



## Climate Change Worry Among Adolescents Viewed Through Parental Role Perspectives

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### Article Info

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### Abstract

*This study aims to examine differences in adolescents' climate worry in relation to parental roles. Parental roles in this context refer to parents' engagement in discussions with their adolescents about climate change and the level of climate-related worry experienced by the parents themselves. However, existing research has not sufficiently clarified whether and how parental involvement in climate-related discussions and parents' own climate worry are associated with differences in adolescents' climate worry. The research employed a comparative quantitative method involving 85 adolescent participants. The measurement tool was a translated version of the 10-item Climate Change Worry Scale, which demonstrated a reliability coefficient of 0.858. Data analysis was conducted using the Mann Whitney test. The findings indicated that: (1) There is a significant difference in adolescents' concerns about climate change based on whether or not their parents have discussed it with them with a significance value of 0.004. Adolescents whose parents have discussed climate change reported higher levels of concern about climate change (mean = 48.84) compared to those whose parents have not (mean = 32.82); and (2) There is a significant difference between adolescents' concerns about climate change based on their parents' levels of concern with a significance value of 0.042. Adolescents with parents who experienced climate worry reported higher climate worry (mean = 46.01) than those whose parents did not (mean = 33.23). These results suggest that adolescents who engage in climate-related discussions with their parents tend to exhibit higher climate worry, likely because a majority of parents were found to experience climate worry themselves. The results of this study imply that parents need to convey climate change issues to adolescents in a balanced way, by combining informative and solution-oriented discussions so that climate awareness develops without triggering excessive worry.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Climate change is the most urgent and complex challenge of the 21st century that human civilization must face. This phenomenon is not merely ordinary weather variations, but rather a long-term transformation in temperature patterns, rainfall, and other climate conditions, mainly driven by the increased concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This rise in greenhouse gas concentrations is caused by human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrialization, which contribute significantly to the increase in carbon emissions (IPCC, 2021). This issue is not only an ecological and socio-economic problem, but it also triggers significant psychological consequences, especially among the younger generation who will inherit the condition of this planet (Clayton, 2020).

Adolescents, with their broad access to information and heightened awareness, often experience feelings of helplessness, fear about the future, and deep emotional pressure related to the environmental crisis. This phenomenon is known as climate change worry, which can be felt both personally and collectively (Pihkala, 2020). Climate change worry is defined as a form of emotional, mental, or somatic distress that arises in response to the threat of climate change (Dodds, 2021). Many studies indicate that in various countries, reports of concerns about the condition of the earth, a diminished sense of security, and pessimism about the future are quite high. Based on a survey conducted among more than 10,000 adolescents, it was found that the majority of them feel disappointed and betrayed by the lack of action from the adult generation in addressing the climate crisis, resulting in emotional stress and decreased psychological well-being (Hickman et al., 2021).

Research by Bolek et al., (2024) shows that climate change can affect the mental health of adolescents, as they are considered particularly vulnerable to it, exacerbating their anxiety and depression, given that they are in a period of cognitive and emotional development, during which they are still improving their problem-solving skills. Climate change is a critical issue, not only because of its immediate effects on the environment, but also because of its extensive social and psychological ramifications, especially in relation to public awareness. Empirical research indicates that insufficient levels of knowledge about climate change and environmental literacy can hinder individuals' understanding of the determinants and repercussions of climate change, potentially culminating in apathy, denial, or a passive stance toward ecological concerns (Leiserowitz et al., 2025; Stevenson et al., 2013). When individuals have limited knowledge about prevailing environmental conditions, they may significantly underestimate the severity of climate change and fail to recognize their responsibilities in mitigation initiatives. This lack of awareness not only discourages pro-environmental actions, but also exacerbates feelings of uncertainty and diminishes psychological readiness to face climate-related risks.

Indonesia itself is one of the countries experiencing quite serious impacts due to climate change (Zuhra et al., 2018). Indonesia is recognized as one of the most diverse nations globally. The third largest biome on the planet, it should inherently fulfill the role of acting as the "Lungs of the World." Nonetheless, Indonesia remains one of the countries that has encountered significantly adverse effects as a consequence of climate change. These repercussions will inevitably give rise to issues that intersect with the phenomenon of Eco-anxiety within society (Zuhra et al., 2018). In the context of Indonesian families, parenting styles, emotional closeness, and communication among family members play an important role in shaping children's psychological responses. Developmental psychology studies in Indonesia show that the quality of the parent-child relationship largely determines adolescents' ability to manage stress and worry (Desmita, 2017). Attention to the psychological impact of climate change on adolescents is also increasing (Yasinda et al., 2023). A report from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry shows that climate change impacts various aspects of social life, including the mental health of vulnerable groups such as children and adolescents (KLHK, 2020). In addressing adolescent concerns, the role of parents and the family environment becomes a very important protective factor. Strong attachment between parent and child can serve as

a support system, helping adolescents minimize anxiety and the potential for emotional pressure related to transitional phases (Sonata, 2023).

Several studies, in addition to highlighting the emotional aspect, also emphasize the importance of family factors in shaping adolescents' psychological responses to climate issues. The role of parents as caregiver figures plays a fundamental part in modeling pro-environmental behavior and being a source of emotional support, which has been shown to influence how adolescents process information about climate change (Eisenberg et al., 2019). Other research has also observed the relationship between parenting style and adolescents' attitudes toward environmental issues. Adolescents with parents who apply democratic parenting tend to exhibit better emotion regulation and be more actively involved in environmental action (Haltinner & Sarathchandra, 2018). However, most of these studies still focus on pro-environmental behavior, rather than on the specific emotional experience of climate worry.

Although research on climate worry among adolescents continues to increase, there are still some important gaps. First, many studies still focus on the general effects of climate change on adolescent mental health, but have not specifically explored how climate worry is formed through family interactions, especially from the perspective of the parental role. This points to a lack of analysis connecting parenting processes with the development of climate change worry. Second, some research on the parental role emphasizes pro-environmental behavior or environmental education, and not the emotional dynamics associated with climate worry. As a result, understanding of how parents influence adolescents' perceptions of threat, hope, and sense of control regarding climate issues remains limited. Third, few studies integrate adolescents' psychosocial perspectives with parental parenting perspectives within a single, comprehensive analytical framework.

Based on these gaps, the scientific novelty of this research lies in its effort to specifically examine adolescent climate worry from the perspective of the parental role. This study combines the emotional aspects of adolescents and parenting dynamics to explain how parental support, communication, and role-modeling contribute to the formation or reduction of climate worry. This approach provides a new, more integrative understanding compared to previous research.

## **METHOD**

This study is a comparative quantitative research. The subjects of this study were 85 adolescents. The sampling technique used was convenience sampling. This technique was employed by selecting participants based on ease of access (Golzar, 2022). The variable used in this study is Climate change worry. Climate change worry is defined as verbal-linguistic thoughts about potential changes in the climate system and the possible impacts of those changes.

The measurement tool used was a scale translated by the researcher from Stewart's scale (2021). This scale is unidimensional. The translation process applied was forward translation (Maneesriwongul & Dixon, 2004). The number of items used was 10, with the following rating scale: 1 = Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Always. This measurement tool has a reliability value of 0.858, which means it has high reliability (Mailani, in Nasrah et al., 2015). The Corrected Item-Total Correlation values for the 10 items ranged from 0.470 to 0.750, so none of the items were excluded.

Regarding questions about the role of parents, the researcher asked participants the following questions: "Have you ever discussed climate change with your parents?" and "Do you think your parents are worried about climate change?" The answer options provided were yes and no. Questions related to the role of parents were developed based on previous studies that emphasize the impact of parental communication and behavior patterns on adolescents' understanding of climate change and their emotional responses to it. Research shows that conversations about climate-related issues in the family environment play an important role in developing adolescents' awareness, concern, and coping mechanisms for environmental challenges (Meeusen, 2014; Ojala, 2012). In addition, adolescents'

perception of their parents' level of concern influences their emotional responses and engagement with climate change issues, as parents are often the primary models of socialization and sources of emotional guidance (Lawson et al., 2019). Therefore, in order to assess the influence of generations on adolescents' awareness and concern about climate change, questions were included about whether adolescents have discussed climate change with their parents and whether they believe their parents care about climate change. The data analysis used was the non-parametric Mann-Whitney test because the data was not normally distributed. The application used to conduct this test was SPSS 27.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1.** Demographic Data

	N	%
Gender		
Male	11	13%
Female	74	87%
Age Group		
13	1	1%
14	1	1%
16	2	2%
17	5	6%
18	12	14%
19	46	54%
20	14	17%
21	4	5%
Father's Education		
SD	13	15%
SMP	17	20%
SMA/SMK	35	41%
D1-D3	4	5%
S1	15	18%
S2	0	0%
S3	1	1%
Mother's Education		
SD	17	20%
SMP	20	24%
SMA/SMK	27	32%
D1-D3	2	2%
S1	17	20%
S2	2	2%
S3	0	0%

Based on Table 1, the demographic data show that the majority of the subjects are female, making up 87%. In the age category, most subjects are 19 years old, accounting for 54%. Regarding parental education levels, the majority of subjects have parents whose highest education is Senior High School/Vocational School.

The results of categorization based on the variable of climate change anxiety show that the majority of subjects fall into the moderate anxiety category, with a total of 46 respondents. This situation indicates that individuals believe in their own ability to handle circumstances and tend to see threats related to climate change not as something frightening, but rather as motivation to take steps toward control. Moderate anxiety is considered a normal response that can drive the necessary changes in the future, such as encouraging pro-environmental behaviors (Mucharomah & Luqman, 2024). In addition, information obtained through discussions between adolescents and their parents, conducted with sufficient intensity, can also impact their anxiety. This is because they are aware of

and concerned about the current climate situation, which can trigger anxiety among adolescents (Dayton et al., 2025).

Additionally, the second largest group of adolescents fell into the high concern category, with 17 respondents. High levels of concern among adolescents may occur because they tend to have low self-efficacy. Those with low self-confidence tend to view the threat of climate change as very frightening and worrisome. This feeling can lead to hopelessness and exhaustion, where they feel the problem is beyond their reach and it is already too late to address it. Excessive concern can disrupt their activities and make them feel overwhelmed, and may even have an impact on their mental health. Moreover, adolescents' elevated anxiety may stem from direct experience with the impacts of climate change, or indirect experience through data and information from the media about how alarming climate change is today (Mucharomah & Luqman, 2024). Parents who display excessive concern about climate change without the skills to manage their anxious reactions can affect the level of concern in their children (Jones & Lucas, 2022).

**Table 2.** Difference Test Based on Discussions with Parents

	Y
Mann-Whitney	521.500
Wilcoxon W	1017.500
Z	-2.887
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.004

Based on the difference test, the significance value obtained was 0.004 ( $p < 0.05$ ), thus the hypothesis is accepted. It can be concluded that there is a significant difference between adolescents who discuss with their parents and those who do not discuss with their parents. This may occur because family discussions are a factor that can influence children's understanding and attitudes regarding climate change issues. The intensity with which children discuss climate change with their parents will impact how much concern they have about the issue (Dayton et al., 2022). Adolescents who engage in such discussions are considered to be more concerned, so it can be said that their level of worry about environmental change is higher compared to those who do not discuss with their parents.

**Table 3.** Mean on Discussions with Parents

Discussion with Parents	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Yes	54	48.84	2637.5
No	31	32.82	1017.5
Total	85		

Based on the mean value in Table 3, it can be seen that adolescents who more frequently discuss with their parents have a higher level of concern about climate change compared to those who do not discuss with their parents, with a mean value of 48.84. This may be because there is a significant relationship between parent communication and the emotional reactions of children or adolescents, including feelings of worry and anxiety. Family communication plays an important role in shaping children's emotional responses to climate change. Parents who have a high level of concern and anxiety about climate change indirectly transmit their worries to their children through discussions or communication. As a result, children are much more likely to experience the same concerns. This is evident from the data which shows an adjusted OR value of 7.80. Although communication styles may influence whether such discussions increase anxiety or instead build emotional resilience, the results of this study indicate that higher frequencies of discussion are associated with more intense emotional responses (Magklara et al., 2025).

**Table 4.** Difference Test Based on Adolescents' Perceptions of Parental Worries

	Y
Mann-Whitney U	454.500
Wilcoxon W	664.500
Z	-2.030
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.042

Based on the difference test in Table 4, the significance value obtained was 0.042 ( $p < 0.05$ ), which means that the hypothesis was accepted. It can be concluded that there is a significant difference in climate worry between adolescents who perceive their parents as being concerned about the environment and those who do not. This relates to the impact of parent-adolescent discussions about climate change. During these discussions, parents' worries about climate change can affect their children's worry through emotional transmission. Adolescents who feel that their parents are concerned about climate change and view the issue as a significant threat tend to mimic this emotional response by showing higher levels of worry about climate change. This aligns with research conducted by Magklara et al. (2025), which found that parents' worries are strongly related to their children's worries. Thus, it can be stated that adolescents who perceive their parents as worried have higher worry scores than those who do not.

**Table 5.** Mean on Adolescents' Perceptions of Parental Worries

Adolescents' Perceptions of Parental Worries	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Yes	65	46.01	2990.5
No	20	33.23	664.5
Total	85		

From the difference test results, a mean of 46.01 was found for adolescents who perceive their parents as worried, and a mean of 33.23 for those who perceive their parents as not worried about climate change. This indicates that adolescents who perceive their parents as worried also feel more worried about climate change compared to those who see their parents as unconcerned. This could occur because parents are considered to be a highly influential factor on adolescents' perceptions and actions (Scopelliti et al., 2022). In the context of climate worry, discussions between parents and teenagers about climate change can trigger the transmission of pro-environmental attitudes.

Consistent with a study by Jones and Lucas (2023), it was revealed that when parents routinely and openly express their concerns about climate change, it fosters norms and an emotional atmosphere within the family that acknowledges the issue as a serious problem deserving of concern. It can be said that worry about climate change does not only come from individual experiences, but is also closely tied to interactions with others, including parents. Therefore, when adolescents realize that their parents are concerned, this emotion becomes a response that they also accept and feel. Adolescents may take these emotional cues as a primary influence, so parents' worries are seen as a trigger for the teenagers' own apprehension compared to those whose parents do not show similar concern.

Based on this discussion, there is a significant difference in climate change worry between adolescents who discuss the issue with their parents and those who do not. Adolescents who frequently discuss the issue with their parents tend to have higher levels of worry about climate change. In addition, there is a significant difference in the worry levels of adolescents who perceive their parents as concerned versus those who perceive them as unconcerned. Adolescents who perceive their parents as worried tend to adapt and transmit that feeling, resulting in higher worry scores.

Many studies show that family communication and interaction play an important role in shaping concerns, emotional responses, and behaviors related to climate change, both in children and parents. A study conducted by Lawson, et al. (2019) found that frequent family discussions about

climate change are associated with increased climate change mitigation behaviors in adolescents, as children tend to imitate their parents' behaviors, making communication at home a key factor. These results are confirmed by other studies showing that conversations with family members are an important indicator of environmentally friendly behavior in adolescents, with more frequent discussions associated with greater participation in environmentally supportive activities (Valdez et al., 2018). A study conducted in Greece also showed that discussions between parents and children about climate issues were linked to children's emotional responses, awareness, and levels of concern about climate change (Magklara et al., 2025). In addition, experimental research revealed intergenerational learning, where climate education for children not only increased children's knowledge but also had a positive impact on parents' concerns about climate change (North Carolina State University, 2019).

The implications of these findings show that the role of parents and communication or discussion within the family are crucial factors influencing adolescents' emotional reactions to climate change issues. In-depth discussions and adolescents' perceptions of their parents' worries can transmit those feelings to children and teenagers, so worry about climate change not only stems from individual experiences but is also closely linked to family interactions. Therefore, for practitioners and policymakers, it is crucial not only to provide information about climate to adolescents, but also to empower parents with the necessary skills to manage and express their concerns positively. Parents need to be equipped with the right ways to control the conveyance of emotions that might heighten their children's anxiety, and to foster emotional resilience and pro-environmental behavior.

The limitations of this study relate to the research variable and subjects. This study used only one main variable, climate change worry. In addition, the questions asked regarding the role of parents were limited to two simple questions with only yes or no answers: "Have you ever discussed climate change with your parents?" and "Do you think your parents are worried about climate change?" These limitations hinder deeper exploration into the communication styles used by parents with their children, the intensity of the discussions, and parents' coping strategies for dealing with climate change worry. These factors actually have an impact on whether discussions increase adolescents' worry or instead build their emotional resilience. In other words, there is still a lack of analysis in specifically linking how the parenting process can shape climate worry.

The researchers also acknowledge limitations in the study subjects. This study used a convenience sampling technique, where subjects were selected based on ease of access. The number of research subjects was also limited, namely 85 adolescents. The majority of subjects were female (87%) and aged 19 years (54%). This unbalanced composition could limit the generalizability of the results to the wider adolescent population.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research findings, it is evident that adolescents' worry about climate change is influenced by their interactions and communication with their parents. Adolescents who regularly discuss climate issues with their parents show higher levels of worry compared to those who do not. Furthermore, adolescents who perceive their parents as concerned about climate change also tend to be more worried themselves. This indicates that adolescents' emotional responses to climate issues are not only derived from personal experience, but also influenced by family relationships and communication patterns within the family.

For future scientific development, it is recommended that studies on climate change worry not only focus on a single variable, but also include other variables such as parental communication style, discussion intensity, parenting patterns, and family coping strategies. The use of more comprehensive instruments will allow for deeper exploration of how communication processes and family dynamics shape adolescents' emotional responses. Additionally, future studies should involve

more diverse subjects in terms of age, gender, and social background to yield findings that are more representative and generalizable to a broader adolescent population.

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