



Climate Change and Deliberative Democracy-Exploring Consciousness Among India's Youth

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Abstract:

This research tries to create strong relationship between climate change awareness and deliberative democracy among India's youth, primarily concerning their role in shaping climate-responsive governance. It being one of the most vulnerable groups to climate change impacts such as heatwaves, water scarcity, and extreme weather events, the youth often remain disassociated and not completely engaged from climate discourse and policy formulation or participation. The study tries to investigate the imbalance of limited climate consciousness among youth and explores how deliberative democratic platforms can enhance their engagement in environmental decision-making.

The research adopts a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews across schools and colleges to find climate literacy, engagement in climate initiatives, and perceptions of democratic structure. And the Secondary literature, including studies on youth political actions, digital activism, and participatory governance, is used to emphasize findings. Remaining scholarship points out that while social media and youth-led networks do have broader opportunities for climate activism, such as educational gaps, limited political representation, socio-economic inequalities, and digital divides continue to stop meaningful participation.

This study further complete deliberative spaces such as student unions, climate clubs, social media platforms, and citizen assemblies as potential avenues for inclusive dialogue and policy influence. By looking into youth-driven initiatives and democratic engagement models, the research aims to identify mechanisms that strengthen youth participation in climate governance. The solution are expected to demonstrate that enhanced deliberative

participation rises climate awareness, encourages sustainable behavioural change, and addresses to more inclusive policymaking. Thus, this research highlights the importance of integrating youth voices into

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democratic processes to address climate challenges effectively and promote a youth-led climate democracy in India.

Keywords: Climate Change, Deliberative Democracy, Consciousness, Youth, Climate Action

Introduction

The issue of climate change is unequivocally established: the IPCC confirms that human activities, principally through emissions of greenhouse gases, have unequivocally caused global warming. Today the planet is nearly 1.1 °C warmer than in pre-industrial times, and world leaders warn that without steady and deep emissions reductions across all sectors, stopping warming to 1.5 °C will be impossible. The remaining shifts are already felt around the globe – from heat stress and floods to threats to agriculture and health – making our shared future more vulnerable. Thus, engaging young people is important. According to various studies, climate change is one of the most concerning global challenges of our times and the youth have a vital role to meet this challenge since they are the upcoming generation and inherit the need to build a sustainable future. Thus, Democratic institutions must respond: experts warn that climate change poses an existential risk to democracy if it fails to produce effective solutions. So, innovative mechanisms like citizens' climate assemblies, which include citizens in touch with developing climate policy, have been shown to raise policy ambition and strengthen legitimacy of tough climate choices.

Methodology (Youth Survey)

the article tried to find out youth perspectives, we conducted a survey of 50 young adults (predominantly urban, university-educated students from diverse disciplines). The questionnaire asked about their understanding of climate change ex- greenhouse gases, impacts, mitigation) and related topics (livelihood effects, international commitments such as the Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement). However, this sample is precise it aligns with findings from larger studies. For example, a survey of Indian secondary and university students found that although students exhibit average proficiency of climate as a whole, there exist significant differences in knowledge of health-related climatic effects and locally applicable strategies of adaptation., urban

students generally reported higher climate awareness and risk perception than rural students. Education simply matters: research indicates that education of institutions and college students on climate change is highly important in influencing mitigation and adaptive behaviours in the long term.



Key Findings-therefore the young generation tries to demonstrate high awareness and concern regarding climate change. Official participation opportunities remain limited despite strong interest. Tokenism is a seen issue in youth inclusion practices. There are strong vote and mandate for legally chosen government accountability to youth inputs. Therefore, study highlights a critical difference in contemporary climate governance: while youth awareness and concern about climate change are exceptionally high, opportunities for meaningful participation remain constrained. The Young people are eager to participate to climate solutions, yet existing institutional structure often reduce their involvement to symbolic gestures rather than substantive inclusion. The widespread perception of tokenism underscores the limitations of current participatory frameworks. Inclusion without influence serious risks alienating a generation that is both deeply invested in and directly affected by climate outcomes. The Respondents' firm demand for legally mandated government responses to youth-led recommendations reflects a broader call for accountability and structural reform. Valuable youth participation must move beyond consultation toward shared decision-making. Emerging youth voices within formal policy processes through legally binding mechanisms, honest feedback systems, and institutional reforms can significantly enhance the effectiveness and legitimacy of climate governance. In the long term, empowering youth is not only a democratic imperative but also a strategic necessity for achieving sustainable and resilient climate consciousness

Awareness

As noticed in with prior experience, most respondents in our survey had heard of climate change and renewable energy, but often only in superficial manner. This Research has found that students were mostly knowledge of climate change and renewable energy technology, but the understanding remained superficial, with only a small proportion willing to adopt renewables. Thus, our respondents likewise knew basic facts but showed gaps on specifics such as mechanisms of greenhouse gases and that meaning of net-zero.

Demographic Profile of Respondents -The study found that majority of respondents fall within the 18–30 age group, with limited representation below 18 years of age. Gender engagement was balanced, ensuring diverse perspectives. Therefore, most respondents identified as students, reflecting a strong academic youth presence. Hence, Educational qualifications largely ranged from undergraduate metropolitan areas.

Awareness and Perception of Climate -Furthermore, Change The findings indicate a high level of movement and concern regarding climate change among respondents. Thus, most participants view climate change as both an immediate and long-term threat with serious environmental, financial, and social consequences. Educational institutions and social media platforms raised as the primary sources of climate-related



information, counting the role of formal education and digital spaces in shaping environmental consciousness.

Youth Participation in Climate Initiatives -Since Despite high awareness, active participation in formal climate policy actions remains limited. Respondents reported greater involvement in informal activities likewise online advocacy, awareness campaigns, and student-led movements rather than institutional or government-led programs. The lack of accessible platforms, lack in institutional support, and limited decision-making power were identified as important barriers to meaningful participation.

Thus, Perception of Tokenism in Youth Inclusion- A significant portion of respondents expressed the view that youth participation in official climate initiatives is often tokenistic. Many felt that while youth are included symbolically, their inputs rarely translate into concrete policy outcomes. This perception of performative inclusion contributes to scepticism toward formal governance structures and discourages long-term engagement.

Expectations from Government and Institutions-An overwhelming majority of respondents agreed that governments should be legally obligated to respond to recommendations made by youth-led climate initiatives. Participants emphasized the importance of accountability, transparency, and structured feedback mechanisms. Suggestions included the establishment of institutionalized youth councils and mandatory consultation processes within climate policy frameworks.

Self-efficacy and Engagement

Consistent with other research, we observed that young people's willingness to act was more strongly linked to their sense of risk and self-efficacy than to factual knowledge. Becoming part of eco-clubs or climate courses notably increased their intent to participate in environmental actions. A recent survey, (Climate Scorecard/British Council study ahead of COP26) found that many Indian youths feel equipped to act against issues arising from climate change, but they face challenges in finding opportunities due to limited digital access, hierarchical social cultures, and lack of access to training. In our interviews, many students expressed similar frustration: they were eager to help but had few channels to influence policy or community action.

These results underscore that Indian youth are aware of climate risks but often lack deep knowledge or participatory opportunities. Education and engagement programs must go beyond awareness to develop



climate literacy and agency among young people. Only then can surveys reveal robust, actionable insights into how the next generation understands and is prepared to tackle climate change.

Future Concerns

Is It Enough? (Words vs. Action)

It got discovered that willingness to act among the youths was more related to their perception of risk and self-efficacy rather than the factual knowledge. Their desire to be a part of eco-clubs or climate courses expanded their motivation to be involved in environmental activities highly. A recent poll (Climate Scorecard/British Council study prior to COP26) has discovered that many young Indians believe that they are now prepared to take action on problems caused by climate change, but they lack access to opportunities due to poor digital access, hierarchical social cultures, and because of lack of training opportunities. The same frustration was expressed by many students whom I interviewed: they wanted to do something but did not have numerous chances to influence the policy or community action.

These results bring out the understanding that the Indian youths are aware of the dangers in climate but they are not necessarily informed and offered an opportunity to engage. The education and engagement schemes do not have to be bound to the development of climate literacy and agency among the youth. Only at this point, surveys can reveal good, realistic data on how the future generation views and gets ready to deal with the issue of climate change.

Deliberative Democracy and International Action

Global climate governance continues, and India has strengthened its commitments. India's updated pledges aim to reduce emissions intensity of GDP by 45% by 2030 and generate about 50% of electricity from non-fossil sources by the same year. Such targets are commendable, but closing the ambition gap requires inclusive democratic innovation and public participation.

Deliberative forums offer one avenue. By involving ordinary citizens, especially youth, in climate policymaking, these processes can build broader support. Climate assemblies have been shown to raise ambition and strengthen legitimacy of difficult policy choices. Youth and other citizens in such assemblies have generated actionable recommendations on energy transition and resilient agriculture. While assemblies are not a cure-all, they are considered an important tool for climate action. Our survey



respondents agreed that having a voice matters, and many said they would feel more hopeful if citizen councils or youth forums influenced policy.

The prospects are mixed. There is growing momentum, with countries piloting deliberative climate initiatives. Climate change poses an existential risk to democracy, but adapting democratic institutions can help craft more ambitious agendas. However, challenges remain. Young people note barriers such as limited participation channels and social constraints. Overcoming these obstacles is crucial if youth engagement is to be meaningful.

Conclusion

The problem of climate change is grave and needs a quick action, and young people are direct victims of the problem and potential activists. We discover that the Indian city youth are concerned and ever-so-slightly educated yet need education, empowerment and opportunity to act. The initiatives that are being undertaken by the international community provide a guide but are yet to fulfil the needs of science and justice. Part of a solution is deliberative democratic innovations which involve direct involvement of the citizens in policymaking.

They can develop the social imperative of the transformative change and aid in bridging the gap between the goals and the reality. This will be critical in enhancing engagement, making polluters answerable, and thinking about climate action and social equity and sustainable development in the future. The instrument and expertise are there, all that is required is the political will that is enlightened and charged by an active citizenry. Amartya Sen claims that development is not merely a question of economic growth but that it is about expanding the human freedoms and capabilities and social engagement are critical in achieving this. Within his capability approach, people have to be allowed to take part in making decisions that impact their lives such as environmental and climate policies. Amartya Sen points out that the development process must be popular and a democratic debate. When it comes to the climate change, citizen engagement (especially among young people) will boost accountability and make sure that climate policies encourage fair and sustainable development.” The UNDP published Human Development Reports that assert that climate change is nothing but a question of justice and inequality, since its consequences are disproportionately distributed across societies. It is the poor population and developing countries that are typically the most affected by the harsh impacts of the contributors who also contribute the least, in terms of emissions.



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