

Abstract #: 520

Author Name: Nirav Patel

Author Company: Cornell University

Second Author's Name:

**Abstract Title: Renewable Energy Education: Does it impact students' perception of climate change? Does environmental education alter students' attitudes towards environment?**

Abstract Text:

Traditional view holds that humans are “rational actors”. Thus, they make optimal decisions upon receiving necessary information. But newer insights suggest that human cognition & motivation is not solely predicated upon this traditional view. Our study evaluates information & attitude-based factors of educators & their students towards renewable energy across five states. The purpose of the current study was to determine whether the students of teachers trained in REE were more likely to pursue renewable energy education, compared to students of teachers who had not attended similar workshops. A survey tool was administered to two groups of students: 1) students of trained teachers, 2) students of untrained teachers. We utilize a social-psychological framework to examine effective energy literacy within an environmental education program. Our results indicate that while workshop attendance influenced educator attitudes, such effects were not passed down to students. Students when measured on their subjective norms on learning about renewable energy place greater emphasis on their teachers than they do on their parents or friends. The students across sites place direct emphasis on systemic educational drivers (tests & teachers). Societal norms (poverty, hunger & obesity) and subjective norms (parents & friends) have little traction on students' learning. We find that students were less aware of issues related to renewable energy & climate change. The perception is that climate change is distant, and not an immediate concern, such as poverty & hunger. This suggests a dissonance that can be addressed through an interdisciplinary curricula adoption of renewable energy.