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We Know, But We Don't Act: Bridging the Gap Between Climate Awareness and Sustainable Behavior

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Abstract

Climate concern is increasing globally, and research suggests that behavior change is essential for advancing climate action. However, many individuals struggle to translate their concern into meaningful action. This disconnect, often described as the awareness–action gap, psychological climate paradox, or value–action gap, remains a significant challenge. While widely studied, its insights are not consistently applied in climate policy and practice. This paper examines the gap between climate awareness and sustainable behavior through a systematic literature review. Drawing on research in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), sustainability literacy, and behavioral change, the study identifies key factors that limit the transition from knowledge to action. These include habitual behaviors, perceived inconvenience, lack of practical tools, and limited engagement strategies that fail to connect awareness with everyday decision-making. The paper further explores participatory educational approaches and broader engagement strategies in supporting behavior change. It argues that while awareness is necessary, it is not sufficient without targeted interventions that address behavioral, social, and structural barriers. The findings highlight the need to integrate sustainability literacy with practical engagement strategies to empower individuals, particularly youth, as active agents of climate action. This study contributes to discussions on sustainability and climate change by offering insights for educators, policymakers, and practitioners working toward Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action).

Keywords: Climate Change; Sustainable Behavior; Climate Awareness; Behavior Change; Awareness–Action Gap