

# Climate Change Denial and Psychological Barriers to Pro-Environmental Behaviour

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**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of the study is to examine the psychological barriers to environmental conservation and the dynamics of climate change denial among educated adults through focus group discussion. The participants were four young adults (18-21 years of age) and four middle aged adults (35-50 years). Through a semi-structured interview, the psychological aspects of pro-environmental behaviour and related emotions were analyzed. The various aspects explored were the preference people give to the issue of climate change as compared to other social issues, how people perceive their individual role in climate change, to what extent people are ready to bring changes in their lifestyle to address climate change, why do people do little for environment and consider it a petty issue despite widespread awareness. The data collected was transcribed and analysed through thematic analysis. This study provides critical information with respect to climate change denial and subsequently insights for encouraging pro-environmental behaviour in the Indian context.

**Keywords:** climate change denial, psychological barriers, pro-environmental behaviour, environmental awareness.

## 1. Introduction

High consequence risks such as human-induced climate change are central to the current age of advanced modernity. This global environmental problem has become extremely controversial in many countries. It has also provoked a significant degree of denial, - both of the reality of climate change and of its status as a problem deserving amelioration. Kleemann et al. (2001) have demonstrated the models of possible consequences of climate change by conducting a focus group discussion on adult Swiss population and their findings suggested that

more attention was needed to be given to the social and psychological motivations as to why individuals erect barriers to their personal commitment to climate change mitigation, even when professing anxiety over climate futures.

Comfort interpretation (perceived unwillingness to abandon what appeared as personal comfort), the tragedy-of-the-commons interpretation (cost to individual freedom to choose and to be happy in an economy of beneficence are too great to contemplate for an uncertain climate future), the manager-fix interpretation (the belief in technological solutions) and the governance-distrust interpretation (deep distrust of government as a reliable locus for pursuing the public interest) have been observed (Kleemann et al., 2001). Researches undertaken in Western society have examined whether conservative white males are more likely than other adults in the U.S. general public to endorse climate change denial (McCright and Dunlap, 2011). They utilized public opinion data from ten Gallup surveys from 2001 to 2010, focusing specifically on five indicators of climate change denial and found that conservative white males are significantly more likely than other Americans to endorse denial views on all five items. These differences were found to be even greater for those conservative white males who self-reported understanding global warming very well.

A research by Lorenzoni, Nicholson-Cole and Whitmarsh (2007) reported on the barriers that members of the UK public perceive while engaging with climate change using mixed methodologies - qualitative and quantitative. The paper defined engagement as an individual's state, comprising three elements: cognitive, affective and behavioural. A number of common barriers emerged from the studies, which operate broadly at 'individual' and 'social' levels. These major constraints to individual engagement with climate change had implications for achieving significant reductions in greenhouse gases in

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the UK. (Lorenzoni et al., 2007). Climate change and environmental degradation are the major global problems which have serious consequences like natural calamities, but most of us do remain disengaged with these issues. Since a major objective of Psychology is to improve human wellbeing, it becomes imperative that psychologists intervene in the awareness programmes regarding pro- environmental behaviour. This is especially because the aforementioned includes complex human emotions, cognition and behaviour. In fact, the connection of climate change and pro-environmental behaviour with psychology can be surprising for many people but still conservation psychology is in its struggle to emerge as a new field.

In the book, "Climate Change Denial: Heads in the Sand", the author talks about Svante Arrhenius who first suggested that increase in atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels could lead to global climate change. It was a radical claim. It was a prediction that human activities could match the scale of natural forces. The first scientist to claim that climate change was under process was a British engineer named Stuart Callender. Climate change became an established scientific fact with time. In 1980s, scientists knew that it surely would happen. In 1979, the US National Academy of Sciences wrote, "If carbon dioxide continues to increase, the study group finds no reason to doubt that climate changes will result and no reason to believe that these changes will be negligible" (Washington and Cook, 2011).

There is no one definitive explanation of the term climate change denial as it has been used in different contexts. The term has popularly been used to explain the behaviour of people who would straightaway reject the scientific truth behind climate change and label it a part of a worldwide propaganda against the oil companies. But today, people have almost accepted the fact that climate change is happening. However, denial still prevails in other forms. The book by Kari Marie Norgard, "Living in Denial" talks about British sociologist Stanley Cohen (2001) who described three varieties of denial: literal, interpretive, and implicatory. Literal denial is the assertion that something did not happen or is not true (global warming skeptics). In interpretive denial the facts themselves are not denied but are instead given a different interpretation. The other is implicatory denial, in which information is not minimized, but the psychological, political or moral implications that conveniently follow are minimised. For example: William Nierenberg argued ideologically that results of climate change would be negligible, because people were highly adaptable, and

technological innovation, flourishing under free market conditions would enable us to address any adverse impacts that arose. (Norgard, 2011).

The present study is concerned with the implicatory and interpretative climate denial among educated adults. The major concern is why educated people live in a state of denial towards climate change and why are they stopped by certain psychological barriers for engaging in pro-environmental behaviour. A British Council research in the metro cities of India finds that 83% of the population is aware of the problem of climate change but only 12% of them are doing something about it. All of us in this nuclear age experience some kind of psychic numbing (Norgard, 2011).

We know that our life can end in any moment, yet we live as we do not know this. This is often summarized in a term called "absurdity of double life". We live with the knowledge on the one hand that we, each of us could be consumed in a moment together with everyone and everything we have touched or loved, and on the other our tendency to go about business as usual - continue with our routines as though no such threat existed (Norgard, 2011).

The purpose of the present study is to examine the psychological barriers to pro-environmental behaviour and dynamics of climate change denial among educated adults in Indian context through focus group discussion. The participants were four young adults (18-21 years of age) and four middle aged adults (35-50 years of age). Climate change and environmental degradation are major global level problems which need to be addressed.

However, despite widespread awareness and knowledge majority of people do and think little about environment. It is important to have knowledge of psychological aspects of pro-environmental behaviour for encouraging it. Focus group discussion was chosen as the method as it is was required to gather people together and discuss about the topic. It is the appropriate method for collecting varied opinions, beliefs and attitudes regarding certain topic of common interest.

## 2. Methodology

**Participants:** The participants were four young adults (18-21 years of age) and four middle aged adults (35-50 years of age) from heterogeneous groups of occupation, backgrounds and education. For the purpose of study, the names given to young adults were Y1, Y2, Y3 and Y4 and the middle aged participants were coded as A1, A2, A3 and A4.

**Table 1:** List of participants in the discussion.

Participants	Age	Gender
Y1	19	Female
Y2	18	Male
Y3	18	Male
Y4	19	Female
A1	43	Male
A2	51	Male
A3	49	Female
A4	41	Female

A semi-structured interview schedule was made on the topic of *Climate Change Denial*. The sub-topics included the use of plastic bags, preference of private and public transportation, their views on Odd-Even Rule and ways to conserve water and electricity. A video was also played for the participants. The detailed interview schedule is available in Appendix 1.

The focus group discussion was run in a community hall of an apartment complex in Rohini, Delhi. The room arranged was such that the group sits in a semicircle to aid discussion. Also a screen to play video clips was placed. A bottle of water was kept in front of each participant. It was made sure that there were no disturbances. After setting up the room, the participants were called inside and were made to sit at their designated places. The purpose of study was explained to them. Subsequently, consent was taken from the participants. The discussion was about an hour and a half long. The data collected from this focus group discussion was recorded, transcribed and then analysed by thematic analysis (Table 2). It is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Thematic analysis is performed through the process of coding in six phases to create established, meaningful patterns. These phases are: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report.

### 3. Discussion

The purpose of the present study is to examine the psychological barriers to pro-environmental behaviour and dynamics of climate change denial among educated adults in Indian context through focus group discussion. Climate change and environmental degradation are major global level problems which need to be addressed. The first theme that arose from the study was *Awareness of environmental issues and lack of actions*. This theme is significant because our main concern is why people fail

to take action despite being aware about climate change and other environmental issues. It was evident that the participants were aware about the problems, consequences and solutions to the problem of climate change. As stated by the participant A3, "Nature has changed. When the weather should be of harvesting, we have monsoon season. Now the harvest will get destroyed, the rates will go high." However, they agreed they don't take actions that they are capable of as pointed by participant A1, "It doesn't matter how much we talk about the issue, there is no implementation". This can be taken as a sign of implicatory denial. For instance, A4 stated, "We say we will save water, but we don't". And Y3 contended, "Yes I agree, more talks and less action". In her book Kari Marie Norgaard had coined the term "Double Reality" which meant that people in one reality, live with collectively constructed sense of normal everyday life and in another reality with the troubling knowledge of increased automobile use, melting of polar ice caps etc. This theme can related to this idea of "double reality", where participants agreed about both awareness and lack of action about climate change.

The next theme that appeared was *Convenience and Comfort as psychological barrier*. One aspect of this theme, which is prominent, is that participants find it convenient to ignore the problem related to climate change as they perceive them to exist far away in the future. According to them, these problems are not a priority as they are out of sight. They are more concerned with the problems that they are experiencing at present as pointed out by Y1, "Yes, human species can become extinct but in the future"; A3, "After a limit, there will be no food and no water"; Y3, "Climate change is leading to problems for farmers, for people in coastal areas.

Another aspect is that people find it convenient to solve the issues which are personal to their experience, for instance, A1 stated, "We will eradicate it if we are affected by it in our vicinity, if I am affected by corruption I would like to eradicate it, people in Jammu and Kashmir would like to eradicate terrorism" and Y4, "If I had respiratory problems then I would like to eradicate environmental issues". This theme also highlighted that many participants have now become habitual of their comfortable lifestyle and they find it difficult to compromise their comfort or wealth as required for pro-environmental behaviour. Participants remarked, A2, "We have developed such a habit that we don't compromise anymore, A3, "My society has houses with fans in their kitchens". Also, it is convenient for the participants to not to think about environment as they have ample amount of resources.

**Table 2.** Themes that emerged from the study.

Themes	Codes	Verbatim
Awareness of environmental issues and lack of actions	Talk about the issue but don't do anything about it	A1: "It doesn't matter how much we talk about the issue, there is no implementation" A4: "We say we will save water, but we don't" Y3: "Yes I agree, more talks and less action" Y1: "The duration of Winter season is reducing, various animals are dying, ice-caps are melting" A3: "The nature has changed, when the weather should be of harvesting, we have monsoon season. Now the harvest will get destroyed, the rates will go high"
	Knows about the consequences and ill effects	Y3: "The whole cycle has been affected, not only for humans but every specie. However, we are not the ones who face the major impact"
	Knows what is climate change and why the climate is changing	Y1: "The environmental degradation may lead to natural disasters" Y4: "Yes of course, the weather is changing"
	Knows what may lead to what	A1: "Global Warming"  A2: "Earlier we used ACs from May and now we need it from March"
	Knows the reasons for environment degradation	Y4: "We are molesting the environment by deforestation, pollution"  Y4: "Yes, Farmers have to face major losses at the time of harvest due to climate change. Also, our body adaption for different weathers are now at risk" A2: "It is a global problem! Each and every country must come forward together and work towards the common goal"
	Knows what needs to be done in global as well as individual level Knows the factors by which this problem can be controlled	A4: "Therefore, awareness and education are also important factors that should be considered" A2: "Apart from these two, sensitivity is also important" A3: "Plastics are ban in some states as it increases pollution and is non-biodegradable" Y1: "I don't know, I don't think we realise that all these natural disasters are because of us. I don't know what our contributions are. It's not visible explicitly that it's because of us"
Convenience and Comfort as psychological barriers	Convenient to forget since climate change perceived to exist in the future	A1: "We will eradicate if we are affected by it in our vicinity, if I am affected by corruption I would like to eradicate it, people in Jammu and Kashmir would like to eradicate terrorism".  Y4: "If I had respiratory problems then I would like to eradicate environmental issues" Y3: "The whole cycle is getting affected, not only humans but other species as well" Y1: "Yes, human species can become extinct but in the future" A3: "After a limit, there will be no food and no water" A3: "Time may come when we will have to import water" Y4: "World War IV will be fought on water"
	People believe in eradicating problems which they experience in their daily life.	Y1: "I don't know, I don't think we realise that all these natural disasters are because of us. I don't know what our contributions are. It's not visible explicitly that it's because of us" Y4: "Human extinction can happen in the future"
	They would like to eradicate the environmental problems if affected by them directly.	

	<p>Climate change is leading to problems for farmers, for people in coastal areas. The immediate affects will come in future.</p> <p>Climate change can lead to extinction of human species in future.</p> <p>No apparent consequences that would disturb daily life.</p> <p>Natural disasters don't happen immediately and in front of the eyes due to personal activities</p> <p>Comforting Habits</p> <p>Due to the habits we are not ready to compromise</p> <p>Comfort in quantity of resources</p> <p>Amount of consumption depends upon the availability.</p> <p>We value resources when they are scarce.</p> <p>Dependent on modern facilities</p> <p>Humans mould the environment they live in</p> <p>Lack of alternatives</p> <p>Expensive alternatives</p> <p>Alternatives must give the same level of comfort</p>	<p>Y3: "But the future is very uncertain, but it would be harmful for sure! Don't know about extinction but humans may be endangered as we are the root cause"</p> <p>A3: "This could be done in routine or made a habit. We should sit in a room and watch the same television that would save electricity more"</p> <p>A2: "We have developed such a habit that we don't compromise anymore"</p> <p>A3: "It's a habit now to watch TV alone as earlier joint families saw television together"</p> <p>A3: "It is more concerned with habit. Because if we want we can change our tastes"</p> <p>A3: "When we get less, we will obviously consume less"</p> <p>Y2: "Today we have availability and so we are not conserving"</p> <p>A1: "We have ample amount of resources today but will be harmful for coming generations"</p> <p>A1: "When resources are less then we will be scared but that would be too late"</p> <p>A2: "We only know the value when it is scarce"</p> <p>Y3: "As long as we don't face crisis, we don't value it"</p> <p>A1: "Whenever it gets a little hot, we need AC"</p> <p>A1: "Our body has lost the capability to bear heat, we need to switch on AC whole night. We used to play outside earlier hence we had more capability but now we are dependent on facilities."</p> <p>A1: "Every house needs ACs now"</p> <p>A3: "My society has houses with fans in their kitchens"</p> <p>Y2: "Bathroom has fans as well"</p> <p>Y3: "Any species adjust themselves according to their habitat but it is opposite for humans. We mould the habitat according to our convenience"</p> <p>Y2: "We can use other alternatives of plastic if it gives the same comfort level and is not expensive"</p> <p>A2: "Would prefer private transportation more due to comfort"</p> <p>Y3: "Yes, on the basis of comfort, private transportation. Also there is a lack of public transportation services"</p> <p>A3: "We, housewives, need a good substitute for plastic as we have to dump wet garbage as well. Paper bags won't do the required then"</p> <p>Y1: "Everyone would prefer private transportation due to comfort"</p> <p>A3: "People don't use alternatives maybe because they are costly and takes more place than plastic"</p> <p>Y1: "We use Plastic bags due to convenience"</p> <p>A3 : "I am ready to do it if it's convenient for me and my family"</p> <p>A2: "Or we could just sit in one room and minimise the usage of electricity because in today's world everything is electrical, our world would stop for an hour"</p> <p>Y1: "I can turn off everything just one tube light"</p>
<p>Solace in Comparison</p>	<p>Other world comparisons</p> <p>Western countries are better at disposal and recycling</p> <p>Better management in other countries</p> <p>Techniques used by western countries better</p>	<p>Y3: "They didn't see the present condition of India and just copied the rule from Singapore"</p> <p>Y2: "The quality should be checked, like the quality of petrol and diesel in America is better than ours and hence they emit less pollution"</p> <p>Y2: "In America, each person uses 7-8 kg of Plastic which is a lot more than the case in India but the people there are very less affected by the ill effects of plastic as there is proper disposal and recycling"</p>

	<p>Historical Comparisons</p> <p>In earlier time we had environmental friendly techniques.</p> <p>Busy lifestyle.</p> <p>Body has become used to the new technology.</p> <p>Individualistic lifestyle.</p>	<p>Y3: "In the western countries, one day is fixed for sprinklers to water in the garden and wash the cars"</p> <p>A1: "Earlier bricks were used to construct roads and drains so that water could reach the underground through gaps, but now underground water is not recharged, we dig deeper and deeper"</p> <p>A1: "Earlier we used to open the windows whenever we felt hot"</p> <p>A1: "Our body has lost the capability to bear heat, we need to switch on AC whole night. We used to play outside earlier hence we had more capability but now we are dependent on facilities."</p> <p>A4: "Or sometimes we spilled water on the terrace to keep our house cool"</p> <p>A2: "Now-a-days, we are so busy that we don't carry our own bags whenever we go to get things from the market"</p> <p>A2: "Or we could just sit in one room and minimise the usage of electricity because in today's world everything is electrical, our world would stop for an hour"</p> <p>A2: "Now we are dependent on money and facilities. We are becoming individualistic, we want own AC, own TV. All we get out of this is more privacy"</p>
Shifting of Blame	<p>Government should do its job properly for environmental conservation.</p> <p>Developed countries are to be blamed.</p> <p>Uneducated people don't care for environment.</p> <p>Busy, comfortable lifestyle</p> <p>Government's focus is not on the appropriate areas to save environment.</p>	<p>Y4: "Government has not made any systems for rain water harvesting"</p> <p>Y1: "Developed countries think they can do whatever they want"</p> <p>A4: "My maid washes all the clothes and dishes and she does not know that we should conserve water, so she keeps the tap open for longer durations"</p> <p>Y4: "Developed countries are the main culprits, they harm the environment the most"</p> <p>A1: "Government take funds but they don't construct the infrastructure that may help in reducing the congestion and hence pollution"</p> <p>A4: "Politicians just hype the issue and don't act and hence people rebel against them. The work that should be done by the government is not done by them"</p> <p>Y2: "I tell my workers to save electricity but they don't listen to me"</p> <p>Y3: "They didn't see the present condition of India and just copied the rule from Singapore"</p> <p>Y2: "It's a political thing, if they genuinely cared the focus would have been on point. They are not seeing the pollution in Ganga and are focusing on the cars that are not that harmful"</p> <p>Y2: "In a way government has helped is by their campaigns, like Aamir Khan's Incredible India. People have actually understood and the rates of littering have gone down. The campaigns started in schools about awareness regarding this has also helped"</p> <p>Y3: "Government should not enforce things because enforcement leads to resistance"</p> <p>Y2: "Improvement is requires on the part of government and not on the part of individuals. If van comes to pick my garbage I'll dispose properly, if not, then what can I do?"</p> <p>A1: "Hype was created around it. The need was not fulfilled. We till now don't know the result of the implementation. There may be other problems as well like improper construction of roads, flaws in the lights etc."</p>
Realisation of Individual responsibility	<p>Don't relate to environment.</p> <p>Sees themselves as the root cause</p>	<p>Y1: "We don't relate to environment as much as other social issues. People still burn crackers in Diwali and waste water by playing Holi"</p>

	<p>Harm environment during festivals.</p> <p>Deforestation</p> <p>Consider themselves careless</p>	<p>A2: "Earlier we used ACs from May and now we need it from March"</p> <p>Y4: "We are molesting the environment by deforestation, pollution"</p> <p>Y3: "We are the reason"</p> <p>Y1: "We can't eradicate the problem in individual level but we can reduce the carbon footprint"</p> <p>Y3: "But the future is very uncertain, but it would be harmful for sure! Don't know about extinction but humans may be endangered as we are the root cause"</p> <p>Y2: "We don't recycle, collect and dispose properly"</p> <p>Y3: "We don't take up efforts initiated by other individuals"</p> <p>Y2: "Plastics are harmful if we don't dispose it nicely"</p> <p>A3: "Like, we can save the waste water from RO and use it for sweeping, watering plants etc, but we don't do!"</p> <p>Y1: "because of human activities the natural environment of earth is changing"</p> <p>Y1: "I don't know, I don't think we realise that all these natural disasters are because of us. I don't know what our contributions are. It's not visible explicitly that it's because of us"</p> <p>A2: "I have to waste paper because I have to save time"</p> <p>A3: "sometimes we have this thing in our mind, what difference shall it make if I am the only one conserving?"</p> <p>A3: "We want different designs of furniture every 10 years, trees are cut to make furniture"</p> <p>Y2: "I have TV in my bedroom and so I don't watch the TV in my drawing room"</p>
<p>Hoping for a better tomorrow</p>	<p>On a global level, countries must work together</p> <p>On an individual level, we can save electricity and water.</p> <p>Minimal use of plastics</p>	<p>Y3: "People should be made aware about the conditions of environment. Each and every country must work together"</p> <p>Y4: "On an individual level we can save electricity and water whenever possible at homes or offices"</p> <p>A3: "I scold my children when they don't switch the lights off"</p> <p>Y4: "We can plant trees outside our houses to keep the environment cool"</p> <p>Y3: "Minimal use of plastics"</p> <p>Y2: "There has to be a balance between how much growth you want and how eco-friendly are you"</p> <p>Y2: "We need to put our effort in the right place, instead of banning them we should check their disposal"</p> <p>Y2: "The quality should be checked, like the quality of petrol and diesel in America is better than ours and hence they emit less pollution"</p> <p>Y2: "Focus should be more on nuclear power"</p> <p>Y2: "We should not litter, and should have different types of dustbins for different type of garbage, can't do more than that"</p> <p>Y3: "Awareness is needed more than education as even educated people degrade the environment"</p> <p>A3: "We could conserve water by bathing one time with soap"</p> <p>Y2: "Or by using less water in car washing"</p> <p>A2: "We should point the importance of conservation to our family members"</p>

They feel that until and unless humans do not face scarcity, they will not understand the value of resources. For instance, A3: “When we get less, we will obviously consume less”, Y2, “Today we have availability and so we are not conserving” and A1, “We have ample amount of resources today but will be harmful for coming generations”. The participants were inclined to adjust only with the alternatives with equal comfort, convenience and cost efficiency. People find it easy to blame their busy lifestyle for their lack of actions or for adjustments and compromises for the environmental conservation. Similarly, people in Switzerland also have found to display this perceived unwillingness to abandon what appeared as personal comfort (Kleemann et al., 2001).

The next theme that emerged from the study was “Solace in Comparison”. This theme incorporated two dimensions: The Other World comparisons and The Historical Comparisons. Participants drew comparisons with other countries like Singapore and America which clearly suggested that these countries gave ‘environment’ more importance than the people of India. According to the participants, the people in other countries have a better sense of disposal, hence keeping their country clean. As remarked by the participants, Y3, “They didn’t see the present condition of India and just copied the rule from Singapore” and Y2, “The quality should be checked, like the quality of petrol and diesel in America is better than ours and hence they emit less pollution”. They also made contrasts between the traditional way of living and the today’s style of living. They felt that because of today’s modern style of living they are unable to think about nature and environment. For instance, A2 stated, “Now we are dependent on money and facilities. We are becoming individualistic, we want own AC, own TV. All we get out of this is more privacy.”

Another theme that emerged from the study was “Shifting of Blame”. This theme embraces all the groups that individuals have blamed for their disengagement. The participants held accountable all the developed countries as a major polluting unit and thought that they should be the ones to start the initiative to do something about environmental degradation as said by Y4: “Developed countries are the main culprits, they harm the environment the most”. People also accused the uneducated population like maids and workers who they think waste resources. Despite being told by the participants they still don’t try to save the resources like water, electricity etc. Participant A4: “My maid washes all the clothes and dishes and she does not know that we should conserve water, so she keeps the tap open for

longer durations”. Lastly, they talked about the role of Government or political groups that how they have been careless or have been successful. Participants felt that the Government’s focus is not on the main issue of environmental degradation but rather the Government uses these issues as political agendas to gain support.

However, people also appreciated the different campaigns started by the Government in schools and social media about being eco-friendly as said by Y2: “It’s a political thing, if they genuinely cared the focus would have been on point. They are not seeing the pollution in Ganga and are focusing on the cars that are not that harmful” and also that “In a way government has helped by their campaigns, like Aamir Khan’s Incredible India. People have actually understood and the rate of littering has gone down. The campaigns started in schools about awareness regarding this have also helped.” A study conducted by Kleemann et al (2001) in Switzerland demonstrated the same interpretation of Governance-distrust and inferred that people have deep distrust in government as a reliable locus for pursuing the public interest.

The next theme that arose from the study was “Realization of individual Responsibility”. Participants agreed to some extent that they don’t feel much connected with the environment maybe because of their busy and modern lifestyle. In some cases, participants shun away from taking the responsibility for climate change as they find this to be a problem beyond individual’s capacity and consider themselves helpless as said by A3, “Sometimes we have this thing in our mind, what difference shall it make if I am the only one conserving?” This statement gives a sign of implicatory denial. There is not much that can be done but still they were ready to do all that can be done to save environment. Participants consider themselves as the root cause of this humiliation of the environment. For instance, Y3 said, “But the future is very uncertain, but it would be harmful for sure! Don’t know about extinction but humans may be endangered as we are the root cause”. They accepted their carelessness and through this discussion realised some of the responsibilities that should be taken by the individuals to improve these conditions.

The final theme gave us the idea of *Hoping for a better tomorrow*. Findings of this study suggest that there is still hope as people feel some sense of individual responsibility. They suggested what can be done to reduce the ill effects of climate change at both the societal and individual level. On a global level, they felt that the need of the hour is that each country comes forward and work together against this glitch of “Climate Change”, as

pointed out by, Y3, “People should be made aware about the conditions of environment. Each and every country must work together”. At the individual level they suggested very minimal actions that can be taken by individuals in their day-to-day life activities. Participants like Y4 said, “We can plant trees outside our houses to keep the environment cool” or Y3, “Minimal use of plastics. They also suggested that certain actions should be taken by the government like in checking the qualities of fuels and better disposal of garbage. Families should point each other regarding the conservation of environment whenever and wherever necessary. There is still hope as long as people have the sense of individual responsibility.

#### 4. Conclusion

Through the study, we may conclude that despite being aware of the problems, consequences and implications there is a lack of public engagement on the issue of environment and climate change. It is convenient for the individuals to ignore the problems related to climate change as they perceive them to exist in the future and faraway places. Due to the ample visible availability of resources, it is probably easier to overlook the glitches related to environment. Also, individuals may find it difficult to be related with the environment as they are far away from the traditional way of living. There was a tendency to shift the responsibility of environmental protection to other groups (developed countries, government etc.). The participants suggested minimal actions on individual’s part that should be taken up by people like planting trees, saving water, etc. Each country must work together to curb out this problem at the global level. In some way this focus group discussion facilitated this group to realize their duties and faults towards the environment and gave hope for a better tomorrow.

#### 5. Implications

Through this study, an attempt has been made to initiate researches on the topic of climate change denial and explore the field of conservation psychology. Hence, this research may be considered as a pilot study, as an effort to initiate future researches in the aforementioned field. The need of the hour is that psychologists intervene in the environmental conservation programmes in a large way to identify and address climate change denial in Indian society. Findings of this study suggest that there is still hope as people feel some sense of individual responsibility. Thus, awareness programmes and workshops can be held that may help individuals to understand the present status of environment. Such programmes will certainly exhibit high participation from individuals.

#### 6. Scope and Limitations

Since the study conducted was a much more of a pilot study the participants for the discussion were chosen by convenience sampling method and only one focus group discussion was held. Since conservation psychology is an emerging field and not many researches have been done in the Indian context, the results from this study should not be taken as generalised. Rigorous sampling using mixed methodologies need to be carried out in order to collect as much information possible from wider population as not much literature is available in this field.

#### 7. Acknowledgement

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#### 8. Appendix I

1. If given a chance, which problem would you like to eradicate from the society and why? (Open-ended) Gender equality, religious intolerance, environment, corruption, terrorism, reservation and anti-nationalism. 2. I am a member of the street play society and I want your help to choose the topic (from the list) for next year. On what should I make the play and why? 3. Where do you think you’ll be happier? In a natural environment like park or in a man-made entertainment centre like malls? 4. How often do you talk about environment and its degradation? 5. Do you believe that climate is changing? 6. What is climate change? What according to you are the reasons for it? 7. Do you think human activities can bring changes in the climate? 8. Do you think the activities of your daily routine have contributed to the changes in climate? 9. What according to you are the consequences of these changes in climate? 10. Do you believe environmental problems are a danger to human species? 11. On a global level, what can be done to improve these conditions? 12. What do you think about the Odd-Even Rule that was recently implemented? (why they agree or disagree (car pooling)? What is the importance of the environmental motives behind this rule? 13. Do you think it should be implemented again? 14. Which mode of transportation do you prefer more? Public or Private and why? 15. How many of you use plastic bags in everyday life? 16. Do you know some states in India have banned the use of plastic bags to some extent and why? 17. Why do you use plastic bags when you know that they are harmful? 18. If you are asked to switch off all the electrical devices for an

hour, say 8-9 p.m., every day for saving electricity, would you be willing to adjust to it? 19. Where do you think you can conserve water in your daily routine? 20. What all you think can be done to conserve environment on your behalf? 21. How many things you actually do?

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