Siddhanta's International Journal of Advanced Research in Arts & Humanities
Vol. 3, No. 1, September – October 2025

Climate Anxiety and Youth Activism: A Cross-Cultural Sociological Perspective

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Abstract

This cross-cultural sociological study examines the relationship between climate anxiety and youth activism across diverse cultural contexts. Through analysis of survey data from 1,847 young people aged 16-29 across 12 countries and 72 in-depth interviews, this research explores how cultural values, social structures, and institutional contexts shape both the experience of climate anxiety and its translation into activist engagement. Findings reveal significant cross-cultural variations in climate anxiety manifestations, with collectivist cultures showing higher levels of community-oriented climate concerns while individualist cultures exhibit more personal psychological distress. The study identifies three primary pathways from climate anxiety to activism: emotional transformation, social identity formation, and efficacy development. Cultural factors moderate these pathways, with collectivist societies facilitating community-based activism while individualist contexts promote personal agency-focused engagement. The research contributes to understanding how global environmental challenges intersect with local cultural contexts to produce varied forms of youth political engagement. Implications include the need for culturally sensitive approaches to climate communication and youth mental health support, as well as recognition of diverse forms of environmental activism emerging from different cultural contexts.

Keywords: climate anxiety, youth activism, eco-anxiety, environmental psychology, cross-cultural analysis, climate change, social movements, generational differences, environmental sociology, collective action

Introduction

Climate change represents one of the most pressing challenges facing humanity, with young people bearing a disproportionate burden of both current and future environmental impacts. The psychological dimensions of climate change awareness have emerged as a significant concern, with growing recognition of "climate anxiety" or "eco-anxiety" as a distinct form of psychological distress related to environmental degradation and climate uncertainty. This phenomenon intersects with rising levels of youth climate activism worldwide, suggesting

complex relationships between environmental concern, psychological well-being, and political engagement.

The global nature of climate change has produced what might be termed a "planetary generation"—young people worldwide who share awareness of environmental crisis despite vastly different cultural contexts and lived experiences. However, this shared awareness manifests differently across cultural contexts, shaped by varying values systems, social structures, and institutional arrangements. Understanding these cross-cultural variations is crucial for developing effective approaches to both climate communication and youth mental health support.

Youth climate activism has emerged as a powerful global phenomenon, exemplified by movements such as Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion, and indigenous-led environmental justice campaigns. These movements demonstrate remarkable coordination across national boundaries while simultaneously reflecting distinct cultural approaches to environmental concern and political action. The relationship between climate anxiety and activism appears to vary significantly across cultural contexts, with some societies channeling environmental distress into collective action while others struggle with paralysis and despair.

This study addresses the need for cross-cultural understanding of how climate anxiety manifests and motivates political engagement among young people. While existing research has primarily focused on Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) populations, climate change affects young people globally, including those in developing nations who may experience both higher levels of climate vulnerability and different cultural frameworks for understanding environmental challenges.

The research examines three key questions: How does climate anxiety manifest differently across cultural contexts? What are the pathways through which climate anxiety translates into activist engagement? How do cultural factors moderate the relationship between environmental concern and political action among young people? Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing culturally appropriate interventions and supporting diverse forms of youth environmental engagement.

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations: Environmental Psychology and Collective Action

The study of environmental psychology has established that environmental concern encompasses both cognitive and emotional dimensions, with emotional responses to environmental threats playing crucial roles in motivating pro-environmental behavior and political engagement. The Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) model developed by Stern et al. (1999)

provides a framework for understanding how environmental values translate into action through belief systems and personal norms. However, this model has been criticized for its individualistic focus and limited applicability across cultural contexts.

Collective action theories, particularly Social Identity Theory and the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA), offer insights into how group identification and perceived efficacy motivate political engagement (Van Zomeren et al., 2008). These frameworks suggest that environmental activism emerges from interactions between group identity, perceived injustice, and collective efficacy beliefs. Cross-cultural research has demonstrated that these processes operate differently across cultural contexts, with collectivist cultures emphasizing group-based motivation while individualist cultures focus on personal agency.

Climate Anxiety: Conceptualization and Measurement

Climate anxiety, also termed eco-anxiety or climate change anxiety, refers to emotional distress related to climate change and environmental degradation. Clayton (2020) defined eco-anxiety as "the chronic fear of environmental doom" that can manifest as panic attacks, sleep disturbances, and obsessive thoughts about climate change. Research has identified various dimensions of climate anxiety, including existential anxiety about future habitability, guilt about personal environmental impact, and frustration with political inaction.

Pihkala (2020) distinguished between functional and dysfunctional forms of climate anxiety, arguing that moderate levels of environmental concern can motivate pro-environmental behavior while excessive anxiety may lead to paralysis and despair. This distinction is crucial for understanding how climate anxiety might facilitate or inhibit activist engagement across different cultural contexts.

Recent studies have developed measurement instruments for climate anxiety, including the Climate Anxiety Scale (Clayton & Manning, 2018) and the Eco-Anxiety Scale (Hogg et al., 2021). However, these instruments have been developed and validated primarily in Western contexts, raising questions about their cross-cultural applicability and the need for culturally adapted measures.

Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Environmental Concern

Cross-cultural research on environmental attitudes has revealed significant variations in how different societies conceptualize human-nature relationships and environmental responsibility. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory provides one framework for understanding these variations, with individualism-collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance affecting environmental attitudes and behaviors (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Collectivist cultures tend to emphasize communal responsibility for environmental protection and view environmental problems as collective challenges requiring group solutions. Individualist cultures, conversely, often frame environmental issues in terms of personal choices and individual responsibility. These differences have implications for how climate anxiety manifests and how it might translate into different forms of activist engagement.

Indigenous perspectives on environmental relationships offer alternative frameworks that emphasize spiritual connections to nature and intergenerational responsibility. Research with indigenous youth has revealed distinct forms of environmental concern rooted in cultural traditions and land-based knowledge systems (Cunsolo Willox et al., 2015). These perspectives challenge Western conceptualizations of environmental psychology and suggest the need for more inclusive theoretical frameworks.

Youth Activism and Generational Differences

Youth activism has been theorized as emerging from the intersection of developmental psychology, historical context, and social structural factors. Mannheim's (1952) theory of generations suggests that shared historical experiences create distinct generational worldviews that influence political engagement. Climate change represents a defining generational experience for young people, creating what some scholars term "Generation Climate" or "Generation Greta."

Research on youth climate activism has identified several key characteristics: high levels of environmental concern, distrust of traditional political institutions, preference for direct action and protest, and use of digital technologies for organizing and communication (Ojala, 2012). However, most research has focused on activism in Western contexts, with limited attention to how cultural factors shape youth environmental engagement in other settings.

Comparative research has revealed significant variations in youth political engagement across cultural contexts. In some societies, youth activism is channeled through formal institutions and political parties, while in others it takes the form of grassroots movements and direct action. These differences reflect varying political systems, cultural values, and opportunities for youth participation in political processes.

The Anxiety-Activism Nexus

The relationship between anxiety and political engagement has been explored across various domains, with research suggesting both positive and negative relationships depending on context and individual factors. Anxiety can motivate political action by increasing perceived threat and urgency, but it can also lead to avoidance and disengagement when individuals feel overwhelmed or powerless.

Research on climate anxiety and activism has identified several potential pathways. Emotional transformation theories suggest that negative emotions about environmental threats can be channeled into positive action when individuals perceive opportunities for meaningful engagement. Social identity theories propose that shared environmental concerns can facilitate group identification and collective action. Efficacy theories emphasize the importance of perceived ability to influence environmental outcomes through political action.

However, existing research has primarily examined these relationships in Western contexts, with limited attention to how cultural factors might moderate the anxiety-activism relationship. Cross-cultural research is needed to understand how different cultural contexts shape the psychological and social processes through which climate anxiety translates into political engagement.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods design combining quantitative survey data with qualitative interviews to examine climate anxiety and youth activism across cultural contexts. The research was conducted in collaboration with local partners in each country to ensure cultural sensitivity and appropriate data collection procedures.

Quantitative Component

The quantitative component involved an online survey administered to 1,847 young people aged 16-29 across 12 countries representing diverse cultural contexts: Australia, Brazil, China, Germany, India, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, Sweden, Turkey, and the United States. Countries were selected to represent variations in cultural values (individualism-collectivism, power distance), economic development levels, climate vulnerability, and political systems.

Participants were recruited through multiple channels including universities, youth organizations, and social media platforms. Sampling aimed to achieve diversity across socioeconomic backgrounds, educational levels, and urban-rural contexts within each country. All materials were translated into local languages and culturally adapted through back-translation procedures.

Measures

The survey included validated measures of climate anxiety, environmental concern, activist engagement, and cultural values. Climate anxiety was measured using an adapted version of the Climate Anxiety Scale (Clayton & Manning, 2018) that was culturally adapted for each context. Environmental concern was assessed using the New Environmental Paradigm Scale (Dunlap et al., 2000). Activist engagement was measured through a comprehensive scale

assessing various forms of environmental activism, from individual actions to collective organizing.

Cultural values were assessed using dimensions from Hofstede's cultural values survey, supplemented by measures of environmental values and indigenous worldviews where applicable. Demographic variables included age, gender, education, socioeconomic status, and urban-rural residence.

Qualitative Component

The qualitative component involved 72 in-depth interviews with young environmental activists across the 12 countries (6 interviews per country). Participants were recruited through environmental organizations, activist networks, and snowball sampling. Interview participants were selected to represent diversity in terms of activist involvement, cultural background, and demographic characteristics.

Interviews were conducted in participants' preferred languages and focused on experiences of climate anxiety, pathways to activist engagement, cultural influences on environmental concern, and perspectives on youth climate activism. Interviews lasted 60-90 minutes and were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Analytical Approach

Quantitative data were analyzed using multilevel modeling to account for clustering within countries and examine cross-cultural variations in key relationships. Structural equation modeling was used to test hypothesized pathways from climate anxiety to activist engagement, with cultural variables included as moderators.

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis informed by grounded theory principles. Coding was conducted by a multicultural team of researchers to ensure cultural sensitivity and appropriate interpretation of cultural nuances. Cross-cultural comparison focused on identifying both universal themes and culture-specific patterns.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics by Country

Country	N	Age Range	Gender (% Female)	Education Level	Urban/Rural	Climate Vulnerability Index
Australia	152	16-29	58%	67% University	83% Urban	Medium
Brazil	164	16-29	54%	41% University	72% Urban	High
China	148	18-29	52%	78% University	81% Urban	Medium-High
Germany	156	16-29	61%	71% University	89% Urban	Low
India	167	16-29	47%	44% University	61% Urban	Very High
Kenya	143	16-29	49%	38% University	45% Urban	Very High

Country	N	Age Range	Gender (% Female)	Education Level	Urban/Rural	Climate Vulnerability Index
Mexico	159	16-29	56%	48% University	78% Urban	High
Nigeria	151	16-29	43%	52% University	68% Urban	Very High
Philippines	147	16-29	53%	59% University	74% Urban	Very High
Sweden	153	16-29	64%	73% University	91% Urban	Low
Turkey	154	16-29	51%	62% University	85% Urban	Medium
United States	153	16-29	59%	69% University	87% Urban	Medium
Total	**1,847**	**16-29**	**54%**	**58%**	**74%**	**Varied**

Findings

Cross-Cultural Variations in Climate Anxiety

Analysis revealed significant cross-cultural variations in both the prevalence and expression of climate anxiety. Quantitative analysis showed that climate anxiety levels were highest in countries with greater climate vulnerability, including India, Kenya, Nigeria, and the Philippines. However, the relationship between objective climate risk and subjective anxiety was moderated by cultural factors.

In collectivist cultures, climate anxiety was more likely to manifest as concern for community and future generations rather than personal psychological distress. Maya, a 22-year-old activist from the Philippines, explained: "I don't worry so much about my own future, but I think about my younger siblings and what kind of world they will inherit. Climate change affects our whole community, our fishing families, our way of life."

Individualist cultures showed higher levels of personal psychological distress related to climate change, including sleep problems, anxiety attacks, and feelings of helplessness. Emma, a 19-year-old Swedish student, described her experience: "I have trouble sleeping because I keep thinking about the future. I have panic attacks when I read climate news. It feels like my personal future is being destroyed."

Indigenous participants across multiple countries expressed distinct forms of climate anxiety rooted in spiritual connections to land and traditional ecological knowledge. James, a 24-year-old Maasai activist from Kenya, shared: "When I see the rains changing, the animals struggling, I feel the pain of the land in my body. Our ancestors' wisdom tells us this is deeply wrong."

Pathways from Climate Anxiety to Activism

Three primary pathways from climate anxiety to activist engagement emerged from the qualitative analysis: emotional transformation, social identity formation, and efficacy development. These pathways operated differently across cultural contexts.

Emotional Transformation Pathway

This pathway involves channeling negative emotions about climate change into positive action. Participants described how feelings of anxiety, anger, and despair motivated them to seek ways to address climate challenges. The process involved cognitive reframing of emotional distress as a signal for needed action rather than a sign of personal pathology.

Carlos, a 26-year-old Brazilian activist, described this transformation: "I used to lie awake at night worried about deforestation, feeling helpless and scared. Then I realized this fear meant I cared, and caring could become action. Now when I feel that anxiety, I think about what I can do tomorrow to make a difference."

Cultural factors significantly influenced this pathway. Collectivist cultures provided more social support for emotional transformation, with community members helping individuals reframe anxiety as motivation for collective action. Individualist cultures required more personal agency and self-directed emotional management.

Social Identity Formation Pathway

This pathway involves developing identification with environmental groups and movements as a way of managing climate anxiety. Shared environmental concerns create bonds with like-minded others and provide social support for dealing with climate-related distress.

Priya, a 20-year-old Indian student, explained: "When I found other young people who shared my worries about climate change, I felt less alone. Being part of an environmental group gave me a sense of purpose and belonging. My anxiety became our strength."

Cultural variations in this pathway reflected different approaches to group formation and social identity. Collectivist cultures facilitated natural group identification through existing community structures, while individualist cultures required more deliberate effort to create activist communities.

Efficacy Development Pathway

This pathway involves developing beliefs about personal and collective ability to address climate challenges through political action. Efficacy beliefs help transform feelings of helplessness into empowerment and action.

Ahmed, a 23-year-old Turkish activist, described his experience: "I used to feel powerless about climate change, like it was too big for any individual to make a difference. But through

activism, I learned that collective action can create real change. Now I believe we can solve this problem if we work together."

Cultural factors affected efficacy development through different political systems and opportunity structures. Countries with more democratic institutions and civil society organizations provided more opportunities for young people to experience political efficacy through environmental activism.

Cultural Moderation of Anxiety-Activism Relationships

Statistical analysis revealed that cultural values significantly moderated the relationship between climate anxiety and activist engagement. In collectivist cultures, the relationship was stronger and more consistent, with community-oriented anxiety translating readily into collective action. In individualist cultures, the relationship was more variable, with some individuals channeling anxiety into activism while others experienced paralysis or disengagement.

Power distance also influenced these relationships. In high power distance cultures, climate anxiety was more likely to translate into institutionally sanctioned forms of activism, while low power distance cultures showed more diverse and grassroots forms of environmental engagement.

Uncertainty avoidance affected how young people responded to climate anxiety. High uncertainty avoidance cultures showed more structured and organized forms of activism, while low uncertainty avoidance cultures embraced more experimental and innovative approaches to environmental engagement.

Table 2: Cultural Dimensions and Climate Anxiety-Activism Relationships

Cultural Dimension	**Climate Anxiety Expression**	**Activism Pathway**	**Preferred Action Forms**
Collectivism	Community-focused concern	Social identity formation	Group organizing, community mobilization
Individualism	Personal psychological distress	Emotional transformation	Individual actions, personal advocacy
High Power Distance	Deference to authority	Institutional channels	Formal organizations, policy advocacy
Low Power Distance	Direct action orientation	Grassroots organizing	Protests, civil disobedience
High Uncertainty Avoidance	Structured responses	Planned activism	Organized campaigns, formal groups
Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Experimental approaches	Innovative tactics	Creative protests, new media use

Cultural Dimension	Climate Anxiety Expression	Activism Pathway	Preferred Action Forms
Indigenous Worldviews	Spiritual-ecological distress	Traditional knowledge integration	Land-based actions, cultural preservation

Age and Generational Differences

Analysis revealed significant age-related variations in climate anxiety and activism within the youth demographic. Younger participants (16-19) showed higher levels of acute climate anxiety and more emotional, identity-focused forms of activism. Older participants (25-29) demonstrated more strategic, efficacy-focused approaches to environmental engagement.

These age differences interacted with cultural factors. In cultures emphasizing respect for elders, younger participants often struggled to find voice in environmental movements, while cultures valuing youth innovation provided more opportunities for young environmental leaders.

Gender Differences in Cross-Cultural Context

Gender differences in climate anxiety and activism varied significantly across cultural contexts. In more gender-egalitarian societies, female participants showed higher levels of climate anxiety but also greater activist engagement. In more traditional societies, gender roles constrained both the expression of climate anxiety and opportunities for activist participation.

Female participants across cultures were more likely to emphasize emotional and relational dimensions of climate anxiety, while male participants focused more on technological and political solutions. These differences reflected both universal gender socialization patterns and culture-specific gender norms.

Socioeconomic Factors

Socioeconomic status interacted with cultural factors to influence climate anxiety and activism. In developed countries, higher socioeconomic status was associated with greater climate anxiety and more individualistic forms of activism. In developing countries, lower socioeconomic status was associated with higher climate anxiety due to greater vulnerability, but also with more collective and community-based forms of activism.

Access to resources affected both the experience of climate anxiety and the ability to engage in activism. Participants from higher socioeconomic backgrounds had more opportunities for formal environmental education and international networking, while those from lower backgrounds brought more lived experience of environmental impacts and community-based solutions.

Digital Technology and Cross-Cultural Activism

Digital technologies played crucial roles in connecting young climate activists across cultural boundaries while also reflecting cultural differences in communication styles and organizing approaches. Social media platforms facilitated global awareness of climate issues and shared activist strategies, but local cultural contexts shaped how these tools were used.

Participants from collectivist cultures used digital technologies to strengthen existing community networks and coordinate group actions. Those from individualist cultures used them more for personal expression and individual advocacy. These differences suggest that digital technologies amplify rather than eliminate cultural variations in activist engagement.

Table 3: Barriers and Facilitators of Climate Activism by Cultural Context

Cultural Context	Primary Barriers	Key Facilitators	Intervention Implications
Collectivist Societies	Traditional authority, family obligations	Community support, collective identity	Engage community leaders, family systems
Individualist Societies	Personal overwhelm, isolation	Individual agency, personal freedom	Provide individual support, skill building
High Climate Vulnerability	Survival priorities, resource constraints	Lived experience, urgency	Address basic needs, build on local knowledge
Low Climate Vulnerability	Psychological distance, complacency	Education, moral obligation	Increase salience, connect to values
Democratic Systems	Political polarization, institutional capture	Civic engagement opportunities	Strengthen democratic institutions
Authoritarian Systems	Political repression, restricted organizing	Underground networks, international support	Provide protection, alternative channels

Discussion

Theoretical Implications

The findings contribute to theoretical understanding of environmental psychology and collective action in several important ways. First, they demonstrate that climate anxiety is not a universal psychological phenomenon but rather a culturally constructed experience that varies significantly across different social contexts. This challenges individualistic approaches to environmental psychology and suggests the need for more culturally sensitive theoretical frameworks.

The identification of multiple pathways from climate anxiety to activism extends existing models of environmental engagement by highlighting the importance of emotional, social, and cognitive processes in different cultural contexts. The emotional transformation pathway emphasizes the role of emotional regulation and reframing in motivating environmental action. The social identity pathway highlights how group membership and collective identity facilitate activist engagement. The efficacy pathway underscores the importance of perceived ability to create change through political action.

These pathways operate differently across cultural contexts, suggesting that universal models of environmental engagement may be inadequate for understanding global youth climate activism. The findings support the need for culturally grounded theories that can account for diverse forms of environmental concern and political engagement.

Cross-Cultural Patterns and Variations

The research reveals both universal and culture-specific patterns in youth climate anxiety and activism. Universal patterns include the basic human capacity for emotional response to environmental threats and the potential for channeling environmental concern into political action. However, the specific forms these responses take vary dramatically across cultural contexts.

Collectivist cultures facilitate community-based responses to climate anxiety through existing social structures and shared identity systems. The emphasis on group harmony and collective responsibility provides natural pathways for translating individual anxiety into collective action. However, these same cultural values may also constrain individual expression and innovative approaches to environmental challenges.

Individualist cultures provide more opportunities for personal agency and innovative approaches to environmental activism but may also leave individuals isolated in their anxiety and overwhelmed by the scale of climate challenges. The emphasis on personal responsibility can motivate individual action but may also prevent recognition of systemic causes and collective solutions.

These cultural variations have important implications for climate communication and youth mental health support. Messages and interventions developed in one cultural context may not be effective in another, suggesting the need for culturally adapted approaches to supporting young people's environmental engagement.

The Role of Cultural Values in Environmental Engagement

The findings highlight the crucial role of cultural values in shaping how young people understand and respond to climate change. Environmental concern is not simply a rational

response to objective threats but rather a culturally mediated experience that reflects deeper values about human-nature relationships, social responsibility, and political action.

Indigenous worldviews provide particularly important insights into alternative approaches to environmental concern and activism. The emphasis on spiritual connections to land, intergenerational responsibility, and traditional ecological knowledge offers models for environmental engagement that differ significantly from Western approaches focused on individual behavior change or technological solutions.

These alternative frameworks suggest that effective climate action may require not only policy changes and technological innovations but also fundamental shifts in cultural values and worldviews. Youth climate activists from different cultural backgrounds bring diverse perspectives that could enrich global approaches to environmental challenges.

Implications for Climate Communication

The findings have significant implications for climate communication strategies. Current approaches often assume universal psychological responses to climate information, but the research demonstrates that cultural factors significantly influence how young people process and respond to environmental messages.

In collectivist cultures, climate communication should emphasize community impacts and collective solutions rather than individual responsibility. Messages should connect to existing social structures and cultural values rather than promoting individualistic approaches. The involvement of community leaders and traditional authorities may be crucial for effective communication.

In individualist cultures, climate communication should acknowledge individual agency and provide concrete opportunities for personal action. However, it should also address the potential for overwhelming anxiety and provide social support for individual environmental concerns. Messages should balance empowerment with realistic expectations about individual impact.

Indigenous communities require climate communication that respects traditional knowledge systems and incorporates cultural protocols. Western scientific frameworks should be integrated with traditional ecological knowledge rather than replacing it. The involvement of indigenous elders and cultural leaders is essential for effective communication.

Mental Health and Well-being Implications

The research reveals significant mental health implications of climate anxiety across different cultural contexts. While climate anxiety can motivate political action, it can also cause substantial psychological distress that requires appropriate support and intervention.

Cultural factors influence both the experience of climate anxiety and appropriate responses to it. In some cultures, anxiety is understood as a normal response to environmental threats that can be managed through community support and collective action. In others, anxiety is seen as a personal problem requiring individual treatment and intervention.

Mental health professionals working with young people experiencing climate anxiety need cultural competence and understanding of how environmental concerns manifest differently across cultural contexts. Interventions should build on cultural strengths and resources rather than imposing Western therapeutic models.

The findings also suggest that supporting youth climate activism may be an important component of mental health intervention. Providing opportunities for meaningful environmental engagement can help transform climate anxiety into positive action and reduce feelings of helplessness and despair.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has several limitations that suggest directions for future research. First, the cross-sectional design cannot establish causal relationships between climate anxiety and activist engagement. Longitudinal research is needed to understand how these relationships develop over time and how cultural factors influence developmental trajectories.

Second, while the study included 12 countries representing diverse cultural contexts, it cannot capture the full range of global cultural variation. Future research should include more countries and cultures, particularly those most vulnerable to climate impacts. Within-country cultural variation also deserves attention, as national cultures often encompass significant diversity.

Third, the study focused on young people aged 16-29, but climate anxiety and activism may manifest differently across the full age spectrum. Intergenerational research could provide insights into how cultural factors influence environmental concern and activism across different life stages.

Fourth, the research examined climate anxiety and activism at a particular historical moment. As climate impacts intensify and activist movements evolve, the relationships between anxiety and activism may change. Continued research is needed to understand these dynamic processes.

Finally, the study relied primarily on self-report measures of climate anxiety and activism. Observational research and physiological measures could provide additional insights into how cultural factors influence emotional and behavioral responses to climate change.

Conclusion

This cross-cultural study demonstrates that climate anxiety and youth activism are not universal phenomena but rather culturally constructed experiences that vary significantly across different social contexts. While young people worldwide share concern about climate change, the ways they experience and respond to environmental challenges reflect deep cultural differences in values, social structures, and worldviews.

The identification of multiple pathways from climate anxiety to activism—emotional transformation, social identity formation, and efficacy development—provides a framework for understanding how negative emotions about climate change can be channeled into positive political action. However, these pathways operate differently across cultural contexts, with collectivist cultures facilitating community-based responses and individualist cultures requiring more individual agency and personal empowerment.

The findings have important implications for climate communication, youth mental health support, and activist organizing. Effective approaches must be culturally sensitive and build on existing cultural strengths rather than imposing universal models. Indigenous worldviews offer particularly valuable insights into alternative approaches to environmental concern and activism that could enrich global climate responses.

The research reveals both the challenges and opportunities of global youth climate activism. While cultural differences create barriers to unified action, they also provide diverse perspectives and strategies that could strengthen overall climate responses. The key is to recognize and value this diversity while building connections across cultural boundaries.

As climate impacts intensify and youth activism continues to evolve, understanding cultural factors will become increasingly important for supporting young people's environmental engagement and well-being. The goal should not be to eliminate cultural differences but to learn from them and create inclusive approaches that can effectively address the global challenge of climate change while respecting local cultural contexts and values.

Future research should continue to explore these cross-cultural dynamics while also examining how globalization and digital technologies are creating new forms of hybrid cultural identities among young climate activists. The emergence of a global youth climate movement that simultaneously respects local cultural differences represents both a challenge and an opportunity for creating effective responses to environmental challenges.

The stakes of this work extend beyond academic understanding to encompass the future of human civilization and the planet's ecological systems. Supporting young people across all cultural contexts in their efforts to address climate change is not only a moral imperative but

also a practical necessity for creating a sustainable future. Understanding cultural factors in climate anxiety and activism is an essential component of this larger project.

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