

Editorial: Contextualization of Climate Change and Its Impact on Human Behavior

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Abstract

Climate change represents a global challenge that transcends geographic, political, and cultural boundaries, affecting not only environmental systems but also human behavior, social well-being, and the sustainability of life. This special issue of *Perspectives on Climate Change and Human Behavior* examines individual and community perceptions, attitudes, and responses to climate change, emphasizing decision-making at both personal and policy levels. The issue focuses on three interconnected themes: environmental education, mental health, and community action as strategic pathways toward resilience and sustainability. Contributions highlight the critical role of education and environmental awareness in fostering sustainable behavior. Studies explore best educational practices for promoting ecological consciousness, methodological innovations in assessing school–family collaboration, and the integration of territorial justice and social equity in local environmental programs. Psychological dimensions are addressed through research on social capital as a buffer against climate-related distress and the perspectives of vulnerable rural populations, particularly women. Additionally, the issue examines post-COVID challenges in education and sustainable development, addressing gaps in environmental literacy and the influence of cultural practices on adaptive governance of socio-ecosystems. Overall, the research underscores the urgency of interdisciplinary approaches that integrate knowledge, human experience, and cultural diversity, fostering critical participation and resilience. This special issue provides insights into the complex interplay between climate change and human behavior, offering evidence-based guidance for sustainable policy and practice.

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climate change, human behavior, environmental education, resilience, community action

Climate change is a global challenge that transcends geographical, political, and cultural boundaries, generating impacts that extend beyond environmental degradation to profoundly influence human behavior, social well-being, and the sustainability of life systems. This special issue of *Perspectives on Climate Change and Human Behavior* examines the perceptions, attitudes, and responses of individuals and communities to climate change, as well as its influence on decision-making—both at the personal level and in the design of public policies. It also explores three interrelated thematic axes: environmental education, mental health, and community action as strategic pathways to mitigate adverse effects and foster the transition toward more resilient and sustainable societies.

A central focus of this issue is the role of education and environmental awareness in promoting sustainable behavior. The article “Best Educational Practices to Improve Environmental Awareness: A Multinational Study,” by Ángel Deroncele Acosta, Ángel Olider Rojas Vistorte, Althia Ellis, and Carmen Lili Rodríguez Velasco, examines how educational practices—through an international comparative lens—contribute to the construction of a culture of sustainability. Their findings highlight the need to implement pedagogical approaches that integrate knowledge, critical thinking skills, and ethical values, providing a solid foundation for curriculum design, teacher training, and the development of institutional policies aimed at strengthening ecological awareness in a global context.

In the same direction, the article “Design and Validation of a Scale to Measure School–Family Collaboration in Environmental Education,” by Belkis Rojas Hernández, Oscar Ulloa-Guerra, Andresa Sartor-Harada, and Fernanda Fauth, makes a relevant methodological contribution by developing and validating an instrument to assess school–family interaction in fostering sustainable habits from early childhood. The research underscores the importance of teacher–family co-responsibility as a driving force in environmental education and provides a robust tool for future research and the design of more integrative and participatory educational policies.

From a situated perspective, the study “Sustainable Environmental Education, Multidimensional Vulnerability, and Climate Change: A Necessary Integration at the Local Level in the Municipality of Guam,” by Aimara Ferrera Bergues, Osmanys Soler Nariño, María Elena Pérez-Ochoa, Mirtha del Prado-Morales, and María Fernanda del Real-García, examines the interplay between sustainable environmental education and structural vulnerabilities in coastal communities of the Global South. Their results point to the need to integrate territorial justice and social equity into educational programs, articulating knowledge, community participation, and local adaptive strategies for an inclusive and resilient sustainability.

Another key thematic axis focuses on the psychological effects of climate change. The article “Resilience in the Wake of Disaster: The Role of Social Capital in Mitigating Long-Term Well-Being Losse,” by Santiago Budría, Alejandro Betancourt-Odio, and Marlene Fonseca, based on a longitudinal study in Australia, demonstrates that social capital serves as a crucial buffer against the negative impact of natural disasters on mental health, perceived safety, and psychological distress. The work calls for strengthening community ties and social networks as part of climate adaptation and recovery strategies.

Similarly, “Perceptions and Concerns of Rural Women in Depopulated Areas on Climate Chang,” by Lidia Sanz-Molina, Raúl Maján-Navalón, and María García-Lázaro, offers a localized perspective from depopulated rural areas in Soria, Spain, highlighting rural women’s concerns about climate change impacts on agriculture and food security, as well as their willingness to adopt sustainable practices. The study also identifies significant barriers—such as lack of information and high costs—that hinder adaptation capacity, underscoring the importance of integrating a gender perspective into climate policies.

The third axis addresses the relationship between intersectionality, education, and sustainable development in the post-COVID context, with attention to the Sustainable Development Goals. The article “Beyond the Illusion of Knowledge: Overconfidence and Misconceptions in Science Teacher’, Environmental Literacy and Their Impact on Behavior,” by Guiomar Garrido, Irene M. Arribas-Tiemblo, Fernando Morcillo, and Ainhoa Arana-Cuenca, identifies a significant gap between actual environmental literacy and the self-perception of science teachers. Their conclusions warn of the risk that educational decisions and practices may be based more on self-confidence than on scientific knowledge, increasing vulnerability to misconceptions and misinformation.

In the same section, “Perception and Cultural Practices on Beach Socio-ecosystems for Adaptive Governance in Southeastern Cub,” by Ofelia Pérez Montero, Yúnior Ramón Velázquez Labrada, Haydee María Quiala Pérez, and Ramón Rivero Pino, offers a sociological analysis of how local cultural practices and identities shape the conservation of vulnerable coastal ecosystems. This approach reinforces the relevance of incorporating community perceptions into adaptive coastal governance.

Overall, the studies presented in this issue highlight the urgency of an environmental education that integrates multiple dimensions of knowledge and human experience, fosters critical participation, and respects cultural diversity as strategic pillars for sustainable development in the post-pandemic era. This special edition positions itself as an interdisciplinary space to contextualize climate change and analyze its impact on human behavior, contributing both to scientific knowledge and to the design of practical solutions that promote sustainability and resilience in a world undergoing rapid transformation.

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