Journal of Research High School

Vol. 2026 (4) 297 – 310
ISSN 2688-3651 [online]

The Influence of Parental Political Affiliations on Adolescent Climate Anxiety: An Investigation in South Korea

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Received May 26, 2025; Revised December 17, 2025; Accepted January 15, 2026

Abstract

Climate anxiety, which refers to "emotional distress and feelings of stress, worry, guilt, fear, hopelessness, despair, and/or sorrow associated with current and predicted damage, loss, and destruction from climate change," has been a growing psychological concern among adolescents. Although previous research has investigated numerous factors that may contribute to adolescent climate anxiety, very little research has been conducted on how parental political ideology influences these experiences. This study investigated the extent to which adolescents' climate anxiety is associated with their perceptions of their parents' political affiliations. Drawing a convenience sample of adolescents (aged 13-18) from an international school in South Korea (N=31), this study employed an online survey assessing perceived parental political beliefs, climate change concern, and climate anxiety levels. Results from the linear regression model show a negative correlation between conservative parental beliefs and adolescents' climate anxiety (B = -1.39), though this was not statistically significant. A Pearson's Correlation Test was used to conduct bivariate analyses. The correlation tests also yielded non-statistically significant results, nevertheless indicating a positive correlation between adolescents' climate concern and anxiety levels (r = 0.1051) and a negative correlation between conservatism and adolescent climate change concern (r = -0.1954). Aligning with previous literature on the relationship between political ideology and climate change concern, the findings of the current study suggest that the more climate concern parents hold, the more intensely climate anxiety is felt among their children. "However, it is important to note that these relationships were not statistically significant; therefore, these exploratory results cannot be interpreted as definitive findings nor generalized to a larger population." Overall, this study demonstrates the importance of understanding household political dynamics in shaping youth's climate-related psychological mental health.

Keywords: Climate anxiety, Political psychology, Adolescent mental health, Environmental psychology

1. Introduction

Over recent years, climate anxiety has grown to become one of the most prominent issues in adolescent populations in modern society. According to a 2023 report by the American Psychological Association, adolescents as young as 10 years old reported feeling fear and sadness about environmental degradation. Indeed, researchers agree that climate anxiety is becoming a more widespread issue that is most prevalent and severe among adolescents (Clayton, 2022; Hickman et al., 2021; Kankawale & Niedzwiedz, 2023). On the one hand, climate anxiety for some adolescents may encourage environmental activism, pressuring governments and communities to take more decisive action on climate change (Benoit, et al., 2022). More likely, however, is that climate anxiety leads to detrimental mental health effects, such as depression, PTSD, and sleep disturbances, making this issue an imperative concern to tackle (Crandon, et al., 2022). The key to addressing climate anxiety among adolescents is to better understand what factors contribute to its rise.

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Over the decades, scholars have documented numerous predictors of climate anxiety or worry, such as demographics, geographic location, political beliefs, and parental influences (Burstein & Ginsburg, 2010; Hickman et al., 2021; Kankawale & Niedzwiedz, 2023; Whitmarsh et al., 2022). However, despite the potential association between the two factors, there are significant gaps in the literature on the effect of parental political beliefs on adolescent climate anxiety. Previous literature has extensively focused on how government action to mitigate climate change affects the mental health of people (including parents) but has rarely mentioned the mental health impacts on adolescents as a result of parents' political attitudes— liberal or conservative — and their beliefs about climate change (Hickman et al., 2021; Whitmarsh et al., 2022). In fact, while it has been documented that parents influence children's climate anxiety, the influence of their political ideology on their children's anxiety levels remains unexplored (Crandon et al., 2022). Since parental influence is crucial to an adolescent's development, it is undoubtedly valuable to investigate the emergence of climate anxiety from this lens.

This paper thus poses the following research question: To what extent do parental political affiliations influence climate anxiety levels among adolescents (aged 13-18)? Overall, the current research aims to contribute to understanding the impact of climate change from a psychological and political perspective with implications for mental health support, filling in a critical gap in this body of knowledge.

1.1 Overview of Climate Anxiety

Climate anxiety, a term increasingly used in psychological and environmental fields, is a broad range of emotional and cognitive responses to the current and impending impacts of climate change. Scholars and institutions have articulated different but overlapping definitions that try to define the complexity of this phenomenon. For instance, Ogunbode et al. (2022) describes climate anxiety as an "experience of environment-related distress" including negative emotions such as fear, worry, guilt, and despair. Clayton and Karazia (2020) expand the definition of climate anxiety by framing it as "experienced apprehension, anxiety, sorrow, or loss" connected to the real and perceived consequences of climate change for "oneself, humanity, and/or the natural world." In another study by Ojala et al. (2021), they differentiate similar concepts such as climate change worry, which emphasizes stress over predicted destruction, and ecological grief, which addresses sadness stemming from the loss of cherished facets of nature.

Table 1. Summary of Definitions for Climate Anxiety.

Authors	Definition
Ogunbode et al. (2022)	"Commonly termed "eco-anxiety" or "climate anxiety", the experience of environment-related distress encompasses negative emotions like fear, worry, guilt, shame, hopelessness and despair"
Clayton & Karazsia (2020)	"...distress as experienced apprehension, anxiety, sorrow, or loss due to the threat and projected consequences of climate change, for oneself, humanity, and/or the natural world."
Ojala et al. (2021)	1. "Climate change worry: the worry, and accompanying stress, associated with current and predicted damage, loss, and destruction from climate change." 2. "Eco-anxiety: the anxiety related to current and predicated environmental damage or loss, particularly from the climate crisis." "Ecological grief: the grief and sadness felt in response to the loss of beloved places, ecosystems, and species."

Despite these varying definitions, common similarities are noticeable: climate anxiety is fundamentally rooted in the awareness of environmental degradation and its implications of present and future life. Common effects of climate anxiety can be felt emotionally(e.g., despair or apprehension), cognitively (e.g., intrusive thoughts), and physically (e.g., symptoms of stress). Drawing on previous scholars' definitions, (see Table 1), the current paper will hereafter refer to climate anxiety as the following: "emotional distress and feelings of stress, worry, guilt, fear, hopelessness, despair, and/or sorrow associated with current and predicted damage, loss, and destruction from climate change."

1.2 Climate Anxiety Among Adolescents

There is compelling evidence that younger populations are significantly more susceptible to climate anxiety, especially in recent years. (Hickman et al., 2021; Léger-Goodes et al., 2023; Whitmarsh et al., 2022). Previous research

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has documented numerous predictors of climate anxiety among adolescents, notably demographics, geographical factors, political beliefs, and parental influences.

Demographic factors

In one study, Berry, et al. (2010) report that one of the major predictors of climate anxiety was socio-economic status: individuals who are less financially stable are more likely to suffer greater damages from disasters which thus amount to climate anxiety (Berry, et al., 2010), and this has been similarly documented in subsequent studies (Chique et al., 2021). However, there is also a previous finding that suggests the opposite effects of socio-economic status on climate anxiety among youth Chou et al. (2023). Specifically, in their qualitative study, Chou et al. (2023) examined a sample of 50 adolescents in Brazil and found that wealth may actually be associated with higher eco-anxiety for two reasons: (1) wealthier children may have more access to information which increases their awareness of climate change, and (2) wealthier individuals may have more resources to take meaningful climate action which creates a sense of responsibility and pressure to act. Furthermore, Leonhardt et al. (2022) used survey data of over 120,000 adolescents in Norway and found that adolescent women were more likely to experience eco-anxiety than men.

Geographical factors

In their literature review, Kankawale & Niedzwiedz (2023) drew related articles from the years 2017 to 2023 to identify geographical and social factors that influence climate anxiety among children and young people. According to Vercammen et al. (2023), who studied a sample of Americans aged 16 to 24, people who had direct experience or exposure to climate-related events exhibited higher levels of eco-anxiety than those who did not. Other scholars have reported similar findings in Australia (Lykins et al., 2023) and the Philippines (Simon et al., 2021) on the association between direct exposure to climate-related events and climate anxiety.

Political beliefs

Furthermore, adolescents' perception of government has been found to be predictive of climate anxiety. According to a research article by Hickman et al. (2021), where they conducted a global survey on 10,000 youth, they found that over 45% reported that their anxiety adversely affected their daily lives, commonly experiencing sadness, anger, and helplessness. Importantly, their participants felt betrayed by governments' inadequate responses, perceiving a lack of urgency or care for future generations. In another study, similar findings showed that climate anxiety was prevalent and driven by perceived inaction from governments and corporations (Myers, 2022).

Parental influence

Finally, parents can significantly impact how children emotionally understand climate change. In one study by Burstein and Ginsburg (2010), researchers explored how parents' ideologies and behaviors as a result of their own anxiety influence their children's anxiety levels. They found a positive correlation between parents' anxiety and children's anxiety levels via a parental modeling mechanism. Another study found that unsupportive parental reactions as a result of the child's negative emotions are associated with problematic coping by children, leading to mental and physical health risks (Gentzler et al., 2005). This suggests that if parents ignore their children's concerns about climate change—that is, due to their political beliefs—children's anxiety may exacerbate.

1.3 Parental Transferal of Political Beliefs

The established relationship between political beliefs and climate change concerns has similarly been documented among adult populations in a report by *Pew Research Center* (Kennedy & Tyson, 2024). In their experimental survey of U.S. citizens, researchers found that there is a link between conservative political beliefs and refusal to accept climate science (Jessani & Harris, 2018). Similarly, Whitman et al. (2018) found that "climate change blindness" was most prevalent among conservatives with low concern. On the other hand, liberals showed greater concern for climate change related topics. In their meta-analysis, researchers found that the majority of people within liberal political parties expressed concern about climate change, while those who aligned themselves with conservative political parties were less likely to believe in climate change at all (Dunlap & McCright, 2009; Hornsey et al., 2016; Poortinga

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et al., 2019). Gregersen et al, (2020) similarly reports that left-leaning or liberal individuals are more likely to believe climate change, and to be worried about it, than those who are politically affiliated as right-leaning or conservative. Overall, the general trend is that right-leaning individuals and Republicans are less concerned about climate related issues, while left-leaning individuals and Democrats are more worried about climate change.

Given the established relationships between political ideology and climate change beliefs, as well as the influence of parents on their children's mental health, there is compelling reason to predict that parent's political beliefs will affect the behaviors of the parents regarding climate change, which will in turn impact the extent to which children experience climate anxiety. However, despite this potential influence, there is a lack of research investigating the mental health impacts on adolescents as a result of parental political affiliations and their corresponding beliefs about climate change. Thus, this paper aims to fill in the gap and research whether parents' political attitudes are linked with increased climate anxiety among their children.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study Design and Procedure

Sample and Consent

Data was collected from February 26th, 2025 to March 01, 2025 from adolescents aged 13 to 18 attending School X in South Korea ($N = 31$). The recruitment process was conducted through an anonymous online survey administered via an anonymous *Qualtrics* link. Participants were informed of the study's purpose and ethical considerations before providing consent. For minors under the age of 18, passive parental consent was required. To maintain confidentiality, no identifying information such as the names or contact details was collected.

Survey Procedure

Consenting participants were required to complete the consent form once more. Then, participants entered the survey in which they indicated their level of confidence in their perceived knowledge of their parents' political beliefs. Next, participants proceeded to the main survey with three sections: (1) parental political affiliation, (2) climate anxiety scale, (3) climate change beliefs, and (4) age. After completing the survey, participants were taken to the debriefing page where they read about the study's aims and contact information for further inquiries.

2.2 Measures

The aim of this study was to examine the extent to which parental political affiliations impact their children's levels of climate anxiety. Accordingly, the independent variable of the survey measured participants' perceived parent's political affiliations, and the dependent variable measured the participants' climate anxiety levels.

Independent Variable: Parental Political Affiliation

To answer the research question, parental political affiliations were measured through the Pew Research Center's Political Typology Quiz (Rubenstein, 2021). In the survey, participants answer a battery of questions (e.g. "How do your parents feel about South Korea's openness to people from all over the world?"; "How do your parents feel about South Korea's openness to people from all over the world?"). Given that the majority of the sample population was from an International School located in South Korea, questions not specific to the U.S. were excluded to ensure contextual relevance. These modifications did not alter the substantive intent of the original survey items. It is important to note that the terms "liberal" and "conservative" indicate the ideological orientations very broadly, such that "liberal" reflects openness to social progression, government intervention, and environmental policies, etc., rather than direct alignment with U.S. political parties"

Traditional surveys assessing parental political affiliation rely on direct self-reported data, such as asking respondents to classify their parents' political affiliations on a scale ranging from "very conservative" to "very liberal" (Rubenstein, 2021). However, this approach presented methodological limitations because some adolescents may not be aware of their parents' explicit political leanings or may provide responses influenced by social desirability.

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To mitigate these limitations, this study developed a modified questionnaire in which parental political affiliations are indirectly provided through responses to policy preferences and ideological leanings. To accomplish this, the Pew Research Center's publicly available methodology framework was referenced to ensure that, even with the selected subset of items, meaningful conclusions about parental political attitudes could be drawn (Mitchell & Mitchell, 2024). Specifically, seven items were selected from the Pew Research Center's Political Typology Quiz, each designed to capture implicit attitudes that have been demonstrated to align with broader political ideologies. The seven questions extracted and modified are listed in Table 2.These items measure participants' perceived parental attitudes toward governance, economic policy, and social issues—key indicators of political orientation—without requiring explicit self-identification.

Table 2. Modified Questionnaire for Parental Political Ideology Measure.

Original Question from *Pew Research Center's Political Typology Quiz*	Modified Version for current study
"GOVSIZE1: If you had to choose, would you rather have… (1) a smaller government, providing fewer services (2) a bigger government, providing more services."	If your parents had to choose, do you think they would prefer: (0) A smaller government providing fewer services (1) A bigger government providing more services
"RELIG_GOV: Please choose the statement that comes closer to your own views – even if neither is exactly right. (1) Religion should be kept separate from government policies (2) Government policies should support religious values and beliefs."	If your parents had to choose, do you think they would prefer: (0) Religion being kept separate from government policies (1) Government policies supporting religious values and beliefs.
"ECONFAIR: Please choose the statement that comes closer to your own views – even if neither is exactly right. (1) The economic system in this country unfairly favors powerful interests (2) The economic system in this country is generally fair to most Americans."	How would your parents view the current economic system in South Korea? (0) It unfairly favors powerful interests (1) It is generally fair to most Koreans
"OPENIDEN_W92 Please choose the statement that comes closer to your own views – even if neither is exactly right. (1) America's openness to people from all over the world is essential to who we are as a nation" (2) If America is too open to people from all over the world, we risk losing our identity as a nation."	How do your parents feel about South Korea's openness to people from all over the world? (0) It is essential to who we are as a nation and it is helpful. (1) It risks losing South Korea's identity as a nation. Indifferent, no opinion
"WOMENOBS: Please choose the statement that comes closer to your own views – even if neither is exactly right. (1) The obstacles that once made it harder for women than men to get ahead are now largely gone (2) There are still significant obstacles that make it harder for women to get ahead than men"	Which statement do you think your parents are more likely to agree with? (0) Significant obstacles still make it harder for women to get ahead (1) The obstacles that once made it harder for women are now largely gone.
"SOCIETYTRANS: Do you think each of the following is generally good or bad for our society? Greater social acceptance of people who are transgender (1) Very good for society (2) Somewhat good for society (3) Neither good nor bad for society (4) Somewhat bad for society (5) Very bad for society."	How would your parents likely view greater social acceptance of people who are transgender? (0) Very good for society (0) Somewhat good for society (0) Neither good nor bad for society (neutral) (1) Somewhat bad for society (1) Very bad for society
"BUSPROFIT: Please choose the statement that comes closer to your views – even if neither is exactly right. (1) Business corporations make too much profit (2) Most corporations make a fair and reasonable amount of profit"	How do your parents feel about business corporations in Korea? (0) They make too much profit and should be regulated more often. (1) Most corporations make a fair and reasonable amount of profit.

Dependent Variable: Climate Anxiety

The dependent variable was measured using a modified version of the "Climate Change Anxiety Scale (CCAS)" (Clayton & Karazsia, 2020). In their paper, they conducted a factor analysis across multiple studies to ensure that their questionnaire accurately measured dimensions of climate anxiety, such as individuals' cognitive impairment,

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functional impairment, and behavioral engagement. For the purpose of the current study, however, questions such as "I recycle" and "I turn off lights" were excluded because the goal of this study focused less on behavioral engagement and more on psychological anxiety. As shown in Table 3, participants answered a total of 13 questions, and their responses were measured via a Likert Scale from 1 to 5 (1 = "Never" to 5 = "Almost Always"), allowing for quantitative analysis.

Climate anxiety was measured using a measured using a modified version of the Climate Change Anxiety Scale (CCAS; Clayton & Karazsia, 2020), where 13 statements were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=never to 5=almost always) and summed to create a total anxiety score.

Table 3. Climate Change Anxiety Scale (CCAS).

Please rate how often the following statements are true of you.				
1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always

1. Never Rarely Sometimes Often Almost always
2. Thinking about climate change makes it difficult for me to concentrate.
3. Thinking about climate change makes it difficult for me to sleep.
4. I have nightmares about climate change
5. I find myself crying because of climate change
6. I think, "why can't I handle climate change better?"
7. I go away by myself and think about why I feel this way about climate change
8. I write down my thoughts about climate change and analyze them
9. I think, "why do I react to climate change this way?"
10. My concerns about climate change make it hard for me to have fun with my family or friends.
11. I have problems balancing my concerns about sustainability with the needs of my family.
12. My concerns about climate change interfere with my ability to get work or school assignments done.
13. My concerns about climate change undermine my ability to work to my potential.
14. My friends say I think about climate change too much.

Note. Source: Clayton and Karazsia (2020)

Climate Change Attitudes

Since the goal of this study was to determine the influence of parental political attitudes on climate anxiety levels among adolescents, climate change beliefs were also measured to account for their role in moderating the relationship between parental political ideology and climate anxiety (See Figure 1). Climate change beliefs were assessed using the Six Americas Short Survey (SASSY; Chryst et al., 2018), with item responses scored to produce a composite index of climate change concern, with higher scores indicating greater concern.

The causal diagram in Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the primary variables in the study: political ideology (X), climate change beliefs (Z), and climate anxiety (Y). The path coefficients (*r* values) indicate the strength and direction of the correlations. A negative relationship between political ideology and climate change beliefs (r = -0.1954) suggests that as political ideology becomes more conservative, climate change beliefs decrease. Similarly, the negative correlation between climate change beliefs and climate anxiety (*r* = 0.1051) suggests that stronger climate change beliefs are associated with higher climate anxiety. The direct path from political ideology to climate anxiety represents a potential direct effect that is not moderated by climate change beliefs.

Climate change attitudes were measured through the Six Americas Short Survey (SASSY!) (Chryst et al., 2018). This survey asks six questions about individual attitudes toward climate change or global warming (e.g. "How worried are you about global warming"). Prior climate beliefs (e.g. levels of worry) were collected as pre-existing attitudes could influence climate change anxiety levels among adolescents, connecting back to the research inquiry.

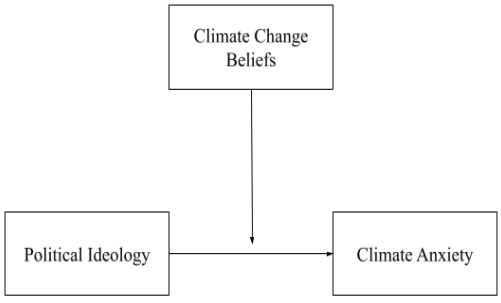

Figure 1 *Theoretical Framework of the Moderating Role of Climate Change Beliefs*.

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Demographic Variables

The final section of the survey asks participants to indicate their age. Age is critical to the current research question as this data would allow further analysis on the extent to which differences in climate anxiety levels among adolescents can be explained by age differences. The IRB determined that middle-school students (under 14) may not be able to fully understand the political information and the questions being asked on my survey. Overall, the board concluded that the survey was appropriate for high school students (aged 13-18).

3. Results

3.1 Sample Characteristics

This experiment was approved by the IRB at School X in South Korea. Data was collected from February 25, 2025 to February 28, 2025. All participants were recruited from School X, and they were between the ages of 13 to 18, which is the range for high schoolers at School X. Participants did not earn monetary compensation for completing the survey, and all their information remained anonymous throughout and after the survey completion.

A total of 50 participants responded to the survey. However, participants who left key questions unanswered had to be removed from the survey, which significantly reduced the sample size to 41 participants. Additionally, 10 responses were removed because they were submitted prior to the official data collection period, invalidating these data points according to ethical standards.

3.2 Descriptive Statistics

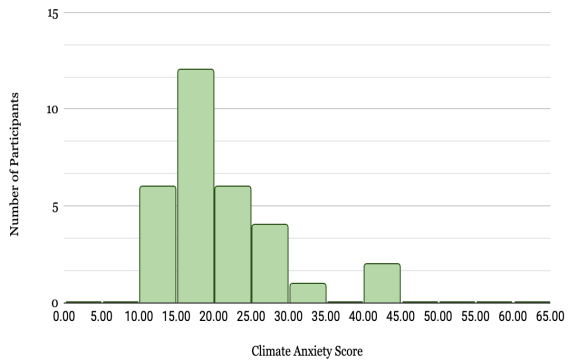

Figure 2. Distribution of Climate Anxiety Scores.

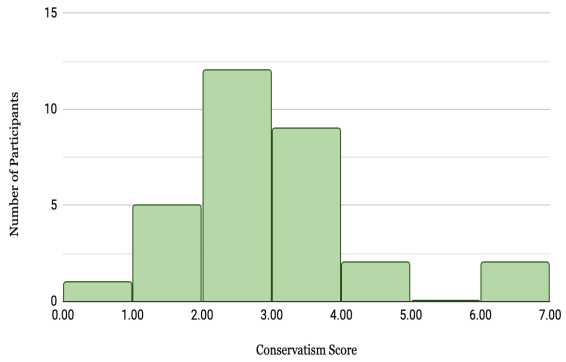

Figure 3. Distribution of Parental Conservatism Scores.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of climate anxiety scores. Participants scored between 10 to 45 out of 65 possible points with a mean score of 20.68 (*SD* = 7.7). Overall, the distribution is skewed to the right, with many scoring between 15 to 20, from which we can infer that most participants exhibited low levels of climate anxiety with a few outliers who expressed high levels of climate anxiety.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of parental conservatism scores. Overall, the distribution mimics a normal distribution, with a few outliers with high conservatism scores. The higher an individual scores on this scale, the more strongly the parent is conservative. The mean conservatism score was 2.6 (*SD* = 1.28), indicating that the majority of parents were perceived to be politically liberal.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of climate change belief scores, which were measured via a self-reported questionnaire. Each bar corresponds to the number of individuals who received a particular total score. A

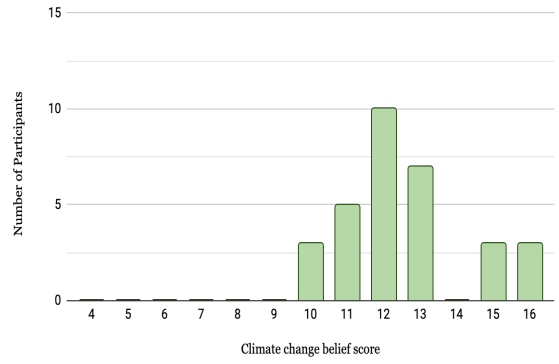

Figure 4. Distribution of Total Climate Change Belief Scores.

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higher score indicates greater concern and worry regarding climate change while a lower score indicates low concern and worry about climate change. In this study, all participants scored above 9 out of 16, with the highest score frequency reaching 12 participants and a mean score of 12.55 (*SD* = 1.73). Overall, most participants indicated relatively high concern for climate change.

3.3 Data Analysis

The primary aim of this study was to establish whether there is a significant correlation between parental political ideology and adolescents' climate anxiety levels. This study theorized that parents' ideology could affect their beliefs about climate change, which may accordingly influence childrens' anxiety levels. Thus, to determine the correlations (*parental political ideologies* vs. *climate change belief*; *climate change beliefs* vs. *climate change anxiety*), a Pearson's correlation test was conducted for each pair of variables. Foremost, the bivariate correlation between parental political affiliations and climate change beliefs was negative and not statistically significant, $r(31) = -.1954$, $p > 0.05$. This negative correlation, though not strong, indicates that high scores on conservatism are associated with lower levels of climate beliefs. Additionally, the correlation between adolescents' climate change beliefs and climate anxiety was positive but likewise not statistically significant, $r(31) = .1051$, $p > 0.05$. This positive score suggests that higher concern for climate change were associated with higher climate anxiety scores.

To determine the relationship between the primary independent variable, parental political affiliation, and the dependent variable, climate anxiety, a multivariate linear regression analysis was conducted via *Stats.Blue*. The coefficients of each variable (X_1, X_2, *and* X_3) are represented as B_1, B_2, and B_3. Regression analysis was an appropriate statistical method because climate anxiety is a continuous variable, with values ranging from 0 to 5. The linear regression model equation is as follows:

$$Y(\text{climate anxiety}) = B_0\ (\text{intercept}) + B_1X_1\ (\text{parental political affiliation}) + B_2X_2\ (\text{climate change beliefs}) + B_3X_3\ (\text{age}) + \mathcal{E}\ (\text{error term})$$

Table 4 Multiple Linear Regression Results Table

Predictor	Coefficient	Estimate	Std. Error	*t*-statistic	*p*-value
Constant	B_0	-8.38	24.97	-0.34	0.74
Parental Political Ideology	B_1	-1.39	1.22	-1.13	0.27
Climate Change Belief	B_2	0.39	0.85	0.46	0.65
Age	B_3	1.71	1.4	1.22	0.23
R-Squared	r^2=0.08				
Adjusted R-Squared	r^2_{adj}=-0.02				
Residual Standard Error	7.87 on 27 degrees of freedom				
Overall F-statistic	0.8 on *df = 27*				
Overall p-value	0.51 on *df = 27*				
Number of Observations	*N = 31*				

*, ** significant at 5% and 1% level, respectively

This study considers predictors such as climate change beliefs and age. The dependent variable is, again, climate anxiety which ranges from a score of 13 to 65. Overall, only 8 percent of the variation in climate anxiety can be explained by variation in the three predictor variables, parents' ideology, climate change belief, and age, $r^2 = 0.08$, $F(27) = 0.8$, $p = .51$. Nevertheless, this study reports that this overall finding was not statistically significant because the overall *p*-value of 0.51 (i.e. there is a 51% probability that the model and equation produced from this study's sample may have come out by random chance). An r^2 value of 0.08 essentially indicates that only 8% of the variation in climate anxiety scores could be explained by parental ideology, climate beliefs, and age combined. To put this into the context of the current study, differences in people's levels of climate anxiety cannot be solely explained by parental political ideology, climate beliefs, and age. That is, there could be many other factors that can help understand why people may have different climate anxiety scores, and those factors were not included in this study.

Furthermore, the findings from Table 4 suggest that the more conservative a parent is, the less climate anxiety their child has, $B_1 = -1.39$, with a 95% CI [-5.27, 2.492], $t(27) = -1.13$, $p = .27$. The effect of parental political affiliation on climate anxiety was not statistically significant; following the principles of *p*-values, this result indicated that there

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is a 27% probability that the result I got was produced by random chance. Additionally, the results suggest that more concern about climate change is associated with higher climate anxiety levels among adolescents, $B_2 = 0.39$, with a 95% CI [-2.745, 6.167], $t(27) = 0.46$, $p = .65$. This finding however, is not statistically significant as the p-value of .65 indicates that there is a 65% probability this result could have been produced randomly.

Furthermore, this model included age as a final predictor, and the results suggest that older age is associated with higher climate anxiety levels, but this finding is likewise not statistically significant, $B_3 = 1.71$, with a 95% CI [-2.315, 2.744], $t(27) = 1.22$, $p = .23$.

Although the regression coefficient for parental conservatism was negative (B=-1.39), this means that in this sample, adolescents who perceived their parents as more conservative tended to report slightly lower climate anxiety levels. However, the p-value of .27 shows that this pattern could easily be due to chance.

Overall, although the findings from this study did not yield statistically significant results, the results have significant implications for the current paper's inquiry. The negative coefficient for the relationship between parents' ideology and climate anxiety suggests that adolescents whose parents are more conservative reported lower levels of climate anxiety. The bivariate analyses revealed that parents' political ideology is associated with decreased concern for climate change among adolescents. Taken together, the findings of the current study are consistent with academic precedents that demonstrated that conservative individuals are less concerned about climate change (Dunlap & McCright, 2008; Gregersen et al., 2020). Additionally, this study reported a positive correlation between adolescents' climate change concern and anxiety levels, which not only aligns with previous findings (Ogunbode et al., 2022; Hickman et al., 2021) but also lends credibility to the moderating role of climate concern in the relationship between parents' political views and climate anxiety among adolescents.

4. Discussion

4.1 Interpretation of findings

The primary goal of this study was to examine the relationship between parental political ideology and adolescents' climate anxiety levels. Overall, the results of this study were not statistically significant. As discussed in the results, the current study yielded relatively low r^2 values, suggesting that future scientists should investigate other factors that may contribute to or help explain differences in climate anxiety scores among adolescents. However, this study reported a negative correlation between perceived parents' ideologies and their children' s climate anxiety levels, which can be interpreted to mean that higher political conservatism is associated with lower climate anxiety levels. This particular finding is consistent with previous research that found that children can increase parents' climate change concern, strengthening the relationships of parental political ideology, children' s climate anxiety levels, and climate beliefs (Lawson et al., 2019).

Furthermore, although not statistically significant, this study's findings contribute to the existing literature by extending upon previous research on political ideology and climate anxiety. These findings align with those of Dunlap and McCright (2008) and Gregersen et al. (2020), which suggest that conservative ideology is associated with lower climate concern. Furthermore, the observed positive correlation between climate concern and climate anxiety aligns with existing studies that found similar correlations (Hickman et al., 2021; Ogunbode et al., 2022).

Overall, these findings can inform parents, educators, and mental health professionals, raising awareness of how parents' political leanings can shape the extent to which adolescents feel stress and anxiety from climate change concerns.

4.2 Limitations

Several limitations of this research need to be acknowledged. One notable limitation is the small sample size ($N = 31$), which was limited due to incompletion rates and invalidated data points because they were collected before the permitted data collection period. Additionally, the small sample size may be attributed to a lack of monetary compensation. Without an incentive (e.g. monetary compensation) participants may have lacked motivation to fill out my survey as it would hold no direct benefits for them (Bowen & Kensinger, 2017; Jia et al., 2020). Finally, there

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were time constraints for data collection as a result of delays in gathering parental consent at School X. Therefore, this study recommends future researchers to consider both monetary compensation for completion of surveys and careful planning with school administrators to ensure that ethical consent can be gathered timely.

Additionally, this study reports limitations in the sampling method. Due to ethical and resource constraints, I used a convenience sample collected from a population close at hand. Convenience samples are from neither random or systematic populations, but rather defined by chance or close proximity (American Psychological Association, 2018). In this study, specifically, a convenience sample was necessary because adolescent samples required parental consent, and school administrators were the only figures authorized to anonymously receive parental consent for AP Research studies conducted at School X. Additionally, because monetary funding was not available for this study, it was unfeasible to recruit participants outside of School X. Finally, given the relatively small student population size, the institutional review board (IRB) at School X did not permit researchers from collecting any demographic information (e.g. survey questions regarding gender, income, etc.) in their surveys as it would be possible to identify specific students with such information. However, this study would like to note that convenience samples are not always unreliable. Indeed, Novielli et al. (2023) present quantitative evidence that convenience samples, like undergraduates at the researchers' universities, can be sometimes more reliable than samples collected from online sources like *Qualtrics*. Recent studies on sampling methods in psychological studies have also demonstrated the power of convenience samples, especially in experimental studies (Sherman, 2024).

Another limitation concerns the measurement of parental political ideology. In this study, parents' political orientations were assessed indirectly through adolescents' perceptions rather than through parents' own self-reports. Because adolescents may not fully understand or may unintentionally misinterpret their parents' political views, some degree of perceptual measurement error is likely. Such errors could weaken or obscure the true relationships between parental ideology and adolescents' climate anxiety, potentially contributing to the non-significant associations observed in this study.

In regards to the measurement of parental political ideology, it is also worth noting that the terms "liberal" and "conservative" are Western labels from mainly U.S. political frameworks, which may not accurately represent the political landscape of South Korea. In South Korea, political ideology is shaped by different cultural and historical factors, which may not match that of Western concepts of liberalism and conservatism. As a result, adolescents' perceptions of their parents' political orientations may not accurately reflect their true ideological beliefs. This conceptual difference may introduce additional measurement imprecision and could have changed the observed associations between parental ideology and adolescent climate anxiety.

Nonetheless, this study recommends future researchers to consider collecting a sample from a larger, nationally representative population that is not limited to a single International School but rather includes adolescents from diverse cultural, educational contexts. For example, this study predicts that a sample drawn from public schools in South Korea may have yielded significantly different results, with lower levels of climate change concern than those in the current study who are exposed to an American education system. In fact, one explanation for the skewed distribution of individuals with high levels of climate concern in this study could be due to the characteristics of my sample population, which was composed of students from an international school that emphasizes climate change as part of the liberal American curriculum, which has been linked to greater climate change concern (Ardoin et al., 2017; van de Wetering, 2022). Recruiting participants from diverse backgrounds (i.e. particularly varying levels of socioeconomic status, urbanity, and political ideologies) can increase the generalizability of the current study's findings to adolescents in South Korea, or East Asian contexts more broadly. Indeed, this last point is crucial especially when considering the paucity of research on the relationship between political ideology and climate anxiety in contexts outside the Western Hemisphere.

4.3 Future directions

One of the most significant areas of research about parental political affiliations and adolescent climate anxiety that was not explored in my paper was *how* parents communicate about climate change with their children. While the current study focuses on parental political ideology and its link to adolescents' climate anxiety levels, it does not

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investigate the specific interactions that might moderate this correlation. For instance, conservative parents may be more likely to deny a child's climate change concerns, leading to greater anxiety levels (Mah et al., 2024). Alternatively, constant denial could quell the child's worries, therefore reducing levels of climate anxiety. This possibility of yielding contesting results makes it worthwhile for future researchers to investigate the mechanisms through which climate anxiety is induced as a result of parental political ideology. For improved causal inferences, this study recommends future researchers to employ experiments.

Future studies are also recommended to extend this inquiry to other cultural contexts. Although this study added value by collecting data from East Asian contexts in which climate anxiety research remains underexplored, this study studied a subset of South Korea's population, specifically from students under an Americanized curriculum (van de Wetering et al., 2022). Therefore, one promising direction could be to replicate this study with students from traditional public schools that better represent a given country's cultural and educational backgrounds. Ultimately, more cross-cultural research can help fill gaps in the literature by developing a comprehensive picture of the impact of political ideology on adolescents' climate anxiety levels.

Finally, if it is indeed true that adolescents' climate anxiety is exacerbated by parents' political beliefs, future researchers are encouraged to investigate intervention strategies that can mitigate climate-related stress.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the extent to which adolescents' climate anxiety is associated with their perceptions of their parents' political affiliations, contributing to a growing but still limited body of research on climate-related mental health among youth. Although the analyses did not yield statistically significant results, the observed patterns, which suggest that more conservative parental beliefs may align with lower adolescent climate anxiety, and that greater climate concern may correspond with higher anxiety, offer preliminary insight into how family political environments might shape adolescents' emotional responses to climate change. These findings emphasize the importance of considering both psychological and sociopolitical dynamics when assessing the factors that contribute to climate anxiety among adolescents. By acknowledging methodological constraints, this study highlights the need for larger, more diverse, and parent-adolescent paired research designed to more precisely analyze these relationships. Ultimately, as climate change continues to affect society, further investigation into household influences, communication patterns, and cultural contexts will be essential for developing informed support systems. Indeed, this area of research would yield promising answers for how educators and parents can help children and teenagers independently cope with this novel mental health crisis — climate anxiety.

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