

International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research www.socialsciencejournal.in ISSN: 2455-2070 Received: 12-08-2022; Accepted: 29-08-2022; Published: 16-09-2022 Volume 8, Issue 5, 2022, Page No. 1-8

Impact of activism, climate change and media on university students of Guwahati, Assam

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Abstract

Climate change has been one of the trending topics of the past few years. Campaigns like Fridays For Future have managed to get attention and importance. The emergence of new media is often considered as an advantage and is widely used in environmental activities. Not only the Internet, but even the social media platforms helped activists to bring change and also enabled activists around the world to communicate and organize movements more effectively. Currently, the media is considered the most powerful weapon to bring about positive change in society. Some movements that were limited to a specific state or country were now being recognized worldwide and more people began to join these campaigns. According to United Nations 2013, Youth do play a critical role in tackling climate change and the UN System works closely with youth-led and youth-focused organizations around the world through the UN's Joint Framework Initiative on Children, Youth, and Climate Change. Since 2008, the Joint Framework Initiative has coordinated action from sixteen intergovernmental organizations and many youth organizations to empower youth to take adaptation and mitigation actions and enhance them. This paper will highlight the influence of social media which is immensely massive nowadays while many are counting on the net to learn, acquire information, entertain, and socialize. Along with the raging pandemic, teaching and inspiring human beings thru online media, it could be even more important for preventing weather change. The study aims to investigate how climate change activists are creating an impact on the youth belonging to different universities through New media in Guwahati, Assam.

Keywords: activism, climate change, youth, UN and media

Introduction

Climate change has increased our sense of insecurity about the future, but one thing is clear. The children, youth, and future generations will inherit the Earth from the present generations. Young people are becoming more aware of the problems and opportunities that the inevitable transition to low-carbon growth presents, and many are participating in the global discourse on solutions, becoming active, and taking action. (Youth in action on climate change: inspirations from around the world, 2013)

Climate change is the overall shift in weather patterns caused by rising international temperatures. aid consultants concur that this could have sway on human health, particularly mental state. Humans burning fossil fuels for energy is the primary driver of global climate changes these days. As a result, the quantity of CO2 within the atmosphere rises. the rise in CO2 levels within the atmosphere causes the Earth's temperature to rise. "Global warming" may be a term accustomed to describing these trends. different extreme weather occurrences caused by global climate change embrace damaging hurricanes, flooding, tornadoes, wildfires, and severe winter storms. People in different places of the world are affected differently by climate change. Extreme heat, poor air quality, wildfires, coastal flooding, and droughts are all examples of climate changerelated events. These disasters can have a greater impact on families and children with minimal resources. Major changes to weather imprints caused by a warming planet affect health in many ways. Youth who do not experience a climate emergency may still contain social or dynamic differences related to this worldwide problem. (Climate Change and Eco-Anxiety in Youth, 2022)

We live in an instance where climate change is one of the most important global challenges. Recent events have clearly demonstrated our vulnerability to climate change. As a result of alternate weather patterns, impacts range from affecting agriculture and further threatening food security, to sea-stage rise and the erosion of coastal zones increasing the risk of natural disasters, species extinction, and vectorborne illnesses. It is a significant challenge for each international citizen. Therefore, a global effort is needed towards it. According to a paper titled "Youth And Climate Change, 2009"it has been stated that most importantly Humans need to know about the number of fossil fuels, deforestation, and unsustainable agriculture that contribute to climate change, which has now reduced the availability of healthy food and clean water, destroys ecosystems and threatens the security of living spaces for everyone. Youth are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition, ill health, and migration as a result. Moreover, youth represent the majority of the population in many countries and have a strong sense of social consciousness, which has the power to transform our societies in a climate-resilient, low-carbon direction.

Several campaigns have been launched by various environmental activists over the years, involving a large number of citizens from all around the world. In the year 2020, UNICEF India and the NGO PRATYeK held a Climate Parliament with young climate champions from across India, who delivered their 'Climate Charter of Demands' to the Hon'ble Vice President of India Shri Venkaiah Naidu, the Hon'ble Minister of Women and Child Development Smriti Irani, and Members of Parliament. "We may not have been voters, yet we feel that children's voices seem to be more powerful than adult votes," the youths asserted as they submitted their petition for a clean and safe environment. These kids also pledged to help the environment for the community mass transportation, separating trash, and preserving flora and wildlife. They also exchanged ideas with their counterparts and legislators.(Unicef,2021)Youth are very much affected by climate change in a variety of ways and also the digital platforms have been very important for fostering youth participation, not only nationally but also internationally. Currently the digital age, in which social media are not only limited to making friends, showing videos, or uploading images, but also making an impact at the local level, but also at the international level over the years. It has become possible for ideas, information and opinions to travel online around the world to help people get what they need to learn, services, and stimulate innovations and movements everywhere. The Internet has shifted from just a remote means of communication to a modern distillation of ideas and nothing speaks louder than the main influential and opinion leaders (KOL). Impact means a person or group that has a significant impact because of its ability to attract a large number of audiences to its content, so there is no shortage of key influential and opinion leaders. (Andrio, Safrina, 2021)

"Climate change is real. It is happening right now, it is the most urgent threat facing our entire species and we need to work collectively together and stop procrastinating."

Leonardo Di Caprio, Actor & Environmentalist

This is all wrong. I shouldn't be up here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet you all come to us young people for hope. How dare you! You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. And yet I'm one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!

Greta Thunberg

According to an article mentioned in "NextBlue,2015" Greta Thunberg is a Swedish climate activist who is spreading awareness about climate change through her social networking sites. Because she's such a young woman worried about her future, her tweets can make climate change increasingly real and relatable. It fosters compassion and imagination for just a greener, alternate world. Social is putting her versus global leaders who've been elected to sit there and listen and improve. Greta Thunberg, an globally known 18-year-old climate extremist, has developed as that of the voice of the adolescents who would be influenced by the climate emergency as a reaction to political parties' failure to anticipate climate alter. In Eminent 2018, her voice exterior the Swedish parliament associated with numerous youthful individuals all through the world. She was named a youthful symbol and assigned for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019 for her rousing request that political pioneers take quick climate activity. She was moreover named Times Individual of the Year within the same year. Aside from her shows and open mindfulness activities, she has given the aggregate of her \$1 million prize cash to climate organizations for the headway of human civilization and natural security. Shailene Woodley, a widely known

role player, is an incredible environmental activist, UN agency is incessantly advocating for environmental protection. For her social and environmental contributions, she could be a well-known celebrity. In 2019, Woodley the world's largest worked with environmental nongovernmental organization as an inexperienced Peace Ocean Ambassador to stop plastic pollution. Woodley astonishes her fans together with her real efforts to shield the atmosphere, from being inactive for her environmental efforts to essaying the importance of environmental policy, from taking the associate initiative to combat temperature change by hunting her own food to being vocal regarding plastic pollution and environmental injustice to marginalized individuals. Similarly Sir David Attenborough, a famed British environmentalist and broadcaster, promotes how human actions obstruct natural protection. His natural curiosity stems from his extensive education, expertise, and activism. For his incredible 60-year commitment to the environment, Attenborough received the renowned "Green Star Award." It highlights his continuous work to rescue our world and address the climate change catastrophe, from making vast animal films to documentaries dealing to climate change. In the 1960s, he founded the World Wildlife Fund and was a patron of various charity organisations, including the World Land Trust and Flora and Fauna International. He is a powerful environmental conservation role model and Leonardo DiCaprio, a well-known actor and producer, has consistently proven to be one of Hollywood's most ardent environmentalists. He founded the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation in 1998 to address pressing environmental challenges such as ecosystem restoration and endangered species preservation. As an actor, he has exploited the medium of film to increase public awareness. (Top 10 Environmental Celebrity Activists Inspiring the World to Volunteer With Climate Action to Stop Climate Change, 2022).Several climate activists have influenced a number of young people to strive for positive change and to safeguard the environment as much as possible. Around the world, youthful people are mobilizing by the hundreds of thousands to demand lesser action on climate change. (19 Youth Climate Activists you should be following on social media, 2019) Driven by the understanding that the action that leaders take or don't take in the coming decade will determine life and livelihoods for generations to come, these youthful people are striking from the academy and taking to the thoroughfares for transformational change for people, earth, and our combined substance. Further, than a million youthful people have turned out for a global student strike that is also driving home mortal rights. Youthful climate leaders around the world are rising to the challenge, seizing the occasion of these strikes to raise their voices in a collaborative call for lesser ambition in defence of the vulnerable and at-threat communities most impacted by unbounded climate change.

Across India, climate change has caused heat waves, floods, and heavy rains, say, experts, as reported in the report "Heat waves, floods, and heavy showers: India battles climate change and it's getting worse, say experts". The impacts of climate change are here to stay and are even expected to worsen as searing winds blow across parts of north India, including New Delhi, where temperatures have reached 49 degrees Celsius, and flash floods ravage parts of the northeast. As a result of climate change, the frequency of climate extremes has increased, says a University of

Kashmir professor. In his opinion, heatwaves are a climate extreme and a tell-tale sign of climate change. North India was hit with high temperatures, but parts of Kerala and the Lakshadweep islands were soaked with rain. Moreover, the Kerala weather office issued a red alert for five districts. Assam's Dima Hasao district has been ravaged by flash floods and landslides, disrupting rail and road transport. The Indian Meteorological Department reports that the average maximum temperature over northwest and central India this April was the highest in 122 years. Climate change, according to scientists, is not only boosting temperatures and making India's heatwaves hotter, but it is also changing weather patterns, fuelling catastrophic weather extremes. Severe rains that have flooded Assam. These floods cause damage to a variety of properties. People are unable to lead regular lives. We expect occasional showers of varying intensity to continue.

Study Gap

Though there has been a lot of research done on climate change the study of Impact of Activism, Climate Change, and Media on University students has not been explored yet, especially in Guwahati, Assam. We have seen that young people are taking up climate activism and expressing their concerns about the planet's future and their own. We have also seen that how environmental organizations are trying to encourage people to take action on climate change. The fight against climate change is becoming increasingly urgent, and education plays a crucial role. Educating young people about global warming helps them understand and cope with its consequences, motivates them to change their behaviours, and prepares them to cope with what is already a global emergency. There was a massive flood in Assam, where lakhs of properties were damaged and thousands lost their lives. Meanwhile, another part of the country suffered from a heatwave. The north of India endured high temperatures on Sunday, while parts of Kerala and Lakshadweep islands experienced heavy rainfall. As a result, the Kerala weather office sounded a red alert across five districts. The Dima Hasao district of Assam has been hit by flash floods and landslides at several places, disrupting rail and road links. Therefore, Climate Change has been on the horizon since several countries took steps to counteract the damage. Therefore, this research will highlight implications for creating awareness among the university students. Also, to encourage students to come forward and take initiative and understand how media plays an important role in explaining climate change and prioritizing climate information over other problems so that the youth become engaged.

Research Question

- Are youth aware about climate change?
- Why is it important for youths to know about climate change?
- Why is youth involvement and activism vital to explore climate change solutions?
- What role does the new media like Facebook play in climate change issues?

Research Objective

- To understand if the youths are aware of climate change.
- To check if it is important for the youths to know about climate change.

- To understand the importance of youth activism in exploring climate change solutions
- To understand the role of new media like Facebook in spreading awareness on climate change issues

Review of Literature

According to a "School strike 4 challenge": Social Media and the International Youth Protest on Climate Change" written by Ilkiw, Lalancette and Boulianne, 2020 here it's been seen that from the start in 2018, youth across the world participated in protest activities aimed toward encouraging government action on temperature change. This policy was initiated and light-emitting diode by Swedish stripling, Greta Thunberg. Like different modern movements, the college Strike four Climate used social media. Like different movements, the first perform of those tweets was to share info, however we tend to highlight a novel sort of info shared in these tweets-documentation of native events across the world. we tend to conjointly examine opinions shared regarding youth, the tactic(protest/strike), and temperature change, still because the assignment of blame on government and different establishments for his or her inaction and compliance within the climate crisis. This international climate strike reflects the trend of international protest events connected via social media and different digital media tools. broadly, rethink however social media platforms area unit dynamical political engagement by empowering actors, particularly the younger generation, to require action by expressing considerations to viewers round the world can. "Fighting for Their Future: An Exploratory Study of Online Community Building in the Youth Climate Change Movement" a 2021 research paper written by Emily Wielk, Alecea Standleem found that the offline iteration of the climate change movement spans decades, but the participation of young people online through today's social media platforms is the status of this social movement. The study explores how young climate activists can use social media platforms to create social communities of movement and steer towards more collective action. Our project analyzes story framing and language practices to better understand how young climate activists used Twitter to build communities and mobilize supporters for their movement. increase. The strategies used by young climate activists seem to be effective in attracting the activist community on Twitter. These strategies demonstrate the power of digital and youth culture in creating collective identities among diverse generations. This fusion of digital and physical resistance is an integral part of the youth climate activist's strategy and has the potential to play a role in the future of new social movements. According to "Imagining future worlds alongside young climate activists: a new framework" for research Benjamin Bowman's article, youth climate change activity in 2019 must stand as one of the most notable and important mass movements of our time. At the organizational level, from local to global, young climate activists are mobilizing on a large scale, with school strikes under the names of Friday For Future, #Fridays For Future, Youth for Climate, Youth Strike for Climate, and School Strike for Climate. This article is the most comprehensive study of climate protection for young people to date: Protests for the Future: Composition and Mobilization of Participants in the Climate Protests for the Future on Friday, March 15, 2019 in 13 European Cities, Motivation ".This important and provocative article

analyzes the potential and need for empirical research at the local and international levels on youth climate activity. Against climate change. Through this analysis, this article aims to overcome a rigorous top-down understanding of youth's political involvement and instead build a theory from youth's vision of social, economic, and political change in response to climate change. "Effects of Social Media Use on Climate Change Opinion, Knowledge, and Behaviour" by Ashley A. Anderson talked about early studies on the relationship between the use of social media and opinions, knowledge and behaviour on climate change suggest some positive implications. Social media encourages deeper knowledge of climate change, the mobilization of climate change activists, a forum for discussions on issues with others, and online discussions that portray climate change as negative to society. However, social media provides space to revitalize those who are sceptical of climate change and who are sceptical of it. The relationship between the use of social media and the perception of climate change needs to be further investigated.

Methodology

The researcher opted to utilize quantitative research method and accordingly primary research method was adapted. A survey was conducted to study the objectives and research questions. A structured questionnaire was distributed amongst the universities students of Guwahati. The sample size of the survey consist of 200 respondents who belonged to the population age group of 18-27 years. The method that was used to gather information was done with the help of snowball sampling. This technique is called "snowball" because the sample group grows like a rolling snowball. Researchers, or participants in the study, choose the sample instead of randomly selecting it, so not all members of the population are equally likely to be selected.(CRKothari, Gaurav Garg, 2019)

Data Analysis

In this survey, 200 respondents from Guwahati participated, out of which 30% were aged 18-20 years of age, 34.5% were 21-23 years old, 23% were 24 to 26 years old, and the remaining 12.5% were older than 27 years of age.



There were 200 respondents, 57.5% of whom were female and 42.5% were male. Almost all respondents were students from universities throughout Guwahati, Assam. The institutions to which they belonged were Cotton College State University, The Assam Royal Global University, Guwahati University, and Krishna Kanta Handique State Open University.



Most of the respondents are students pursuing graduation, 32.5% are pursuing masters, 4.5% are pursuing doctorates, 3.5% are professionals, and 1% are enrolled in diploma courses.



Almost 92.5% of the students were aware of the term climate change, while 4.5% of them were unaware, and the remaining 3% were unsure if they understood what it meant at first.



Out of 200 respondents, around 58.5% strongly agreed, 26% chose to agree, 10.5% chose neutral, while 3%,2% chose to disagree, and strongly disagreed. We must address climate change now because it disrupts national economies and impacts lives, costing individuals, communities, and nations dearly today and in the future as well. As a result of climate change, people are experiencing a variety of changes, including changing weather patterns, rising sea levels, and more extreme weather events.

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Fig 5

When the researcher wanted to find out whether the youth were aware about different climate change campaigns around 44% were aware, 41.5% were not aware and 14.5% were not sure. #Fridays For Future is a youth-led and - organized movement that began in August 2018 after Greta Thunberg and other young activists sat in front of the Swedish parliament every school day for three weeks in protest of the lack of action on the climate crisis. A youth-led and -organized movement, #Fridays For Future started in August 2018 after Greta Thunberg and other young activists protested the lack of action on climate change every school day for three weeks.

When the students were asked whether they remember or are aware about and environmental activists then it was found that around 58% were aware, 23.5% were unaware rest 18.5% were not sure with their answers. An environmental activists consists of individuals and organizations who work together in order to address environmental concerns in social, scientific, political, and conservation fields. Famous activist include Sunderlal Bahuguna Kolbert, Reinhold Messner, David Attenborough, Jane Goodall, Julia 'Butterfly' Hill, Elizabeth Kolbert, Greta Thunberg, Isabella Tree, and Paul Watson.





Fig 7





Fig 8

When the students were asked if digital media, including various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter can be used as a powerful tool to support campaigns like climate change investigation, they said no. 44.5% strongly agreed with the statement, 35.5% agreed with the statement, 12.5% opted for neutral, rest 4.5% and 3.5% opted for Disagree and Strongly Disagree, respectively. It has been proven that social media has played a key role in helping humans communicate, including spreading knowledge about climate change. Climate movements and actions are on the rise, so the messages can create more awareness.

Nearly 56% strongly agree that it is our moral duty to act on climate change, while 28.5% strongly agree, 8% neutral, and 5.5% and 2% disagree respectively. We have a moral obligation to protect the environment. We should conduct ourselves ethically in order to protect the environment. Ethics refers to the moral principles that govern the actions of individuals.



Around 34% gave a neutral answer, when once they were asked whether if there were enough activities taking place to stop further damage against climate change. 30.5% disagreed, 17.5% agreed, 11.5% strongly agreed rest 6.5% strongly disagreed.



Fig 10

When the respondents were asked whether they have participated in any events which were organized on climate change it was found that almost around 51% never took part, while 40% actively took part and the rest 9% were not sure. Such events are done by conducting marches, silent protests, quizzes, debate competitions, and more. To gather more and more participants and indulge them in an active fight against environmental change.



Fig 11

76% of the respondents agreed to be part of any event related to climate change, 17.5% are not sure rest 6.5% directly mentioned no, and are not interested part in any events which will be related to environmental activities.



Fig 12

Around 37% did not agree that the media were not doing enough to prevent or highlight climate change. Since we know that media is a platform that informs us, educates us, and entertains us as well. But according to the respondents, there is not enough content, programs, or debates that are not enough to create an impact on the viewers. 34% agreed that there is enough content shown but the rest 29% are not sure there opted for neutral answers.



Fig 13

Majority 81.5% did agree that heatwaves in North India and Floods in Assam that is taken place is one of the biggest evidence that climate change is actually taken place. 14% are not sure rest 4.5% did not agree and feel it may be a

mere coincidence. It was the through the media it was found that while rest of India suffered from heatwaves and people were suffering heatstroke's, schools were shut down, schools were also shut down in Assam but here the reason was flood which almost ruined many lives, destroyed properties. Therefore if we do not take actions and study how climate change can be prevented then after few more years worst things are yet to take place.



When the respondents were asked with what media they would be engaging for them, then around 33.5% stated they would find short videos engaging, 24.5% stated Facebook post, 23.5% Instagram post, 15% reels rest 3.5% found text post perfect for content related for engaging content related to environmental activities.



Fig 15

Around 84.5% agreed that the impact of climate change campaigns and also think digital media and youth activism are necessary. 9.5% are unsure rest of 6% choose no and they do not feel that it creates an influence and do not think that new media, youths, and activists are necessary.



Around 40.5% agreed that students can combat the negative effects of environmental/climate change.28.5% were neutral, 23.5% strongly agree, 5% disagree, 2.5% strongly disagree. Therefore we can see that students are quite optimistic and think that we can prevent and fight against changes that are gradually affecting us.

Findings Research Questions

Are youth aware about climate change?

Yes, it has been found that youth are aware about the climate change Almost 92.5% of the students were aware of the term climate change, while 4.5% of them were unaware, and the remaining 3% were unsure if they understood what it meant at first.

Why is it important for youths to know about climate change?

It is important to know about the climate change because it will them who will fight against the negative impact of climate change. Most of the students also feel that it is their moral duty to do something regarding the climate change and also feel that immediate actions should be taken in order prevent environmental change which is caused by human activities and is threatening the way we live and the future of our planet, by addressing climate change, we can build a sus- trainable world for everyone.

Why is youth involvement and activism vital to explore climate change solutions?

Environmental activists like Sunderlal Bahuguna Kolbert, Reinhold Messner, David Attenborough, Jane Goodall, Julia 'Butterfly' Hill, Elizabeth Kolbert, Greta Thunberg, Isabella Tree, and Paul Watson are some of the world renowned activists who have been inspiring youths and youth should therefore be given a chance to take an active part in the decision-making of local, national and global levels. A more defined role should be given to the youth to prevent the impact of climate change.

What role does the new media like Facebook play in climate change issues?

Facebook plays an important role in highlighting climate change issues because media plays a pivotal role in creating awareness and bringing the positive behavioural change among people in mitigating the anthropogenic climate change. Hence, the role of Communication and Mass Media is immense in climate change and sustainable development. Facebook can have short videos, text post, pictures, groups where only content dedicated only to contents or topics which are related to the climate change issues. Facebook also debunks myths about climate change and make users aware about the empowering youths with Information about the climate crisis.

Research Objective

To understand if the youths are aware of climate change.

To determine whether or not young people are aware of climate change. It is critical for young people to understand climate change since they are regarded the future generation who will play an active part in combating the harmful effects of climate change. As a result, people should be aware of the environmental change that has been occurring over time, before it is too late, and after completing the study, it was discovered that the majority are aware of the climate issue because it is occurring not only globally, but also nationally and locally.

To check if it is important for the youths to know about climate change.

It is critical for the youth to be aware of the current environmental challenges so that effective solutions may be found to address the quickly growing negative effects. It is critical that we understand how the climate is changing in order to plan for the future. We live on a beautiful, diversified, nurturing, and awe-inspiring world. Our children and future generations are entitled to the same.

To understand the importance of youth activism in exploring climate change solutions

The enormous mobilization of young people throughout the world demonstrates the immense power they have to hold decision-makers responsible. Their message is simple: the elder generation failed, and the young will pay the price - with their lives. Climate change affects young people in more ways than one. They also make significant contributions to climate action. They are change agents, business owners, and innovators. Young people are increasing their efforts and utilizing their abilities to speed climate action, whether via education, research, or technology. Therefore, it is very important to understand that young activist is moving towards solutions which will somehow contribute and help to combat the negative effect.

To understand the role of new media like Facebook in spreading awareness on climate change issues

Climate change has been one of the most discussed issues for decades, but many difficult situations have hampered strong policy and technological improvements with the help of the state. At the same time, social media platforms such as Facebook have enabled the general public to share reviews and interact with the weather like never before. Content in various format such as text, status, pages, community Facebook groups. Facebook is taking action and announcing a series of new features designed to raise awareness of the effects of climate change, while funding a new program aimed at combating climate misinformation on the platform. increase. The hub is currently available in 16 countries and is visited by over 100,000 people daily. And now Facebook is trying to make it a more attractive and informative element. The new additions would ideally make it a more compelling experience and allow for more discussion and knowledge sharing about the effects of climate change. This update will also make it easier to share a lot of information about the centre, allow more users to disseminate information on the Facebook network, and may facilitate discussions about such implications. In addition, Facebook is launching a new video series on Facebook and Instagram to highlight young climate activists. (Andrew Hutchinson, 2021)

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that activism, climate change and media impacts on college students occurred during the study. It has been shown that young people are aware of climate change and believe that it is their moral obligation to take immediate action to counter the adverse effects of environmental damage that has occurred so far. Most of us are aware of the various campaigns that have been carried out to support the climate. They also recognize young activists who actively participated in future campaigns and, in particular, used Facebook to work hard to make a difference in their voice and strong media presence. As a result, they also feel that various media have not created enough content to address the issue of climate change. To get their attention and content, they will find short videos, Facebook posts, Instagram posts, and more attractive. Students also feel that digital media impact and activism are needed for a successful environmental campaign. In addition, young people are ready to combat the urgently needed adverse effects of climate change.

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