

Beauty beyond Adversity: Exploring the Effects and Challenges of Climate Change on Married Women Beauty Pageant Participants

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ABSTRACT

Climate change, a pressing global issue, disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, particularly women. The beauty pageant industry, often criticized for objectifying women, also provides a platform for empowerment and self-expression. Married women participating in beauty pageants face unique challenges, pageant expectations, and environmental stressors. The central aim of the study is to bring out the impacts of perceived climate change on experience of married women in beauty pageants and obstacles encountered by married women in balancing pageant participation with climate-related stressors. This study investigates the intersectional climate crisis effects on married women participating in beauty pageants, examining the challenges they face and the effects on their well-being, family, pageant experiences, maintenance of their beauty standards, disparities in the resources available to women from different regions or backgrounds in response to climate change, coping with changing weather patterns and environmental conditions and their preparation routines. This paper focuses on the rationale qualitative methods used to examine the methodology to capture the reality of the married women participating in beauty pageant in the year 2023 at Milestone Pageant Organisation based out of Lucknow, where 20 individuals from every corner of the world participated. The findings highlight the need for climate- resilient pageant industry initiatives, support networks, and inclusive policies. This research contributes to the understanding of climate change's gendered impacts and informs strategies to promote resilience and empowerment among married women in the beauty pageant industry. This study also highlights the sustainable methods used by the married women Beauty Pageant Participants to tackle environmental conditions along with preparing for the beauty pageant using eco-friendly products. The study brings out how the contestants from backward or rural areas lack access to specialised skincare products compete with confidence with the contestants from urban centres with better access to beauty resources. This research will contribute in future to build understanding on how married women in beauty pageants experience and perceive climate change impacts and the struggles experienced by them in balancing pageant participation with climate-related stressors and the coping mechanisms and resilience strategies including the sustainable development strategies that they employ to navigate these challenges.

Keywords: Beauty Pageant, Married Women, Climate Change, Adversity, Resilience

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Beauty Pageant: female focussed competition in which they are judged on their outer beauty and on their presence of mind.

Married Women: a woman who is married /divorced/widowed or separated.

Climate Change: Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. Such shifts can be natural, due to modifications in the sun's activity or large volcanic eruptions. However Human actions have additionally been the key contributor to global warming through fossil fuel consumption.

Adversity: a difficult or unpleasant situation of climate change on Married women beauty pageant participants.

Resilience: the capacity to withstand or to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.

Overview

Pageantry has traditionally served as a topic of controversy, opponents argue that they perpetuate harmful beauty standards and objectify women, while supporters claim that they encourage significant opportunities for growth and empowerment. Participants in modern pageants come from diverse backgrounds and possess a range of talents and qualities beyond physical appearance. By showcasing their skills, intelligence, and charisma, contestants challenge traditional notions of beauty and inspire others to embrace their uniqueness. Beauty pageants, therefore, have the potential to promote inclusivity and diversity, encouraging individuals to celebrate their individuality and challenge conventional thinking. ([gradesfixer.com](https://www.gradesfixer.com), 2024). The beauty pageant industry, often criticized for objectifying women, also provides a platform for empowerment and self-expression. Married women participating in beauty pageants face unique challenges, balancing family responsibilities, pageant expectations and environmental stressors. This study explores the intersectional outcomes of shifts in climate Patterns on married women in the beauty pageant industry, shedding light on their experiences, challenges, and resilience. Shifts in climate Patterns could amplify risk of heat, poor air quality, and intense weather conditions. Women frequently face greater risks to these health impacts due to cultural, socioeconomic, and biologic factors ([Cecilia Sorensen, 2018](#)).

Review of Literature

Beauty pageants have their own myths, doubts and stereotypes in many developing countries, but have evolved over the years. As communicative and representation tools, modelling and beauty pageants are currently seen with sustainability lenses hence their integrated roles in climate advocacy. Modelling and beauty pageants are forms of art that have defied odds, gathered momentum and have become the fastest growing industry in the developing world ([Makwanya, 2024](#)).

Pageants are no longer 'just another beauty contest' anymore. It is a platform for showcasing empowerment, diversity, intelligence and leadership. People who take part in pageants have utilised the platform to empower others like them a variety of others have also used pageants as a way to advance in their careers, despite the diverse professions they chose. Sensitive and vital topics such as shifts in climate Patterns, abuse, human trafficking, capitalism, wars, freedom of speech etc are addressed. Some even come up with sustainable solutions which are then implemented, slowly and steadily improving the society they live in. Persons from indigenous communities, no matter which social or economic status

they belong from, stand a chance to represent their tribe and win the competition. Winning such a prestigious title makes their voice reach the masses. People seek to learn more about their roots and their life stories and this inspires several lives all across the globe. (**Aparna Kannan, 2021**).

Climate change impacts health through various pathways, such as increased heat exposure, degraded air quality, extreme weather phenomena, and shifts in meteorological conditions. Near to 1920s, beauty contests were a rising phenomenon both in the United States and worldwide, such as Turkey, Japan, and Mexico, that had undergone modernizing revolutions. In these countries, beauty contests were often intended as tools for affecting a social revolution at home, and for projecting a revolution to audiences abroad. Participation in international beauty contests was an important form of nationalist expression and a means of representing the new state on the world stage, as an equal accepted among the "great" and "civilized" nations of the earth. In terms of domestic consumption, contests in these countries were less a reflection of social change and more a means of implementing it. (**Ada Holland Shissler, 2004**).

According to **Abboud, Martine (2022)** The segment of the questions in the beauty pageants may be elongated to allow each participant the time to express her thoughts and goals. Several questions may be asked about different fields and topics, the questions should be diverse covering important global and local issues. Therefore, the women will have the opportunity to highlight topics that they find important to address, this will allow the viewers to comprehend the target of the contestant along with her goals for the future; creating a stronger and closer bond between the viewer and the contestants. This opportunity should be taken to discuss the global and international problems with the participants in addition to their goals to promote change and help with the solutions of these problems. Therefore, the winners should not always end up as models or actresses; they can also end up being an UN ambassador. For example, Miss World 1994 Aishwarya Rai became an ambassador of Pulse Polio which was a government initiative to promote the vaccination of children under 5. Another example is Miss Asia Pacific International 2000 Dia Mirza, this beauty pageant winner is a climate warrior known to be the UN Environment's Goodwill Ambassador for India and an Ambassador for Wildlife Trust of India. According to **De La Cruz (2018)** this step will change the results of most international competitions where the viewers are part of the voting scheme, and consequently the viewers can directly influence the results of the competition and the winner. Therefore, the viewers will be able to cast their votes considering the contestants' morals, beliefs, and general knowledge rather their physical appearance. It was suggested in this paper that huge platform that is watched world-wide, should be used to shed light upon global issues where they can be discussed by empowered women that are taking part in these competitions to make a change in the world rather than end up in a modelling agency. **Mohini Sharma**, Founder, Mrs India Inc in a conversation highlighted how pageants have been pivotal in this journey of women validating their worth. They get to train, learn and compete with other married women who face the same challenges that they do and are presented with similar opportunities like them. Using these platforms, they are able to harness the unacknowledged potential that they possess and bring out their individuality and renew self-love. There is a growing need for women to defy the out dated beliefs of the society and become confident in themselves while gracefully conquering the world. In fact, we as a society need to change the world's perception towards married women and break the stereotypes surrounding them. Beauty pageants have evolved beyond traditional beauty contests to become platforms that showcase empowerment, diversity, intelligence, and leadership. Participants utilize these events to advocate for significant causes, focussing on concerns such as climate change, human

trafficking, and freedom of speech, promoting environmentally conscious solutions for collective growth. Individuals from indigenous communities, regardless of their social or economic status, now have opportunities to represent their heritage, amplifying their voices and inspiring others worldwide.

Beauty for a Cause is the slogan of the Miss Earth beauty pageant which highlights the work of the pageant and the slogan was adopted since the pageant's inception in 2001. The slogan empowers the contestants to work with an environmental advocacy that is personally significant to them. (Wikipedia,2022)

Research Objectives

1. To bring out the impacts of perceived climate change on experience of married women in beauty pageants.
2. To bring out the adversities encountered by the married women in balancing pageant participation with climate-related stressors.

Research Questions

1. How do married women in beauty pageants experience and perceive climate change impacts?
2. What challenges do married women face in balancing pageant participation with climate-related stressors?
3. What coping mechanisms and resilience strategies do married women employ to navigate these challenges?

Methodology

○ Research Design

- This study is an exploratory research that employs a **qualitative research design** to explore experience and perceived climate change impacts, challenges faced and coping mechanisms and resilience strategies employed by married women participating in an international beauty pageant.

○ Study Setting

- The research was conducted at the Milestone Pageant Organisation, located in Lucknow, India. The pageant was held in 2023 in Thailand and included 20 participants from diverse nationalities, providing a multicultural context for understanding the implication of climate shifts, challenges faced and coping mechanism applied by the participants to resolve it.

○ Sampling Technique

- The study used **purposive sampling** to select participants. Inclusion criteria were:
 - Married women participants in the 2023 Milestone Pageant.
 - Readiness to engage in the study.
 - Ability to communicate in English or Hindi for interviews.
 - Here's another refined version with more significant changes:

○ Data Gathering Process

- The data collection process involved administering a questionnaire with open-ended questions. The questionnaire was shared with participants through email or WhatsApp, allowing them to respond at their convenience."

○ Ethical Considerations

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sustainability, and authenticity:

Natural Aesthetics: Participants emphasized a shift toward natural beauty, with judges valuing contestants' alignment with eco-consciousness and holistic well-being.

Sustainable Fashion: Contestants incorporated recycled materials and eco-friendly attire, and a hairstyle that does not signaling a departure from extravagance toward sustainability

This transformation mirrors wider cultural shifts, where environmental awareness intersects with aesthetics.

3. Advocacy and Environmental Responsibility

Advocacy has become central to the pageant industry, with contestants leveraging their platforms to promote environmental sustainability:

Climate Action Initiatives: Many participants engaged in activities like tree planting, recycling campaigns, and raising awareness through social media

Judges' Emphasis: Contestants were evaluated on their environmental advocacy, resilience, and ability to inspire societal change, demonstrating the growing importance of activism in pageants

These efforts underscore how pageants are evolving into platforms for environmental education and community mobilization.

4. Mental and Emotional Well-Being

The interplay between climate change, societal expectations, and personal responsibilities has placed immense pressure on contestants:

Stress and Resilience: Participants described the challenges of balancing personal roles, beauty standards, and advocacy efforts, leading to stress and emotional strain

Holistic Practices: To manage these pressures, contestants embraced yoga, mindfulness, and wellness activities, aligning their routines with sustainable values

This dual focus on mental health and environmental responsibility illustrates a holistic approach to addressing modern challenges.

5. Gender and Resource Disparities

Climate change exacerbates existing gender and resource inequalities:

Access to Resources: Contestants from disadvantaged regions faced significant hurdles due to limited access to eco-friendly products and sustainable practices.

Global Perspectives: Despite these disparities, participants benefited from learning and collaboration, drawing inspiration from diverse cultural approaches to sustainability.

These disparities highlight the importance of systemic support to ensure equitable participation and advocacy.

6. Intersection of Personal Growth and Advocacy

Participation in pageants has fostered personal growth among contestants, enabling them to combine beauty with meaningful advocacy:

Empowerment: Contestants reported increased confidence, resilience, and a sense of purpose through their advocacy efforts.

Community Impact: Many participants used their platforms to educate communities about climate change, demonstrating the potential for pageants to drive societal change.

This integration of personal and collective goals reflects the transformative potential of beauty pageants in addressing global challenges.

7. Role of Pageant Organizations

The Milestone Pageant Organisation was instrumental in moulding contestants' experiences:

Support for Sustainability: By prioritizing eco-consciousness in judging criteria, the organization has encouraged contestants to adopt and promote sustainable practices.

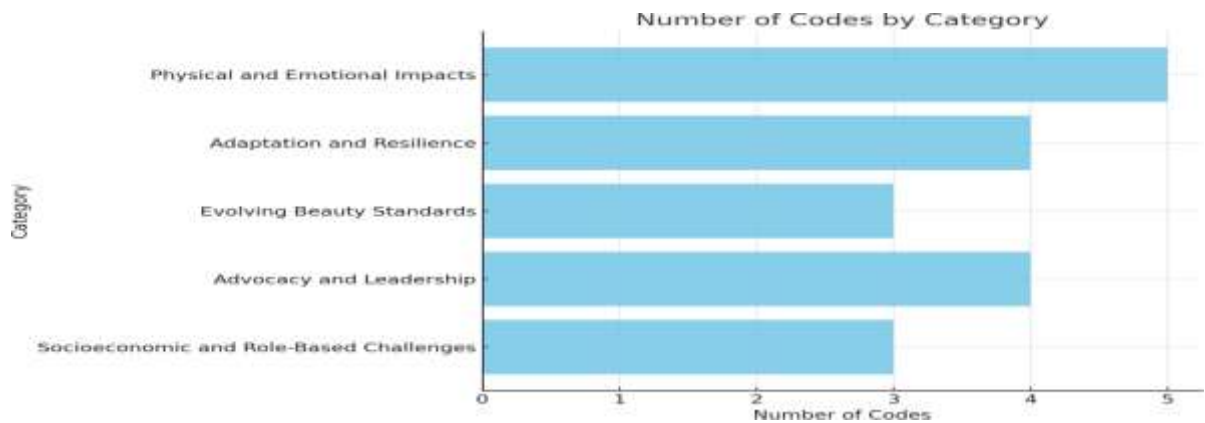
Platform for Advocacy: The event provided a global platform for contestants to showcase their environmental initiatives, amplifying their impact

These efforts indicate how pageant organizations can serve as catalysts for cultural and environmental change.

Category	Codes	Theme	Supporting Excerpts
Physical and Emotional Impacts	- Climate impacts preparation - Health-related challenges - Mental health strain - Logistical disruptions - Environmental stressors	<i>Climate-induced physical challenges</i>	"Contestants face challenges like heatwaves, lack of hydration, and inadequate sleep, which complicate maintaining beauty standards while prioritizing health."
Adaptation and Resilience	- Adapting routines - Holistic stress management - Peer support resilience - Advocacy as purpose	<i>Building climate resilience</i>	"Participants embrace holistic practices like yoga and meditation to cope with stress and enhance well-being."
Evolving Beauty Standards	- Natural beauty focus - Evolving beauty norms - Eco-conscious beauty balance	<i>Sustainability in beauty standards</i>	"Participants highlight the shift toward natural beauty and sustainable aesthetics in pageants."
Advocacy and Leadership	- Sustainability advocacy efforts - Social media advocacy - Community leadership - Criteria shift to sustainability	<i>Driving environmental advocacy</i>	"Contestants adopt eco-friendly practices, including carbon reduction, afforestation, and recycling, while leveraging social media to spread awareness."

Socioeconomic and Role-Based Challenges	- Resource access disparities - Juggling multiple roles - Balancing advocacy stress	<i>Navigating role-based stress</i>	"Married women juggle societal roles, pageant participation, and climate advocacy, leading to heightened stress."
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Table for Implications of Climate shifts on the married women beauty Pageant Participants

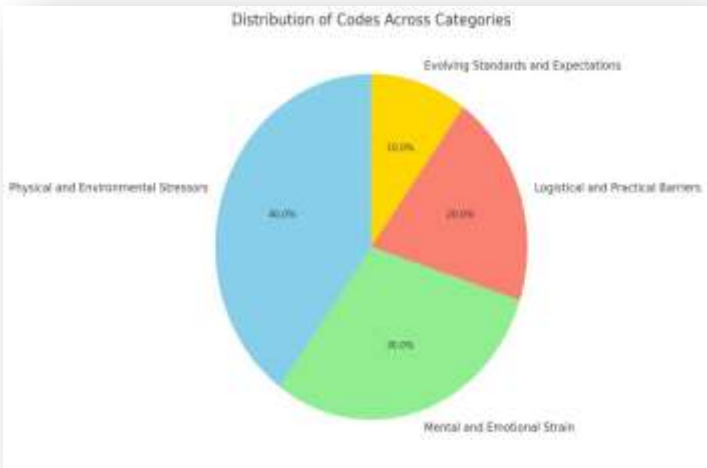


Bar Chart Depicting Participant Responses Across Climate Change Impact Categories

Category	Codes	Theme	Supporting Excerpts
Physical and Environmental Stressors	- Health-related stressors - Environmental stressors - Physical strain - Disparity in environmental impact	<i>Physical and environmental challenges</i>	"Contestants face challenges like heat waves, lack of hydration, and inadequate sleep, which complicate maintaining beauty standards while prioritizing health."
Mental and Emotional Strain	- Advocacy and role strain - Mental health impacts - Societal pressure stress	<i>Mental and emotional stressors</i>	"Emotional well-being is impacted by balancing personal roles and societal responsibilities."
Logistical and Practical Barriers	- Logistical challenges - Resource inequalities	<i>Logistical and resource constraints</i>	"Event logistics face disruptions from unpredictable weather." "Women in marginalized regions face greater challenges due to limited access to eco-friendly products and resources."

Evolving Standards and Expectations	Adapting to new standards	Pressure from evolving norms	"Navigating shifts in beauty standards toward health and sustainability creates additional pressure."
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Table depicting Challenges Faced in balancing pageant participation with climate-related stressors



Pie chart depicting response of participants in Challenges Faced in balancing pageant participation with climate-related stressors

The analysis of data from the study "Beauty beyond Adversity: Exploring the Effects and Challenges of Climate Change on Married Women Beauty Pageant Participants" highlights the profound ways in which climate shifts has influenced the lives and experiences of contestants. These effects manifest across physical, emotional, social, and logistical domains, with key themes highlighting both the challenges faced and the strategies adopted to overcome them.

Conclusion

Climate change imposes significant **physical and emotional stressors** on participants, influencing their ability to maintain traditional beauty standards. Contestants grapple with extreme heat, dehydration, and disrupted sleep patterns, which compromise their physical well-being and preparation routines. Environmental stressors such as air pollution and unpredictable weather further exacerbate these challenges. Additionally, juggling personal roles and responsibilities alongside pageant participation creates heightened mental health strain. Contestants' narratives illustrate the difficulty of balancing societal expectations with self-care and advocacy, leading to emotional exhaustion and logistical hurdles.

Despite these adversities, participants demonstrate remarkable **resilience and adaptability**. They incorporate holistic practices, including yoga and meditation, to manage stress and maintain their emotional and physical well-being. Peer support within the pageant environment provides an additional layer of resilience, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose. These strategies not only

enhance their ability to navigate the demands of the pageant but also empower them to take on leadership roles in environmental advocacy.

A significant shift in **beauty standards** has emerged, influenced by the challenges posed by climate change. Participants and pageant organizers alike increasingly emphasize natural beauty, minimalistic makeup, and eco-conscious fashion. This evolving paradigm prioritizes health, sustainability, and authenticity, reflecting broader societal shifts toward environmental awareness. Contestants who embody these values are more favorably evaluated, marking a departure from traditional norms centered solely on physical appearance.

The role of contestants as **advocates and leaders** in environmental sustainability is a critical theme. They engage in diverse initiatives, from promoting afforestation to encouraging recycling, and use social media to amplify their message. Advocacy has become an integral aspect of their participation, with pageant criteria now valuing environmental consciousness and community leadership. These efforts showcase the potential of beauty pageants as platforms for driving societal change and raising awareness about global challenges like climate change.

Nevertheless, **socioeconomic and logistical barriers** persist, particularly for contestants from marginalized regions. Limited access to eco-friendly resources and disparities in environmental impact create uneven playing fields. Contestants in disadvantaged circumstances face greater physical, emotional, and financial burdens, highlighting systemic inequities within the pageant industry. Addressing these disparities requires structural changes, such as greater inclusivity, resource distribution, and support systems.

In conclusion, the experiences of married women beauty pageant participants underscore the intersection of climate change, social roles, and evolving cultural expectations. While challenges abound, participants' resilience, adaptability, and commitment to advocacy highlight their transformative potential. By fostering inclusivity, sustainability, and support, beauty pageants can serve as powerful platforms for addressing global issues and inspiring change, blending the pursuit of beauty with meaningful social impact. This research illuminates the vital role of these platforms in shaping modern discourses on gender, environment, and resilience.

Limitations

- The small sample size (20 participants) limits the generalizability of findings.
- Language barriers may have influenced the depth of responses for non-native speakers of Hindi or English.

Significance

This study contributes to:

1. Understanding climate change's intersectional impacts on married women.
2. Informing strategies for promoting resilience and empowerment in the beauty pageant industry.
3. Encouraging sustainable and inclusive practices in the pageant industry. Women bear a greater burden of climate shifts, particularly those in vulnerable communities.
4. Married women in beauty pageants face unique challenges, balancing family responsibilities, pageant expectations, and environmental stressors.

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