

Research Paper

## Exploring Eco-Anxiety and Eco-Coping in Young Adults in India

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### ABSTRACT

With the rising challenges faced by humanity due to climate change, a new phenomenon known as eco-anxiety has been researched, especially with its impacts on mental health. With this growing research, there is a scarcity of research on the prevalence of eco-anxiety in young adults without generalized anxiety disorder, and the coping mechanisms they use. The aim of this study was to address this research gap in young adults in India and gain a deeper knowledge of the phenomenon. The study used a non-probability purposive sampling for the recruitment. A heterogeneous sample of young adults aged 18-24 years was recruited for semi-structured interviews. The participants hailed from different cities in the country and were recruited after a screening process. The interview questions covered domains of eco-anxiety, its behavioural, and mental impacts, as well as the coping mechanisms for the phenomenon. They were also asked to fill out an eco-anxiety scale to validate the data further. Seven major themes were found as a result of Braun & Clarke's thematic analysis. These included – information about climate change, emotions associated, coping strategies, blame attribution, barriers to pro-environmental behaviour, views about the future, and personal impact of climate change. These implications may extend to the therapeutic realm, informing the development of coping strategies for long-term well-being. These will also aid in developing psychometric scales for coping strategies specific to eco-anxiety, policy development, and the inclusion of young adults in the decision-making process. Overall, this research aimed to provide valuable insights into the experiences of Indian young adults.

**Keywords:** *Eco-anxiety, emotional manifestation, behavioural manifestation, coping and climate change*

Climate change is an exponentially growing phenomenon that the world is experiencing and struggling to cope with. The increasing heat waves, floods, hurricanes, and pollution levels are only a few indicators of the global crisis. Studies have also shown that people who experienced calamity had increased PTSD, anxiety disorders, depressive disorders, and addictive behaviours (Agoston et al., 2022; Clayton, 2020; Morganstein & Ursano, 2020).

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There has also been evidence of the indirect effects of the climate crisis on mental health. It has been found that adults are experiencing ‘eco-anxiety’ or ‘climate stress’. The terms represent a range of emotions people feel because of environmental devastation and the threat to one’s future, severely impacting mental and behavioural aspects (Ojala, 2018; Pihkala, 2020).

In a national survey in Canada, Galway and Field (2023) found that 78% of the young adults surveyed reported climate change impacts their mental health, while 38% of the participants mentioned even thoughts of climate change make them anxious. Other global surveys (Hickman et al., 2021; Ogunbode et al., 2022; Tam et al., 2023) have reported a greater prevalence of climate change anxiety in the young adults of India, China, and Pakistan as compared to the participants of Western countries. However, Sambath et al. (2022), reported that the awareness of the indirect effects of climate change among healthcare professionals was relatively low, while some showed interest in gaining more knowledge about the same. According to a report by UNICEF, Indian children ranked 26th in the vulnerability to experience climate change and its physical and psychological implications (UNICEF, 2021).

The term ‘solastalgia’ preceded eco-anxiety. It was used to refer to the distress produced by the impact of environmental change on people (Albrecht, 2007). In the following years, several definitions of eco-anxiety have been proposed, including - climate change distress (Searle & Gow, 2010), a severe and debilitating worry related to a changing and uncertain natural environment (Helm et al., 2018), and a form of a negative emotional response to climate change (Clayton & Karazsia, 2020). Although there are several conceptions about the definition of the term ‘eco-anxiety’, the one that is most widely used is “persistent feelings of worry, anxiety, dread, or doom regarding environmental degradation and the impacts and implications of climate change on our planet as a whole” (Passmore et al., 2022).

Besides the widely accepted meaning of eco-anxiety, as the constant worry about environmental change, several other feelings associated with climate change have been explored in recent years. Previous studies have discussed the concepts of eco-guilt, eco-depression, eco-anger, eco-grief, and, to a lesser extent, eco-coping (Agosten et al., 2022; Bright & Eames, 2021; Stanley et al., 2021).

Experiments by Moore (2019) found that eco-guilt results in greater environmentally friendly behaviour in young adults. The impact of eco-guilt and shame has also been studied on consumer and tourism behaviour (Bahja & Hancer, 2021; Mkono & Hughes, 2020). In line with the research on eco-guilt and environmentally friendly behaviour, Bahja and Hancer (2021), found a positive correlation between eco-guilt and environmentally friendly tourist behaviours. Eco-grief is another widely researched emotion (Comtesse et al., 2021; Cunsolo et al., 2020; Noy et al., 2022; Ojala et al., 2021; & Pihkala, 2022). However, most studies have found it similar to a normal grief response, healthy for environmentally friendly behaviour.

Other emotions include anger, apathy, depression, and helplessness. These negative feelings have also emerged in children and adolescents (Bright & Eames, 2021; Stanley et al., 2021; Thompson et al., 2021). Unlike eco-anxiety, however, previous research has concluded these negative feelings to be adaptive in encouraging pro-environmental behaviour (Tschakert et al., 2019). Thus, it becomes even more important to understand the impacts of eco-anxiety and the coping mechanisms of people against it for their well-being.

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Several studies have been conducted to understand the impacts of eco-anxiety on people's lives. As early as 2011, Albrecht discussed the possible emergence of 'psychoterratic syndromes', which are mental health syndromes due to environmental change. Some of the consequences he accurately predicted are - anxiety about the potential harm to their children and feelings of indecisiveness, helplessness, and inadequacy in solving the climate crisis. It was only almost a decade later, that research on the mental health impacts of climate change took a central place in the field of environmental psychology.

In line with Albrecht's predictions, in middle-aged populations, one of the behavioural manifestations of eco-anxiety is a child-free attitude. Helm et al. (2021) explored these attitudes in participants aged 18-35. They found that all participants agreed that a child-free lifestyle was the biggest positive change one could make for the environment. A survey conducted by Schneider-Mayerson and Leong (2020b) found that 96% of their participants were extremely concerned about the well-being of their existing and hypothetical children.

The prevalence and impact of eco-anxiety among children and adolescents has also been researched (Hickman, 2020; Hickman et al., 2021b; Patrick et al., 2022; Reyes et al., 2021; Thompson et al., 2022). Most studies have found a positive correlation between eco-anxiety and the poorer mental health of children, along with a greater need to take action for a better environment. Nevertheless, some researchers have found eco-anxiety to be a motivating factor for people to engage in sustainable behaviours (Mathers-Jones & Todd, 2023; Pavani et al., 2023)

There has been considerable debate on the prevalence of eco-anxiety among people with no signs of an existing anxiety disorder (Asgarizadeh et al., 2023; Heeren et al., 2023; Ojala et al., 2021; Taylor, 2020). Moreover, to better understand eco-anxiety and its manifestations, the "Hogg's Eco-Anxiety Scale" was developed (Hogg et al., 2021). It included the affective and behavioural aspects of eco-anxiety, along with its impacts on the levels of anxiety and depression. Although this scale has broadened the scope of research on eco-anxiety, there is still a lack of research on the coping techniques used by people dealing with eco-anxiety.

Research conducted to understand the different ways in which people cope with eco-anxiety has found three major coping strategies - problem-focused, emotion-focused, and meaning-focused coping (Agoston et al., 2022; Bright & Eames, 2020; Ojala, 2012; Ojala, 2013). Other studies have emphasised the role of the right education, community support groups, as well as government initiatives to help young adults cope with eco-anxiety better (Gunasiri et al., 2022; Sims et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023).

Even though the need for such initiatives has been recognised, the lack of implementation has made it increasingly difficult for young adults to trust the authorities and feel powerful and hopeful about the future (Stanley et al., 2021; Thompson et al., 2022). A qualitative study conducted by Budziszewska and Jonsson (2022) found that young adults talk about eco-anxiety in psychotherapy, and the validation of their feelings, a focus on action-oriented strategies to help with eco-anxiety, along with learning emotion regulation techniques helped people manage their anxiety. A review of the therapeutic interventions to deal with eco-anxiety (Baudon & Jachens, 2021b) also found similar results wherein, cognitive interventions, grief-focused interventions, as well as action-oriented interventions were found to be most helpful for the client. However, the therapist's competence in the phenomenon was a common concern shared by most participants.

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Apart from therapeutic interventions, there is limited research on how young adults cope with eco-anxiety. The broad categories of coping provide us with a framework, but do not delve deeper into the adaptive and maladaptive strategies that might be used under them. Understanding such techniques would further the research on eco-anxiety and eco-coping by providing a basis for standardised scales to measure the coping strategies and informing mental health practitioners and support groups to direct their interventions at helping young adults better.

Even with such devastating impacts on the youth, there is a paucity of research on the prevalence and experiences of eco-anxiety among Indian youth. This study aims to bridge this gap in the research and understand young adults' awareness, beliefs, emotions, and experiences regarding eco-anxiety. The study focuses not only on the attitudes about the current state of the environment but also on the views of young adults about the planet's future and the well-being of future generations. It also aims to explore the ways in which young adults cope with eco-anxiety and other associated feelings. Such an understanding would further the research on the prevalence and the need for specific psychological interventions in aiding the youth to deal with this upcoming phenomenon. The study employs a qualitative method to explore the depths of the experiences of young adults and understand the phenomenon better.

### **METHODS**

The study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach while collecting data and analysing the results.

#### *Participants*

The study included 11 participants aged between 18- 25 years. The participants were recruited through a Google form through the purposive sampling technique. Interested participants were also asked to fill out a screening form to match the inclusion criteria. Participants with any diagnosed psychological disorder were excluded from the study to control for the effects of a predisposition to eco-anxiety. The screening protocol also included a standardised measure to assess the participants' anxiety levels in the past two weeks (Spitzer et al., 2006) to understand the effects of general anxiety on eco-anxiety.

#### *Procedure*

The interview schedule was developed in line with previous research. There were 17 questions finalised which were also validated by experts. Some of the questions in the interview schedule are as follows -

- How would you describe the effects of climate change on your life?/How do you think climate change is influencing your life?
- How would you describe your feelings while reading or thinking about climate change in the current scenario?
- Could you explain a little about how you deal with the emotions you experience while thinking about climate change?
- Who do you think is the most responsible for harming the environment?

The interested participants were first asked to complete the Google form with the screening protocol. The shortlisted participants were then approached for the interview. An interviewer was trained before conducting the interviews. The interviews were, on average, 30 minutes in length. The participants were also asked to complete an eco-anxiety questionnaire (Hogg

et al., 2021) to validate their interview responses and get more robust data. The interviews were then analysed using the thematic analysis method proposed by Braun and Clarke. Two coders analysed the interviews, and the inter-rater reliability was found to be 0.78.

### RESULTS

The interviews provided a rich source of information about participants' opinions on climate change and its impacts on their lives. Thematic analysis revealed seven major themes representing the various kinds of views of the participants. These themes were further categorised into subthemes to understand the data better.

#### *Information about Climate Change*

Most participants considered social media to be their major source of information about climate change. Apps such as Twitter, Instagram, and Reddit were mentioned as being their first point of information. This was explained to result from the time spent and the increased engagement and discussions conducted amongst people through such apps. It was also later noted that a few participants went on to news channels, research articles and pages of worldwide organisations to gain more information about the phenomenon or a particular incident that they were interested in.

*“...So the sources mainly would be news channels, Instagram, articles, everything.”*

Despite spending a considerable amount of time on social media and being updated with current events, most participants reported being unaware of the news surrounding climate change and its impacts. Nevertheless, the participants expressed their desire to read more about the phenomenon and be updated about the state of their environment. In contrast, two participants mentioned being aware and actively reading about the phenomenon and checking several sources to obtain complete information. They mentioned following relevant pages, spending time in the day to read about the phenomenon and reflecting on the information's impact on their lives.

*“I do read articles, but not much, I just read and then don't reflect upon it.”*

*“Maybe I read an article all through every week because you are on social media, and the art accounts and even the news channels I follow are pro-climate change, and they post a lot of information that I tend to read. So it just comes to me rather than me searching for it.”*

Although all participants obtained information about the phenomenon from different sources, they had trouble believing the credibility of it. All participants mentioned being dissatisfied with reporting climate change incidents, finding them hiding the truth and minimising the seriousness of the issue. Some participants also expressed their distrust, which arose from a general distrust of social media information and, thus, relied on research articles to provide accurate information. With regard to news channels, participants had mixed opinions. News channels were considered to give reliable information; however, they were still expected to be influenced by government policies and propaganda.

*“I do go to verified sources but I also get mixed you know information and I can say that it colours my judgement...I do think it is exaggerated.”*

The participants' views in this study corroborated with previous research (Bright & Eames, 2021). Young adults consistently notice the inauthenticity of the information they are provided, not just on social media but also in newspapers and renowned articles. There is

also no doubt that social media has become one of the most common sources of information for young people. One thing this research added, however, was that regardless of the seriousness of the situation, people still are not keen to seek more information about it. This reluctance could be because of the fear of knowing too much or ignorance and denial regarding the state of the environment.

### ***Blame for Harm to the Environment***

When asked who is responsible for causing the most harm to the environment, the participants talked about the individual responsibility and blame that all citizens have. They felt that the smallest of the actions significantly impacted the damage done to the surroundings. This opinion also echoed the accountability and the guilt that participants faced regularly while considering their actions towards Earth.

*“It’s only us, the common people, again it’s the common people all in all the humans who are contributing in harming the nature.”*

Nevertheless, there were other participants who were less self-critical. According to these participants, individual citizens did not hold the power or the major responsibility for causing harm when they were being overpowered and manipulated by multinational corporations and the capitalistic nature of society. To validate their view, these participants brought up the fashion industry and the non-sustainable way in which it operates. They also talked about the chemical, noise, and air pollution such industries cause, minimising the impact of smaller individual actions. Thus, these participants put the blame on the industries and thought it wrong that citizens should be made to feel responsible for such a big impact.

*“...because the big corporations and the multibillion-dollar industries that do the...kind of cause the most of the pollution and climate change, they are not taking accountability, and they have so much power and money that they do not need to make any meaningful changes to how their operations are.”*

Some other participants also thought that the ultimate power and, thus, the blame should be on the government for not putting in sufficient measures to control the deterioration of the environment. According to these participants, the industries could be stopped if the government had regulations for them, and the citizens could be made more mindful through awareness campaigns and stricter punishments. However, according to these participants, since the government does not engage in such measures, the blame lies with it.

*“But I guess some people just hold more power to worsen it or stop it. Like for example, the government hold more power to stop it, but they don’t do enough.”*

Similar to the previous theme, the views of the participants regarding the blame for the harm to the environment have been echoed by adults, young adults, and climate activists all around the world (Ogunbode et al., 2022; Tam et al., 2023; Thompson et al., 2022). The growing industries, the country's development, and the government's encouragement of such activities have made the youth collectively against such decisions when considering their future and a healthy environment (Pihkala, 2020). Despite being cautious about individual action, the participants still felt most of the blame went to people who had control.

### ***Personal Impact of Climate Change***

When asked about their personal experiences with climate change, most participants explained their deteriorating health and immunity. People mentioned difficulty breathing, getting heat burns and boils, and an increased frequency of fevers, colds, and viral infections due to the changing weather and the unpredictable climate. Such impacts on people are expected with an increasing number of news articles, climate studies and weather reports that warn the populations about global warming, water shortages, and the overall destruction of the planet.

*“My body has started reacting to climate change...I have breakouts, my skin is constantly tanned, I get boils in my hand due to the heat, there’s a lot of hairfall happening...so I feel like there is a lot of change.”*

*“I have chronic bronchitis...so whenever there is dust around me it gets triggered so I like being in nature, but that has been changing because now there is just smoke around me and it gets triggered a lot more.”*

However, it was not just their physical health that the participants were concerned about. Most of the participants mentioned a change in their emotional well-being with the changes in the environment. With the constant downfall of the climate, it was clear that most participants were facing breakdowns, irritability, and even numbness. The unpredictability of the present as well as the future climate, the aggravated changes, and the lack of a soothing nature to comfort them took a toll on participants, which they talked about at length in the interviews.

*“...If I see clouds I would expect rain but if it turns sunny the next second and then starts raining after a bit, then starts getting chilly, it just irritates my body...So it just changes the way I deal with my emotions...then I have to create a disconnect with the weather.”*

Several studies have established the effects of heat on aggression levels, as well as the increasing rates of health conditions due to the declining state of the planet (Clayton, 2020; Heeren et al., 2023; Morganstein & Ursano, 2020). The results of this study further validate these findings by presenting the effects of climate change faced by a younger generation waiting to thrive in the future.

### ***Emotions Towards the Environment***

Participants reported various emotions that they felt while thinking about the environment and nature. For most participants, being surrounded by trees and greenery was a source of comfort and a way for them to regulate their emotions better. Going out for walks, spending time in parks, and creating their small gardens were all some activities that the participants liked doing to find peace and comfort. Some others also mentioned going on treks to feel closer to nature and wanting to do so more often.

*“It feels a very personalised space...I feel so connected to nature so it’s just the only place where I am comfortable.”*

*“I think it calms me down. So if there’s a lot on my mind or I am thinking about something....I go sit in a garden and just admire the sky.”*

The comfort talked about by the participants was also clouded by an overall sadness over the recent changes to the environment and their surroundings. The participants talked about having difficulty finding a peaceful place surrounded by nature in their cities and feeling the

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lack of greenery around them distressing. It was also mentioned by a few participants how they found difficulty in regulating their emotions when they couldn't find a park to walk, and that made their bad days worse.

*“Honestly, I mean seeing the different catastrophic events happening around the world is very upsetting”*

Although the environment's present state upset all participants, the future made them scared. All participants mentioned that they were anxious about how worse the situation would get in the future. They also mentioned being upset for future generations and feared that they wouldn't get to see trees anymore. Some participants also mentioned that their fear rose mostly from people's inaction and ignorance of their habits. These participants thought this ignorance leads to a point from which it can't be saved.

*“When it rains in the middle of January which is very uncharacteristic of Bombay...it genuinely scares my friends and I for a second that holy hell the world is really changing.”*  
*“It feels we are the reason why its happening so it scares me...I try to change a little bit...”*  
*“I feel worried about oh my goodness after a few years we won't have oxygen”*

Contrary to the pessimistic view of some individuals, other participants were hopeful about the future. They believed that the increasing awareness and the fear created will catalyse people to start working towards improving the environment. This will lead to a better future, according to some participants. These participants also appreciated the sustainable products coming up. However, not all participants thought these messages and efforts would work anymore. Their fear for the environment has grown to such an extent that they feel that there is no hope left for the world.

*“...but if what I am doing, all the people start doing it will create an impact. So if the sustainable products keep coming in, that is beneficial for the climate...it will help create a better future for the upcoming generations.”*  
*“... I was very invested, I think its on like on the outside it's beyond control because there's so much happening.”*

The feelings of comfort and peace that the participants mentioned around trees have been recently studied with the growth of urban trees (Mihara et al., 2023; Van Vleet et al., 2023). It comes without a doubt that the declining green spaces and parks to find comfort in, young adults experience anxiety and fear for their future. Furthermore, with the lack of action felt by this generation, it is natural for them to feel hopeless about their and the future generations. Research on eco-anxiety includes all these emotions as subsumed under the broad term of anxiety (Agoston et al., 2022; Pihkala, 2020)

### ***Coping Strategies***

When asked about the ways in which the participants dealt with these negative emotions around the environment and its future, they had various answers. One of the most common coping strategies they mentioned was making small changes in their lifestyles to feel better and take some sort of action. However, it was also apparent that the participants could not make any big changes considering their constraints due to the organisational requirements, financial limitations and other conditions. Thus, the participants had metal straws and water bottles, did not litter, and carried their boxes outside. A few also mentioned using public transport when they could.



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*“So, whenever I’m going out for shopping, I usually carry a bag of my own and I do not like to take paper bags or even plastic bags, I have a cloth bag with me usually. I do carry a water bottle which I like to refill more...which is a steel bottle and not a plastic one...yeah and then I use a lot of public transport...and like carrying my own dabba in case you’re eating out.”*

Despite adopting small life changes, most participants still felt overwhelmed when they came across any information regarding climate change. This sense of overwhelm led them to disregard and distract themselves from the phenomenon. The participants mentioned that they slept off, or hung out with their friends instead of thinking about the future of the planet - a thought that made them anxious. Other people use social media and mindless scrolling to escape the dread they experience while thinking about their future.

*“...but I distract myself so that I don’t overthink about it and end up having like being anxious about it. I end up doing something that distracts me that I like, like listening to music or something that would distract me or maybe talking to friends or something like that.”*

Escaping from the reality was not something that worked for all participants. Some participants mentioned that they actively seek information about climate change and things that can worsen or improve it. This information made them feel prepared and ready for the outcome. Such preparation also helped them regulate their emotions better and made them think rationally about their actions.

*“I think the first thing for me would be educating yourself, second would be actually understanding the basics of it like a lot of our Indian villages and a lot of our Indian practices or in general throughout the world. Lower economic classes who are not ultra elite have a lot of sustainable practices because that is how they look at the world...so I like to know more about such stories and practices.”*

Other participants went even further after gaining in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon. It was not just information, but a concrete plan to be put into practice that made some participants feel confident in their ability to tackle this world-wrenching crisis. Despite being unable to engage in large-scale changes, participants planned such changes and their involvement in those for the future. One of the most common plans mentioned by the participants was to participate more in awareness drives and campaigns addressing the climate crisis.

*“...So if I get a chance to volunteer in such an organisation, I would really love to volunteer and also spread awareness through like you know, you have those various drives...so I would take that as an opportunity to do something.”*

One of the less researched aspects of eco-anxiety, so far, has been the ways in which people cope with it. Although there have been reports of eco-anxiety being mentioned in therapy (Baudon & Jachens, 2021b; Budziszewska & Jonsson, 2022), they all have reported a lack of understanding felt by the clients when it came to the therapists’ understanding of the phenomenon and ways to deal with it. This study thus, adds on the previous research by providing concrete ways in which young adults deal with the phenomenon currently. Assessing these in terms of the emotion, problem, and solution focused strategies would help in developing future interventions catering to the phenomenon.

### ***Barriers to Pro-Environmental Behaviour***

Apart from the negative emotions they experienced while thinking about their future, another aspect of the present conditions upset the participants. Although most participants had set up plans to improve the environmental conditions for their future, they still felt powerless to make a substantial change. Some participants mentioned that their actions won't matter at all since bigger organisations like MNCs and the government will overpower those with their harmful activities. Others mentioned that even though their future was at stake, they were not accounted for in decision-making and implementation. Such activities made the participants feel even more hopeless about the future than they already are.

*"...if there should be an effort from my side or if my efforts actually matter because there are forces much bigger than me who are actually making it worse, but on the other hand I also think that even if it is going to end then I might as well do something I really want because it would be insignificant."*

Although some participants felt the powerlessness stopped them from taking action, others thought it was insincerity on the part of the citizens. They talked about how people still didn't consider climate change and its impacts as something to be worried about. Until that changed, pro-environmental behaviour would not make any difference.

*"I really really don't care what's happening right now, I just think about what if. Where I am living, if its a perfect place or not, and I'm thinking about the temperature where I am living its all cool...like its not affecting me."*

While talking about the insincerity of people, the participants also mentioned the role of governments in contributing to it. All participants mentioned that there weren't enough laws regulating environmentally harmful activities, and those that were present were not implemented properly. The participants felt that unless the government was strict about this, there would be no substantial change observed.

*"...No, even if they have, they are not being followed and no action is being taken against those who are not following them. The laws should be more, and they should be implemented sternly."*

However, when the participants were probed about the difficulties they faced personally while engaging in pro-environmental behaviour, another surprising element was brought up. Although sustainable products are seen to be a great step towards improving the condition of the planet, the participants had different views. One participant mentioned that everything is now being sold with the label of being sustainable, and it has become difficult to separate authentic products from shams. Others thought sustainable products were generally expensive and, thus, using them was difficult. Another participant mentioned that the lack of awareness about the practices that are actually sustainable led people to fall in the capitalist traps of buying everything, defeating the purpose of sustainability.

*"Sustainable products, healthy products are always more expensive than what's available in the market...and a lot of them are scammed, so I think the awareness is not there. We need a lot of understanding about what it means to be sustainable but right now I think that it is still a profit as a whole."*

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Considering previous qualitative research on youth climate activists, it was noticed that young people find their lack of involvement in government decisions, a big barrier to engaging in pro-environmental behaviour, combined with a feeling of powerlessness (Bright & Eames, 2021; Mathers-Jones & Todd, 2023). However, a few new opinions were highlighted in this study. Despite the popularity of sustainable products, young adults find them to be unhelpful and more distracting in their goals towards environmental change. Similarly, although it can be concluded that young adults would be concerned about their future, the participants had contrary opinions. Despite their fears, they felt that most people were insincere in their efforts to protect the environment. Such developments can lead to future research into the behavioural impacts of eco-anxiety and interventions for pro-environmental behaviour.

### *Views About the Future*

To conclude the interview, participants were asked to give their opinion on how the future on Earth would look like. Although some participants were hopeful about the current sustainable practices working towards improving the environment, they all had an overall pessimistic view of the future. Most participants imagined the world to be a ruin, an urban jungle with nothing but concrete around, where people would have to carry oxygen cylinders. It would come out to be a scene from a dystopian novel. For them, the ruin would be far too great to be imagining a peaceful and beautiful world.

*“Like an urban jungle with so much heat because the UV rays are going to burn the planet up because there’s not much ozone layer left, and yeah, with the kind of...with the splurging of water...we’ll have no water there’s just going to be buildings and people are going to be tired.”*

Going a step further, some participants thought that no matter what people do, with the current destruction, there is no way a future would exist on the planet. They went as far as to say that there would be no future for the people and the world would lead to ultimate extinction.

*“I feel saddened by the situation that where are we heading and what are we going to give our future generations. Are we even going to be left with anything or is it just going to be dust and smoke?”*

Considering the views of young adults on their future is also an addition by this study to ignite a wake-up call among lay people, policy-makers, children, and old people. Their dire visuals arouse the need to save the planet and act as a plea to people worldwide to take action and save the planet before it's too late. More research is needed not only to understand the phenomenon but also to address these pressing worries and fears about the planet's future. Interventions need to be planned not just for their mental health but also for their survival. Although this study is not free of its limitations, it is a start towards that end in a developing country like India. Future studies can include mental health professionals, policy-makers and influential people to understand their views and plan strategies to include mental well-being and climate change's physical impacts.

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