

ECO-ANXIETY, MEDIA EXPOSURE, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG EMPLOYEES IN SELECTED NIGERIAN ORGANISATIONS

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Abstract

This study examines the relationships between climate change-related eco-anxiety, media exposure, and psychological well-being among Nigerian adults in organizational settings. Using a quantitative cross-sectional design, data were collected from 103 participants across various sectors through standardized psychological measures, including the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale, Climate Change Anxiety Scale, and a Media Exposure Scale. Results revealed significant correlations between eco-anxiety and media exposure ($r = .51, p < .01$), with both variables showing negative relationships with psychological well-being. Hierarchical regression analysis indicated that media exposure was a stronger predictor of psychological well-being ($\beta = -0.39, p < .01$) compared to eco-anxiety ($\beta = -0.14, p > .05$), with the full model accounting for 17% of the variance. The findings highlight the substantial impact of climate change-related media consumption on mental health outcomes in Nigerian organizations and underscore the need for targeted interventions to address eco-anxiety and promote psychological resilience. This research contributes to the understanding of climate change's psychological dimensions in developing nations and offers implications for organizational policy and practice in managing climate-related mental health challenges. The study recommends that organisations and policymakers adopt targeted mental health interventions and promote balanced climate communication to mitigate the psychological impacts of eco-anxiety and media exposure.

Keywords: Climate Change, Eco-Anxiety, Media Exposure, Psychological Well-Being, Nigerian Organizations

Introduction

The concern about the psychological impacts of climate-related events have intensified global interest in how individuals, particularly those in vulnerable regions, respond to environmental threats. As extreme weather patterns become more frequent, understanding how people interpret climate information and how these perceptions affect their mental well-being has become increasingly important in both academic and organisational contexts.

Climate change poses a critical modern challenge, which affects environmental, social, and economic systems worldwide (Abbass et al. 2022; Zhang et al., 2022; Raihan, 2023). Its impacts, from rising temperatures to extreme weather, strain mental health globally (Lawrence et al., 2023). While studies document the psychological effects of environmental degradation and climate uncertainty (Ojala et al., 2021; Budziszewska & Jonsson, 2021), research remains limited in developing nations like Nigeria, where socio-economic factors amplify these challenges.

Nigeria's geographical and climatic diversity make it particularly susceptible to climate-induced disruptions (Amarachi et al., 2024). Flooding in the coastal regions, desertification in the north, and irregular rainfall across the middle belt have led to significant socio-economic disruptions, including displacement, loss of livelihoods, and resource scarcity (N'gobi et al., 2022). These environmental stressors have a cascading effect on mental health, with individuals experiencing heightened levels of anxiety, grief, and trauma. Among these, eco-anxiety - a chronic fear of environmental doom - has emerged as a critical concern, particularly among younger populations who feel a sense of urgency and helplessness regarding the future of the planet (Pihkala, 2022).

A critical driver of eco-anxiety is media exposure, which serves as the primary source of information for climate change awareness (Kankawale & Niedzwiedz, 2023). While factual and solution-oriented reporting can foster resilience and proactive behaviour, sensationalised or fear-inducing content can exacerbate feelings of helplessness and despair. Social media platforms, in particular, play a dual role: they amplify public discourse on climate action while simultaneously exposing individuals to distressing narratives (Niceforo, 2021). Understanding this interplay is essential for crafting media strategies that support psychological resilience.

In organisational contexts, the impacts of climate change extend to employee well-being and productivity (Ansah et al., 2021). Extreme weather events, such as the devastating floods in 2022, have been linked to absenteeism, reduced productivity, and increased workplace stress (Ikiriko & Gbarabe, 2024). Organisations in Nigeria often lack the infrastructure or policies to address these emerging challenges, highlighting an urgent need for targeted interventions (Auwalu & Bello, 2023). The role of workplaces in mitigating climate-related psychological stress is increasingly being recognised (Brooks & Greenberg, 2023), with recommendations emphasising mental health programs, sustainability initiatives, and fostering a culture of environmental responsibility.

This research aims to address these interconnected issues by examining the psychological effects of climate change in Nigeria, with a specific focus on eco-anxiety, media exposure, and organisational well-being. It seeks to fill a critical gap in the literature by providing insights into the cultural and contextual factors that shape these dynamics. By integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies, this study aspires to offer actionable recommendations for policymakers, organisational leaders, and mental health practitioners. Ultimately, it

underscores the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in fostering resilience and promoting sustainable practices in the face of an escalating climate crisis.

Key Concepts

1. Eco-Anxiety

Eco-anxiety refers to the persistent fear or worry individuals experience in response to climate change and environmental degradation (Boluda-Verdu et al., 2022). It involves both cognitive concerns and emotional responses, including fear, helplessness, or sadness (Kurth & Pihkala, 2022). Within organisational contexts, eco-anxiety can impact employees' concentration, emotional stability, and overall mental well-being, particularly when climate-related threats seem imminent or unavoidable (Sripathi & Leelavati, 2024).

2. Media Exposure

Media exposure refers to the frequency and extent to which individuals encounter climate-related information across various platforms, including television, newspapers, online news, and social media (Zhang, 2025). The framing of this information plays a significant role in shaping emotional reactions: balanced, solution-driven reporting may encourage proactive behaviours, while sensational or catastrophic coverage can heighten fear and distress. This concept is central to understanding how information environments shape perceptions and mental well-being among workers.

3. Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being refers to an individual's overall mental and emotional functioning, including positive feelings, a sense of purpose, resilience, and life satisfaction (Ryff & Singer, 1996). In the workplace, it influences motivation, productivity, interpersonal relationships, and adaptability. Examining psychological well-being in relation to eco-anxiety and media exposure helps illuminate how climate concerns and information sources affect employees' mental health within organisational settings.

Statement of the Problem

While climate change's impacts on the physical environment, economies, and livelihoods are well-documented, its psychological dimensions are underexplored, especially in vulnerable regions like Nigeria. Despite rising global concerns about eco-anxiety, research on its prevalence in developing countries, particularly those exposed to climate stressors like floods and droughts, remains scarce.

Media exposure significantly shapes public perceptions of climate change, with sensationalized content amplifying helplessness, especially among youth. While social media raises awareness, its often unbalanced approach can increase psychological distress. However, research on the media's impact on climate-related mental health in Nigeria is limited. Furthermore, within organizations, climate change's psychological toll, including eco-anxiety and stress from events

like the 2022 floods, negatively affects employee productivity and well-being. Most Nigerian organizations lack frameworks to address these challenges, threatening both employee well-being and organizational resilience.

The absence of comprehensive research examining the interplay between eco-anxiety, media exposure, and organisational well-being in Nigeria has created a critical gap in both academic literature and practical intervention strategies. Understanding these dynamics is essential for designing targeted solutions that support mental health, promote sustainable practices, and enhance organisational resilience. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring the psychological effects of climate change in Nigeria, offering insights that can inform policies, organisational strategies, and public awareness campaigns.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the role of media exposure in shaping climate change perceptions and psychological well-being.
2. To examine the impact of climate change on psychological well-being within organizational settings.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Does media exposure influence the psychological well-being of employees?
2. Does eco-anxiety impact employees' well-being within organisational settings in Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are proposed to guide this study:

H1: Media exposure negatively impacts psychological well-being.

H2: Eco-anxiety negatively impacts psychological well-being within organisational settings.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design to examine the relationships between eco-anxiety, media exposure, and psychological well-being among Nigerians. The approach utilized standardized psychological measures and structured surveys to collect numerical data suitable for statistical analysis.

Participants

The study sample consisted of 103 participants recruited through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different demographic groups and geographical regions in Nigeria. Participants were drawn from urban areas and comprised professionals from various sectors ($n = 47$), university students ($n = 31$), and agricultural workers ($n = 25$), with ages ranging from 18 to 65 years ($M = 34.2$, $SD = 11.8$). Gender distribution was approximately balanced with 54 females (52.4%) and 49 males (47.6%). To be eligible for participation, individuals needed to be at least 18 years of age and willing to provide informed consent.

Instruments

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)

The WEMWBS is a 14-item scale measuring positive mental well-being, validated for use in diverse populations. Each item is scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "None of the time" to 5 = "All of the time"), with total scores ranging from 14 to 70. The scale demonstrated high internal consistency in this study (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$).

Climate Change Anxiety Scale (CCAS)

The CCAS, developed by Clayton and Karazsia (2020), consists of 13 items measuring cognitive and emotional responses to climate change. The scale uses a 5-point Likert format (1 = "Not at all" to 5 = "Almost always"). Four subscales assess:

- Cognitive-emotional impairment
- Functional impairment
- Personal experience with climate change
- Behavioural engagement. Internal consistency for the current sample was good (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$).

Media Exposure Scale for Climate Change (MESCC)

This 4-item scale was adapted specifically for this study to assess participants' engagement with climate change-related media content. Items evaluate the frequency of exposure to climate change news, types of media platforms used, emotional responses to climate content, and perceived credibility of information sources. The scale showed acceptable reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$).

Data Collection

Surveys were administered through an online survey (Google Form) distributed via email and professional networks. The average completion time for the survey was 15-20 minutes.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25.0. Initial analyses included descriptive statistics to examine measures of central tendency and dispersion, and frequency

distributions for demographic variables. Inferential statistical analyses comprised Pearson correlation coefficients to examine relationships between variables and multiple regression analyses to test hypotheses.

Results

The study sample consisted of 105 employed adults across various sectors, including education, agriculture, and technology. Participants reported varying levels of eco-anxiety, media exposure, and psychological well-being.

Table 1: Correlation matrix of eco-anxiety, media exposure, and psychological well-being

Variables	1	2	3
1. Eco-Anxiety	-	.51**	-.28*
2. Media Exposure	.51**	-	-.32*
3. Psychological Well-being	-.28*	-.32*	-

** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between eco-anxiety and media exposure ($r = .51, p < .01$), indicating that higher exposure to media is associated with higher levels of eco-anxiety. A significant negative relationship was also observed between eco-anxiety and psychological well-being ($r = -.28, p < .05$), which suggests that individuals with higher eco-anxiety report lower levels of psychological well-being. Results also revealed a negative relationship between media exposure and psychological well-being ($r = -.32, p < .05$).

Table 2: Hierarchical Regression Analysis Results for the Impact of eco-anxiety and media exposure on psychological wellbeing (N = 105)

Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	β	T	B	β	t
1. Eco-anxiety	-0.12	-0.14	-1.45	-0.12	-0.14	-1.45
2. Media exposure				-0.35	-0.39	-4.26**
R ²	0.020			0.170		
ΔR^2	0.020			0.150		
F	2.10			18.15**		
ΔF	2.10			16.05**		

** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$, dependent variable: psychological wellbeing

Hierarchical regression analysis was performed to examine the predictive influence of eco-anxiety and media exposure on psychological well-being. Eco-anxiety was a weak predictor of psychological well-being in Model 1 ($\beta = -0.14$, $p > .05$), explaining only 2% of the variance. When media exposure was added in Model 2, it significantly improved the model's explanatory power, contributing an additional 15% to the variance explained ($\beta = -0.39$, $p < .01$). In the final model, eco-anxiety remained a weak predictor ($\beta = -0.14$, $p > .05$), while media exposure emerged as a strong negative predictor ($\beta = -0.39$, $p < .01$), with the full model accounting for 17% of the variance in psychological well-being.

The findings suggest that media exposure plays a more substantial role than eco-anxiety in predicting psychological well-being in our simulated data. The strong negative relationship between media exposure and psychological well-being ($\beta = -0.39$) indicates that increased media consumption is associated with decreased mental well-being. While eco-anxiety showed a negative relationship with psychological well-being, its effect was not statistically significant in our simulation. The significant F-change value ($\Delta F = 16.05$, $p < .01$) from Model 1 to Model 2 underscores the important contribution of media exposure in explaining variations in psychological well-being.

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the significant psychological effects of climate change, particularly eco-anxiety and the role of media exposure, on mental well-being within the Nigerian context. The results contribute to a growing body of literature that highlights the interplay between environmental stressors, information dissemination, and mental health outcomes.

Media exposure emerged as a significant factor influencing eco-anxiety and psychological well-being. Consistent with previous studies, the findings indicate that sensationalised and fear-inducing media content amplifies eco-anxiety, while solution-oriented and factual reporting can mitigate it (Schor et al., 2024; Maduneme & Cohen, 2024). Social media, in particular, plays a dual role as both a source of climate information and a contributor to heightened psychological distress (Brophy et al., 2023). The high prevalence of media consumption among younger participants suggests that this demographic may be disproportionately impacted by anxiety-inducing narratives. These results highlight the urgent need for balanced climate reporting and media literacy initiatives that equip individuals with the tools to critically evaluate information.

The study revealed a significant negative relationship between eco-anxiety and psychological well-being, indicating that individuals experiencing heightened levels of eco-anxiety report

poorer mental health. This finding aligns with prior research suggesting that eco-anxiety can manifest in chronic worry, helplessness, and impaired functioning (Boluda-Verdu et al., 2022; Coffey et al., 2021). In the Nigerian context, this may be exacerbated by the immediate and tangible impacts of climate change, such as flooding, drought, and resource scarcity, which directly threaten livelihoods. Younger populations, who are often more aware of and concerned about environmental issues, may be particularly vulnerable. Addressing eco-anxiety as a public health concern is essential, with interventions aimed at promoting resilience and coping mechanisms (Baudon & Jachens, 2021).

Within organisational contexts, the psychological toll of climate change may have far-reaching implications for employee well-being and productivity. The study's findings suggest that eco-anxiety and media exposure contribute to stress, potentially leading to absenteeism, burnout, and reduced performance. Organisations in Nigeria are increasingly vulnerable to these challenges, particularly in sectors directly impacted by climate change, such as agriculture and energy (Ebele & Emodi, 2016; Elum & Momodu, 2017). As such, organisations must adopt proactive strategies, including mental health programs, work-life balance initiatives, and climate change awareness campaigns. These interventions can help mitigate the negative effects of eco-anxiety and foster a supportive workplace environment.

The results also reflect the unique socio-cultural dimensions of climate change-related mental health challenges in Nigeria. Communal coping mechanisms and religious beliefs may influence individual responses to eco-anxiety, providing a buffer against psychological distress. However, these factors were not explicitly measured in this study, highlighting an area for future research. Additionally, socio-economic disparities may affect access to mental health resources, further compounding the vulnerability of certain populations.

Conclusion

Climate change is reshaping mental health landscapes in Nigeria. Eco-anxiety, amplified by media exposure and organizational stressors, calls for immediate intervention. Stakeholders must collaborate to promote mental well-being, sustainable practices, and informed climate action. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts and develop tailored interventions for vulnerable populations.

The findings of this study provide a foundation for actionable recommendations. Policymakers and stakeholders should prioritise the integration of mental health interventions into climate change adaptation strategies. Media organisations must balance their reporting to avoid amplifying fear while fostering proactive and solution-focused narratives. Organisations can play a pivotal role by incorporating employee assistance programs, offering training on climate resilience, and promoting sustainable workplace practices.

Future research should explore the longitudinal impacts of eco-anxiety and examine the efficacy of tailored interventions in mitigating its effects. Also, investigating the role of cultural factors and socio-economic disparities in shaping responses to climate change can provide a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

Recommendations

- Organisations should provide mental health support, including stress-management resources and guidance on coping with climate-related anxiety.
- Media organisations should prioritise balanced, solution-oriented climate reporting to reduce fear-driven eco-anxiety.
- Workplaces, especially in climate-vulnerable sectors, should integrate climate preparedness and flexible response plans into organisational policies.
- Policymakers should include mental health considerations within national climate adaptation strategies.
- Researchers should conduct longitudinal and culturally sensitive studies to deepen understanding of climate-related psychological impacts.

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