

Climate Anxiety Among Young People in China and its Connections with Hope and Action

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The climate crisis is a serious contemporary threat to people's lives, with a growing risk of mental health issues among children and young people. This crisis has become a significant ecological and social crisis, which has resulted in various psychological reactions. Similarly, China's climate is facing serious threats as the surface temperature has been increasing since the 1950s and is increasing at a faster rate than the global average. With an annual average increase in temperature of about 0.5-0.8°C in the past 100 years. Climate change has posed serious impacts on ecosystems, natural resources, food security, agriculture, and human health. Young people in China are showing their concerns over climate change with their mixed emotions, such as climate anxiety, which is a phenomenon receiving growing attention. It is pertinent to discuss the phenomenon of climate anxiety and its relationship with hope and action. To analyze the emotions and behavior (N = 380) among young people in China, we discussed climate anxiety and its relationship with hope and action. We found that climate anxiety and hope are positively correlated with each other and climate action. We used the Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM) as a framework to study the role of hope and anxiety in taking climate action (Kim, 1994). This model examines the reactions of people towards fear and self-efficacy. For this study, we applied climate anxiety to fear and climate hope to self-efficacy. The concept of climate anxiety is a major discourse among researchers and the public, and it is indicated that climate anxiety is popular among young people in China. The range of this emotion may range from milder to strong in different age groups. Climate anxiety has been referred to both a strong and general emotion by different scholars with different definitions. However, for this paper, we understand the concept of anxiety as worrying behaviour, tension, and physiological changes. Hence, we define climate anxiety as a feeling of anxiety significantly related to the climate crisis. The aim of the present study was to investigate the concept of climate anxiety and its relationship with climate hope and climate action. To do this, we aimed to assess both the cognitive and emotional aspects of anxiety and hope. While these are difficult to fully separate, we aimed to capture the cognitive aspects through statements, including, for example, worried thoughts (anxiety index) and efficacy beliefs (hope index). To conduct this study, we created a set of questions to examine the climate change emotions among young people in China. Results show that climate anxiety and climate hope were strongly intercorrelated, and all the items measuring the Anxiety-index and Hope-index loaded on the same factor. This indicates that the relationships between them are rather intimate, which is not surprising considering that both anxiety and hope are reactions to uncertainty and are strongly future-oriented.

References

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