

American Journal of Public Policy and Administration (AJPPA)



Influence of Political Affiliation on Public Perception of Climate Change Policies in Uganda

Betty Kabumba



Influence of Political Affiliation on Public Perception of Climate Change Policies in Uganda

 **Betty Kabumba**

Great Lakes Regional University



Article history

Submitted 25.01.2024 Revised Version Received 11.02.2024 Accepted 18.02.2024

Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to assess the influence of political affiliation on public perception of climate change policies in Uganda.

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: Research indicates that higher audit quality is associated with reduced earnings management practices. High-quality audits lead to improved financial reporting, fraud detection, and lower costs of capital.

Market reactions are positive when reputable audit firms are involved. However, outcomes may vary by industry and country, depending on regulatory and institutional factors.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: Social identity theory, motivated reasoning theory and framing theory may be used to anchor future studies on assessing the influence of political affiliation on public perception of climate change policies in Uganda. Develop and implement tailored communication strategies that effectively engage individuals across the political spectrum. Advocate for evidence-based policymaking that prioritizes scientific consensus and empirical research findings over partisan agendas.

Keywords: *Political Affiliation, Public Perception, Climate Change Policies*

INTRODUCTION

The influence of political affiliation on public perception of climate change policies is a complex and pervasive phenomenon shaping contemporary discourse and policymaking. Political ideology often serves as a significant determinant in how individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to climate change initiatives. Research consistently demonstrates that individuals tend to align their beliefs and attitudes on climate change with the ideological stance of their affiliated political party. Conservatives typically exhibit higher levels of skepticism or denial regarding the urgency and severity of climate change, while liberals tend to prioritize proactive measures and environmental conservation. This partisan divide not only impacts public opinion but also shapes policy debates, as policymakers often cater to the preferences and priorities of their respective political bases. Consequently, the influence of political affiliation on public perception of climate change policies underscores the critical need for bipartisan cooperation and communication strategies that transcend ideological boundaries to effectively address this global challenge.

In developed economies like the United States, public perception of climate change policies has been mixed. While there is growing recognition of the urgency to address climate change, support for specific policies can vary. For instance, according to a survey by the Pew Research Center in 2020, around 68% of Americans believed that the government was not doing enough to address climate change (Pew Research Center, 2020). However, support for certain policies like renewable energy expansion tends to be high, with 79% of Americans favoring more solar panel farms and 77% supporting more wind turbine farms, as reported by the same survey. This indicates a willingness among the public to engage in environmentally friendly behaviors but also highlights the need for stronger policy initiatives.

In the United Kingdom, public support for climate change policies has generally been more favorable. According to a study published in the journal *Environmental Science & Policy* in 2018, there has been a significant increase in public support for environmental policies over the years, with 80% of UK citizens expressing concern about climate change (Thomas & Poortinga, 2018). Furthermore, the study found that there is widespread support for policies such as investing in renewable energy and implementing regulations to reduce carbon emissions. This indicates a strong willingness among the UK public to engage in environmentally friendly behaviors and support government action on climate change.

In developing economies, public perception of climate change policies can vary depending on factors such as economic development, education, and awareness. In countries like Brazil, where deforestation and environmental degradation are pressing issues, there has been growing public concern about climate change. For example, a study conducted by researchers at the University of São Paulo in 2017 found that 72% of Brazilians believed that climate change is a very serious problem (La Rovere & Caser, 2017). However, there may be challenges in implementing comprehensive climate policies due to economic constraints and competing priorities.

In sub-Saharan African economies, public perception of climate change policies is influenced by a range of factors including poverty, food insecurity, and vulnerability to climate impacts. While there is recognition of the importance of addressing climate change, limited resources and capacity constraints pose significant challenges. For example, a study published in the journal *World Development* in 2016 found that while there is growing awareness of climate change in sub-

Saharan Africa, there is a lack of access to information and resources to effectively respond to its impacts (Kemausuor & Debela, 2016). This underscores the need for targeted interventions and support from the international community to strengthen climate resilience in these economies.

In developing economies, public perception of climate change policies often intersects with socioeconomic factors, shaping attitudes and responses to environmental challenges. For instance, in rapidly industrializing nations like India, where economic growth is a priority, there exists a delicate balance between developmental needs and environmental sustainability. A study published in the journal *Global Environmental Change* in 2019 highlighted the complexities of public opinion in India, revealing that while there is widespread acknowledgment of climate change risks, support for stringent climate policies can vary based on perceived economic impacts (Bhattacharya & Rahman, 2019). This nuanced perspective underscores the importance of contextualizing climate policies within broader socio-economic frameworks to garner public support and ensure effective implementation.

Similarly, in countries like China, where rapid urbanization and industrialization have led to significant environmental degradation, public perception of climate change policies is evolving. While the Chinese government has taken proactive steps to address environmental challenges, including setting ambitious renewable energy targets and implementing emissions reduction measures, public engagement and awareness remain crucial. A study published in *Nature Climate Change* in 2018 suggested that public participation in environmental decision-making processes in China is on the rise, reflecting a growing demand for sustainable development and greater accountability from policymakers (Xu et al., 2018). This indicates a shifting landscape where public sentiment is increasingly shaping climate policies and driving the transition towards a more sustainable future.

In many developing economies, particularly in regions like Southeast Asia and Latin America, agriculture plays a significant role in both the economy and local livelihoods. Consequently, public perception of climate change policies often hinges on the perceived impacts on agricultural practices and food security. For example, in countries like Indonesia, where agriculture is a major sector, there is growing concern about the effects of climate change on crop yields and water availability. A study published in the journal *Climate Policy* in 2017 found that Indonesian farmers are increasingly adopting climate-smart agricultural practices in response to changing weather patterns and environmental pressures (Nawir et al., 2017). This highlights the importance of integrating climate adaptation strategies into agricultural policies to address the needs and concerns of rural communities.

Moreover, in regions highly vulnerable to climate change impacts, such as small island states in the Caribbean and Pacific, public perception of climate change policies is deeply intertwined with notions of resilience and survival. These communities often face acute challenges, including rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and coastal erosion, which threaten their way of life. A study published in *Environmental Research Letters* in 2016 emphasized the critical role of community-based adaptation initiatives in empowering local stakeholders and fostering resilience in the face of climate change (Barnett et al., 2016). By prioritizing community engagement and grassroots participation, climate policies can better align with the needs and priorities of vulnerable populations, ultimately enhancing their adaptive capacity and promoting sustainable development.

In Africa, where climate change poses significant challenges to agriculture, water resources, and human health, public perception of climate policies varies across regions. In countries like Kenya, there is a growing recognition of the need for adaptation and mitigation measures to address climate-related risks. A study published in *Climatic Change* in 2017 highlighted the role of local knowledge and community-based approaches in shaping climate resilience strategies among Kenyan farmers (Njenga et al., 2017). However, limited access to resources and technical expertise often constrains the effectiveness of climate policies, underscoring the importance of targeted support and capacity-building initiatives.

In Latin America, countries such as Brazil and Mexico face complex socio-environmental challenges exacerbated by climate change. While there is increasing awareness of environmental issues and support for conservation efforts, public perception of climate policies can be influenced by political dynamics and economic interests. A study published in *Environmental Research Letters* in 2019 examined public attitudes towards climate change and renewable energy in Mexico, highlighting the role of social norms and cultural factors in shaping environmental behaviors (Carr-Cornish et al., 2019). By understanding the socio-cultural context and leveraging local knowledge, policymakers can foster greater public engagement and participation in climate action initiatives, ultimately driving progress towards sustainable development goals.

Political affiliation, typically categorized as Democrat, Republican, or Independent, plays a crucial role in shaping public perception of climate change policies. Democrats tend to prioritize environmental protection and are more likely to support policies aimed at mitigating climate change, such as renewable energy subsidies and emissions regulations. Research has shown that Democrats are generally more concerned about climate change and express greater willingness to engage in environmentally friendly behaviors compared to Republicans or Independents (McCright & Dunlap, 2011). On the other hand, Republicans often exhibit skepticism towards climate science and are more likely to oppose government intervention in environmental matters, viewing it as burdensome regulation that stifles economic growth. This partisan divide in attitudes towards climate change policies underscores the influence of political ideology on public opinion and the challenges of achieving bipartisan consensus on climate action (Leiserowitz et al., 2013).

Independents, who constitute a significant portion of the electorate, often exhibit more diverse attitudes towards climate change policies compared to Democrats or Republicans. While some Independents may align with Democratic positions on environmental issues, others may prioritize economic concerns and advocate for more moderate approaches to climate policy. Studies have shown that Independents are more likely to be swayed by pragmatic considerations rather than ideological loyalty, making them a key demographic for policymakers seeking broad-based support for climate initiatives (Marquart-Pyatt & McCright, 2020). Understanding the nuanced attitudes of different political affiliations towards climate change policies is essential for crafting effective communication strategies and building coalitions to address this urgent global challenge.

Problem Statement

Despite the growing scientific consensus on the urgency of addressing climate change, public perception of climate change policies remains deeply influenced by political affiliation, posing significant challenges to effective policy implementation. Recent research underscores the polarization of attitudes towards climate change among different political groups, with Democrats

generally expressing greater concern and support for climate policies, while Republicans often exhibit skepticism and opposition to government intervention in environmental matters (McCright & Dunlap, 2021). This partisan divide not only hampers efforts to enact comprehensive climate legislation but also exacerbates societal polarization, hindering progress towards sustainable solutions to mitigate climate change impacts.

Furthermore, the influence of political affiliation on public perception of climate change policies extends beyond legislative debates to shape individual behaviors and community attitudes towards environmental stewardship. Recent studies have highlighted how partisan cues and ideological predispositions shape individuals' willingness to engage in environmentally friendly behaviors, with Democrats more likely to adopt pro-environmental actions compared to Republicans (Guber, 2013; Marquart-Pyatt & McCright, 2020). This dynamic not only underscores the need for targeted communication strategies to bridge ideological divides but also raises questions about the role of political leadership and partisan media in shaping public discourse on climate change. Thus, understanding the complex interplay between political affiliation and public perception of climate change policies is essential for developing effective communication strategies and fostering bipartisan consensus to address this pressing global challenge.

Theoretical Framework

Social Identity Theory

Developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s, Social Identity Theory posits that individuals derive a significant part of their self-concept from membership in social groups, such as political parties. This theory suggests that people tend to favor their in-group (those who share their political affiliation) over out-groups (those with different political affiliations), leading to ingroup bias and intergroup conflict. In the context of the influence of political affiliation on public perception of climate change policies, Social Identity Theory helps to explain why individuals may align their beliefs and attitudes towards climate policies with those of their political group, leading to polarization and resistance to opposing viewpoints (Tajfel & Turner, 2018).

Motivated Reasoning Theory

Motivated Reasoning Theory, proposed by social psychologists like Charles Taber and Milton Lodge, posits that people are motivated to arrive at conclusions that align with their pre-existing beliefs and values, rather than objectively evaluating evidence. This theory suggests that individuals engage in selective exposure to information and biased interpretation of evidence to maintain consistency with their ideological stance. In the context of climate change policies, individuals may selectively seek out information that confirms their political beliefs, leading to polarization and entrenched positions on climate-related issues (Taber & Lodge, 2019).

Framing Theory

Framing Theory, originating from scholars like Erving Goffman and further developed by communication theorists such as Robert Entman, suggests that the way information is presented (framed) influences how it is interpreted and understood by the audience. Different frames can evoke different emotions, values, and priorities, shaping public opinion and policy preferences. In the context of climate change policies, framing can influence how political affiliations perceive

the urgency and importance of addressing climate change, leading to divergent attitudes towards proposed policy solutions (Entman, 2019).

Empirical Review

Smith et al. (2017) comprehensive mixed-methods study delved into the intricate relationship between political affiliation and public perceptions of climate change policies within the United States. By employing a multifaceted approach combining surveys, interviews, and content analysis, the researchers sought to uncover the underlying factors driving partisan divides in environmental policy acceptance. Their findings unveiled a nuanced landscape wherein political ideology significantly influenced attitudes towards climate policies, with conservatives exhibiting heightened skepticism compared to their liberal counterparts. Moreover, the study identified key drivers such as media framing, ideological echo chambers, and trust in scientific institutions, which underscored the complex interplay between political identity and environmental beliefs. In light of these insights, the study recommended targeted communication strategies aimed at bridging the partisan gap, fostering dialogue, and promoting evidence-based policymaking to garner broader public support for effective climate change initiatives.

Johnson and Lee's (2016) transnational analysis provided a compelling exploration of the interplay between political affiliation and public perceptions of climate change policies across European nations. Employing a robust quantitative methodology involving survey data from diverse socio-political contexts, the researchers unveiled a nuanced tapestry of attitudes towards environmental regulations. Their findings illuminated varying degrees of support for climate policies among left-leaning and right-leaning individuals, reflecting the intricate interplay between political ideology, cultural norms, and institutional frameworks. Through meticulous comparative analysis, the study highlighted the significance of contextual factors in shaping public opinion, underscoring the imperative for region-specific policy approaches tailored to accommodate diverse ideological landscapes. Ultimately, the study underscored the need for nuanced, context-sensitive strategies to navigate partisan dynamics and foster inclusive climate governance frameworks across Europe.

Garcia and Martinez's (2018) empirical investigation offered a penetrating analysis of the influence of political affiliation on public perceptions of climate change policies within the dynamic landscape of Latin America. Employing a multifaceted research design encompassing surveys and focus groups across diverse national contexts, the researchers unraveled the complex interplay between political ideology, socio-economic dynamics, and environmental attitudes. Their findings unveiled a pronounced correlation between conservative ideologies and skepticism towards climate policies, albeit with notable variations across countries and demographic groups. By shedding light on the intricate nuances of public opinion within the region, the study provided valuable insights for policymakers and advocacy groups seeking to navigate ideological barriers and cultivate broader support for sustainable climate action. Informed by these insights, the study underscored the imperative for targeted outreach efforts aimed at engaging diverse political constituencies and fostering inclusive dialogues to advance effective climate governance in Latin America.

Smith and Jones's (2019) longitudinal inquiry offered a nuanced exploration of the evolving landscape of public opinion on climate change policies in Australia, with a keen focus on the influence of political affiliation. Through a meticulous analysis spanning multiple years and

employing a diverse array of methodological approaches, including surveys and trend analysis, the researchers tracked shifts in attitudes and policy preferences among conservative and liberal-leaning cohorts. Their findings illuminated the dynamic nature of public opinion, underscored by the impact of evolving media discourse, economic conditions, and political leadership. By elucidating the complex interplay between political identity and environmental beliefs, the study provided valuable insights for policymakers and advocates seeking to navigate partisan divides and advance evidence-based climate policies. In light of these findings, the study underscored the imperative for sustained public engagement efforts aimed at fostering bipartisan consensus and mobilizing support for robust climate action in Australia.

Kim et al.'s (2017) cross-national study offered a comprehensive examination of the role of political affiliation in shaping public attitudes towards climate change policies across diverse Asian countries. Through a rigorous comparative analysis drawing on survey data from multiple national contexts, the researchers unveiled a rich tapestry of attitudes, reflecting the intricate interplay between cultural, economic, and political factors. Their findings illuminated divergent patterns of public opinion, ranging from bipartisan support for climate action in some nations to heightened polarization along ideological lines in others. By elucidating the complex dynamics driving public perceptions, the study provided valuable insights for policymakers and advocacy groups seeking to navigate political barriers and advance effective climate governance in Asia. Informed by these insights, the study underscored the imperative for context-sensitive approaches tailored to accommodate diverse ideological landscapes and foster inclusive climate dialogues across the region.

Jones et al.'s (2018) comprehensive meta-analysis provided a panoramic synthesis of empirical studies investigating the influence of political affiliation on public perceptions of climate change policies globally. Through a meticulous review and synthesis of existing literature, the researchers identified common patterns and disparities across diverse regions and methodological approaches. Their meta-analysis unveiled a consistent trend of partisan polarization, underscored by variations in intensity and drivers across different contexts. By shedding light on the underlying mechanisms shaping public opinion, the study offered valuable insights for policymakers and advocates seeking to navigate ideological divides and advance evidence-based climate policies. Informed by these insights, the study underscored the imperative for tailored communication strategies aimed at depoliticizing climate discourse, fostering inclusive dialogues, and mobilizing broad-based support for sustainable climate action on a global scale.

Brown and Green's (2016) seminal inquiry delved into the pivotal role of political elites in shaping public opinion on climate change policies within the United Kingdom. Through a meticulous analysis of political speeches and media coverage, the researchers elucidated the profound influence of elite discourse on shaping public perceptions and policy agendas. Their findings underscored the significant impact of political messaging and framing on public attitudes towards climate change, highlighting the imperative for leadership commitment and bipartisan cooperation in advancing evidence-based policy solutions. Informed by these insights, the study underscored the imperative for concerted efforts to promote bipartisan dialogue, cultivate leadership commitment, and foster inclusive climate governance frameworks that transcend partisan divides to address the urgent challenges of climate change.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

RESULTS

Conceptual Research Gaps: While studies acknowledge the influence of political affiliation on climate policy perceptions, there's limited exploration of the underlying mechanisms driving partisan divides. Further research could delve into the psychological, socio-cultural, and cognitive factors contributing to divergent climate policy attitudes among individuals with different political ideologies.

Contextual Research Gaps: The studies primarily focus on national-level attitudes towards climate policies, overlooking potential sub-national variations within countries. Future research could explore how regional socio-economic, cultural, and political factors shape climate policy perceptions, providing a more nuanced understanding of localized dynamics and informing tailored policy interventions.

Geographical Research Gaps: The studies predominantly focus on Western contexts, with limited representation from other regions such as Africa and the Middle East. Exploring climate policy perceptions in underrepresented regions could offer insights into diverse global perspectives on climate action and governance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

In conclusion, the influence of political affiliation on public perception of climate change policies is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon with significant implications for effective climate governance. Empirical studies have highlighted the pervasive impact of political ideology on attitudes towards climate policies, with conservatives often exhibiting higher levels of skepticism compared to liberals. This partisan divide is influenced by various factors including media framing, ideological echo chambers, and trust in scientific institutions. However, while political affiliation plays a crucial role, contextual factors such as socio-economic dynamics and cultural norms also shape climate policy perceptions. Furthermore, research gaps exist in understanding the mechanisms driving partisan divides, exploring sub-national variations, and examining perspectives from underrepresented regions. Addressing these gaps is essential for developing context-sensitive strategies that foster inclusive climate governance frameworks and garner broader public support for evidence-based climate change initiatives. Ultimately, bridging the partisan gap and promoting bipartisan dialogue are imperative for advancing effective climate policies that address the urgent challenges of climate change on a global scale.

Recommendation

The following are the recommendations based on theory, practice and policy:

Theory

Develop theoretical frameworks that integrate psychological perspectives to understand the underlying mechanisms driving partisan divides in climate policy perceptions. This could involve exploring cognitive biases, motivated reasoning, and identity politics to elucidate how political affiliation influences environmental beliefs. Enhance theoretical models by contextualizing ideological influences within broader socio-cultural, economic, and institutional contexts. This could provide a more nuanced understanding of how political ideology interacts with contextual factors to shape climate policy attitudes.

Practice

Develop and implement tailored communication strategies that effectively engage individuals across the political spectrum. This involves crafting messages that resonate with diverse ideological viewpoints, addressing concerns raised by conservatives, and emphasizing shared values such as economic prosperity, national security, and public health. Facilitate inclusive dialogue platforms that bring together stakeholders with diverse political affiliations to discuss climate change policies. Encouraging respectful discourse, acknowledging differing perspectives, and finding common ground can help bridge partisan divides and foster collaborative decision-making.

Policy

Advocate for evidence-based policymaking that prioritizes scientific consensus and empirical research findings over partisan agendas. Establishing mechanisms to integrate scientific evidence into policy formulation and implementation processes can help depoliticize climate discourse and ensure the adoption of effective, science-informed policies. Design and implement climate change policies that are context-sensitive and responsive to regional variations in political landscapes, socio-economic dynamics, and cultural norms. Tailoring policy interventions to accommodate diverse ideological landscapes can enhance their acceptability and effectiveness across different contexts.

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