

## THE GLOBAL CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTEST: STUDENT ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM A TRANSFORMATIVE DEFIANCE

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### Abstract:

Global climate and environmental protests are a widespread movement that aims to draw attention to the urgent need for action on climate change and environmental issues. The movement has gained momentum in recent years as people worldwide have become increasingly aware of the devastating effects of climate change, such as rising sea levels, more frequent and severe natural disasters, and loss of biodiversity. This paper is theoretically grounded on social movement theory which navigated through several climate protests witnessed in recent times, particularly in sub-Sahara Africa. More than 7 million young people gather in cities throughout the globe in protest of the lack of action by world leaders to stop the severe effects of climate change and its accelerating rate. Greta Thunberg, a Swedish climate activist, and others call on students to leave their classes on Fridays to protest the unending climate crises to pressure world leaders to act. These campaigns have led to growing environmental activism as more young people are becoming aware of the devastating impact of climate change on their daily lives. It was discovered that; Students have been actively involved in several climate protests defying the institution's authorities to protest for a change in the global conversation amid a series of rhetoric and indecision from world leaders. The paper has unearthed that climate activism has yielded positive outcomes, bringing transformation into global discourse in pursuit of strategic measures to address climate and environmental crises.

**Keywords:** Social Movement, Students Protest, Youth Climate Demonstration, Environmental Crisis, Climate Change Activism

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## INTRODUCTION

There have been student protests worldwide and for a significant portion of history. However, the demand for change in an environment of unhappiness and injustice ultimately ties them together. Japan, Sweden, and former Czechoslovakia were just a few nations where student protests took place in 1968. Students took to the streets in Paris, France, to demonstrate against domestic conservative norms and the underfunding of higher education (Jian et al., 2018). Krainz (2013) asserted that after the baby boom of the post-World War II era, French universities received many applications, which led to an increase in enrolment during the 1960s. However, the government

funding needed to be seen as adequate from the students' perspective considering the more significant enrolment at the university, which increased their frustration.

Gillis (2013) argued that French youth began to demand social and cultural change at the same time. Regarding social hierarchy and gender roles, students on campuses were challenging the structures of norms and rules. Due to this discontentment, students besieged the Sorbonne University campus, which at the time belonged to the University of Paris, in early May 1968. The invasion of the Sorbonne campus heightened the already-increasing protests and brought about more clashes with the police. On May 10, following the Sorbonne occupation, almost 40.000 students took to the streets of Paris. However, following the protests, there was a change in the dynamic between students and teachers. Students could now participate actively in class and debate, thanks to abandoning previous hierarchical and social status structures. The political and cultural spheres still view these events as significant turning points for the French student and civil movement. Finally, the student demonstrations in Paris in 1968 show that repressive social structures can be overthrown if enough brave people band together to do so (Horn, 2007). Wasserstrom (2005) averred that in 1989 there were student protests in Beijing, China. Armed government forces used deadly force to repress student protesters in Tiananmen Square on June 4. One of the student protesters, Zhou Fengsuo, described the circumstances as "the darkest moment in Chinese history" in an interview with On Point. Uncertainty surrounds the number of protesters killed or hurt, but estimates point to thousands of students being killed.

There was a time of social unrest in China before the protests and massacre in Tiananmen Square. The Chinese people hoped for democracy and more political and social freedom as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) began the process of economic liberalization. However, the CCP made no adjustments to enhance greater transparency, and corruption in the government remained viewed as a problem in the nation. It eventually prompted students to stage hunger strikes, classroom occupations, and public demonstrations against the CCP, with the support of other groups (Cheng, 2019). Regarding democracy and free speech for Chinese citizens, many worries remain over 30 years following the second Tiananmen Square event.

Additionally, reports indicate that the Chinese government has censored information about the events in textbooks and online, which has left many members of China's younger generation ignorant of the Tiananmen Square massacre. Despite concerns about strict government control, China's GDP per capita values have increased over the past few decades. However, political and social justice are intertwined with economic performance. As a result of limited political and social freedom, protests and public opinion may still develop, as we also learned from the Tiananmen Square events (Chung & Fu, 2022).

Brown (2016) intimated that in 1976, students in Soweto, South Africa, a Johannesburg suburb, protested government education decisions. The Bantu Education Act passed in 1953, increased governmental control over the South African educational system, which gave rise to the Soweto protests. As a result, the act permitted the government's practice of apartheid policies to continue and be intensified. As a result, the government was given more authority to regulate issues about education, such as selecting the language of instruction (Anderson, 2020).

The Afrikaans language was made the required medium of instruction in 1976 after the Bantu Education Act was passed; descendants primarily speak Afrikaans of European colonizers. As a result, Afrikaans would be added to the already-present English. It offended Many students because they could not communicate in Afrikaans, primarily spoken by South Africans who supported the National Party, which supported apartheid in the nation (Ndimande, 2013). Since 1994, many significant challenges have plagued South Africa's educational system (Spaull, 2013). These

challenges include the difficulty of getting students admitted to universities and colleges, the exorbitant cost of tuition, worries about disparities, and inadequate student hostel facilities. Over the past few years, student unrest and crises have affected South Africa's higher education institutions. It has happened at universities and colleges nationwide (Reddy, 2004). Sadly, this unwelcome trend has not only affected South African higher education but also impacted higher education systems in Nigeria, Ghana, and the United States.

These unresolved issues sparked the "Fees Must Fall movement," which started in 2015 and led to the nationwide shutdown of South African universities. Students have organized in past years to demand action on climate change, bring attention to exorbitant tuition costs, and denounce institutionalized racial discrimination. However, student activism, which includes protests of this nature, is not a recent development. Instead, student activism has advocated for increased inclusion and human rights throughout history. Regardless of their setbacks, the undertone of these historical accounts of student unrest is one of transformation (Godsell et al., 2016). Student protests and uprisings have consistently influenced how policies are implemented at educational institutions (Williams et al., 2021). The trend has changed recently from one of pursuing one's interests to one that calls for global action on climate change. Youth have become some of the most potent climate activists due to their passion for safeguarding the planet's capacity to support life. Governments are implored to prioritize ecological responsibility (Feldman, 2020).

Thousands of children worldwide have recently joined a weekly protest against climate inaction that was started by one high school student in Sweden (Han & Ahn, 2020). The "School Climate March" of Greta Thunberg, who skips class on Fridays to demonstrate in front of the Swedish Parliament in Stockholm, has caught the attention of young adults tired of waiting for governments to address environmental sustainability (Global Citizen, 2019). College and university students are demonstrating outside buildings and on the streets in reaction to her demonstrations, calling for more aggressive climate change legislation. Thunberg has recently become a moral celebrity due to her relentless condemnation of organizations and institutions contributing to climate change (Vavilov, 2019). Only a tiny portion of the 195 nations who support the Paris climate accord is carrying out its rules, which seek to limit global temperatures from rising by more than 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels (Clémentçon, 2016). In a speech at the World Economic Forum on January 23, 2019, Thunberg encouraged world leaders to do more to cut greenhouse gas emissions (Global Citizen, 2019). She stated once more that "adults constantly saying we owe it to young people to offer them hope." However, I do not need your optimism. It would help if you did not have any optimism. I want you to be alarmed. It would help if you experienced the same level of terror that I do daily.

Furthermore, I need you to take action. It would help if you behaved as though you were experiencing a catastrophe. It would help if you behaved like the house was on fire (Bach, 2022).



Thousands of youngsters crowd the streets as they march during a climate change protest in Brussels, Jan. 31, 2019. | Thousands of youngsters crowd the streets as they march during a climate change protest in Brussels, Jan. 31, 2019. | Francisco Seco/AP

**Figure 1.**

Other students have been motivated by the high school student's daring advocacy throughout Europe and other areas of the world. More than twelve thousand students demonstrated against climate change in front of the Hague, the UN's international court of Justice, in Belgium (Peperman & Maesele, 2017). Student climate protest organizations in the United States are changing how people talk about the government's reaction to climate change (Global Citizen, 2019). For instance, the Sunrise Movement swiftly convinced politicians to support their proposal for a Paris Agreement, an incredible effort to transition away from fossil fuels by 2030, by organizing sit-ins and other kinds of protest in the House of Representatives (Bessant & Lohmeyer, 2021).

The urgency to switch to renewable energy sources will only increase as global climate change worsens. Similar mass protests have occurred in Germany, and youth activists from other countries have also joined Thunberg's cause (Global Citizen, 2019). This joyous defiance has compelled world leaders to reach a consensus on workable resolutions at COP 27 held in Egypt to address the unprecedented climate change crises confronting the world today. The world has witnessed unassailable and mouth-watering climate change resolutions from COP 1, held in Berlin, Germany, in March 1995, to COP 26 in Glasgow, United Kingdom. Meanwhile, the political will and action needed to drive the implementation of these resolutions are nowhere to be found in the global conversation on climate change. The recent ferocious global intercontinental climate unrest has sent new signals to world leaders that climate change mitigation efforts must be stepped up (Han & Ahn, 2020).

The wave of student climate protests has inescapably revived the need to prioritize climate and environmental issues, significantly impacting the COP 27 summit held in Egypt in November 2022. The worldwide climate protest aims to persuade world leaders to adopt radical measures to deal with the climate crisis. History clearly shows that whenever student rebel, good things happen. There has not been a sufficient paper to unpack the ramifications of these climate protests from a transformative defiance perspective. It makes it necessary for this paper to look at a series of continental student climate unrest and its implication on sustainable development.

**Social Movement as a Theoretical Framework.** The paper is theoretically framed on social movement theory. A social movement is an unorganized group working toward a specific objective, usually social or political. It might be carried out to support or oppose social change. It is a collective action that may involve people, groups, or both. Social movements have been defined as organizational frameworks and tactics that may enable oppressed groups to mount successful protests and push back against the more dominant and privileged elites. They stand for a social change strategy at the grassroots level within nations. Social movements began to emerge in the

middle of the 19th century when influential theorists like Marx and Le Bon, who held very different philosophical stances, emphasized conflicts between collective behavior and related actions as a part of more extensive social, economic, and political changes (Markoff, 2017).

A social movement refers to a collective effort by individuals or organizations to bring about social, cultural, or political change. Social movements are typically grassroots movements that arise from the ground up, often in response to perceived injustices or grievances. Social movements can take various forms, including protests, marches, boycotts, strikes, and civil disobedience. They often involve organized campaigns to raise awareness about a particular issue, mobilize support, and pressure governments or other institutions to change their policies or practices. Examples of social movements throughout history include the civil rights movement in the United States, the feminist movement, the environmental movement, the labor movement, and the anti-war movement. Social media has also played a significant role in recent social movements, such as the Arab Spring and Black Lives Matter. Social movements are essential for people to have their voices heard and bring about meaningful societal change (Johnston, 2016).

In the following years, interest in mass action increased during pivotal moments when people came together to protest government policies and social norms. The women's movement, the student movement, the environmental movement, the peace or anti-war movement, and the independence or post-colonial movements are examples of how collective behavior in Europe centered around movements based on various issues (Bennett, 2003). Both the US and other countries have experienced their movements, most notably the anti-Vietnam war, Black lives matter, and civil rights movements, California climate change movement in the US as well as more recently the Arab Spring, the democracy and human rights movements in Hong Kong, the pro- and anti-monarchy movements in Thailand, Mahsa Amini protest movement in Iran and various movements throughout Latin America and elsewhere. Social movement theory is different and unique from other mass groups without focus (Uygur, 2022).

#### Social Movement Attributes

1. A movement is more than just a crowd that keeps popping up because a crowd lacks the organizational and motivational systems that can keep members engaged during periods of waiting and inaction.
2. For achieving communication and activity coordination over a vast area, such as a nation or continent, crowd mechanisms are ineffective for social movement.
3. A movement combines planning and unpredictability. The movement typically has one or more organizations providing coordination, leadership, and identity, but the organizations' boundaries always differ. For instance, even though groups like California's Sierra Club significantly impact the movement to protect the environment, anyone who works for the cause and communicates with others who share this goal is a member of the conservationist movement.
4. A social movement is distinguished by its relative longevity; membership activity is sustained for weeks, months, or even years instead of spiking for a short period and then waning away.
5. A social movement typically has a large size, but the size is relative, just like duration. Numerous social movements that last for decades may have hundreds of thousands of participants. Some movements only have a few scores or a few hundred participants and are contained within the confines of a particular secondary group, such as a religious organization or a local community. Since membership is not formally defined, it is impossible to estimate the precise size of a social movement.

6. The semi-formal nature of a social movement's organization is one of its distinguishing features. It is more formalized and fully developed than a stable association like a club, corporation, or political party.

Social movements have persisted despite Covid-19 and the constraints of social distance, supporting Meyer and Tarrow's (1998) assertion that we live in a movement society or even a movement world. Technology and the internet are frequently used by contemporary movements to mobilize people worldwide. Successful movements often have a common theme of adjusting to positive social interactions. The guiding concepts of the widespread movements against climate impacts are comparable to those of the social movement. Climate and environmental demonstrations are connected to social movement core values. This theory is thus pertinent to the paper since its tenets can help the student climate protest led by Greta Thunberg to effect societal change. One person started the protest against climate change, gaining international attention. These spontaneous student climate demonstrations aim to fix environmental and climate legislation flaws. The philosophical perspective on social movements is unmistakably geared toward encouraging beneficial social phenomena to effectuate societal transformation.

## METHODS

This paper is based on the Transformative Paradigm's (TP) philosophical principles because it seeks to employ student activism to change unjust environmental and climatic policies. The TP brings together numerous philosophical threads concentrating on power concerns and resolving disparities to advance social justice and human rights (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). The transformational framework offers a chance to investigate the significance of many aspects of diversity that serve as the foundation for oppression and discrimination. The TP is a way of thinking predicated on the idea that researchers and evaluators must address social justice and human rights concerns like climate and environmental crises affecting global communities. The actions of industrialized countries have contributed significantly to climate crises that have adversely affected underdeveloped countries. In reaction to the exclusion of people of disadvantaged groups from choices about research and assessment that touched their lives and an outcry from those communities that they were not experiencing good changes because of the research done on them, Mertens (2015) established this paradigm. The axiological assumptions of the TP are based on respect for cultural diversity, social justice, human rights, and the elimination of injustices in climate change policies. The TP makes the ontological assumption that our world is complex, with many perspectives on reality emerging from various socioeconomic and cultural viewpoints. According to the epistemological premise, knowledge is produced within a framework of power and privilege with repercussions tied to whatever version of knowledge is granted privilege (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). The fourth methodological premise is that no one technique is preferred; instead, methodological choices are linked to social justice goals. A structural analysis is part of the methodology, promoting a critical and reflexive interaction between the evaluator and the stakeholders (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). Climate and environmental student activism are premised on transformational defiance, which supports the principles of social movement theory. A TP entails altering how we see the world, experience it, and behave daily. It comprises individual and societal transformation and has an individual and a community dimension (Baker et al., 2021).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The severity of this worldwide student protest would affect the global discourse on environmental education. These assumptions are examined below as part of the African continent's climate change rallies staged by student activists.

**The Voice of African Students on Climate Protest.** Climate change is a pressing issue that affects the entire planet, including Africa. Like students in other parts of the world, African students have been increasingly vocal in expressing their concerns about climate change and demanding action from their governments and the international community.

Many African countries are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as droughts, floods, and other extreme weather events. These events can lead to food and water shortages, displacement of populations, and other devastating consequences. African students have been taking part in global climate strikes and protests to raise awareness about the urgent need for action to address climate change. They have also been calling on their governments to take steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to clean energy sources.

In addition, African students have been advocating for more excellent representation and participation of young people in climate change decision-making processes. They believe young people are crucial in shaping policies and initiatives that will affect their futures and future generations. The voice of African students on climate protest highlights the urgent need for action to address climate change and the crucial role that young people can play in shaping a sustainable future. The African continent has recently witnessed spontaneous student climate protests, ably inspired by Greta Thunberg in Sweden, Vanessa Nakate in Uganda, and Rahmani in Tunisia activism.

**Climate Activism South Africa.** Climate activism in South Africa is a growing movement that aims to raise awareness about the urgent need for climate action and to pressure the government and corporations to take bold steps toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating the impacts of climate change. One of the critical issues climate activists in South Africa are fighting is the phasing out of coal-fired power plants, which are responsible for a significant portion of the country's carbon emissions. There are also calls for a rapid transition to renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power.

Another concern is climate change's impact on vulnerable communities, mainly rural areas and informal settlements. Climate activists are advocating for policies addressing the social and economic injustices that exacerbate climate change impacts and for including marginalized groups in decision-making processes related to climate action. Youth-led groups have been particularly active in South Africa, staging protests and rallies to call on political leaders to take action and to increase awareness of the seriousness of the climate problem. Examples of these movements include the Fridays for Future movement and the African Climate Alliance. Climate activism in South Africa is an essential movement that highlights the need for urgent action on climate change, both within and globally.

Among the hundreds of demonstrators, many young people marched to Parliament to support legislation to slow climate change in Cape Town. The #MarchforSystemChange was being used to coordinate the Heritage Day demonstration. Several civil society organizations, including the Green Connection, Extinction Rebellion Cape Town, and 350Africa.org, participated in the demonstration, which the African Climate Alliance coordinated. Additional participants were Bardale High School, Fairdale High School, and the Mfuleni Technical Academy students (GroundUp, 2022).

Outside of Parliament, activist Zipho Majova hinted that the demonstrators wanted structural change to take place. Too long have the rights and welfare of people and the environment been

neglected to enrich a few. This system views the planet and its inhabitants as being of little value. The climate issue may be one of the greatest threats to human rights (GroundUp, 2022).



**Figure 2.**

The African Climate Alliance's Gabriel Klaasen stated they are protesting for future generations. People are tired of being exploited by the system. People are sick of being mistreated and subjugated. Climate change is a factor in many of South Africa's problems, including deteriorating public transportation, housing scarcity, and food poverty. He said the ineffective public transportation system increases automobile use and greenhouse gas emissions. People are more vulnerable to floods when they lack access to adequate housing. Affected by climate change will be the cost of and accessibility to nutritious food. The protesters' demands included the creation of a permanent Joint Standing Committee of Parliament on the Climate Crisis, revisions to the school curricula to assist climate education, and an agreement to stop using fossil fuels for energy generation by the year 2035. The demonstration was part of a worldwide movement a few weeks before the COP27 climate summit in Egypt (GroundUp, 2022).

**Climate Activism in Kenya.** Climate activism in Kenya has been on the rise in recent years as people become increasingly aware of the devastating effects of climate change on the country's environment, economy, and people. Some of the critical areas of focus for climate activists in Kenya include:

1. **Advocating for renewable energy:** Many climate activists in Kenya call for the country to transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources like solar and wind power. It is a critical way to reduce the country's greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change.
2. **Promoting sustainable agriculture:** Kenya is a major agricultural country, and many climate activists are calling for farmers to adopt sustainable practices that reduce the use of chemicals and promote biodiversity. It can help protect the country's soil and water resources and promote food security.
3. **Protecting forests and wildlife:** Kenya has many wildlife, including elephants, lions, and rhinos. Climate activists are working to protect these animals by advocating for conservation policies and cracking down on illegal hunting and deforestation.
4. **Building awareness and education:** Many climate activists in Kenya are working to educate the public about the dangers of climate change and the importance of taking action to address it. It includes working with schools, community groups, and local media to spread the message.

Climate activism in Kenya is focused on finding sustainable solutions that can help to protect the environment and promote economic development for all Kenyans. By working together, activists hope to create a more sustainable and resilient future for the country.

In Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, hundreds of demonstrators thronged the streets to express their opposition to climate change, which is mostly the fault of developed nations. The Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance was formed by the demonstrators, who marched while carrying various banners. The youth-led organization staged public demonstrations to demand that wealthy nations compensate for the severe harm done to nomadic people and peasant farmers' lands throughout Africa (VOA, 2019).



Kenyan protesters, predominantly young people, march demanding their government take immediate action against climate change, in Nairobi, Kenya, Sept. 20, 2019. (M. Yusuf/VOA)

**Figure 3.**

According to news reports, Kenya has been ravaged by the most significant drought in forty years, linked to climate change. Duncan Omwami, a prominent protester and activist, said that the Global North must pay for the harm they are producing. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report states that the Global North is responsible for 96% of greenhouse gases. The Global South emits 4% of the total. Africa can only contribute 4% of these emissions in our current location. Hence we are asking the Global North to cover the costs of the loss and destruction (Vanguard, 2022).

Elizabeth Wathuti, another demonstrator, emphasized that these catastrophes and difficulties affect the entire African continent, not only Kenya. Moreover, our continent bears the most burden while contributing the least to the climate problem. Protesters urge that the nations that have made the most contributions to the issue do not just jettison the people on the front lines to their inevitability but act and stick to their commitments about climate funding. Nearly 3.5 million Kenyans experienced harsh weather in September 2021, and the government deemed it a national emergency. During the same time frame, floods forced almost 200,000 people to relocate (Vanguard, 2022).

**Climate Activism in Ghana.** Climate activism in Ghana has been gaining momentum in recent years as the country is experiencing the impact of climate change in various forms, such as floods, droughts, and sea-level rise. The government has recognized the importance of addressing climate change and has taken steps to promote sustainable development, including adopting the National Climate Change Policy in 2013.

Several organizations and individuals in Ghana are actively engaged in climate activism, including:

1. Ghana Youth Climate Coalition (GYCC) - a network of young people advocating for climate justice and promoting sustainable development.
2. 350 Ghana Reducing Our Carbon (G-ROC) - an organization focused on promoting renewable energy and advocating for policies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
3. Green Africa Youth Organization (GAYO) - a youth-led environmental organization that advocates for sustainable development and engages in tree planting and environmental education.
4. The Nature and Development Foundation (NDF) is an NGO promoting biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource management.
5. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) - is a government agency responsible for promoting sustainable development and protecting the environment.

In addition to these organizations, there are also individual climate activists in Ghana who are using their voices and platforms to raise awareness about the urgent need to address climate change. For example, Kofi Annan, a Ghanaian diplomat and former Secretary-General of the United Nations, strongly advocated sustainable development and climate action. Climate activism in Ghana is growing, and there is a growing recognition of the importance of addressing climate change to achieve sustainable development.

Three zonal marches were held nationwide as part of the "Ghana March for Climate" effort, led by Arocha Ghana in partnership with the Ghana Youth Environmental Movement, Green Youth Alliance, and KASA Initiative Ghana. The march took place at Damango, the seat of the Savannah Regional government, in the Northern Zone (Arocha, 2019). The southern zone march occurred in Accra, while the middle zone march occurred in Kumasi. As more young people become aware of the severe effects of climate change on their everyday lives, there is an upsurge in climate activism in Ghana. Due to the recent uncertainty of Ghana's precipitation patterns, which negatively influences agriculture, the sea levels rise, the entry of pests, and the temperature rise, which has socioeconomic issues, many youths are struggling economically. Several CSOs and young people collaborated for the first time in Ghana to participate in the Friday for Future global climate strike (Kasaghana, 2023).



From the heart of Accra in the Southern part of the country to Damongo, in Ghana's Savanna Region, young climate activists last Friday, September 27, 2019, abandoned their daily routines and joined the rest of the world to demand immediate action on climate change.

**Figure 4.**

The mayor of Accra and the minister for environment, science, technology, and innovation were petitioned during a climate strike organized by the Young Reporters on Environment (YRE) and KASA Initiative Ghana. The group wanted the government to dedicate much effort and resources toward obtaining a 10 percent sustainable energy mix based on the government's target. They also demanded that the government commit more funds and resources toward establishing a comprehensive Climate adaptation policy. The government should take action on climate change, and there should be climate justice on a local and international level. About 300 students from different institutions participated in the march overall (Kasaghana, 2023).

The Strategic Youth Network for Development (SYND) also started a social media campaign to educate people on the realities of the status of climate change right now, how human activities lead to it, and some strategies for governmental and personal mitigation and adaptation. The project's primary goal was to invite young people to engage online in the discourse about climate change. People are organizing to speak with one voice and demand that the government and other leaders take proactive measures to reduce the effects of and adapt to the changing environment. At the march in Damango, protesters urged the government to prevent the destruction of their Shea trees from making firewood. They also requested the Yabon Wura, the region's paramount chief, to intervene on their behalf to persuade the government to find long-term solutions to the climate change problem. The mayor of Kumasi joined demonstrators in planting roughly 1000 trees as a symbol of his resolve to regreen Ghana's formerly garden city. Leading environmental policy advocacy groups motivated youth to act to address the global climate emergency as well as the environmental problems in our local communities (Kasaghana, 2023).

**Climate Activism in Nigeria.** Climate activism in Nigeria is growing as people become increasingly aware of the devastating effects of climate change on the country's environment, economy, and people. Some of the critical areas of focus for climate activists in Nigeria include:

1. Promoting renewable energy: Many climate activists in Nigeria are calling for the country to transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources like solar and wind power. It is a critical way to reduce the country's greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change.
2. Encouraging sustainable agriculture: Agriculture is a critical sector in Nigeria, and climate activists are calling for farmers to adopt sustainable practices that reduce the use of chemicals and promote biodiversity. It can help protect the country's soil and water resources and promote food security.
3. Protecting forests and wildlife: Nigeria has many wildlife, including elephants, gorillas, and chimpanzees. Climate activists are working to protect these animals by advocating for conservation policies and cracking down on illegal hunting and deforestation.
4. Building awareness and education: Climate activists in Nigeria are working to educate the public about the dangers of climate change and the importance of addressing it. It includes working with schools, community groups, and local media to spread the message.
5. Holding the government accountable: Climate activists in Nigeria are advocating for the government to take more decisive action on climate change, including setting ambitious targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, investing in renewable energy, and cracking down on deforestation and pollution.

Faithwins Iwuh, 16, and Adenike Oladosu, sometimes called Greta Thunberg of Nigeria, want their country to participate in the global battle against climate change. She began planting trees near her school and neighborhood to help accomplish this, and she recycles discarded plastic bags into shower caps. Iwuh claims that she has always worried about irresponsible environmental actions'

implications. An estimated 4 million students worldwide have participated in the "Fridays for Future" movement, launched by Thunberg in Sweden in August 2018. In recent months, hundreds of students in Nigeria joined the movement. The Swedish ambassador to Nigeria implied that the young generation is taking responsibility and demanding that climate action be taken seriously as the future of their planet is in jeopardy (VOA, 2019).



Protesters march to demand action on climate change, on the streets in Lagos, Nigeria, Sept. 20, 2019.

**Figure 5.**

Nigeria is one of the top producers of greenhouse gases in Africa since it imports the most fossil fuel-powered generators. In protest, 300 students from ten different schools skipped classes in Abuja. According to David Michael and other environmental scientists, climate change would significantly impact Nigeria. The repercussions of climate change are evident throughout Nigeria, with desertification in the north, sea level rise in the south, and conflicts between farmers and herders in the middle belt, and more than 195 nations and territories, including Nigeria, have committed to taking action to keep global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. If many students demand urgent action toward that objective, as Iwuh did, then that declaration will likely be realized in real-world politics (VOA, 2019).

Climate activism in Nigeria is focused on finding sustainable solutions that can help to protect the environment and promote economic development for all Nigerians. By working together, activists hope to create a more sustainable and resilient future for the country.

**Climate Activism in Morocco.** Morocco is a country that is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, with its population and economy heavily reliant on agriculture, tourism, and fishing. As a result, there has been growing awareness and concern about the impacts of climate change among the Moroccan population, particularly among young people.

Climate activism in Morocco is still in its early stages, but there have been some significant developments in recent years. In 2016, Morocco hosted the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP22) in Marrakech, which brought together leaders worldwide to discuss solutions to the global climate crisis. This event helped to raise awareness of climate change and its impacts in Morocco and provided a platform for activists to share their concerns and ideas with a global audience.

Since then, several grassroots organizations and movements have emerged in Morocco, focusing on renewable energy, waste management, and sustainable agriculture. One of the most notable is the Moroccan Youth Climate Movement (MYCM), established in 2018 and has since grown to become one of the country's leading voices for climate action. The MYCM has organized several

protests and campaigns calling for more significant action on climate change and has worked to engage young people in the fight against climate change.

In addition to grassroots movements, there have been some government-led initiatives to address climate change in Morocco. For example, in 2020, Morocco launched its National Adaptation Plan, which outlines a range of measures to reduce the country's vulnerability to climate change. The plan includes initiatives such as promoting sustainable agriculture, improving water management, and increasing the use of renewable energy.

Morocco is already making significant efforts to mitigate climate change, but students want their nation to go further, beginning with resolving the regional issues discouraging public participation. Students buzzed enthusiastically, wearing their school uniforms, bee costumes, and T-shirts with incendiary messages. They yelled, "Who are we? " as they formed a marching formation. Students! What are we after? Strong movement! Together with Greenpeace and other nonprofit groups, the Association for Earth and Life Science Teachers (AESVT) called for action from the government and its people. Under the glaring afternoon sun, Moroccan students and volunteers congregated close to a Casablanca movie theater. About six hundred activists participated in one of the kingdom's first-ever youth climate marches, joining peers organizing climate strikes worldwide. (Al-Monitor, 2019).



Youth activists protest for climate action in Casablanca, Morocco, Sept. 27, 2019. - Sebastian Bouknight

**Figure 6.**

When Morocco hosted the 2016 UN Climate Change Conference, COP22, environmental organizations bloomed, plastic bags were banned, and electric buses and solar bicycles came to Marrakech. It needs to keep working, not just during the COP22. For all of Morocco's top-down climate plans, the public needs to be more involved. According to Afrobarometer, only 29% of Moroccans are fully aware of the dangers and causes of climate change, and only a fraction believe that individuals can make an impact (Al-Monitor, 2019).

Change can also happen in the classroom: 85 percent of university-educated Moroccans questioned by Afrobarometer were environmentally aware, compared with 17 percent without formal education. While several schools refused to let organizers display posters in their corridors, others – all public – invited their pupils to the march. In Morocco, children are positioned to be the driving force behind climate action. Because they are battling for their future, youth are more inclined to fight for anything. When you transform a child, he has the potential to alter his family. Protesters requested that the state safeguard environmental activists, including those battling

against polluters owned by the state. After their trek, the marchers arrived at a beautiful oceanside park between a stylish cafe and an ancient concrete apartment structure. Young activists seized the podium, brimming with zeal and making remarks in Arabic, English, French, and Tamazight. Abdelghani Boucham, director of the Energy Ministry's climate change department, disagreed, claiming that Morocco is already taking the actions necessary by the Agreement per its economic might, allocating 15% of its investment budget to climate change adaptation. Protesters requested that the state make recycling mandatory to relieve pressure on the seas and Casablanca's overcrowded landfills. The young Moroccans driving their country's climate movement are full of ideas, fury, and cautious optimism (Al-Monitor, 2019). Climate activism in Morocco is still relatively new; there are signs of growing awareness and engagement on the issue. With its vulnerable position as a country heavily impacted by climate change, the population has a growing sense of urgency to take action to address the crisis.

**Climate Activism in Tunisia.** Tunisians are coping with climate-related effects nationwide, from fatal floods to record droughts. At 49 degrees Celsius, August 2021 broke all previous marks for the nation's warmest month. Due to utilities' sporadic water supply shutoff due to water shortages, communities have been forced to use bottled water sources instead. Diseases that destroy crops flourish in humid environments. Sparse rainfall in a nation where 20% of the workforce is dedicated to agriculture has caused crops to wither, prompting a large-scale migration of rural farmers to the capital city of Tunis in search of employment. The dearth of employment opportunities has also left Tunisia's young feeling relatively disenfranchised; the nation has one of the highest percentages of high school dropouts in North Africa (EARTHJUSTICE, 2022).

Southwest Asia and North Africa are seeing changes in their geography due to climate. Massive flames have destroyed forests in Palestine and Israel, consumed olive trees in Lebanon, and killed at least 65 people in Algeria. Every country now faces greater water insecurity due to a lack of precipitation. However, cross-border coordination of water distribution has been hampered by political strife between neighbors and proxy conflicts funded by the West. Ten years after Tunisia inspired the Arab Spring and made democratic promises, that nation, and other SWANA nations have returned to tyranny. People are starting to fight for climate justice despite dealing with these political issues, notably youth-led movements like the Arab Youth Climate Movement Qatar and the Moroccan Youth Climate Movement. Political and environmental instability threatens young people's futures; therefore, they are pressing their governments and world leaders to take action (EARTHJUSTICE, 2022).



Protesters hold placards during a demonstration organized by Youth for climate Tunisia in Tunis. JIDI WASSIM / SIPA VIA AP IMAGES

Figure 7.

Rahmani environmental activist asserts that anybody born and raised in an underdeveloped area may become a climate activist. "Watching my people endure these severe weather occurrences without any government response to climate change motivated me to organize." Rahmani and her classmate Mohamed Jaouadi decided to be the change they wanted after being inspired by Greta Thunberg's global school strikes, which mobilized millions of young people to advocate climate action from their governments. Under the moniker Youth for Climate Tunisia, they planned their first Fridays for the Future strike in 2019 (EARTHJUSTICE, 2022).

Numerous young Tunisians have joined YFCT's school strikes and social media posts calling the government to account for its climate inaction. Supporters started going out with Rahmani, sending messages to newly elected officials, and posting information on climate change online. Rahmani declares, "We are the new generation. "We will experience climate change more than the older generations do now. As a young Tunisian facing severe climate change in the 20 to 30 years to come, I had the impression that things would only worsen. We must take action; we cannot remain silent. That initial blow was modest yet meaningful. Rahmani was inspired to continue trying by the small group of adolescents who joined with homemade placards and a desire to assist. The future of Tunisia's climate has some reason for hope. To "conditionally" cut carbon emissions to 45 percent below 2010 levels by 2030 and boost school climate education, the government presented new targets under the UN Paris Agreement last year (EARTHJUSTICE, 2022).

**Implications of Student Climate Activism.** Hundreds of students protested the paucity of action on climate change and its implications for their future by setting down their pens, leaving class, and traveling to the next large city. In general, their requests are:

- i. Promote environmental transformation as a top priority and affirm an environmental crisis.
- ii. Educate students about climate change.
- iii. Lowering the voting age to 16 is one way to increase the political voice of youth.

Since Greta Thunberg, a Swedish girl, started skipping school every Friday and demonstrating in front of the Swedish Parliament building in August 2018, the movement for a global school protest against climate change has been gaining ground slowly. It has now spread to all six inhabited continents and has become a social trend (The Guardian, 2019).

The following details why the protest is entirely justified and, most significantly, everyone must embrace this clarion call:

Regardless of what you think of the protest movement, it has successfully generated conversation. The fact that climate change seldom appears in any significant party manifestos might occasionally seem like the proverbial "elephant in the room." The decision to ultimately and persistently face the elephant is a significant step. The fact that many politicians have concentrated on whether it is acceptable or lawful for young people to miss school raises awareness of the situation. However, debating its legality or desirability loses a significant chance to listen to the worries of those who will have to deal with the effects of climate change for a far more extended period than the individuals in power. Belgian authorities tried to placate young people as the protest gained steam by telling them they could save the earth by spending time sprucing up their local schools. It was not much more than a blatant attempt to divert attention away from young people and entirely sidestep the problem. However, many young people are earnest about the issue they are bringing to the table and cannot be appeased with crude concessions since they are not just prepared to come up daily, give up educational time, and maybe breach the law in the process trend (The Guardian, 2019).

The strikers' parents, teachers, and eminent scientists are just a few notable individuals who have publicly supported them. Their motivations for doing so differ, but the public endorsement of

certain persons who are thought to oversee young people gives the movement legitimacy and serves as a crucial boost for anybody contemplating joining it. One of the most influential and respectable forms of protest is civil disobedience. This method of nonviolent protest is straightforward and accessible to all young people, giving it the ideal platform for a widespread movement. It also causes far less harm or annoyance to other people than the extinction resistance movement, which purposefully disrupts sections of society to convey its message. School walkouts are a quiet protest, a culture that purposefully grooms us to participate in our demise. Although the protest does affect instructors' capacity to instruct students successfully, this effect is far less severe than that on the students themselves. In some ways, a school strike is like a hunger strike in that the strikers themselves will be the ones who suffer the most. Although it is far less harsh, the idea remains the same. The final option for the oppressed and downtrodden is self-harm. To be heard, those lacking other channels must finally act against themselves or their communities (The Guardian, 2019).

In some ways, a school strike is like a hunger strike in that the strikers themselves will be the ones who suffer the most. Although it is far less harsh, the idea remains the same. The final option for the oppressed and downtrodden is self-harm. Those lacking other channels must finally act against themselves or their communities to be heard. In August 2018, a 16-year-old girl skipped class and posted about it on Twitter. Thousands have now joined her across the world. Today's widespread use of social media and young people's skill in harnessing its power, unimaginable even ten years ago, have been crucial in organizing and uniting people worldwide. There has not been any questionable Russian activity, political advertising, or false news. According to the idea that has gained widespread traction, we must pay attention and act immediately to save our future.

The fight to control the discussion about climate change has been fiercely fought by fossil fuel firms and the politicians in their pay. Voters, however, find it absurd that politicians rarely discuss it and much less frequently act. We have continuously brushed aside and informed that we are making improvements to accomplish ill-defined sustainable goals. We can see that the significance of this protest is high and that many people are genuinely somewhat dissatisfied with it. It is encouraging to watch other similarly motivated individuals speak up against what is widely acknowledged to be the most significant crisis humanity is now facing (The Guardian, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

The global climate and environmental protest movement, led by students and young people, has become a powerful force for change in recent years. This movement is characterized by transformative defiance that challenges the status quo and demands urgent action to address the climate crisis and other environmental issues. Student environmental activism has played a crucial role in mobilizing public opinion and pressuring governments and corporations to take action on climate change. Young people have been at the forefront of this movement, organizing school strikes, protests, and other actions to raise awareness about the urgent need for climate action. Through their activism, students demonstrate a transformative defiance that challenges the prevailing narrative that economic growth and environmental protection are mutually exclusive. They demand a fundamental transformation of our economic and social systems toward a more sustainable and equitable future (Damoah, 2023).

The future appears grim on a warming globe, and the good news is rarely heard. All those who believe that the world must act on climate change have found some glimmer of hope in witnessing youths turn out, voice their opinions, and unavoidably impact the political dialogue. Even though it appears insignificant in the struggle for a better future with more animals, more healthy coral reefs, and greater environmental responsibility, it is crucial to remember that having

hope is the most important thing. Greta Thunberg and other student activists have caused the world's most influential politicians, including British lawmakers, to reflect on environmental policy. Damoah and Omodan (2022) argued that to empower students with the information, abilities, and dispositions required to promote a just transformation, schools and Universities must become centers of climate action. Teachers and Lecturers must receive assistance in teaching climate change across all subject areas.

Student climate activism has significant implications for society, the environment, and the political landscape. Here are some of the critical implications:

1. Awareness: Student climate activism has raised awareness about the severity of the climate crisis and the urgent need to take action. By organizing strikes, marches, and other events, students have captured the media's and the public's attention, bringing the issue to the forefront of global conversations.
2. Political pressure: Student activism has pressured governments and institutions to take meaningful action on climate change. As a result, we have seen increased climate policies and investments in renewable energy.
3. Generational divide: Student climate activism has highlighted a generational divide between younger generations, more concerned about the planet's future, and older generations, who may need to be more engaged with environmental issues. It has led to debates about intergenerational equity and responsibility.
4. Educational reform: Student climate activism has also led to calls for educational reform, with some arguing that the education system should emphasize climate change and sustainability more.
5. Social change: Student climate activism has the potential to catalyze broader social change. As more people become aware of the climate crisis and the need for action, we may see a shift in cultural norms and values, leading to more sustainable lifestyles and behaviors.

Student climate activism has the potential to bring about significant change on multiple levels, from policy to culture. By raising awareness, putting pressure on decision-makers, and sparking broader social change, students are playing a critical role in the fight against climate change. The global climate and environmental protest movement, led by student environmental activists, represents a transformative defiance that challenges the status quo and demands urgent action to address the climate crisis and other environmental challenges. It is a powerful force for change that inspires a new generation of leaders and advocates for environmental sustainability and social justice.

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