

Governance | Individual communication

IC - (21101) - THE UNINTENTIONAL IMPACTS OF BUILDING SOLIDARITY BETWEEN CLIMATE AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS ON SUPPORT FOR CLIMATE ACTION: THE CASE OF GRETA THUNBERG AND THE INDIAN FARMERS' PROTEST

Anandita Sabherwal¹

1 - London School of Economics

Background and objectives

An important and emerging strategy in climate movements is to build solidarity with other social movements to mobilize support for climate action. But can this backfire by unintentionally reducing support for climate movements instead? We investigated the effect of Greta Thunberg's support for the Indian farmers' protest on her effectiveness as a climate advocate and Indians' intentions to take collective climate action.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

We investigate this possibility in two experiments, one pre-registered (N=641) in a sample of Indian adults.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

Protest support moderated the effect of her Thunberg's tweets in support of the farmers' protest such that after reading her tweets, those who opposed the farmers' protest found Thunberg to be less effective and those who supported the farmers' protest found her to be more effective as a climate advocate, relative to those in the control condition. Pre-emptively clarifying Thunberg's intentions and values successfully inoculated against the negative effects on her image. Exposure to the tweets also lowered protest opposers' intention to take collective climate action. Climate advocates' involvement in issues unrelated to climate change can polarise public opinion about them and engagement with the climate movement. This can be mitigated by clarifying advocates' intentions before they engage with diverse social movements.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

This work is one of the first to test the effectiveness of inoculation theory in protecting activists' image and restoring collective climate action intentions in a sample that remains underrepresented in psychological research. Since intersection with other social issues is inevitable, and even desirable to build cross-movement solidarity and climate awareness, our findings suggest that one way climate advocates can protect against threats to their image is by clarifying their intentions before engaging with diverse social movements.

Palavras-chave : Collective action, social movements, polarisation, Greta Thunberg, Inoculation, climate change, protest