

The Influence of Social Representations on Attitude, Behaviour, and Adaptation Strategies on Perceptions about Climate Change in the Fiji Islands: A Review of Literature

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Abstract

Social Representation Theory (SRT) is a successful framework that has been used for many years to understand how individuals and groups construct, communicate, and navigate their social reality. Using a narrative method of literature review, this study, with synthesis of findings from previous research, examines how social representations influences attitudes, behaviours, and adaptation strategies related to perceptions about climate change in the Fiji Islands and the Pacific. Findings from the synthesis of results highlights the importance of considering local beliefs and cultural contexts in shaping responses to climate change. The discoveries also place emphasis on the critical role of beliefs and perceptions in driving adaptation efforts and community resilience. For future research, there is a need for inclusive approaches that put together local knowledge and perspectives into climate change policies and strategies that encourages sustainable solutions in Fiji, the Pacific Islands and beyond.

Keywords: social representation, climate change, fiji islands, adaptation strategies, community perceptions

Abstrak

Social Representation Theory atau SRT adalah kerangka yang telah terbukti berhasil dan telah digunakan selama bertahun-tahun untuk memahami bagaimana individu dan kelompok membangun, mengkomunikasikan, dan menavigasi realitas sosial mereka. Dengan menggunakan metode naratif dari tinjauan literatur dengan sintesis temuan dari penelitian sebelumnya, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti bagaimana representasi sosial mempengaruhi sikap, perilaku, dan strategi adaptasi yang terkait dengan persepsi tentang perubahan iklim di Kepulauan Fiji dan Pasifik. Temuan dari sintesis ini menekankan pentingnya mempertimbangkan keyakinan lokal dan konteks budaya dalam membentuk respons terhadap perubahan iklim. Penemuan ini juga menekankan peran penting dari keyakinan dan persepsi dalam mendorong upaya adaptasi dan ketahanan komunitas. Untuk penelitian selanjutnya, diperlukan pendekatan inklusif yang menggabungkan pengetahuan dan perspektif lokal ke dalam kebijakan dan strategi perubahan iklim yang mendorong solusi berkelanjutan di Fiji, Kepulauan Pasifik, dan sekitarnya.

Keywords: representasi sosial, perubahan iklim, kepulauan fiji, strategi adaptasi, persepsi komunitas

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INTRODUCTION

Over the years, researchers have been able to see the Social Representation Theory as a flexible conceptual framework that has been able to explain and understand the way individuals and groups elaborate, transform, and communicate their social reality (Rateau et al., 2012). Rateau et al. also stated that the development of this theory has seen the formation of methods and tools that are directly applicable to the analysis of a wide range of social issues. Research that was conducted by Elcheroth et al. (2011), mentioned that Moscovici, defined social representation as a system of values, ideas, and practices with a twofold function: first, to establish an order that will enable individuals to orientate themselves in their material and social world and to master it, and second to enable communication to take place among members of a community by providing them with a code for social exchange and a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the various aspects of their world and their individual group history. Rateau et al. also defined Social Representation as “systems of opinions, knowledge, and beliefs” particular to a culture, a social category, or a group concerning objects in the social environment. According to a book written by Sammut et al. (2015), in their Handbook of Social Representations, they stated that social representations allow for the presence of change and stability and also the presence and the co-existence of plurality of understandings between members of the community and also the plurality of forms of organisations of thoughts that will allow communities to progress stably without any problems.

According to the research that was conducted by Moliner & Bovina (2020), in their study on the history, postulates and dissemination of the Social Representation Theory, they stated that the SRT is one of the major theories in social psychology which according to Serge Moscovici was drawn from Collective Representation Theory which has undergone a lot of metamorphoses to suit the discipline of social psychology. The research by Moliner & Bovina, also stated in their article that the success of the Social Representation Theory is a result of a number of several key factors. Firstly, the initial postulates of the theory was flexible which resulted in researchers from disciplines outside the area of social psychology to adapt the theory to their own problems, extending the applicability of the theory beyond the discipline of social psychology. Secondly, Serge Moscovici conducted a lot of research in the area of social representation which allowed him to spread the theory worldwide. He also encouraged small groups of researchers in different countries to work on social representations which resulted in the acceptance and adoption of the SRT in various regions. Thirdly, in the beginning of the article, it stated that Serge Moscovici continued to suggest new areas of research in the field of social representations through out his career which somehow has remained untapped and is also a rich source of inspiration for future researchers.

In reading this review, people might think to question the role Social Representation has on societal issues, but with regards to the definition of SRT, it is a system of opinions, and beliefs that a group of people have on societal issues. Now, the societal issue that is prevalent and inevitable in the pacific societies in this day and age somehow navigates towards the society’s perceptions of climate change and strategies that is needed to help people to come to terms with the reality that is at hand. Research that was conducted by Helgeson et al. (2012), in their study about the role of knowledge, learning and mental models about the public perceptions of climate change related risks stated that, risk communications about climate change risks should always be in line with the cultural biases of the target cultural group as people tend to have more trust in communications that is in line with their cultural beliefs about climate change. The study also pointed out



the importance of social representations and cultural worldviews in the construction of environmental risk perceptions.

As briefly stated in the previous paragraphs, the SRT has proven its applicability in many disciplines and societal issues and it is for this reason that this review is focused on reviewing literatures of past research that have been conducted in the area of climate change and how the Social Representation Theory have influenced the attitudes, behaviour and adaptation strategies of people of the Pacific Islands who are at the front line experiencing first hand the impacts of climate change. The people of the Pacific Islands belong to a wide range of cultural backgrounds and with it, their beliefs and understanding of things will differ. The impacts of climate change will be viewed by people from developed countries and those from the western countries as dissimilar to the views of people in the Pacific Islands. The purpose of the review, is to collate findings from research that have been conducted in the same field together with their limitations, so that future researchers could work on those limitations to better understand the reasons Pacific Islanders behave the way they do towards advice from government authorities regarding climate change adaptation strategies. The review will focus of the influence of the SRT on attitudes, behaviour, and adaptation strategies on perceptions about climate change and this will include; the context and background of the review, the theoretical framework that will be used as a guide for the review, review of relevant literatures, the synthesis and discussions about the findings from the literature review and the document will end with the conclusion which will also comprise of recommendations of future areas of research which could be useful to address the proper understanding of climate change and its impacts in Fiji and the Pacific Islands.

Background and Context

With reference to the research that was conducted by Shiiba et al. (2023), in their study to measure climate risk using the climate and ocean risk vulnerability index, stated in their article that Fiji consists of 332 islands which also includes low lying atolls and majority of people live along the coastline which makes them susceptible to the effects of climate change such as sea level rise and storm surges. The article also states that the impacts of climate change places strain on the economic status of the country whereby 1.6% of Fiji's GDP is an average asset loss as a result from damages by cyclones and the costs of coastal protection from sea level rise has been projected to account for 3% of Fiji's GDP in the worst-case scenario.

According to an article written by Hall (2017), in his article about "The Ocean State of Fiji- Turning the Tide", he stated that the ocean and coastal environments are fundamentally linked to the well-being, culture, and the identity of the Fijian people. Shiiba et al., also stated that fishing and tourism are a vital source of revenue for the Fijian Economy where fishing accounts for 1.8% of the country's GDP and 7% of total export earnings. According to the Ministry and Finance in Fiji, Ministry of Finance (2023), in their Tourism Fact Sheet, the tourism industry contributes 40% both directly and indirectly towards Fiji's GDP and the Tourism Industry reduces poverty and promotes well-being by providing approximately 120,000 jobs as of the 2022 which is 36.5% of the total employment.

Conceptual Framework

The journal that was written by Moliner & Bovina (2020), pointed out that, according to Serge Moscovici, the emergence of the theory of social representation



always overlap with the emergence of a new situation, an unknown phenomena or an unusual event that members of the community will make sense of using the cultural background they have. The same article also stated that when situations occur in the community that are new to the social group, members of the community will try and make sense of the situation using three phenomena and they are dispersion of information, focussing, and pressure for inference. However, the article went on to state that the three phenomena, while in the process of acclimatising to the situation, develops against the background of two major processes which has been identified by Moscovici as Objectification and Anchoring. The articles by Moliner & Bovina (2020) and Hakoköngäs & Sakki (2016), defined the two processes and stated that Objectification refers to the way a new situation or object, through communication, will rapidly be simplified, imaged, and dissected according to the level of understanding of a particular social group and through selective construction, and the various parts of the situation or object will be extracted from their context and sorted according to the cultural criteria it has been exposed to. Additionally, Moliner & Bovina (2020) and Hakoköngäs & Sakki (2016) also talked about Anchoring to mean that it completes the process of objectification, and it is the process whereby the new situation or object will find its place in a pre-existing system that is entrenched in the thoughts of individuals or in the social group. To make sense of the situation or object, it will be assimilated into already existing and known forms and familiar categories of objects or situation.

To contextualise the social representation theory to climate change, we will look at research that was conducted by Moloney et al. (2014), in their research about the utilisation of social representation theory to make sense of climate change, found after their comparative analysis of the responses from their participants, concluded that respondents from different cultural backgrounds defined climate change in different ways and that according to the responses of the participants, there is common set of concepts that is shared by different social groups about climate change but that there are also many differences in how climate change is framed and understood by the respondents. Now, taking us back to the concepts of objectification and anchoring, in this research, anchoring is when the respondents share common concepts about climate change and objectification is when the respondents have differences in how they framed and understood the concept of climate change because it is how they can comprehend the concept according to their cultural background and what they go through in life as a response to the threat of climate change.

Additionally, when we are talking about the Social Representation Theory, we also have to include the belief systems that people from various cultural backgrounds have to be able to comprehend situations and objects that have been presented to them. When people have certain beliefs about an object or a situation, they tend to form certain attitude toward it which will later on culminate with a behaviour that corresponds to that attitude, allowing people to form their reactions about a given situation or object. Research that was conducted by Tiet et al. (2022), in their study about “Farmers behaviours and attitudes toward climate change adaptation”, stated that the values-beliefs-norms or (VBN) is a framework that was developed to assist in the investigation about the relationship between environmental concerns, such as personal values, beliefs, and norms, and pro-environmental behaviours. The same research also stated that the VBN theory has proposed that attitudes toward objects and actions are the result of beliefs and that such attitudes can be predictors of behaviours. To add more, research that was conducted by Arbuckle et al. (2013) and Hornsey et al. (2016) stated that, people’s beliefs



about potential climate impacts would have a positive effect on attitudes toward adaptation strategies and also that Arbuckle et al. (2013) found that disbelief about the impacts of climate change have resulted in the lack of adoption of the adaptation strategies and also result in the rejection of the threats that have been purportedly reported by the media to be the impacts of climate change.

Moreover, research that was conducted by Guillén Bolaños et al. (2022) in their paper on climate adaptation and successful adaptation, stated that the definition of climate adaptation is the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects where adaptation seeks to moderate or avoid harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. The paper also states that human interventions may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects and that successful adaptation is any adjustment that reduces the risks associated with climate change or climate change impacts. In support of this statement, research that was conducted by Davoudi et al. (2013), in their study about the Evolutionary Resilience and Strategies for Climate Adaptation, stated that adaptation is a process that begins with preventative measures and ends with crisis recovery and they went on to state that the prevention phase is referring to the actions that is taken to reduce the probability of something to happen or actions taken to reduce the consequences of an impact of something that is expected to happen. Now, to put all this together, the social representation of climate change simply means that the belief system of individuals or social groups determines their attitude towards climate change which then results in their behaviour towards climate change and from that will result in whether the individuals or the social group will follow through with the climate change strategies or not because as already stated, disbelief also impacts the community's level of response to climate change adaptation strategies.

METHOD

For the sake of this paper, the purpose of the review is to collate findings from previously conducted studies and research in the area of the influence of social representation on the attitudes, behaviours, and adaptation strategies on the perceptions of people in Fiji about climate change. The paper also wishes to gather information about research gaps on the field of social representation of climate change in Fiji and that the Fijian people, like many other cultures, will have varying beliefs and opinions about climate change and that their beliefs have resulted in their varying attitudes and behaviours toward climate change in Fiji and the Pacific Islands. The scope of the literature review will revolve around the Fiji Islands and how the different cultures in Fiji have varying views about climate change and how this varying views and beliefs have resulted in their current response to the phenomena. The review might also include the Pacific Islands as whole as there would be some similarities in the beliefs toward climate change.



Table 1.
 PRISMA Process Of Selection Of Articles

Phase	Number of Studies	Description
Records identified through database searching	100	Articles were searched on Google Scholar using the Keywords
Additional records identified through other sources	7	Articles that were accessed through reference lists of selected articles using the key words that were found in the reference section
Records after duplicates have been removed	57	50 Articles were excluded from the identified list because they were similar in nature with other studies for fear of repetition of information that would create confusion
Records Screened	57	These articles were screened to have the required information for the objective of the review and its applicability in Fiji and the Pacific Islands
Records Excluded	20	These articles were excluded because it contained little information specifically for social representation about climate change.
Full Text Articles Assessed for Eligibility	37	These articles were assessed because they fitted the criteria that was needed to get the required information about how Pacific Islanders understand climate change.
Full Text Articles Excluded with Reasons	7	Additional articles that were excluded because even though they talked about social representation, their findings were somehow different from the majority that were selected.
Studies included in the Operational Definitions	17	These articles were used at the beginning of the review right until the Method primarily, they were used for definitions and to better understand the concept and the objective of the review.



Studies included in the Results Synthesis and Analysis	13	These articles were selected and was used to synthesize the findings for the discussion section. They were specifically selected because their findings showed Pacific Islanders have a very different representation about Climate Change.
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Additionally, according to Table 1 above, all journals and articles were accessed through Google Scholar as stated by the research conducted by Jamali & Asadi (2010), that Google is a tool mostly used by researchers who are looking for problem-specific information and also that Google Scholar can be accessed by anyone who knows how to use it from any part of the world at any time of the day. The research also stated that there is a growing reliance on general search engines like Google Scholar by scientists because it is easier to use general search engines for the availability of information outside the scope of the research but somehow usable in terms of leading researchers to other sources of information that could be potentially used for the topic of research in question. Prior to the review, a criteria was created for the selection and identification of journal articles and they included: Area that were used for the study, comparison groups to include pacific islands, Outcomes of the research, Language used to be understandable, narrative studies, and Dates of publication to be within 10 to 15 years to ensure consistency with current findings. Articles that did not fulfil the criteria for selection were excluded to enable the review to be focused only on the objectives.

Furthermore, for this paper, search was conducted using keywords such as the Social Representation Theory for its definition, history and applicability in issues and situations that are happening the world. They keywords such as Attitude and Behaviour towards climate change was also used to gather information about the definitions of Attitude and Behaviour in the context of climate change. The keyword Adaptation Strategies was also used to find out more information about it definition in the context of climate change. Additionally, the keywords Geographical Context and Economic Context of Fiji was also used to find out more information about the description of Fiji Islands and how climate the impacts of climate change have impacted the people and also how the impacts of climate change has impacted the economy of Fiji for the past years.

Table 2.
 Brief information on Literature used in the Discussion Section

Authors	Method	Results
Bertana (2020)	Qualitative research on the impacts of faith-based narratives on climate change adaptation in Narikoso	The study found that beliefs and perceptions about climate change and associated risks are critical indicators of adaptation efforts. Faith-based narratives significantly influence how communities interpret and respond to climate change.
Crona et al.	Comparative study on the	This research found that Local



Authors	Method	Results
(2013)	perception of climate change in local and global contexts	perceptions about climate change are regionally and locally uneven. Participants from Fiji and Ecuador showed different perceptions compared to countries with Anglo-cultural influences. Fijians were concerned about impacts on fishing livelihoods.
Sreenivasa et al. (2024)	Mixed Method Participatory Action Research Design	The researchers in this study placed emphasis on integrating traditional and scientific knowledge for effective biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods
Rarai et al. (2022)	Case study on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (IK, TEK, LEK) in climate change adaptations in Vanuatu	This research found in their results that Indigenous Knowledge, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and Local Environmental Knowledge play crucial roles in climate change adaptations.
Gucake (2016)	Research on oral narratives about climate change adaptation and mitigation	The research by Gucake found that participants had varying views on climate change, with some seeing it as weather pattern changes and others associating it with rising sea levels and the Christian Noah story.
Von Seggern (2020)	A Meta-Ethnographic Analysis of Local and Indigenous Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies	The researchers found that participants related climate change to rising sea levels and the Noah story, leading to a belief that such events are non-recurring and reducing the perceived need for adaptation strategies.
Chand (2017)	A Content Analysis Study on newspaper coverage of climate change in Fiji	Sarika Chand in her research found that climate change coverage in Fijian media is inconsistent and often tied to local and international events,



Authors	Method	Results
		indicating low priority given to climate change reporting.
David & Chand (2017)	A Qualitative Research and Case Study on the Western media's framing of climate issues in the Pacific Islands	The researchers found that Western media often misrepresent climate issues faced by Pacific Island countries, framing them around their concerns rather than the preferred frames of Pacific Islanders like human rights and climate justice.
Nunn et al. (2016)	A Multidisciplinary Mixed Method Study on spirituality and attitudes towards nature in the Pacific Islands	Nunn and her colleagues found that high levels of spirituality and connectedness to nature influence Pacific Islanders' attitudes towards climate change. Messages through religious and culturally appropriate channels are more effective than secular messaging.
Yee et al. (2022)	A Qualitative Research method on Cultural Anthropology on the role of Vanua in climate-related voluntary immobility in Fiji	In this research, it was found that despite understanding the impacts of climate change, some Fijian communities prefer to remain in their current locations due to their attachment to the land, indicating the need for consent for relocation to higher grounds.
Barbara et al. (2023)	A Mixed Method Approach about Research on popular attitudes to climate change in the Pacific	The researchers found that understanding popular attitudes is critical to effective and inclusive adaptation strategies. Tailoring adaptation efforts to the specific needs and cultural contexts of communities enhances their success.
Korovulavula et al. (2020)	Case study and interdisciplinary approach on climate change adaptation in Fiji	Mr. Korovulavula and his colleagues found that increasing global awareness and integrating local and traditional knowledge are key to effective and



Authors	Method	Results
		sustainable adaptation. Foreign interventions should not devalue traditional coping strategies.
Singh et al. (2022)	A Qualitative Approach Case Study on the role of women in community resilience in Fiji	The researchers in this study found that social support systems and the concept of Vanua are strong factors in community resilience, emphasizing natural resources, place, culture, and people as sources of resilience during climate-related disasters.

Social Representation and Climate Change in Fiji

For the subject of this review, we try and look at how the members of the communities in the Fiji Islands perceive climate change and for some reason there has been less attention given to the communities who are experiencing the impacts of climate change and how they interpret these ecological changes. Research that was conducted by Bertana (2020), in her research on the impacts of faith-based narratives on climate change adaptation in Narikoso, Fiji, stated that despite the lack of attention on how those who are affected by climate change interpret the ecological changes that have been occurring, beliefs and perceptions about climate change and their associated risks have been proven to be critical indicators of adaptation efforts. As already mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the representation of a particular situation or object from a particular social group entirely depends on the beliefs of the individuals and the collective belief system of a social group. Whether or not a social group's belief system aligns with climate change protocols, will result in them being influenced and gravitate toward the accepted climate change adaptation strategies.

Additionally, the research that was conducted by Crona et al. (2013), in their research on the perception of climate change in the local and global arena, stated that there has been a growing number of scholarships that focused on the perceptions of global warming and climate change, and this also included how people recognise, understand and respond to risks that is posed by climate change. The same study also stated that most studies that have been conducted to address perceptions about climate change, have all been locally situated and the reasons for this is because perceptions about climate change is projected to be regionally and locally uneven indicating that there needs to be studies conducted to understand the different perceptions of different people about climate change and its impacts. Furthermore, research conducted by Sreenivasa Rao et al. (2024), in their research about participatory forest restoration for sustainable livelihood, highlighted the importance of tailoring forest restoration to local needs and traditional practices to ensure sustainability and effectiveness in biodiversity conservation and livelihood improvement. The study by Crona et al., also stated that local perceptions about climate change also represents real-world and tangible concerns which clearly shows that local ecology and culture do matter in how people conceptualise climate change and its impacts.



The results of the research that was conducted by Crona et al. (2013), stated that participants from Ecuador and Fiji had very low scores on the global cultural consensus model as compared to other countries that were involved in the research. This study suggested that Fijians have perceptions about climate change that were different from other countries with more Anglo-cultural influence or countries that spoke English or with more westernised mindsets. In the study, it was also found that the Fijian that were part of the study, were more concerned about the impact of climate change on their fishing livelihoods and income that they get from fishing. This indicates that Fijians recognize the impacts of climate change on the local environment and also their economic status.

Moreover, research that was conducted by Rarai et al. (2022), in their research on the role of Indigenous and Local Knowledge about Climate Change in Vanuatu, emphasized the importance of Indigenous Knowledge (IK), Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), and Local Environmental Knowledge (LEK), and their roles in climate change adaptations. In the research that was conducted by Gucake (2016), in his research on the oral narratives on climate change building adaptability and mitigation, stated that the participants of the research had differing views on what climate change actually is and its impacts on their individual livelihoods. The same research also pointed out that participants to the research expressed that climate change was a change in weather patterns while the research conducted by von Seggern (2020), in his research in Tuvalu and Kiribati, found that the participants stated that climate change was associated with the rise in sea water and that this is associated with the Christian Noah story. The same study also stated that the participants believed that the repetition of the Noah story was partially believed to be a non-recurring situation which could be the reason majority of people in the Pacific Islands do not pay a lot of attention to the promotion of climate change and its adaptive strategies.

When we are talking about Social Representation and Climate Change in Fiji, we also have to consider how information about climate change is disseminated to the general public and this include the local media in Fiji and also the International medias who try and cover as much information as possible about climate change and its impact on a small island nation like Fiji. Research that was conducted by Chand (2017), in her research on Newspaper coverage of climate change in Fiji, stated that in her study, Fiji is represented by five Australian Newspapers, three newspapers from New Zealand, and one newspaper from Fiji. In her study, she stated that the overall trend of the coverage of information about climate change is being misrepresented and that the coverage does not solely show the coverage of climate change in Fiji. She went on to state that the Fiji Times do not provide its audiences with proper insights into climate change coverage in Fiji. The results of the research by Chand, stated that even though the coverage of climate over the years have increased, there seem to be a lack of consistency in the reporting of environmental issues such as climate change and a close analysis of the results showed that a majority of climate change coverage were generated by local and international events which indicated the low priority that is given to climate change reporting.

While we are still on the issue about how the local and international media influences the social representations of climate change in Fiji, research that was conducted by David & Chand (2017), found that the complex issues that are faced by the Pacific Island countries are rarely explored and addressed by the Western media in that what is broadcasted and published tends to be framed in ways that is centred around the interests and concerns of powerful countries. The same research also pointed out that the Western media usually use frames such as proof of climate change, victims of climate



change, climate refugees, and travel destinations and not the preferred frames by Pacific Islanders such as human rights, climate justice, and adaptive responses. From the findings above, it could be said that the frames used by Western media is a misrepresentation of climate change to the people of Fiji and other Pacific Island nations. Journalistic coverage of climate change in Fiji and other Pacific Island Nations should be framed from the perspective of an Islander or generated from the perspectives of people in villages and communities so that it reflects their understanding and as a result would allow a more thorough coverage of climate change and its adaptive strategies.

Influence on Attitude and Behaviour

The previous paragraphs have talked about aspects of Social Representation and how it has impacted the views people have about climate change and its adaptive strategies. We shall now move on to the influence of social representation on the attitudes. Research that was conducted by Bidjari (2011), in their research about attitude and social representation, stated that social representations has a lot to do with interactive dynamics relationships between social knowledge, common social identities, and social practices and also that attitude is an outward expression of a social representation about a particular situation or object. Now when we contextualise the influence social representation have on attitude about climate change, we get to realise that people from different culture and social groups have different attitudes about climate because they view climate change through the lens of their social identities, experiences and religious beliefs. Research that was conducted by Nunn et al. (2016), in their study about spirituality and attitudes towards nature in the Pacific Islands, stated that deities or gods were held to account for environmental changes and natural disasters. The same research also pointed out that messages from religious bodies in the Pacific Islands is equally as powerful as secular messaging and also that the high levels of spirituality of Pacific Islanders and their connectedness to nature, can explain the ineffectiveness of secular messaging about the impacts of climate change. The attitudes of people in Fiji and the Pacific Islands about climate change has been a result of their social representation and understanding of the various changes in climatic conditions in consideration of their levels of spirituality.

While we are still on the research that was conducted by Nunn et al. (2016), it was found in the research that the sample population in the Pacific Island region has shown positive attitudes in being receptive to pro-environment messages especially when these messages were disseminated through culturally appropriate and religious channels as compared to messages disseminated through secular channels. It was also found in during the research that there is a high level of concern about the environment and that the participants of the research that their future and the future of their children will be affected by climate change. The same study also found that 96% of the students at the University of the South Pacific, in Fiji, were really concerned and anxious about the global impact of climate change and also that 80.3% of the respondents of the research attended church service and that their participation in church activities and services have been able to influence their perspectives on the natural world and climate change. From the findings of the research by Nunn et al., it could be said that most Pacific Islanders understand aspects about climate change through their spiritual teachings and also through traditional teachings and even though majority of the participants from USP understood the global impact of climate change, they still belong to villages and communities that have a collective understanding of things, who also do things communally.



According to research that were conducted by Yee et al. (2022), in their study about the role of Vanua in climate-related voluntary immobility in Fiji, stated that the Pacific Islands are the world's most vulnerable when it comes to the impacts of climate change and also that the Pacific Islands have the lowest percentage on earth on pollution and activities that increase the risks of climate change. There have a lot of studies conducted on the formation of attitudes on climate change as already stated in the previous paragraphs and also it will also state adaptation strategies in the later paragraphs but less studies have been done to ascertain the influence of social representations on climate-related behaviours and this is understandable because many of the Pacific Island states are more focused on adaptation strategies from the impacts of pollution by big countries.

Influence on Adaptation Strategies

According to research that was conducted by Barbara et al. (2023), in their research about popular attitudes to climate change in the Pacific, they stated that the understanding of the popular attitudes of people toward climate change is critical to the effective and inclusive adaptation strategies. Additionally, research that was conducted by Korovulavula et al. (2020), in their case study about Fiji, conducted the research to assess whether increasing global awareness is key to effective and sustainable adaptation or whether the growing support for local and traditional knowledge if also of great importance. The same research by Korovulavula et al., found that there are opportunities for climate change adaptation strategies to be successful in the future by tailoring them to the specific needs of the communities and culturally grounded communities should not be given foreign climate change interventions as this could devalue their traditional coping strategies.

Furthermore, research that was conducted by Singh et al. (2022), in their research on the role of women in community resilience, stated the importance of resilience in community disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and adaptive measures. The study also found that the social support system that create during a flood are strong factors which has contributed to community resilience and also that the concept of the vanua (traditional living) which includes natural resources, place, culture, and people are a great source of social resilience. The social representations and the understanding of the people of Fiji about the impacts of climate change is ingrained and immersed in culture and tradition and with that a lot of people in Fiji are attached to the land and are finding it hard to adjust to adaptive strategies like relocation to higher grounds to prevent being scathed by the impacts of rise in sea level and flooding. Research that was conducted by Yee et al. (2022), found that, despite having the understanding about the impacts of climate change, people of some villages in Fiji, still decide to remain in their current locations because of their attachment to the land and the sea. The research also pointed out that some of these villages need to give their consent in order for the government to move them to higher ground. They see what climate change can do to them but they still insist on staying because of the importance of the land for them.

Synthesis and Way Forward

In synthesizing the review, it could be said that the Social Representation Theory has been successful through out the years because of its flexibility, widespread application and the encouragement it has placed on researchers to work on societal issues through the lens of the theory. The research by Helgeson et al. (2012) have emphasized the importance of SRT and cultural worldviews in the construction of environmental risk



perceptions indicating different cultures will have their own understanding of issues happening within their societies and that to address these issues, their understanding and knowledge of these issues need to be considered as an inclusive way to help them cope with the issues together. Fiji is a country in the Pacific Islands with 332 Islands and one of the major issues that is affecting the livelihoods of the people living in Fiji is the impacts of climate change which, over the years accounted for an average of 1.6% of the GDP from loss incurred due to cyclones and coastal protections account for 3% of the GDP in worst-case scenario. The ocean and the coastal environments have been seen to be fundamentally linked to the well-being, culture, and identity of the people of Fiji and that fishing, and tourism are vital sources of revenue for the Fijian economy, contributing to 40% of the country's GDP.

Additionally, research that was conducted by Gucake (2016) and von Seggern (2020) found that there were differing views on what climate change was in the surrounding Pacific Islands with some identifying climate change as a change in weather patterns and others as the rise sea level and also relating the rise in sea level with the Christian Noah story with the belief that because the Bible had stated that there will never be anymore flooding of the whole world, that climate change adaptation strategies is not a big concern. The differing understanding and views about climate change creates great emphasis on further studies to be conducted to ascertain the route cause of the social representation of climate change by the different cultures in Fiji and also in the Pacific Islands.

Within the review of past research that were included in this study, there were several weaknesses that were noted in the studies that could be used by future researchers to bridge the gap of the social representation of climate change in Fiji and the surrounding Pacific Islands. Studies that have been conducted by Crona et al. (2013), have highlighted the regional and local unevenness in climate change perceptions and they have indicated the need for broader studies to be conducted to address this unevenness in perceptions in the different cultures of Fiji and also around the Pacific Islands. Research that was conducted by Rarai et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of Indigenous Knowledge (IK), Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), and Local Environmental Knowledge (LEK) in climate change adaptations and this also confirms the weakness that was highlighted by Crona et al. about the unevenness of perceptions about climate change.

Furthermore, research that was conducted by Chand (2017), found that there was lack of consistency in the reporting of environmental issues, with most climate change coverage seemed to only pop up when there is a local or international event and this indicates the low priority given to climate change reporting. To add more, research that was conducted by David and Chand (2017), found that Western Media often misrepresent the complex issues faced by Pacific Island Countries by framing climate issues according to their social representation of climate change, ignoring the preferred frames of human rights, climate justice, and adaptive responses that would suite the context of Fiji and the Pacific Islands. Hence this places emphasis on climate change coverage that should focus on the perspectives of an Islander or from the perspectives of people in villages and local communities.

Social representation play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards climate change and people from different cultures and social groups have different attitudes about climates change due to their social identities, experiences, and religious beliefs. Research that was conducted Nunn et al. (2016), found that the Pacific Island population showed positive attitudes towards pro-environment messages, especially when they have been



disseminated through culturally appropriate and religious channels. This finding place great emphasis on future research to be conducted on culturally appropriate ways in the different cultures in Fiji on how best they can respond well to climate change promotional materials. Research that was conducted by Barbara et al. (2023) and Korovulavula et al. (2020), stated that attitudes towards climate change is critical to effective and inclusive adaptation strategies. This highlights the importance of social representation and the understanding of climate change by various cultural groups in Fiji and the Pacific and the recognition of the collective representations of climate change by Western media to enable the correct representations of the stance of people in Fiji and the Pacific about climate change.

CONCLUSION

While trying to make a conclusion for this review, I can rightfully state based on this analysis, that the social representation of climate change in the Fiji Islands places emphasis on the diverse perspectives and beliefs that has been held by different social groups within the communities. The findings from the review highlights the critical role of beliefs and perceptions in shaping strategies of adaptations and responses to ecological changes. In exploring how individuals and communities understand climate change, the review has stressed on the importance of considering local knowledge and cultural contexts in developing effective climate change adaptation strategies in Fiji.

Additionally, the synthesis of the various literature being sought on social representations and climate change in Fiji highlights the need for inclusive and community-oriented approaches in addressing environmental changes. Moving forward, future studies should continue to explore the nuances of social representations within the context of climate change, with a focus on empowering the local communities and integrating their feedback and perspectives into policy and decision-making processes. In working on the gap between scientific knowledge and local beliefs, the community has the ability to allow for a sustainable and resilient responses to climate change in Fiji, the Pacific Islands and beyond.

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