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Climate Anxiety and the Consequent Lack of Will to Procreate among Gen-Z

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Abstract

This paper offers a unifying conceptual framework for understanding the relationship between climate change and the unwillingness to procreate in Generation Z.

Available evidence indicates that this relationship is characterized by a vicious cycle, whereby climate change impacts the decision to procreate in generation Z. The paper identifies seven main reasons due to which climate anxiety has left an aggravating effect on the choice of procreation. Mockery of the young people's climate movement; lack of political consensus and action; and the disproportionate effect of climate change on marginalised communities are a few notable ones among them. The paper presents evidence to illustrate each of the processes mentioned above. It also notes that the same analytical framework can be used to discuss the relationship between climate change and its negative impact across the globe. Finally, it points to the ways in which the analysis can help make relevant policy decisions.

Keywords: *Climate change, climate anxiety: Generation-Z, exposure, susceptibility, procreation, decision-making, mental health.*

1.0 Introduction

2020, cited as ‘The Worst Year Ever’ the cover of the iconic Time Magazine, has been terrible. Fires ravaged Australia, killing and/or harming 3 billion animals (BBC News, 2020). More than two million acres burned across California in 2020, causing unimaginable damage and suffering (Pierre-Louis & Schwartz, 2020). Back home, we saw Assam grapple with devastating floods that brought the lives of more than 2.8 million to a halt (Times Now, 2020). The world witnessed multiple catastrophes in this year’s wild hurricane season, giving us an ominous sign of what lies ahead (Rojanasakul, Sullivan, 2020). Lastly, no conversation about 2020 can be complete without mentioning the elephant present in every room. The Covid-19 pandemic which has brought the human race on its knees is, unfortunately, not an aberration. Scientists worldwide are seeing an ‘acceleration of pandemics’: a direct result of the climate emergency (*Coronavirus and Climate Change*, 2020).

Did these five headlines send you reeling into a spiral of worry and existential dread? If so, welcome to the phenomenon of climate anxiety.

1.1 Climate Anxiety

Climate anxiety is the fear of an ecological catastrophe. The ill-effects of climate change on mental health are gaining massive public traction. The research conducted on the psychological impact of climate anxiety on the youth is scarce. This paper attempts to bridge the gap by conducting primary research as well as building upon secondary sources.

A 2016 study conducted by the U.S. Global Change Research Program collected a large body of research to summarize the-then state of knowledge on the matter. The report was built on that knowledge and considered the direct and indirect effects of climate change on mental health.

We start by describing the mental health effects on individuals, both short and long term, acute and chronic, the stressors that accumulate in the aftermath of a disaster. We will put a distinguished focus on the impacts that natural disasters have on social relationships, with consequences for health and well-being. We move on to discussing the individual-level impacts of more gradual changes in climate, including impacts on identity, childbirth, decision-making, and the long-term emotional impacts of climate change. Finally, we address the problem of inequity—the fact that certain populations are relatively more vulnerable to these mental health impacts compared to others.

1.2 Generation-Z

Generation-Z or Gen-Z is the population born in and after 1997 till 2012. They are mostly the college-going population, who is one of the most valuable resources of our society. And their well-being is of prime importance at all levels.

According to a research report published by Pew Research Center, Generation Z's view on some of the most crucial social and political issues of this world is identical to that of the millennials. The study shows how Generation Z will help shape the political landscape in the future. As authors, we aim to analyse the data collected through primary research and thereby identify the scale at which climate change has impacted the willingness of Generation-Z to procreate.

1.3 Lack of Willingness to Procreate

Here we also explore the unwillingness to procreate (at any point in time) among Gen-Z. Lack of will to procreate is defined as not having the desire to have children who share DNA with the parent(s). Procreation is possible in cisgender-heterosexual relationships, and through other modes like IVF, sperm donors (for single parents/ same-sex couples), and surrogacy.

Lack of willingness to procreate is different from the overarching desire to have children, as one may adopt a child. This paper, therefore, limits its scope to studying climate anxiety as a cause for lack of willingness to procreate, not to have children. Climate anxiety may compel more Gen-Z individuals to adopt rather than procreate by appealing to their sense of morality and obligation to those who already exist on this dying planet.

1.4 Climate anxiety as one of the causes for lack of willingness to procreate among Gen-Z

This paper puts forth the following hypothesis: climate anxiety can lead to a lack of will to procreate among Gen-Z. Individual responses are collected and merged to get collective statistics on the relationship between climate change and unwillingness to procreate in Gen-Z. Climate anxiety causes worry about one's future and that of others. Natural catastrophes and worsening trends in climate change reinforce such anxiety. In this light, an individual may altogether discard the prospect of bringing a new life into a world that poses multiple threats to survival.

The world recognises the right to life as a fundamental human right. However, every year, 150,000 premature deaths are linked to the climate crisis—a number set to increase with rising temperatures. Other climate-related deaths can be attributed to water scarcity, extreme weather events, heatwaves, floods, droughts, wildfires, water-borne and vector-borne diseases, malnutrition, and air pollution (*Human Rights Are at Threat from Climate Change, but Can Also Provide Solutions*, 2019).

For those who manage to survive, climate change leads to a deterioration in the overall quality of life. Still, it is plausible that an individual may harbour the desire to procreate even after considering the global scenario. This poses some ethical questions. If a child is born today, specifically in the Indian context, their well-being would likely be affected by pervasive air pollution. In another instance, if a child is born today in California, an area ravaged by fire,

would the parent(s) not worry about a similar fire destroying their home and their family? What guarantee can we give that the child will not have to face the trauma caused by a catastrophe such as wildfires? And how do these questions impact a decision as personal as choosing to procreate?

Research here attempts to answer these questions coherently through a combination of primary and secondary research.

2.0 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)-13 (Climate Action) and its Role in Mitigating Climate Anxiety

Climate change and climate anxiety share one ultimate solution: climate action.

Climate action earns its place as part of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations due to its universality and urgency. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that encompasses the Sustainable Development Goals acknowledges that a solution is not truly a solution unless it is sustainable. At its essence, ‘climate action means stepped-up efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-induced impacts, including climate-related hazards in all countries; integrating climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning; and improving education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity with respect to climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning. It requires mobilizing US\$100 billion annually by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries in moving towards a low-carbon economy.’ (*Goal 13: Climate Action*, n.d.).

Climate action is the best approach to reduce climate anxiety since it directly addresses the root cause of the worry. At an individual level, coping mechanisms such as building resilience, cultivating optimism, and using mindfulness to find a purpose have been found effective. Manageable levels of climate anxiety may be lessened through community outreach, engagement, co-operation, and social cohesion (American Psychological Association, Climate for Health, ecoAmerica, 2017). However, if and when climate anxiety turns maladaptive, the afflicted individual(s) must turn to licensed mental health professionals. Anxiety is said to be maladaptive if it starts interfering with one’s daily functioning.

We must not forget that these tips are nothing more than individualistic coping mechanisms. They cannot substitute climate action that countries, large corporations, international organisations, and policy changes need to initiate. The discourse on climate action may well be universal, but the onus of implementing such action must lie on the corporations and countries that contribute the most to the ongoing climate crisis, as well as the institutions responsible for overseeing them.

3.0 Reasons for Climate Anxiety among Gen-Z

Colin Jost stated in 2018, in a Saturday Night Live show, “We don’t really worry about climate change because it’s too overwhelming and we’re already in too deep. It’s like if you owe your bookie \$1,000, you’re like, ‘OK, I’ve got to pay this dude back.’ But if you owe your bookie \$1 million dollars, you’re like, ‘I guess I’m just going to die.’”

Human activities in the last 50 years, particularly the burning of fossil fuels, has led to the release of sufficient quantities of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to trap additional heat in the lower atmosphere and affect the global climate. The last 130 years has seen two world wars, the industrial revolution, the digital boom, and a lot more. The world has warmed by approximately 0.85°C. Each of the last 3 decades has been successively warmer than any preceding decade since 1850. Sea levels are rising, glaciers are melting and precipitation patterns are changing. Extreme weather events are becoming more intense and frequent. We have identified a few reasons behind the scenario and have listed them below.

3.1 Worsening global trends concerning climate emergency

According to a survey conducted by the World Economic Forum, “failure of climate-change mitigation and adaptation” is 2020’s number one long-term risk by impact and number two by likelihood. A report published by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicted that some of the most severe social and economic damage from the rise in global temperatures could come as soon as 2040. These publications put a strong impetus on the fact that it’s high time we built a solid action plan against climate change. To track the change, bodies like the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) are set up that prepare comprehensive assessment reports on the state of scientific, technical, and socio-economic knowledge on climate change.

3.2 Lack of political consensus and action

In “The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming,” David Wallace-Wells paints a frightening picture of the coming environmental apocalypse. Whole parts of the globe will become too hot for human habitation and those left behind will die of heat. Diseases will increase and mutate. Food shortages will become chronic as we fail to move agriculture from one climate to another. Whole countries like Bangladesh and parts of other countries like Miami will be underwater. Shortages of freshwater will affect humans and agriculture; the oceans will die, the air will get dirtier. “But,” as Wallace-Wells argues, “what lies between us and extinction is horrifying enough.” That’s because, as climate change takes its toll on Earth’s physical planet, it will also cause social, economic, and political chaos as refugees flee areas that can no longer sustain them. If this prediction seems a bit extreme, all we have to do is look at recent weather events that keep breaking records to confront the possibility that the threat from climate change may indeed be existential.

3.3 Mockery of the young people's climate movement

Shubhadeep Purkayastha, a student of agriculture engineering from Silchar, Assam is a climate activist. He is the founder of Eco Alarmist; they spread awareness about sustainable alternatives. When asked about his experiences working with the issue of climate change, he said “All the toothbrushes we use in our lifetime are very likely to be made out of plastic. And they don’t decompose until and unless four generations aren’t passed after us. The burden on our planet is increasing, and it’s not just toothbrushes, it’s almost everything we use in our day to day life. Artificial produce has far outweighed the natural produce. However, all hope is not lost. If we go back to our roots, we will find sustainable, cheap and easy methods to tackle climate change. For example, if we brush with neem branches (which is way healthier as well), then it can make a huge impact on our struggle for sustainability.” He added, “ Climate change is real, and I have seen a lot of adults (and even peers) who dismiss it by ridiculing our movement. However, we believe that such issues are minuscule when compared to climate change. And if humanity will get wiped away, then where will be the place of such demeaning statements.”

Just like Shubhadeep, there are thousands of other young climate activists working relentlessly all across the globe. Sometimes, their actions are mocked blatantly by the government, or the concerned authorities, which is highly unethical and is a punishable offence in some countries. A famous incident is Donald Trump tweeting about Greta Thunberg. To curb such unpleasant consequences, climate ethics should be made compulsory in educational institutions.

3.4 Disproportionate effect of climate change on marginalised communities

The broader social impacts of climate change and their feedback effects received more attention over time. An early study in this regard was the report by the World Bank (2002) presented at the 8th conference of the UNFCCC. It noted that climate change was making the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) difficult by reducing access to drinking water, decreasing food security, and having adverse health effects.

Other studies followed up on the issue. The Stern report (2007) noted that climate change was expected to increase poverty owing to its effects on agriculture, flooding, malnutrition, water resources, and health. The 2007/2008 Human Development Report devoted a chapter to the discussion of vulnerability and risks arising from climate change (UNDP, 2008). The World Bank's Global Monitoring Report 2008, titled "MDGs and the Environment: Agenda for Inclusive and Sustainable Development," pointed to the potential impacts of climate change on poverty and development (World Bank, 2008). Brainard et al. (eds) (2009) looks into a wide range of impacts of climate change on poverty. Some recent studies examined the issue using cross-country data, and Skoufias et al. (2011) provided a review of several such studies, taking note of the different methodologies used, different units of analysis adopted, and various policy suggestions offered.

All populations will be affected by climate change, but some are more vulnerable than others. People living in small island developing states and other coastal regions, megacities, and mountainous and polar regions are particularly vulnerable. Children, in particular, children living in poor countries – are among the most vulnerable to the resulting health risks and will be exposed longer to the health consequences. The health effects are also expected to be more severe for elderly people and people with infirmities or pre-existing medical conditions. Areas

with weak health infrastructure, mostly in developing countries will be the least able to cope without assistance to prepare and respond. People living in small island developing states and other coastal regions, megacities, and mountainous and polar regions are particularly vulnerable.

3.5 Increase in natural catastrophes

More and larger wildfires are directly linked to climate change. And it could also significantly reduce air quality, which in fact can affect people's health in several ways. Smoke exposure increases acute respiratory illness, respiratory and cardiovascular hospitalizations, and medical visits for lung illnesses. The frequency of wildfires is expected to increase as drought conditions become more prevalent.

Exposure to allergens causes health problems for many people. When sensitive individuals are simultaneously exposed to allergens and air pollutants, allergic reactions often become more severe. The increase in air pollutants makes the effects of increased allergens associated with climate change even worse. People with existing pollen allergies may have an increased risk for acute respiratory effects.

3.6 Increase in origin and spread of disease, including a global pandemic

“This has been an unprecedented year for people and the planet. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted lives worldwide. At the same time, the heating of our planet and climate disruption has continued apace,” said UN Secretary-General António Guterres in a foreword.

COVID-19 is awful, climate change is worse. However, the pandemic has not stopped climate change. Climate change has not stopped for COVID-19. Greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere are at record levels and continue to increase. Emissions are heading in the direction of pre-pandemic levels following a temporary decline caused by the lockdown and economic slowdown. The world is set to see its warmest five years on record – in a trend which is likely to continue - and is not on track to meet agreed targets to keep global temperature increase well below 2 °C or at 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels.

This is according to a new multi-agency report from the leading science organization United in Science 2020. It highlights the increasing and irreversible impacts of climate change, which affects glaciers, oceans, nature, economies, and human living conditions and is often felt through water-related hazards like drought or flooding. It also documents how COVID-19 has impeded our ability to monitor these changes through the global observing system.

3.7 Significantly reduced quality of life

Climate change affects the social and environmental determinants of health, and those are clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food, and secure shelter. Between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approximately 250000 additional deaths per year, from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea, and heat stress. The direct damage costs to health (i.e. excluding costs in health-determining sectors such as agriculture and water and sanitation), is estimated to be between USD 2-4 billion/year by 2030. Areas with weak health infrastructure – mostly in developing countries – will be the least able to cope without assistance to prepare and respond. Reducing emissions of greenhouse gases through better transport, food and energy-use choices can result in improved health, particularly through reduced air pollution.

4.0 An Ethical Dilemma: To Procreate or Not

One might argue that procreation is entirely a personal decision. While this statement is not wrong, it lacks context. Ultimately, the personal is political, and so is the private. In a world where misogynistic and transphobic abortion laws continue to be implemented, planned parenthood increasingly loses funding, and the pro-life movement vilifies those who exercise bodily autonomy, procreation is nothing short of a political stance in itself. Add to the picture the nuances of adoption, and what had initially seemed like a personal decision turns into a convoluted, seemingly never-ending discussion.

4.1 The Subjectivity of Ethics

It does not take a master of Philosophy to know that ethics are subjective. Some ethics (For instance, ‘One should not steal’) enjoy greater popularity at present as compared to others (For instance, ‘It is a necessary practice to ask people for their pronouns.’).

Procreation births a few such ethical questions too. Any prospective parent must bear the responsibility of introspection: 'Have I healed from my past trauma? Will I be able to give my child an emotionally healthy upbringing? Will I be able to fully accept the individual my child grows into?' The climate crisis adds another ethical dimension to procreation: Is it ethical to bring a new life into the world when the child may not have access to even clean air? Will the child live long enough to have a career, to fulfil their dreams?'

Such questions do not spare adoption. All actions have ethical implications and based on those implications, consequences. Important ethical questions stem from the process of adoption—the very choice to adopt is a conscious decision reflecting empathy, consideration, and a sense of moral obligation to one's fellow beings. However, adoption poses its own set of challenges. Some of these have been described in the subsequent sections.

4.2 How Climate Anxiety May Cause Gen-Z to not Procreate

Gen-Z members are more likely to report mental health concerns as compared to other generations. Multiple pieces of research have proven this thesis, including but not limited to the APA Stress in America™ Survey titled 'Stress in America: Generation Z,' released in October 2018. When it comes to specific mental health issues, adult Gen Zs are more likely than some other generations to report they have been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder (18 per cent) and more likely than all other generations to report they have been diagnosed with depression (23 per cent) (American Psychological Association, 2018).

Gender is a determinant of anxiety disorders in addition to age. Women consistently report higher prevalence rates of anxiety disorders. Anxiety disorders are not only more prevalent but also more debilitating in women than in men (McLean et al., 2011, p. 1030). We thus conclude that women, including cisgender women with the ability to procreate, are more likely to suffer from a more debilitating anxiety disorder in their lifetimes. This risk factor magnifies for women belonging to minority communities. It only makes sense to ask if these women are willing to undergo pregnancy and endure its impacts on their physical and mental well-being. During the postpartum period, about 85% of women experience some form of mood disturbance. For most, the symptoms are mild and short-lived. On the contrary, 10 to 15% of

women develop more significant, long-lasting symptoms of depression or anxiety (MGH Center for Women's Mental Health, 2019).

When we place this data into context and take into consideration the climate crisis, we find growth rates of mental disorders stemming from climate change, disasters, augmenting temperatures, and a sharp rise in an overall sense of existential dread or climate anxiety. The universal chasm between patients needing treatment, qualified mental health professionals, and access to mental healthcare exacerbates the problems at hand.

Therefore, even if we keep aside the ethical nuances of procreation in today's world for a moment, we must ask: Are Gen-Z members ready and healthy to become parents? For Gen-Z members who can bear children and have, in the past, battled mental disorders themselves, is the risk that pregnancy poses to their mental health a challenge that they are willing to undertake?

4.3 The Option of Adoption

Adoption is the social, emotional, and legal process in which children who will not be raised by their birth parents become full and permanent legal members of another family while maintaining genetic and psychological connections to their birth family (Introduction to Adoption - Child Welfare Information Gateway, n.d.). Adopting is a feasible option for single individuals, same-sex couples, couples experiencing infertility/trouble conceiving, and others who cannot bear children due to physical incapacity. It is also an option for cisgender-heterosexual couples who can procreate, albeit less popular in this regard.

Children up for adoption often have a sense of abandonment even if they were not abandoned. Abandonment is a subjective experience, but most children continue to experience its effects even after being adopted. Adoption ends the experience of abandonment but is not an instantaneous, miraculous solution that heals the trauma of these children.

Adoption triggers seven lifelong or core issues for all triad members, regardless of the circumstances of the adoption, or the characteristics of the participants:

1. Loss
2. Rejection
3. Guilt and Shame
4. Grief
5. Identity
6. Intimacy
7. Mastery/control

(Roszia & Maxon, 2019, pp. 1–3)

However, adoption is a more sustainable decision considering that the resources available to us are scarce and the world has already witnessed a population explosion. Some may believe it to be more ethical than procreation, as adoption gives millions of children who already exist a chance at a better life.

5.0 Climate Anxiety and the Consequent Lack of Willingness to Procreate among Gen-Z: A Survey

5.1 Context of the Survey

As authors, we felt the need to test our hypothesis through primary research. This survey, like any other, is bound by certain limitations. They are, in no particular order, as follows:

- Dishonesty or hesitation on behalf of the respondents
- Implicit bias of the creators of the survey
- Relatively small population size
- Lack of funding, time, and other resources required to survey on a larger scale
- Lack of depth in bipolar, close-ended questions

The authors have, to the best of their abilities, tried to minimise these limitations to maintain the integrity of the survey. The steps taken by the authors to achieve this include:

- Collecting anonymous responses, guaranteeing confidentiality to the respondents
- Creating questions that are as neutral, non-opinionated, and non-partisan as possible
- Circulating the survey among random Gen-Z members to incorporate as much diversity as possible
- Optimising the time and resources available at present
- Using a combination of bipolar, close-ended, and open-ended questions

5.2 Details of the Sample

The survey, which comprised 31 questions, was conducted on a random sample of 150 respondents born between 1997 and 2012. The age range was 13 to 23 years. The majority of the respondents were 18-19 years old (29.3% aged 18 and 30% aged 19.) Almost two-thirds of the respondents were female (61.3%), while there were 38% males, and only 0.7% non-binary respondents. 97.9% of respondents currently reside in India. Meanwhile, the remaining 2.1% live in other countries (0.7% in Australia, 0.7% in Bangladesh, 0.7% in England.) In the former category, respondents hailed from a variety of cities, namely, Delhi-NCR, Bangalore, Calicut, Chennai, Chandigarh, Coimbatore, Ganaur, Guwahati, Hisar, Hyderabad, Indore, Jaipur, Kargil, Kanpur, Karnal, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, Rohtak, Siliguri, Sirsa, Thiruvananthapuram, and Varanasi. This geographical and ethnic diversity among the respondents allows us to study 2 factors- climate anxiety and willingness (or lack thereof) to procreate- in various socio-economic-cultural-political societies. Since India is one of the most polluted cities in the world, 83.3% of the respondents reside in highly polluted cities. This context is significant for studying their perspectives on the climate crisis and how their habitat influences their experience of climate anxiety.

5.3 Data Analysis

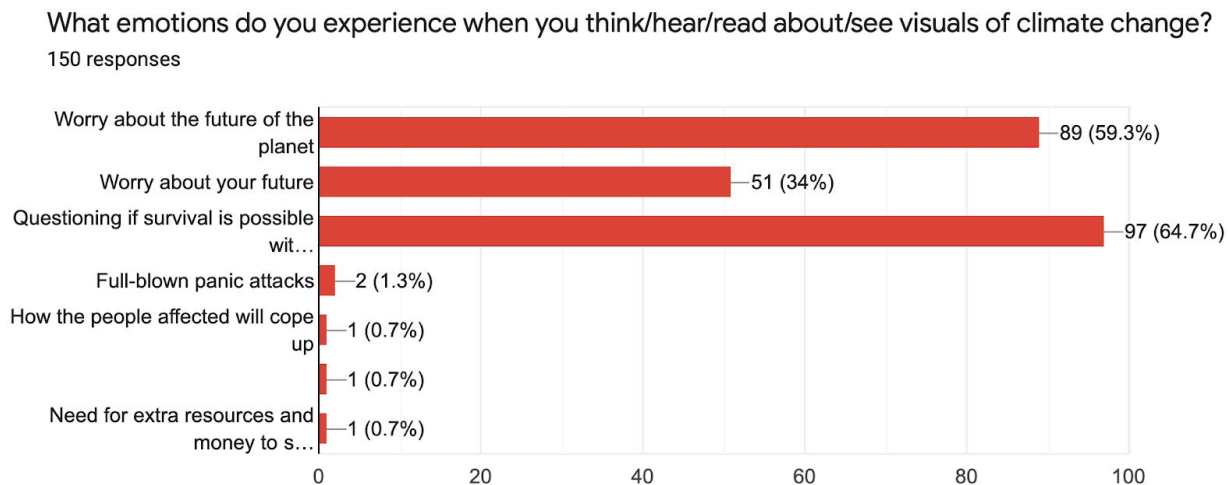


Fig. I.I: A bar graph showing the responses of 150 participants about the emotions evoked upon being aware of climate change.

According to our survey, out of 150 respondents, 94% agreed to have felt distressed or uneasy upon hearing about or on seeing the visuals of natural disasters like earthquake, flood, forest fires, etc. Only, a mere 6% said that they were not bothered by such instances. Next, when we asked them if they worry about climate change on the regular, a whopping 80% of the respondents said 'yes', while 20% of them responded 'no'. When asked about the prospect of the future seems bleak upon hearing news related to climate change, 92.7% participants responded in the affirmative and a mere 7.3% had a negative response. 42.3% of the partakers agreed to have felt excessively overwhelmed, saddened, or stressed because of the worsening climate scenario. 59.3% acknowledged to have worried about the future of the planet. 64.7% question if survival is possible with worsening trends in climate change. 34% worry about their future and the impact of climate change. 62.4% answered acknowledged to have felt engulfed by an existential dread and worry over the fact that their survival is threatened by climate change.

On top of that, 63.3% admitted that climate change has made them rethink their crucial future life plans, such as what career to choose, where to live, whether to have kids, etc, while 67.3% admitted that they feel restricted by pollution(mainly air) in their own city. And also, acknowledged that high pollution levels rendered them unable to play certain sports, move outside freely, or even breathe properly. The conclusion drawn from the statistics here is that the future seems bleak to the younger generation and the decision to have kids is directly proportional to climate change.

5.4 Global Statistics

The first half this decade is going to be ostensibly remembered for deadly climate-related disasters; among them, the floods in Thailand in 2011, Hurricane Sandy within the US in 2012, and Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013. The year 2014 was the Earth's warmest in 134 years of recorded history (NASA GISS 2015). It is hydrometeorological (floods, storms, heat waves) and climatological disasters (droughts, wildfires) instead of geophysical ones (earthquakes, volcanic eruptions) that are on the rise. The global increase in intense floods, storms, droughts, and warmth waves features a likely and ominous link to global climate change. There is a growing literature on the evidence linking anthropogenic climate change¹ with natural disasters. Drawing attention to those climate-related disasters, arguably the foremost tangible manifestation of worldwide warming could help mobilize broader climate action. And it could influence the directions taken for the economic process worldwide and pave the way for a much-needed switch to a path of low-carbon, green growth.

6.0 Recommendations

After proving our hypothesis to be correct for our sample, we recommend that this hypothesis be tested again for a larger sample size, so that the results may hold validity on being generalised.

Having shown that climate anxiety is a cause of unwillingness to procreate among Gen-Z, we wish to make a few recommendations to tackle the former of the two variables. Simply put, the unwillingness to procreate cannot objectively be declared as an 'issue,' and hence, requires no resolution. We would also not like to impinge on the personal liberty of any individual and therefore abstain from making any comments on whether gen-Z should procreate. However,

concerning climate anxiety, we suggest the following measures to be considered and implemented if found useful:

- An official declaration of a climate emergency by every nation to acknowledge the extent of the crisis at hand.
- Strong, unwavering commitment to SDG-13 and other international climate action agreements.
- Eager participation of all nations to partake in climate action, with a focus on creating more equitable and sustainable living conditions for their citizens.
- Establishing mental healthcare institutions, especially in rural areas and regions facing the disproportionate effect of the climate emergency.
- Setting up higher educational institutes to offer specialisations in Psychology and Environmental Psychology under the New Education Policy in India, and other similar schemes abroad. These institutes shall help to compensate for the lack of trained mental health professionals who are licensed to resolve climate anxiety and related problems.
- Providing elementary mental health education to young students and equipping them with simple techniques of anxiety management and resilience.

7.0 Conclusion

There exists conclusive evidence to show that climate anxiety is a legitimate phenomenon that only seems to be on the rise. The factors for this drastic rise are worsening global trends in the climate, lack of political consensus and action, the mockery of the young people's climate movement, disproportionate effect of climate change on marginalised communities, increase in natural catastrophes, and the origin and spread of diseases, including a global pandemic. The consequent deterioration in the quality of life and uncertainty about the future has compelled many Gen-Z members to not procreate. An overwhelming majority of the respondents in our survey felt that adoption is a far more ethical and sustainable option for those who harbour the desire to have children. Many respondents altogether discarded the prospect of having children. Therefore, the hypothesis was proven correct, at least for the given sample. As always, there exists scope for further research. Similar researches may be conducted on larger sample sizes to render the hypothesis fit for generalisation.

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