

Role of Education in Mobilising Youth to Stop Climate Change

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Abstract

Education may be considered to play an integral part in providing solution to the global problem of Climate Change, which is the biggest challenge of the twenty-first century. Education is an essential element of the global response to climate change. It helps young people understand and address the impact of global warming, encourage changes in their attitudes and behaviour and helps them adapt to climate change related trends. UNESCO has made an attempt to make climate change education an essential part of global response to climate change through its Climate Change Education for Sustainable Development programme. This programme has an objective to make people understand the implications of global warming and also increase “climate literacy” among youth. It does this by fortifying the capacity of its Member States to give quality climate change education; encouraging innovative teaching methods to incorporate climate change education in school and by bringing issues to light about climate change as well as improving non-formal education programmes through media, networking and partnerships. This paper makes an attempt to discuss the phenomenon of climate change and to what extent the youth is aware about the nuances of climate change mitigation and adaptation. Further, the author has conducted a short survey by adopting questionnaire method to analyse the response of youth towards dealing with climate crisis and how the educational institutions need to emphasise more upon the importance of climate change education.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.

– William Butler Yeats

Climate change is a multi-faceted test for the present societies though it impacts on living people and their common habitat. The degree of environmental change is showed in a few folds going from expanding diurnal temperature, occasional changes in precipitation pattern, through expanding sun power to diminishing rainfall, in this manner acquainting a few contortions with industrial activities whose actions hold to create in tight the crude materials from agriculture. Other than these outcomes, environmental change summons high spending on design arrangement, business exercises and other adapting systems to rising occupation suggestions and poverty level.

Research on environmental education has indicated that positive ecological voting, consumption, and standards of conduct are to a great extent controlled by how much an individual thinks about a subject. Purposes behind absence of public support are mind boggling, however can be somewhat credited to lacking government funded schooling on the issue. In the event that environment related enactment that can successfully help stop or

moderate worldwide climate change is passed, it will be the result of broad civic campaigning. This sort of public support must be accomplished and maintained if citizens and policymakers comprehend the essential scientific, social, political, and innovative reasons for an issue. Seeing a particularly unpredictable point to cast a ballot proficiently requires a solid science foundation and environmental education. This sort of foundation can't be acquired from the current government funded education system.

The impact of a worldwide temperature alteration and climate change are of concern both for the climate and human existence. Proof of environmental change incorporates the instrumental temperature record, rising ocean levels and diminished snow cover in the Northern Hemisphere. It is anticipated that future environment changes will incorporate further a dangerous atmospheric deviation (i.e., an upward pattern in worldwide mean temperature), ocean level ascent, and a likely expansion in the recurrence of some extraordinary climate occasions. Ecosystems are viewed as being especially helpless against environmental change. Human frameworks are viewed as being variable in their ability to adjust to future environmental change.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are three fold—

1. To assess the level of awareness amongst youth regarding climate crisis.
2. To find out whether they have an understanding about the gaps in resolving the global challenge of climate crisis.
3. To analyse whether the youth are making efforts to adopt the practices of sustainable living.
4. To identify the platform to enhance the awareness about the relevance of healthy environment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methods adopted are a combination of both— doctrinal and non-doctrinal methods.

The primary and secondary sources of data were referred to explain the phenomenon of climate change and its impact on the lives of human beings along with the attempt to understand the relevance of voice of youth raised against climate crisis or climate emergency. Further, a questionnaire method is adopted to know the level of awareness among youth for which ten questions (in the form of a Google Form) consisting of various sections related to knowledge of environmental concerns, attitude towards the environmental problems, skills to identify the gaps in resolving the climate crisis and their participation at an individual level, were circulated to 61 law students

and their responses have been analysed. However, the findings are just indicative and hence cannot be generalised as the universe is really small and limited.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Profile of the Respondents

The questionnaire was circulated among the law students of both government and private college. The total responses received by the researcher were 61 which were collected within the period of one day. The age group which participated in this survey ranged from 16 years to 35 years. The majority of the respondents fall in the category of 21-25 years. Further, the number of female respondents is more than the male respondents. The details of the respondents in terms of age and gender have been tabulated as below (Refer Table A and Table B).

Table A
Age-wise Respondents

Age group of Respondents	Percentage of the Total Respondents
16-20 Years	4.9%
21-25 Years	72.1%
26-30 Years	21.3%
31-35 Years	1.6%

Table B
Gender-wise Respondents

Gender	Percentage of Respondents
Female	54.1%
Male	45.9%

The Phenomenon of Climate Change

Environmental change has arisen as perhaps the most pulverizing ecological dangers. Worldwide environmental change impacts on human and natural frameworks are anticipated to be serious. As proof of environmental change and its effect keeps on being amassed, it has got clear that a significant number of the reasons for environmental change are anthropogenic in nature through ways of life, consumption and choices that cause pollution and abuse assets in an unreasonable way. It is likewise anticipated that environmental change will have inconvenient impacts upon farming and fisheries, and may even bring about imploding biological systems.

Natural environment has been experiencing a continuous change and in comparison, with the present, climatic conditions were more stable in the past with thick clouds forming in the skies, heavy rainfalls and people-friendly weather. Seasons were stable with organic agriculture yielding adequate produce with almost nil application of pesticides. Since then, we see a noticeable change in the weather pattern, which can otherwise be termed as climate change.

The climate of a place is the average weather that it experienced over a period of time. The factors that determine the climate of allocation include the rainfall, sunshine, humidity, wind and temperature. The conditions outside are called the weather which includes rainfall,

sunshine, wind, humidity and temperature at a particular given point of time, and at a particular place. Climate change according to Ekpoh (2009) is “any long-term change in the patterns of average weather of a specific region or the earth as a whole. It is an abnormal variation in the earth’s climate that usually occurs over durations ranging from decades to millions of years”.

The change in climate occurs due to internal dynamics or external forcing factors, which include the natural phenomenon such as, volcanic eruption and solar variations, as well as anthropogenic effects. Primary causes for increased emissions of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) in the atmosphere are human activities including injudicious use of fossil fuels, reducing the area of forests cover which otherwise lead to the global warming.

As far as the findings are concerned, there were three questions in the survey to find out about the level of knowledge regarding climate change among the respondents. And it has been found that the knowledge of the respondents about climate change varies from one aspect to another. Almost 93% of the respondents are aware about the “Greenhouse effect”, however more than 80% of the respondents are unaware about the most striking evidence of global warming. Also, only 60% respondents know about the effects of climate change on human health. This is shown below in Table C.

Table C
Overall Knowledge about the phenomenon of Climate Change

Subject of Questions	Percentage of Respondents with Correct Answers
Evidence of Global Warming	13.1%
Greenhouse Effect	93.3%
Effect of Climate Change on Human Health	60.7%

Environmental Education

Environmental Education (EE) may be defined as a “process of developing a world population that is aware of, and concerned about, the total environment and its associated problems and which has the knowledge, attitudes, commitments and skills to work individually and collectively towards the situation of current problems and prevention of new ones”, (Sonowal, 2009). EE is focused at creating awareness and understanding about environmental concerns that leads to responsible individual and group actions. Fruitful EE emphasises on processes that encourages critical thinking, problem solving, and effective decision-making skills. EE utilises processes that involve students in “observing, measuring, classifying, experimenting, and other data gathering techniques”. These procedures assist students in deliberating, inferring, predicting, and understanding data about environmental issues.

The components of environmental education are—

- Knowledge and understanding of the environment and environmental challenges
- Attitudes of concern for the environment and motivation to improve or maintain environmental quality
- Skills to identify and help resolve environmental challenges
- Participation in activities that lead to the resolution of environmental challenges.

This study also tried to identify the most effective source of information about the phenomenon of climate change. According to the findings, 60% of the respondents came to know about climate change related information from newspapers, journals and magazines. Only 21.7% of the respondents consider educational institutions, that is, schools and colleges as the awareness creating bodies among the youth. Almost 12% of the respondents marked social media as the source of climate change related information. The results have been mentioned as below in Figure 1—

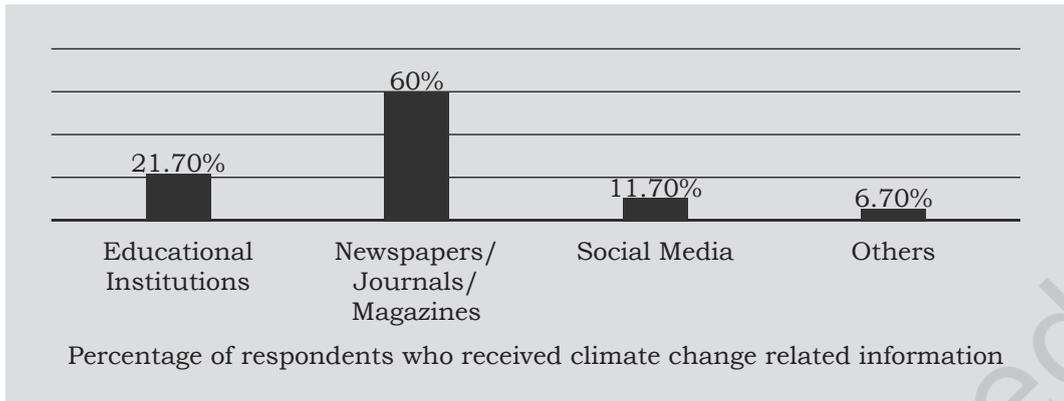


Fig. 1: Source of climate change related awareness

Role of Youth in Stopping Climate Change

The worldwide community perceived the significance of drawing in different cultural gatherings in environmental policymaking right off the bat. During the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (known as the Earth Summit) in 1992 and in the resulting Agenda 21, nine significant gatherings were assigned as channels for accomplishing the world's sustainable development objectives. Those gatherings included women, kids and youth, native people groups, farmers, business and industry, labour and trade unions, science and technology, local authorities, and NGOs. Existing examinations have talked about their commitment with and support in environment activism.

The youth environment movement that cleared the world in the years 2018 and 2019, which got perhaps the most far reaching environmental social movements ever. School strikes

for environment have been related with Greta Thunberg, whose Friday school blacklists commanded global notice. This Swedish teen utilised strikes to request the reception of more forceful environment approaches with respect to older generations, governments, and worldwide associations. She has since propelled different young people, driving large number of them to join her by rampaging. Despite the fact that they are dissipated everywhere on the world, the movement members have requested uncommon activities, for example, a quick decrease in ozone harming substance emanations and a petroleum derivative eliminate. Youth participation in politics isn't new, as they have assumed different parts in domestic and global legislative issues, setting off political and financial changes, for example, democratisation. Young people have played significant roles in various movements, for example, the U.S. civil rights, feminism, environmentalism,

anti-war, labour and immigrant rights movements.

Electrified by Greta Thunberg's thought for Friday School Strikes, "Climate Strikes" arose in 2018 and 2019 as a type of youth social movement requesting expansive activity on environment change. Young people have made different moves to battle environmental change; however scholastics have not given adequate consideration to youth environment mobilisation. Youth aggregated activity has been prevailing with regards to problematising worldwide environment inaction and idleness and in outlining environmental change from an equity viewpoint, yet activists have confronted impediments in changing over their ethical authenticity into the power needed for major developments. By and large, this study exhibits the development of youngsters as influencers in the worldwide environmental change field and the desperation of connecting with them

in environmental change governance and policymaking.

The survey conducted by the author consisted of the two questions concerned with the attitude of the youth towards climate crisis. The questions were in the form of the statements and the respondents were asked whether they agree with those statements or not. One was regarding the role of political leaders from developed countries in taking urgent action to mitigate climate change and the other relating to the need for participation of non-state actors like private corporations, civil society groups etc. to deal with climate emergency. More than 85% of the respondents agreed with the two statements (Refer Table D). Last question in the survey dealt with whether the respondents follow eco-friendly habits, for instance, conserving water, electricity, planting trees etc. regularly or not. 66% of the respondents replied positively (Refer Table E).

Table D
Analysis of Respondents' Attitude towards Climate Crisis

Statements	Respondents' Responses		
	Agreed (%age)	Disagreed (%age)	Not Sure (%age)
Urgent action needed on behalf of Political Leaders from Developed Countries	88.3%	3.3%	8.3%
Need for rise in participation of Non-state actors such as private corporations, civil society groups etc. to deal with Climate emergency	86.7%	3.3%	10%

Table E
Eco-friendly Practices adopted by Youth at an Individual level

	Yes	Sometimes
Whether they have adopted environment friendly practices like conserving water, electricity, planting trees etc.	66.1%	33.9%

CONCLUSION

The scientists and researchers collectively have agreed to mitigate climate change, and with the ratification of the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the international community has officially acknowledged ambitious mitigation goals. However, there is a wide gap between emission reduction objectives of the Paris Agreement and actions of countries that are party to it. Shutting that emissions gap can be accomplished only if a wide gap between scientific and societal understanding of climate change is shut. First, addressing climate change will require activity at all levels of society, including individuals, businesses, organisations, local, state and national governments and worldwide bodies. Second, education is required on the grounds that, in case of climate change, learning from experience is learning too late. The postponement of decisions that cause climate change and their

full societal impact can go from decades to centuries. Therefore, learning from education, instead of experience, is important to maintain a strategic distance from those effects. Considering the current post COVID-19 scenario, climate change education must be promoted more so that the students understand the importance of human beings living in harmony with nature to maintain the environmental balance. This shall definitely prepare them to face the future pandemics in a better way through adoption of sustainable life style. Further, according to the results of the survey, it is very much clear that youth social movements in last few years have motivated the governments and the international community to tackle the climate crisis at its earliest and education has played a very important role in mobilization of youth to compel the whole world to see the climate change as 'climate emergency'. However, the educational institutions need to be more proactive in creating such awareness.

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