



A systematic review literature on climate anxiety in relation to psychological well being

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Abstract

Psychological well-being refers to a mental state that allows an individual to achieve their full potential, innovative in their work and manage everyday stressors. Psychological well-being is an essential indicator of both mental and physical health, involving a wide range of emotional, cognitive, and social factors. Climate anxiety can be described as heightened emotional, mental or physical distress in response to dangerous changes in the climate. Climate anxiety can lead to symptoms such as panic attacks, loss of appetite, irritability, weakness and sleeplessness. According to the 2018 American Psychological Association report, 'the perception of risk regarding climate change, belief in the ability to effect change, and the etiology attributed to extreme weather events are important factors impacting the decisions people make regarding climate change related behaviors. As the effects of climate change on mental health continue to worsen, incorporating positive psychology techniques into public health, education and policy is vital for building a resilient and empowered society.

Keywords: Anxiety, Climate anxiety and Psychological well-being,

INTRODUCTION

Psychological Well-being is the experience of health, happiness, and prosperity. It includes having good mental health, high life satisfaction, a sense of meaning or purpose, and the ability to manage stress. Stress may be physical, psychological, social, emotional, educational and seasonal or Climate change. Climate anxiety is fundamentally distress about climate change and its impacts on the landscape and human existence. That can manifest as intrusive thoughts or feelings of distress about future disasters or the long-term future of human existence and the world, including one's own descendants. Psychological Well-being is something sought by just about everyone because it includes so many positive things — feeling happy, healthy, socially connected, and purposeful. Clayton reports that anxiety, fatalism, hopelessness and fear have been increasing globally, and offers a clinical approach to understanding, measuring and treating climate anxiety, while emphasising the distinction between adaptive and maladaptive types, and the need to keep the society-level response required to combat climate change in mind.



CLIMATE ANXIETY

Climate anxiety is fundamentally distress about climate change and its impacts on the landscape and human existence. That can manifest as intrusive thoughts or feelings of distress about future disasters or the long-term future of human existence and the world, including one's own descendants. There is a physiological component that would include heart racing and shortness of breath, and a behavioral component: when climate anxiety gets in the way of one's social relationships or functioning at work or school. The journal *Global Environmental Change*, considers the term "climate change anxiety" to "broadly refer to people's feelings of anxiety and/or worry related to climate change". Climate anxiety can lead to symptoms such as panic attacks, loss of appetite, irritability, weakness and sleeplessness. The first definition comes from a 2023 research paper, which describes climate anxiety as "persistent anxiety (apprehensiveness) and worry about climate change". The second comes from the American Psychological Association, which in 2020 used the term "eco anxiety" to describe "any anxiety or worry about climate change and its effects".

Kühner explains that "eco anxiety could be interpreted as being more broadly related to the ecological crisis...but [the American Psychological Association] describe it as any anxiety or worry related to climate change". Climate anxiety could negatively affect many people's mental health and may motivate or hamper climate action. Emotion researchers can contribute to our understanding of the prevalence, indicators, causes, and consequences of climate anxiety through theory and research, to promote well-being and climate action in the face of climate change. Investigations into anxiety about climate change have revealed that it is increasingly common for many people across the globe, with large-scale international studies identifying growing concern about climate change.

For example, recent multinational studies have suggested that between 49 and 59% of respondents were very or extremely worried about climate change. This increasing prevalence of eco-anxiety underscores the need to explore its relationship with mental health outcomes. While reports from clinical practice e.g., and mental healthcare professionals e.g., indicate that distress is occurring in relation to climate change, others argue that the threats of climate change are real and thus eco-anxiety is rational, rather than potentially pathological. A landmark survey published in *The Lancet* assessed 10,000 children and young people globally. It found that over 50% experienced sadness, anxiety, anger, powerlessness, and guilt, with many reporting feelings of betrayal regarding inadequate government responses.

Who suffers from climate anxiety?

1. People who are more concerned about nature or extreme weather events like extreme heat waves, floods and earthquakes.
2. People who are concerned about express hesitation.
3. Women who are having higher levels of anxiety.
4. People who are more concerned about personal identity, strong feelings of loss and guilt.
5. People who are concerned with some psychological issues like depression, trauma and stress related disorders.

Coping strategies

Problem-focused coping has a societal benefit in that it leads to "pro-environmental behavior," meaning that young people who engage in it typically spend a lot of time learning about climate change and focusing on what they can do personally to help solve the problem. But climate change is far beyond any one person's control, and problem-focused coping can leave people frustrated by the limits of their own capacity and make them unable to rid themselves of resulting worry and negative emotions, according to Maria Ojala, an associate professor in psychology at Örebro University in Sweden.



PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Psychological well-being is a broad and complex concept that encompasses an individual's overall experience of positive emotions, life satisfaction, and a sense of purpose. According to various studies, psychological well-being is a multidimensional construct that includes both affective and cognitive components. Cognitive-behavioral therapies (CBT) are also effective in boosting well-being, particularly for individuals with anxiety or depression (Cuijpers et al., 2013). Physical activity is another factor that contributes positively to psychological well-being. Exercise has been linked to reduced stress, improved mood, and increased self-esteem (Lancaster & Strath, 2013).

It has also proven effective in treating depression, with its benefits comparable to those of medication and psychotherapy (Babyak et al., 2000). It involves experiencing positive emotions, having a sense of purpose and functioning effectively in personal and social domains. Similarly, another study emphasized that psychological well-being is a combination of “feeling good and functioning well,” highlighting both hedonic (happiness) and eudemonic (meaning and growth) aspects.

Types of Psychological well-being

- a) Emotional Well-Being. The ability to practice stress-management and relaxation techniques, be resilient, boost self-love, and generate the emotions that lead to good feelings.
- b) Physical Well-Being. The ability to improve the functioning of your body through healthy living and good exercise habits.
- c) Social Well-Being. The ability to communicate, develop meaningful relationships with others, and maintain a support network that helps you overcome loneliness.
- d) Workplace Well-Being. The ability to pursue your interests, values, and life purpose in order to gain meaning, happiness, and enrichment professionally.
- e) Environment Well-Being. The ability to actively participate in a thriving community, culture, and environment.

Dimensions of Psychological well-being

Carol Ryff's six dimensions of Psychological well-being are as follows:

- 1. Self-acceptance** - Self-acceptance refers to having a positive attitude towards. It includes recognizing and accepting both strengths and weaknesses. Students with high self-acceptance feel confident and satisfied with themselves. Low self-acceptance may lead to feelings of inferiority and self-doubt.
- 2. Personal Growth**- Personal growth means continuous development of one's abilities and potential. It reflects openness to new experiences and willingness to improve. Students with high personal growth actively seek learning opportunities.
- 3. Purpose in Life**- Purpose in life refers to having clear goals and a sense of direction. Students with purpose feel motivated and focused on their future. Lack of purpose can lead to confusion and lack of motivation.
- 4. Positive Relations with Others** - This component emphasizes healthy and meaningful relationships. Good relationships provide emotional support and reduce stress. Poor relationships may cause loneliness and emotional distress.
- 5. Environmental Mastery**- Environmental mastery means the ability to manage life situations effectively. Students who can handle academic and personal responsibilities show high environmental mastery. It includes problem-solving and decision-making skills.



6. Autonomy- Autonomy refers to independence and self-determination. It means making decisions based on one's own beliefs and values. Students with autonomy are confident and self-directed.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The integration of hedonic (pleasure-oriented) and eudaimonic (purpose-oriented) theories offers a more comprehensive understanding of human flourishing. However, challenges persist in this area. Many studies still rely on self-report surveys, which can be biased. Additionally, there is a lack of cross-cultural perspectives, and longitudinal research remains scarce. Future research should aim to include more diverse populations and enhance the accuracy of well-being measurements by using mixed-methods and longitudinal approaches. Psychological well-being is an essential indicator of both mental and physical health, involving a wide range of emotional, cognitive, and social factors. Psychological well-being is an essential indicator of both mental and physical health, involving a wide range of emotional, cognitive, and social factors.

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