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Gabriel Araújo Njaim, Hilmar Hinz, **Ana Ruiz-Frau**, 2026. [Relational values and human–nature connectedness in Mediterranean marine research: a systematic literature review](#). Ecosystems and People. Volume 22. Issue 1. 2026. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26395916.2026.2633148>

Abstract: Understanding the full spectrum of human-sea relationships is essential for inclusive and effective marine management and conservation. While Mediterranean marine research has traditionally emphasized ecological and economic dimensions, cultural and relational aspects remain underexplored. This systematic review analyzes 117 peer-reviewed studies to examine how human-sea relationships have been conceptualized and operationalized in the Mediterranean using the frameworks of Human-Nature Connectedness (HNC) and Relational Values (RVs). Findings reveal strong biases toward quantitative and instrumental approaches and limited integration of cultural perspectives in marine and coastal management plans. Relational values such as recreation, identity, and stewardship were common, while emotional, spiritual, and philosophical dimensions remain rare. Geographic and representational disparities persist, with research concentrated in the Western Mediterranean and often overlooking the experiences of minority and less visible communities. In light of these findings, the review highlights the need for more interdisciplinary, context-sensitive research approaches and stronger integration of diverse cultural and relational values into marine conservation and governance frameworks.

Keywords: Human–nature connectedness, relational values, Marine identity, Marine social science, Mediterranean Sea, relationality.