

Article

Empowering Change: The Critical Role of Women and Youth in Climate Leadership

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Abstract: The global climate crisis deserves a multi-sectoral response. Evidently, the contributions of women and youth will certainly play key roles in defining climate leadership. This study shall evaluate the present engagement of women and youths in climate leadership with studies of successful case studies that have contributed to achievable environmental benefits. This also elaborates concrete strategy designs aimed at empowering women and youths by addressing the challenges and barriers they face within climate governance. The study engages qualitative analysis, conducting case studies and in-depth interviews of climate leaders by discussing relevant literature published on the themes of gender and youth participation in climate action. It further explores intersectional factors influencing participation, such as socioeconomic status, geographical location, and cultural norms. Results would critically assess current policies and frameworks against successes and shortcomings in integrating women and youths into climate leadership. In fact, significant findings from the study show that institutional barriers, including limitations in access to financial resources and mentorship and exclusion from decision-making processes, remain significant challenges. The research study has also identified a few research gaps, including the need to understand the long-term impacts of youth and gender-inclusive climate policies. One could raise pertinent issues around intersectionality in climate leadership, especially in understanding how marginalized groups within these populations can be better supported in climate governance. Lastly, the report emphasizes the strategic need to involve women and youth in climate leadership for a more resilient and sustainable future. It recommends inclusive policies targeting financing, education, and mentorship mechanisms to strengthen their role in climate decision-making

Keywords: Climate Leadership, Women Empowerment, Youth Involvement, Sustainable Development, Gender Equality, Environmental Action, Inclusive Policies, Global Climate Strategy, Mentorship and Education, Resilient Future.

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1. Introduction

Today the world faces its worst type of environmental pollution that is damaging the lives of a new generation in particular and all the whole humanity in general. That is why this issue is important enough to be discussed by the International institutions for the betterment, and safety of all generations. It demands a lot of research and participation from women and youth to make the world worth living in.

At the moment, one of the most vital issues that face humankind is the climate. The manifestations of this broad-scale environmental issue include loss of biodiversity, extreme climate conditions, global warming, and ecosystem deterioration. Across the globe, governments, organizations, and individuals all recognize how crucial it is to take action, but things are still moving slowly. A most critical hindrance to meaningful climate action is the lack of inclusive, diversified leadership, especially from those who are disproportionately affected by climate change, namely, women and young people. Women

and young people, representing more than half of the world's population, are at the forefront of climate vulnerability. Despite this exposure to environmental risks, they remain sidelined in climate decision-making processes. These are also groups that hold the key to innovative, sustainable, and community-driven solutions to climate change. Such groups are identified with unique experiences, perspectives, and skills that make them powerful agents of change in the quest for environmental resilience and justice. This paper reviews critical roles played by women and youths in climate leadership, pointing out their potential to drive systemic changes. In looking into how these types of groups can contribute to mitigation and adaptation strategies, the barriers they experience, and how they might be transformative for the shaping of a sustainable future, the global community is inching closer to delivering comprehensive, effective climate action through empowering women and youth towards leadership. (Kakade et al., 2024)

It goes without saying that women were vulnerable before climate change, particularly in developing countries. Women generally lack enough energy, food, and water in rural setups, hence becoming more vulnerable to the weather. This is particularly risky for pregnant women because these women carry important information in terms of local ecosystems. Therefore, a much more integrated effort and solution for social, economic, and environmental sustainability is necessary for empowering women to take leadership over issues concerning climate change. Empowering women to take the lead in issues of climate change allows for more all-encompassing, holistic solutions, considering aspects not only of environmental sustainability but also about social and economic resilience. (Goryunova & Madsen, 2024)

Women and young people are surprised by the great role in climate leadership, yet there are such numerous barriers such as social norms, unequal access to education, financial equality, and political participation. This perpetuates inequality in that it excludes women and the youth, including people of color, low-income groups, and the local population of Creed, from full inclusion in climate change moments and governance. The global community also continues uploading those on climate change politics and environmental search. (Memon, 2020)

Besides perpetuating inequality, by not having such voices in climate leadership, the policies and endeavors associated with this climate become less effective. (Lesko et al., 2024)

There is a strong voice who would like climate policies to be gender-sensitive and also proactive in the involvement of the youth in handling this crisis. Therefore, it addresses the question of the recognition of the fact that climate change affects many groups in diverse ways. Among such policies that are meant for young people need to be established at all levels, especially in local governments and international organizations.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has recognized the need to involve women and youth in climate action. Such initiatives under the UNFCCC framework, like the Gender Action Plan and Youth Constituency (YOUNGO), should be steered towards promoting the participation of these groups in global climate governance. However, this calls for a lot more work to be done before it can be turned into meaningful actions at the local and national levels. (Lecoutere et al., 2024)

Young people, along with women, are now spearheading creative projects to produce more insightful global climate visions. For instance, women cooperatives manage projects on sustainable agriculture and forestry in Kenya and India at the same time offsetting greenhouse gases and economically empowering women to benefit the local economies. Nepali female entrepreneurs have promoted green energy sources that prevent deforestation and improve public health, one of them being the sun energy cooking stoves. Youths-organized groups such as 'Sunrise Movement' and the 'Global Youth Biodiversity Network' have turned massive momentum in pursuit of environmental and climatic justice issues. They are engaging the youth in reforestation, good climate policy advocacy, and

raising awareness of the importance of biodiversity among all local members. (Seeberg et al, 2017)

Climate leadership, in reality, is not only about how to address issues of the environment but also social injustice. Women and youths are mainly at the intersections of multiple forms of oppression, such as gender inequality and racial discrimination, besides economic marginalization. It is through empowerment in leadership that solutions to climate change become equitable and address root causes of degradation of the environment and social injustice. For instance, climate change worsens the already-made inequalities in access to clean water, healthcare, and education. Women and youth, particularly from marginalized communities, are highly affected by such inequalities. Thus, it is high time to center the voices of these people on climate leadership to begin developing solutions that could take into consideration rights, equity, and justice together with environmental sustainability. (Lammers et al., 2024)

Several strategies should be employed to appropriately utilize women and youths in leadership toward a brighter future with regard to climate. Capacity building is teaching and educating people about climate science, policy, and leadership techniques. Inclusive governance ensures that women and young people are involved in structures that make decisions on issues related to climate change. All grants, loans, and investments in sustainability and resilience projects should be targeted to engage more youth and women in climate efforts. Media campaigns, education initiatives, and partnerships with civil society organizations shall all be utilized to increase advocacy and awareness. In this regard, appropriate legal and policy reforms in relation to gender equality, youth empowerment, and climate justice have to be espoused to ensure that women's and youths' rights are protected within the context of climate change. (Vogel et al., 2022)

Why are youth voices important in climate leadership?

Youth voices are central in climate leadership, as young people will inherit the long-term effects of environmental actions today. Their fresh perspective, imagination, and technological skills bring innovative solutions to the climate crisis. Youth-led movements, such as Fridays for Future, have mobilized millions, raising global awareness and pressuring governments for stronger climate action. Young people bring a sense of urgency and moral clarity to the debate, which connects sustainable policies with protecting future generations. Involvement by the youth ensures that the climate strategies are forward-looking and become the solution to present needs as well as future demands. (Ng, 2021)

How is the impact of climate change on women and men different?

Gender imbalance climate change has the influence on women more than men, especially in underdeveloped countries. Women are entirely dependent on natural elements, especially those with rural inclinations, which take care of farming, fuel collection, and water harvesting. Climate change destroys the ecological system, causing droughts, floods, and crop failures, thereby raising food insecurity and water scarcity. Women in regard to land ownership, monetary resources, and education have unequal access and, therefore, the potential to adapt to climate-related challenges. Mobility among pregnant, elderly, or child caregiving women is lower, and they are more prone to displacement risk and health risks at the time of disasters. Climatic change may worsen the already existing social inequalities and thus expose them to a greater risk of gender-based violence at the resource conflict or post-disaster. Despite all these vulnerabilities, women play an important role in climate resilience because they possess unique knowledge about local ecosystems and resource management.

What barriers do women face in climate leadership?

This leads to climate leadership for women through other barriers, such as gender inequality and limited access to education, among others. The patriarchal structures that

dominate the regions indicate their very limited participation in leadership, especially concerning environmental sectors. Besides, economic factors like unequal financial resources and property ownership disallow them much power in working on the climate policy outcomes. Cultural issues compel women to be house caregivers and limit them considerably in terms of time and possible public leadership roles. Due to race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, for example, these challenges are then compounded, making it hard for women from marginalized communities to participate in climate governance. (Lesko et al, 2024)

How can gender-responsive policies improve climate action?

Policies should be gender-responsive to enhance climate action, considering women's particular needs and contributions, mainly in the most vulnerable communities. The policies will guarantee women fair access to education, land, and finance so that they can effectively implement sustainable practices. Women's involvement in decision-making increases policies' effectiveness and equity in terms of bringing about a wide range of solutions to climate issues. Gender-responsive strategies for resilience encompass issues such as the recognition of women's roles in agriculture, water management, and disaster response, enabling communities to better adapt to climate impacts and reducing inequalities exacerbated by environmental changes. (John)

What are some examples of youth-led climate initiatives?

Accordingly, inclusive leadership must be led by women and youth. Women's vulnerabilities emanate from their dependence on natural resources. Thus, little education, meager financial means, and ownership of land make them vulnerable. Though they struggle against these challenges, their knowledge of the local ecosystem and sustainable practices makes them a crucial agents in climate resilience. Movements like Fridays for Future and the Sunrise Movement are proof that their power can alter climate policy. These groups can be empowered to meaningfully contribute to climate action by implementing gender-responsive and youth-inclusive policies. (Imran et al., 2021)

What is more, this climate crisis requires more representative leadership from women and youth. The women's task force in particular from the developing world is exposed to fragility through dependence on natural resources and very limited access to education, finance, and land ownership. Despite such daunting challenges, knowledge regarding local ecosystems makes them a vital agent in climate resilience. Youth movements like Fridays for Future and the Sunrise Movement are truly the future shaping climate policy. Gender-responsive and youth-inclusive policies can empower these groups to contribute meaningfully to climate action. (Dobrich, 2024)

Literature Review:

Indeed, the climate crisis is, by extension of instability in both environmental, economic, and political systems, one of the most important global challenges of the twenty-first century. Indeed, times have definitely changed as far as climate action is concerned, and governments, organizations, and civil society are now coming to realize how critical it is to offer adequate and timely responses. Real growth really calls for more inclusive, diversified leadership. Women and youth are crucial to achieving ends in action on climate, but the former especially still remain underrepresented voices in decision-making processes. Through research that focuses on specific vulnerabilities and strengths, the review tries to understand the historical and contemporary level of roles played by women and young people in climate leadership. The study shall consider the concept of intersecting gender, age, and climate governance regarding a detailed knowledge of how the groups may promote systemic change in the fight against climate change.

Environmental studies have shown interest in the connection between gender and environmental deterioration. Because they relied on natural resources for their livelihoods, women have been disproportionately affected by environmental changes, especially in

rural and developing areas. The current 'ecofeminist movement' was sparked by feminist thinkers like Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies, who contended in the 1970s that capitalism's economics and patriarchal structures had abused both women and the environment. According to ecofeminism, women are frequently the first to suffer the negative consequences of environmental deterioration since they are the primary caretakers and managers of natural resources. In developing nations, where women are more likely to be disadvantaged and lack access to financial resources, education, and property ownership, this vulnerability is more evident. Patriarchal systems that value male leadership and competence in fields like environmental research, policy, and resource management have historically kept women out of the decision-making process related to the environment, despite these vulnerabilities. Agarwal's (1997) research emphasizes how gendered environmental governance with women's expertise in regional ecosystems and sustainable farming methods is frequently disregarded in favor of male-dominated technology solutions. In a similar vein, young people have been excluded from climate leadership and frequently just play symbolic roles. (Domínguez et al., 2024)

Similarly, regional ecosystems, sustainable farming practices, and water resource management knowledge of women emphasize their role in combating the impacts of climate change and adapting to it. Studies report that women's leadership is most represented in community-based adaptation projects in rural Asia and Africa, such as forestry efforts and drought-tolerant crops, such as those that reduce carbon emissions and enhance food security and economic resilience. These countries enacting more environmental protection laws tend to have a higher level of female political representation, making women's participation in climate leadership likely to lead to broader and more inclusive solutions.

This means that the more women participate in policy, the more emphasis is placed on sustainable development and social equity since women are more sensitive to environmental, social, and economic interconnection. Theoretical frames, such as intersectionality and feminist political ecology, further enlighten the climate change experience for women, for instance, for Indigenous people or low-income communities. Empowerment of women in climate leadership is vital for environmental sustainability and social justice. (Haq et al., 2020)

Today, youths are the most vigorous activist force of global climate movements, such as Fridays for Future and the Sunrise Movement. They have become demanding even more militant climate policies as the final aftereffect of their exposure to long-term environmental consequences. Current studies by O'Brien et al. (2018) underscore the mobilizing role of the youth as agents of change based on urgent need and a willingness to challenge the given in society. The most notable example of climate activism by the youths is the Fridays for Future movement launched by Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg in 2018. The intergenerational unfairness of climate inaction is graphically spelled out in the pronouncements of Thunberg at the United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP. This is where she protests in a statement where young people lose the most points exactly to the very essence of intergenerational unfairness. Lastly, climate innovation heroes will include young people, like Felix Finkbeiner, who founded the Plant-for-the-Planet initiative, where millions of trees are being planted throughout the world to end deforestation and store carbon. The Global Youth Biodiversity Network asks for the involvement of youths in biodiversity conservation projects and advocacy efforts towards the protection of ecosystems considered crucial to its climate resilience. (Gill et al., 2019)

2. Materials and Methods

This study explores the roles that women and young people play in climate leadership and their experiences and challenges in promoting climate action. Among other qualitative data collection methods, the project employs semi-structured interviews, focus

groups, and participant observations to collect information from underserved communities, including low-income groups, Indigenous peoples, and rural residents. The thematic analysis aims to find the recurring themes and patterns of roles played by women and teens in climate action. Participants must agree to maintain confidentiality and anonymity, and they also have to provide informed consent. A comprehensive knowledge of interactions between these groups and climate leadership is provided, with the focus laid on transformative potential in the advancement of successful climate action through women and youth. (Qais et al., 2023)

3. Results and Discussion

This study points to an important role women and youth play in climate leadership embedded with systemic impediments. Women are visibly impacted in rural and developing regions with regard to climate change because their livelihoods depend on natural resources. The work they do—much of it agriculture-related, including farming, collecting water, and gathering fuel—makes them more vulnerable to food and water insecurity. This leads to higher workloads and stress of acquiring food and water while exacerbating the variability in the climate. These stress factors also lead to increased health hazards, especially during pregnancy, and malnutrition and infectious diseases that are linked with climate change. However, despite these vulnerabilities, women have important local knowledge and skills that are necessary to help them adapt to this climate effectively. They have a more profound familiarity with sustainable agriculture practices and their local ecosystems when it comes to developing adaptation strategies. (Ediae et al., 2024)

Women's traditional knowledge ecology encompasses indigenous practices resilient to climatic fluctuations. There is significant scope for enhancing contributions in bringing climate solutions into the real world for women. However, structural bottlenecks persist in many decision-making processes because their contributions are often overlooked by women. Emphasizing increased urgency has made the youth a very important change agent in the current catastrophe of climate change. The youth-led movements like Fridays for Future mobilized international awareness and advocacy for stronger climate action. However, many participants stated frustration in the fact that climate governance didn't provide meaningful avenues for participation, frequently leaving it at tokenism and not action. The youth bring unique thinking and innovative ideas, especially keeping abreast with the latest technology in climate strategy. They want to be treated as equals in climate discourse, and they have urged policymakers to open up greater platforms for listening to them. Analyzing the several barriers limiting women and youth's participation in climate leadership is complex and encompasses patriarchal structures, cultural norms, gender-based discrimination, age-based discrimination, and economic disparities. Women are excluded from education access, financial resources, and leadership opportunities, while youth are excluded through age-based discrimination, resulting in disregarding their voices in policy discussions about climate. The generation gap further excludes valuable perspectives. Furthermore, economic inequality contributes to hindrances related to participation by some women and youth who hail from low-income backgrounds in climate initiatives, thus exacerbating vulnerabilities and making them shy away from engagement in climate solutions. (Md et al., 2022)

The study highlights the need for gender-responsive and youth-inclusive policies in climate governance. It suggests that policies that involve women's and youth's voices and expertise lead to more inclusive and holistic climate action. Countries that prioritize women's political representation are more likely to implement robust environmental policies. Qualitative results reveal that women in office have promoted activities of their societies, demonstrating what is possible in such a system of governance. Youth-led activities have proved to be strong drivers in mobilizing public opinion and force to achieve policy change. Climate leadership for women and youth includes capacity

building, education on climate science, policy action advocacy, and leadership skills suited for this population. An inclusive government is necessary for integrating differing perspectives into climate policies and for intergenerational understanding. As many of the women's and youth-led organizations lack funds, financing and resource distribution form significant activities of action. Campaigns for advocacy on gender equality in climate governance could impact the public's perception and influence decision-makers to become more inclusive in their stances. Despite these barriers, women and young people become pivotal agents in solving the climate crisis. There must be imperative implementation of climate-responsive and youth-inclusive policies that recognize the multi-faceted impacts of climate change, empowering these groups to take the top seat. The climatic catastrophe results in a framework for climate governance that has the potential for social justice and environmental sustainability in terms of mobilizing the capabilities of women and the youth. (Chow et al., 2024)

4. Conclusion

To conclude the study, this research reflects how challenging and diversified it is for Pakistan to establish an effective framework for climate leadership, especially for women and young people. The extent to which both groups may influence revolutionary climate action has been shown through this research. In reality, economic disparity, dominant patriarchal norms, and lack of access to decision-making platforms represent deep structural barriers that keep them from participating. This study has indicated that while women play a disproportionate role in Pakistani agriculture and resource management, they are generally left out of the policy-making and implementation process. And, despite its size and enthusiasm for climate action, Pakistan's youth is characterized by systemic barriers that scale up the scope of their influence in official administration. Among them are age-based discrimination, under-resourcing, and the lack of platform engagements that could be meaningful to policymakers. (Domínguez et al., 2024)

In Pakistan, the climate framework is degraded as it lacks planning and policies that consider youth and gender forces that have more innovative solutions toward ecological expertise. Similarly, economic inequality also hinders their presence in climate planning and development. The study provides solutions to the problems through women's quotas in governance bodies and gender-sensitive policies that consider women's involvement in resource management and agriculture. More training programs on climate science, environmental management, and leadership for women and youths are suggested. This would lead to more excellent women and youths' leadership potential in this field. (Kwauk & Casey, 2022)

finally, developing intergenerational dialogue forums can promote the cooperation of youth and experienced leaders in bringing the perspectives of youth into climate policy. Empowering projects on climate run by women and youth with access to specifically focused financial aid is crucial to redressing economic inequalities and stimulating their active engagement in governance. In the final analysis, this research finds that it is both strategically and morally necessary to remove the institutional obstacles that women and youth in Pakistan's climate governance must traverse. Their active participation is pivotal for realizing social justice and creating fair, sustainable, and practical climate solutions for the country. If implemented, Pakistan can become an exemplary case of other global climate change movements if the suggested policies and investments are put into action. This will help the country to come up with a strong future that will be spearheaded by the creative and revolutionary powers of women and youth.

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