used to support these ideas and connect them to real-life problems like climate change. The main goal is to show how stories like *The Hunger Games* can help us understand the emotional pain caused by harming the environment.

Trauma Theory

Trauma theory says that extreme places—like war zones or damaged landscapes—can cause deep emotional pain. In *The Hunger Games*, Panem is full of these harsh conditions. Cathy Caruth talks about trauma and how it can come back later and hurt people again. This matches Katniss well. Even after the Games are over, she still has scary memories, bad dreams, and feels like someone is chasing her. The places around her keep reminding her of the painful memories.

Environmental Trauma in Panem : Panem's world is shaped by environmental trauma. The Capitol controls everything, while the suffer from violence, hunger, and fear. The Hunger Games are a cruel

way for the Capitol to show its power, using the environment itself to hurt and control people.

The Games as Environmental Trauma: The arenas are designed to be terrifying places. The one's in the game face hunger, wild animals, and deadly traps. These made up places make them feel helpless and scared—showing signs of environmental trauma.

Impact on Communities : Entire districts feel the pain of the Games. People live with constant fear, knowing their children might be taken to fight. This makes everyone feel worried and has deep emotional wounds that last for years.

Psychological Impact on Characters:

Katniss Everdeen: Katniss shows many signs of trauma. She's always nervous, has bad dreams, feels nothing sometimes, and feels guilty for staying alive. People see Katniss as a rebel, and that makes her feel even more stressed and sad.

Peeta Mellark: Peeta goes through a lot of pain after the Capitol hurts him. His memories get changed, and he feels mixed up and far away from others. These are signs of trauma from fear and control.

Finnick Odair: Finnick's life is full of hurt. The Capitol treats him badly, and it breaks him inside. Later, he struggles a lot, showing how deep the pain is—it even leads to sadness and harmful actions.

Environmental Trauma in Panem:

Panem is a hard place to live. Nature and people both cause problems. The Capitol takes things like food and water from the people and doesn't share. It even uses fire to hurt people during war. This makes life very tough for everyone.

The Hunger Games happen in fake places made to hurt people. The land is dangerous, and it makes life hard. Katniss's home has coal mines that damage the earth and keep people poor. There isn't enough food or clean water, so people get sick and have money problems. The environment is used to hurt them, and staying alive is the most important thing.

Katniss worries about how hunger hurts her family's bodies and feelings. Looking for food in a broken land makes her feel even more stressed. The Hunger Games arena is made to hurt people. It looks like nature but is full of scary and deadly things. The Capitol uses traps like fire, fighting, and tricks to scare the tributes and make them suffer.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in Katniss Everdeen:

Katniss sees a lot of violence in the Games and in her life. It hurts her mind and gives her PTSD. She has scary memories, feels tense all the time, and shuts down her feelings. The Capitol uses her world to control and hurt her, so even after the Games, it's hard for her to feel normal again. Their emotional pain shows that damage to nature can seriously hurt people's minds, making *The Hunger Games* a strong example of how harming the environment affects human lives.

Survivor's Guilt and Depression

Environmental trauma gets even harder to deal with because of survivor's guilt, which both Katniss and Peeta feel. In the Districts, there isn't enough food or help, and the Capitol's cruel Games make it feel like living means others have to die. Katniss feels sad and alone because of the hard choices she makes to stay alive and becomes depressed.

Violence and Trauma Transmission

Environmental trauma is a big problem in *The Hunger Games*. The Capitol uses nature to hurt people, and this causes emotional pain that lasts for years. The trauma isn't just from the Games—it also comes from the damage people face every day. In District 12, the firebombing during the rebellion makes Katniss feel even worse, because her home is destroyed and she's left with sad memories.

Identity confusion

Trauma can make people feel confused about who they are. Katniss feels torn between being a daughter, a sister, a fighter in the Games. She often feels lost and pushed around by others, like the Capitol and District 13. She doesn't always know what she really thinks or wants. This matches the idea that trauma can break a person's sense of time and self, making them feel stuck between past and present. For Katniss, not feeling in control of who she is causes her a lot of emotional pain.

SUMMING UP

This study explores how environmental trauma—emotional pain caused by damage to the environment—affects people's mental health, using *The Hunger Games* as an example. By looking at the story, characters, and themes, it shows how deeply this kind of trauma has affected Katniss Everdeen and others in the series. Trauma doesn't just hurt one person—it also affects how people connect with others, how they see themselves, and how they think about the future. It can even hurt communities and the world around us. The study says it's needed to understand that this kind of pain is a real mental health problem.

The Hunger Games shows how hurting the environment, through climate change and using up resources, can harm people. The story by Suzanne Collins reminds us that nature and people are connected, and that taking care of the Earth is important for everyone's health. This research helps us understand more about how damage to nature affects people's emotions. It uses stories to show this clearly, adding to other studies that mostly use numbers and data. By mixing ideas about nature and trauma, it shows how people, the environment, and emotional pain are all linked. This isn't just about books—today, many people feel hurt because of things like climate change, natural disasters, and pollution. Today, many people feel scared and sad because of problems like climate change and losing their homes. *The Hunger Games* shows us that we need to take care of each other and the Earth. To heal from pain, we need to come together, live in harmony with nature, and build a world that keeps people and the planet safe. This research highlights the need for:

1. More awareness and acceptance of environmental trauma as a real mental health concern
2. Including ecopsychology in mental health care and policy
3. More research into environmental trauma, ecopsychology, and trauma theory

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