

Enhancing Youth Self-Efficacy in Climate Change Negotiations

Isabella Maggioni, ESCP Business School
Daniela Corsaro, Università IULM
Martina Frizzo, Università IULM

Abstract

Climate change looms as an urgent global challenge, demanding united negotiations. Despite seasoned diplomats taking the lead, it is imperative to recognise the pivotal role of young activists in combating this crisis. Yet, waning youth motivation, stemming from the belief in their limited influence on policy decisions, poses a threat and underscores the critical need for amplifying youth involvement. This study delves into the dynamics of negotiation and performance among young activists in the climate change discourse. Based on a survey of 535 young activists from all over the world, we test a model that analyses the contributions of diverse negotiation styles (factual, intuitive, normative, analytical), cultural intelligence, and conflict management to youth self-efficacy in climate change negotiations. We highlight the critical role played by the intuitive, normative and analytical negotiation styles, as well as cultural intelligence in enhancing the self-efficacy of young people in climate change negotiations. Furthermore, we suggest conflict management as an underlying mechanism to further enhance these effects. The study provides young activists with valuable insights and tools to effectively navigate the climate debate, thereby enhancing their influence in decision-making processes. Our findings highlight the pivotal role of youth participation in climate negotiations, providing a foundation to bolster global endeavours toward a sustainable future.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, Negotiation Styles, Cultural Intelligence, Conflict Management, Climate change negotiations, Youth.

1. Introduction

Climate change stands as one of the most urgent challenges of the 21st century (Molthan-Hill et al., 2022). Global cooperation through climate change negotiations is paramount in addressing its complex nature (Shammin et al., 2022), exemplified by agreements like the Paris Agreement adopted by 196 Parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in 2015. While seasoned diplomats and experts typically lead these negotiations, the active involvement of young people is increasingly recognized as essential in combating the climate crisis effectively (De Moor et al., 2020).

Understanding the efficacy of youth participation in climate change negotiations is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, young activists are at the forefront of climate advocacy, driving mobilization efforts and demanding action from governments and corporations (Han & Ahn, 2020). However, research suggests that the motivation of young activists is diminishing due to perceived limited impact on policy decisions and international negotiations (Latkin et al., 2023). This decline in motivation underscores the need to enhance youth involvement in negotiations (Doyle, 2020).

As the older generation hands over leadership to younger individuals, equipping them with the necessary tools to navigate the complex climate debate becomes paramount.

This study adopts the perspective of Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1977) in order to investigate the dynamics behind the engagement and performance of young activists participating in the debate on climate change and to explain the connection between the negotiation styles they employ and the outcomes of the negotiation process, as well as the role of additional factors such as cultural intelligence and conflict mediation capabilities.

2. Background and hypothesis development

As the climate crisis debate expands, activist movements have seen the participation of the youth becoming increasingly substantial and committed (Haugestad et al., 2021; De Moor et al., 2020; Sabherwal et al., 2021).

However, comprehensive grasp of the elements influencing their self-efficacy in climate negotiations remains elusive, leaving a notable gap in our understanding of their potential impact on these critical processes. This void in research is particularly significant considering that young people have emerged as pivotal actors in the climate change discourse, wielding a distinctive influence on negotiations and policy-making (Han & Ahn, 2020). Self-efficacy defines an individual's belief in their own ability to perform specific tasks, achieve goals, and handle various situations, impacting their performance in such tasks (Bandura, 1977) and it is central to shape human behaviour. Given the focus of this study, we define youth self-efficacy in climate change negotiations as their belief in their capacity to influence change and make valuable contributions to policymaking and the broader climate debate.

The growing importance of international negotiations (Tu & Chih, 2011), particularly in the climate change discourse, involves formal and informal negotiations among policymakers and between them and stakeholders like young climate activists, in multicultural contexts. This puts forward the significance of various negotiation styles in impacting self-efficacy. Negotiation styles encompass the strategies employed by parties to achieve their goals and fulfill their needs (Caputo et al., 2019). There are four recognized styles: factual, intuitive, normative, and analytical (Casse and Deol, 1985; Osman-Gani & Tan, 2002). The factual style relies on objective, data-driven communication devoid of emotional elements, emphasizing concrete facts. In contrast, the intuitive style involves empathetic individuals who actively listen and seek to discern hidden needs and emotions, offering creative future-oriented solutions. The normative style integrates personal values with consideration of the counterpart's ideas, utilizing emotions, status, authority, and rewards to reach optimal agreements. Lastly, the analytical style emphasizes logical reasoning and problem-solving, identifying cause-and-effect relationships to propose meticulously considered, rational solutions. Since negotiation styles play a crucial role in achieving success in negotiations, we suggest that gaining proficiency in them will have a positive impact on the self-efficacy of young individuals in climate change negotiations.

Hypothesis 1: The application of (a) factual, (b) normative, (c) intuitive, and (d) analytical negotiation styles increases the self-efficacy of youth in climate change negotiations

The multicultural nature of climate change negotiations necessitates cultural sensitivity for effective international decisions. Lack of cultural awareness can hinder fruitful

negotiations. Understanding the cultural values of all parties involved is crucial for negotiation success. Cultural intelligence, defined as the ability to adapt to diverse cultural settings with awareness and sensitivity (Earley & Ang, 2003; Caputo et al., 2019), is pivotal as high cultural intelligence enables flexibility in negotiation styles with individuals from different cultures (Caputo et al., 2019). Research also highlights the positive role of cultural intelligence in intercultural negotiation effectiveness (Imai & Gelfand, 2010). Thus, we contend that cultivating cultural intelligence stands as a potent strategy to augment the self-efficacy of young individuals engaged in climate change negotiations.

Hypothesis 2: Cultural intelligence increases the self-efficacy of youth in climate change negotiations.

Conflict is an inherent aspect of human interactions, crucial in negotiations for resolving disputes across various domains (Druckman, 1997). Cultural differences significantly influence individuals' approaches to conflict handling (Choi et al., 2017; Peng & Nisbett, 1999). There is an interplay between conflict management, negotiation styles, and cultural intelligence. Negotiation styles shape conflict resolution, impacting negotiation outcomes. Proficient conflict management is vital for successful negotiations (Allred et al., 1997). Cultural intelligence equips individuals to navigate diverse backgrounds effectively and improves the ability to manage conflicts (Gonçalves et al., 2016). In the specific scenario of youth engagement in climate change negotiations, the role of conflict management becomes heightened in significance. It serves as an amplifier, augmenting the favourable impact of negotiation styles on youth self-efficacy. Thus, we propose:

Hypothesis 3: The ability to manage conflicts mediates the effect of negotiation styles and cultural intelligence on youth self-efficacy.

3. Methodology

We recruited 535 young activists from various parts of the globe using an online consumer panel (27% Europe, 29% Asia, 11% North America, 15% South America, 11% Africa, 7% Rest of the World; $M_{age} = 25.6$ years old, Male=45%) to participate in an online survey focused on their behaviour in climate negotiations. Self-efficacy was assessed using three items adapted from van Zomeren et al. (2013), while negotiation styles were evaluated using items adapted from Osman-Gani & Tan (2002). Cultural intelligence was gauged using nine items adapted from Caputo et al. (2019). All items were rated on a 7-point scale and then averaged to calculate variable scores. Following a confirmatory factor analysis, the measures exhibited satisfactory reliability, as well as convergent and discriminant validity.

4. Results

We conducted a regression analysis to test H1 and H2. The model shows that the factual negotiation style has a non-significant effect on youth self-efficacy in climate negotiations ($\beta = -0.14$, $t = -1.89$, $p > 0.05$), while the other negotiation styles have a positive impact (Normative: $\beta = 0.45$, $t = 5.60$, $p < 0.001$; Intuitive: $\beta = 0.36$, $t = 4.98$, $p < 0.001$, and Analytical: $\beta = 0.34$, $t = 4.15$, $p < 0.001$). This partially supports hypothesis 1. We then found support for hypothesis 2, in that cultural intelligence has a significant

and positive impact on youth self-efficacy in climate negotiations ($\beta = 0.32$, $t = 3.67$, $p < 0.001$). Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 4) based on 10,000 bootstrap samples with a 95% bias-corrected interval was used to test the mediation effect of conflict management (Hayes, 2022). Results reveal a significant indirect effect of conflict management in the relationship between normative style ($\beta = 0.055$, CI = [0.013; 0.102]); intuitive style ($\beta = 0.025$, CI = [0.002; 0.054]); analytical style ($\beta = 0.108$, CI = [0.025; 0.198]), cultural intelligence ($\beta = 0.065$, CI = [0.015; 0.123]) and youth self-efficacy in climate negotiations, supporting hypothesis 3.

5. Discussion and conclusions

This study introduces a comprehensive model to investigate youth self-efficacy in climate change negotiations, analysing the contribution of negotiation styles, cultural intelligence, and the mediating influence of conflict management. Our contribution lies in shedding light on the imperative of involving youth in sustainability decision-making and offering strategies to bolster their self-efficacy for sustained impact. We identify varying impacts of negotiation styles on self-efficacy. Specifically, the factual style, grounded in objective data and hard knowledge, does not significantly empower youth in the climate change discourse. Conversely, other styles – normative, intuitive, and analytical – demonstrate positive effects, emphasizing the value of adaptability in negotiation styles based on situational cues. These styles involve considering policymakers' ideas while offering their contributions (normative), actively listening to uncover counterparts' latent needs (intuitive), and proposing solutions rooted in rationality (analytical). Moreover, cultural intelligence emerges as a critical factor in nurturing self-efficacy, enabling young activists to navigate diverse cultural perspectives and promote inclusivity.

We highlight the mediating role of conflict management skills in enhancing the combined effects of negotiation styles and cultural intelligence on the self-efficacy of young participants in climate negotiations. Efficient conflict resolution acts as a cornerstone that allows negotiation styles and cultural intelligence to work together harmoniously, amplifying youth's sense of self-efficacy in critical discussions on climate change.

Overall, this study presents several opportunities for young activists to tailor their training and increase their efficacy in climate change negotiations. Similarly, we provide policymakers with recommendations for designing interventions focused on fostering the self-efficacy of young climate activists, thus enabling them to make substantial contributions to the discourse on climate change.

6. References

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