

Feminist Perspective and Crisis Theory: An Inter-Sectional Analysis of Gender-Based Violence

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ABSTRACT

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a pervasive global issue that affects individuals across diverse socio-cultural contexts. This research article explores GBV within the framework of crisis theory, which posits that crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, economic downturns, and natural disasters, exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and inequalities, including those related to gender. Drawing on feminist perspectives and crisis theory, this article examines the ways in which crises intersect with gender-based violence, both in terms of exacerbating existing forms of violence and creating new challenges for survivors and service providers. The article also explores the role of social structures, cultural norms, and institutional responses in shaping the experiences of GBV survivors during crises. Through a comprehensive review of literature, this article aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics of GBV in times of crisis and to inform policy and practice for addressing gender-based violence in emergency contexts.

KEYWORDS: *Gender-based violence, Crisis theory, Feminist perspectives, COVID-19 pandemic, Social structures, Institutional responses*

INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a pervasive and multifaceted issue that affects millions of individuals worldwide, particularly women and girls. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), GBV encompasses a range of behaviors, including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse, that are perpetrated based on gender norms and unequal power dynamics (WHO, 2020). GBV is deeply rooted in social, cultural, and economic structures that perpetuate gender inequalities and discrimination.

In times of crisis, such as pandemics, natural disasters such as, earthquakes, hurricanes, and economic downturns the risk of GBV increases significantly. Crisis theory posits that crises exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and inequalities, including those related to gender, and can lead to a surge in GBV cases (Pearlin, 1989; Pearlin, 1991). This article examines the intersection of GBV and crisis through a theoretical lens, drawing on feminist perspectives and crisis theory to understand the dynamics of GBV in emergency contexts.

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Feminist scholars have long argued that GBV is not simply a result of individual pathology but is deeply rooted in patriarchal social structures that perpetuate gender inequalities (Heise, 1998). According to this perspective, GBV is a tool used to maintain power and control over women and girls, and is often exacerbated during times of crisis. Crisis theory further emphasizes that crises expose and intensify pre-existing vulnerabilities, including those related to gender, leading to an increase in GBV cases

Gender Based Violence	Research Studies
Tendencies in reporting violence	Barbosa et al, 2020; Boserup et al., 2020; Brodbury-Jones and Isham 2020; Brodley et al 2020; Chandan et al. 2020; Ghoshal et al., 2020; John et al., 2020; Kofman and Garfin, 2020; Mazza et al., 2020; Neil 2020, Rossie et al 2020; Roesch et al.,

	2020; Sacco et al 2020
Factors and vulnerabilities in violence	Anurudran et al., 2020; Barbosa et al, 2020; Brodbury-Jones and Isham 2020; Duncan et al. 2020; Mazza et al., 2020; Neil 2020, Rossie et al 2020; Ragavan et al., 2020; Thorne et al., 2020
Recommendations and prevention strategies	Anurudran et al., 2020; Duncan et al. 2020; Boserup et al., 2020; Brodbury-Jones and Isham 2020; Ferriera et al., 2020; Neil 2020, Rossie et al 2020; Ragavan et al., 2020

Methodology:

This research article is based on a comprehensive review of literature on GBV and crisis theory. The literature review includes scholarly articles, reports, and policy documents from academic journals, international organizations, and government agencies. The review aims to synthesize existing knowledge on the intersection of GBV and crisis, with a focus on understanding the underlying mechanisms and dynamics that contribute to increased GBV during crises.

This analysis adopted an exploratory approach, pulling diverse articles and related literature using keyword search techniques from platforms like Google Scholar, Science Direct, and the websites of publishing companies. A targeted checklist was utilised to examine the literature on Gender Based Violence, feminist theory and the crisis theory.

Discussion:

The findings of this research article underscore the need for a comprehensive and gender-responsive approach to addressing GBV in times of crisis. Policy makers and service providers must recognize the intersecting vulnerabilities that contribute to increased GBV during crises and implement measures to protect and support survivors. This includes ensuring access to essential services, such as helplines, shelters, and counseling, as well as addressing the root causes of GBV, such as gender inequalities and discrimination.

Intersectionality of Feminist Perspective and Crisis theory:

Crisis theory and feminist theory intersect in their analysis and understanding of gender-based violence, highlighting the importance of considering the broader social, economic, and political contexts in which violence occurs. Feminist theory provides a

framework for understanding how gender inequalities and power dynamics contribute to violence against women and marginalized genders, while crisis theory emphasizes how crises can exacerbate these inequalities, leading to increased vulnerability to violence.

Intersectionality: One of the key contributions of feminist theory to the study of GBV is the concept of intersectionality. Intersectionality recognizes that individuals experience multiple forms of oppression and discrimination based on their intersecting identities, such as race, class, sexuality, and ability. During crises, these intersecting identities can compound vulnerabilities, increasing the risk of GBV for marginalized groups.

Feminist theory posits that gender-based violence is not just a result of individual actions but is deeply rooted in societal structures and norms that perpetuate gender inequality and discrimination (Dekel, 2019). It highlights how patriarchy, sexism, and other forms of oppression create environments where violence against women and marginalized genders is more likely to occur. Crisis theory builds on this by suggesting that crises, such as economic downturns, natural disasters, or political instability, can intensify these inequalities, leading to an increase in gender-based violence (Griffin, 2015).

Feminist theory provides a critical lens through which to analyze the root causes of gender-based violence (GBV) and its intersection with crises. It emphasizes the role of power dynamics, social structures, and cultural norms in perpetuating violence against women and marginalized genders. By integrating feminist perspectives with crisis theory, we can gain a deeper understanding of how crises exacerbate existing inequalities and vulnerabilities, leading to increased rates of GBV. Feminist Perspective and crisis theory intersect in the context of understanding gender-based violence by recognizing that individuals experience oppression and discrimination differently based on the intersection of their various social identities (Women, 2020), such as gender, race, class, and others. During crises, these intersecting identities can amplify vulnerabilities, leading to unique forms of gender-based violence.

In the context of crisis theory, feminist theory underscores the importance of addressing the root causes of gender-based violence, rather than just its symptoms. This includes challenging gender norms and stereotypes, promoting gender equality, and empowering women and marginalized genders to participate fully in society (Bayeh, 2016). It also emphasizes the need for comprehensive and integrated responses to gender-based violence during

crises, taking into account the intersecting identities and experiences of survivors.

Overall, the relationship between crisis theory and feminist theory highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of gender-based violence. By integrating these perspectives, policymakers, activists, and practitioners can develop more effective strategies for preventing and responding to gender-based violence in times of crisis.

Modes and risk factors of Gender Based Violence during Crisis situations

In most of the crisis situations all over the globe, it is used as a coercive control strategy by perpetrators to exert further control in an abusive relationship, particularly through the use of confinement, fear, and the threat of infection as an abuse mechanism (Usher et al. 2020). Restrictive tactics may also play into the hands of those who abuse through control, surveillance, and coercion. Strict movement restrictions also cut off avenues of escape, help-seeking, and coping for survivors. (Bradbury Jones & Isham, 2020). Lockdown methods may, unintentionally, provide criminals more leeway to behave without inspection or penalty, leading to aberrant behaviour toward children. Aside from physical violence, which is not always present in abusive relationships, common tools of abuse include isolation from friends, family, and employment; constant surveillance; strict, detailed rules for behaviour; and restrictions on access to basic necessities such as food, clothing, and sanitary facilities (Taub 2020).

Controlling access to a mobile phone, as well as denying the space and time to call for family, friends, and, most importantly, aid, is a frequent technique of DV during COVID-19. A lockdown increases a person's capacity to isolate them, monitor their activities, and restrict their access to financial resources, work prospects, education, or medical treatment, even of the children (Xie et al. 2020). These behaviours frequently have long-term consequences for people and can have a substantial impact on their mental health and well-being. Domestic violence abusers typically isolate their victims as a form of control or to limit the possibility of revelation of abuse, and given contemporary cultural settings, this is quite likely, furthering the impact of these actions (Campbell 2020).

Domestic violence perpetrators frequently target children or even pets in the home in order to maintain control over the household (Campbell 2020). Researchers estimate that children living in a household where Gender Based Violence occurs are up to 60 times more likely to experience child abuse

or neglect than the general kid population. Furthermore, when domestic violence perpetrators additionally hurt animals in the home, it is frequently a signal of heightened danger for both human and animal members of the family. Almost 80% of victims who live in a household where domestic violence and pet cruelty co-occur describe daily terror of being killed by the offender (Campbell 2020).

The aggressive behaviour of the aggressor can lead to serious occurrences of violence, reaching its most extreme form with the bodily annihilation of the other (homicide), or it can be manifested in damaging ways such as sufferer acquiescence or exploitation. Isolation, when combined with psychological and economic pressures, enhances negative coping strategies (for example, excessive alcohol use), which might result in a wave of family violence unmatched in history (Usher, 2020). Substance addiction, financial stress, and isolation are all well-known major risk factor for Gender Based Violence.

Crisis Theory and Gender-Based Violence Dynamics: Crisis theory, in the context of gender-based violence (GBV) dynamics, refers to the idea that crises or critical moments in society can exacerbate existing forms of violence against women and other marginalized genders. These crises can be economic, political, environmental, or social in nature, and they often highlight and intensify underlying inequalities and power dynamics.

During crises, such as natural disasters, conflicts, or pandemics, gender-based violence tends to increase due to various factors (Cohen, 2017). These may include heightened stress and tensions, breakdowns in social order and support systems, displacement, and increased exposure to risk factors. For example, in the aftermath of a natural disaster, women and girls may face increased vulnerability to sexual violence and exploitation (Enarson & Chakrabarti 2009).

Crisis theory also emphasizes the importance of understanding how gender-based violence is not just a result of individual actions, but is deeply rooted in societal structures and norms. These structures can either exacerbate or mitigate violence against women and marginalized genders during crises (EG, 2002). For instance, existing gender inequalities in access to resources, decision-making power, and social support can worsen the impact of a crisis on women and marginalized genders (Bieri & Sancar 2009).

In a natural disaster like a hurricane women from marginalized communities, such as low-income women of color, may face compounded challenges compared to others (Crenshaw, 2013). They may be more likely to live in areas prone to flooding or have

less access to resources for evacuation or recovery (Hankivsky, 2012). This can increase their risk of experiencing gender-based violence, including sexual assault or exploitation, during and after the crisis.

Furthermore, existing societal inequalities can influence how crises are addressed and how resources are distributed. For instance, in the aftermath of a crisis, marginalized communities may face barriers in accessing support services or may be overlooked in relief efforts, exacerbating their vulnerability to gender-based violence. Intersectionality also highlights the importance of considering diverse perspectives and experiences in crisis response and prevention strategies (Yuval-Davis, 2006). By understanding how different social identities intersect and impact experiences of violence, interventions can be more targeted and effective in addressing the needs of marginalized communities (McCall, 2005). Intersectionality and crisis theory together underscore the complex and multifaceted nature of gender-based violence, highlighting the need for comprehensive and inclusive approaches to address these issues in times of crisis.

Crisis Response and Gender-Based Violence

Prevention: Crisis theory informs responses to gender-based violence during crises by highlighting the importance of holistic and integrated approaches that address not only the immediate needs of survivors but also the underlying social, economic, and cultural factors that contribute to gender-based violence (Connell, 2012; García-Moreno et al., 2010). Such approaches recognize that crises can exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and inequalities, making it crucial to address the root causes of violence to create lasting change (EG, 2002). One key aspect of crisis theory in this context is the recognition that gender-based violence is often a symptom of broader social, economic, and political crises (Jewkes, 2002). Therefore, responses must go beyond just providing immediate support to survivors and include efforts to address these underlying factors. This may involve strengthening social support systems, addressing economic inequalities, and challenging harmful gender norms and stereotypes (Sardinha et al., 2018). Additionally, crisis theory emphasizes the importance of coordination and collaboration among various stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, and communities, to ensure a comprehensive response to gender-based violence during crises (Connell, 2012)."

Crisis as a Catalyst: Crisis theory posits that crises serve as catalysts that expose and intensify pre-existing vulnerabilities within society (Smith, 1989). In the context of gender-based violence (GBV), crises can amplify existing power imbalances and

inequalities, making women and marginalized genders more susceptible to violence.

During crises, such as natural disasters, conflicts, or pandemics, social and economic systems often become strained, leading to disruptions in essential services and support systems (Bradshaw, 2004). This can exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, particularly for women and marginalized genders who may already face discrimination and inequality (Crenshaw, 1991).

For example, women and girls may face increased risk of violence during crises due to a combination of factors. Displacement, overcrowding in shelters, and breakdowns in law enforcement and security systems can create environments where perpetrators of violence are more likely to act with impunity (UN, 2020). Additionally, economic instability and loss of livelihoods can increase financial dependence on abusive partners or family members, further perpetuating cycles of violence (Jewkes, 2002).

Crisis situations can also intensify existing social norms and stereotypes that contribute to GBV. For instance, traditional gender roles may become more rigid during crises, leading to increased control over women's behavior and mobility (Connell, 1987). This can further restrict women's access to support services and opportunities for escape.

Response and Resistance: Feminist theory also emphasizes the significance of understanding how individuals and communities respond to crises. In the context of gender-based violence (GBV), feminist scholars have documented acts of resistance and resilience, as communities come together to support survivors and challenge gendered norms and practices that perpetuate violence (Connell, 2014).

During crises, such as natural disasters or conflicts, communities often mobilize to provide support and protection to survivors of GBV. This can include setting up temporary shelters, organizing community patrols, and providing medical and psychosocial support to survivors (Enarson & Chakrabarti, 2009).

These acts of resistance are crucial in shaping responses to GBV during crises and building more equitable and just societies. They highlight the importance of community-led approaches to addressing GBV, which prioritize the needs and voices of survivors (EG, 2002).

Furthermore, these acts of resistance challenge existing power structures and gendered norms, paving the way for more transformative change. By highlighting the resilience and agency of survivors and communities, feminist theory offers a framework

for understanding how individuals and communities can work together to create a world free from GBV (Stöckl et al., 2018). Thus, feminist theory provides a lens through which to understand the complex dynamics of GBV during crises, highlighting the importance of both individual and collective responses in building more resilient and just societies.

Policy Implications:

Applying crisis theory to address gender-based violence has significant policy implications, emphasizing the need for policies that prioritize gender equality, social justice, and human rights, especially during crises, to prevent and respond effectively to gender-based violence (Connell, 2012). Policies aimed at addressing gender-based violence during crises should be comprehensive, addressing not only the immediate needs of survivors but also the underlying factors that contribute to violence. This includes policies that strengthen social support systems, such as access to shelters, counseling, and legal assistance, as well as policies that address economic inequalities and promote women's economic empowerment (García-Moreno et al., 2010).

Furthermore, policies should challenge harmful gender norms and stereotypes that perpetuate violence and promote a culture of respect and equality (Jewkes, 2002). This may involve educational initiatives, awareness-raising campaigns, and the involvement of men and boys in efforts to prevent gender-based violence. Importantly, policies should be informed by the experiences and needs of survivors and should prioritize their safety, autonomy, and well-being. This requires a survivor-centered approach that ensures survivors have access to the support and resources they need to recover and heal (Stöckl et al., 2018).

Applying crisis theory to address gender-based violence highlights the importance of policies that prioritize gender equality, social justice, and human rights, especially during crises. By addressing the root causes of violence and promoting a culture of respect and equality, policies can help prevent and respond effectively to gender-based violence in times of crisis. By integrating feminist theory and crisis theory, policymakers can develop more effective and responsive policies to address GBV in times of crisis. This includes ensuring access to essential services, such as shelters and counseling, as well as addressing the underlying social, economic, and cultural factors that contribute to GBV. It also involves recognizing the agency and resilience of survivors and supporting community-led efforts to prevent and respond to GBV.

The integration of feminist theory and crisis theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing GBV in times of crisis. By centering the experiences of women and marginalized genders, and recognizing the intersecting nature of oppression, we can develop more holistic and effective strategies for preventing and responding to GBV, ultimately creating a more just and equitable society for all.

Gender-based violence is a complex and multifaceted issue that is exacerbated during times of crisis. By examining GBV through a theoretical lens, such as crisis theory and feminist perspectives, we can gain a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms and dynamics that contribute to increased GBV during crises. This research article contributes to the growing body of literature on GBV and crisis, highlighting the need for a comprehensive and gender-responsive approach to addressing GBV in emergency contexts.

Future Directions and Recommendations: Future directions and recommendations for addressing gender-based violence (GBV) through the lens of crisis theory include:

Integrated Response Systems: Developing integrated response systems that address the immediate needs of survivors while also addressing the underlying causes of GBV, such as inequality and discrimination. This includes strengthening coordination among stakeholders, such as government agencies, Voluntary organizations, and community-based organizations, to provide comprehensive support to survivors.

Prevention Strategies: Focusing on prevention strategies that address the root causes of GBV, including gender inequality, harmful gender norms, and lack of access to resources. This can include educational programs, awareness-raising campaigns, and community mobilization efforts.

Intersectional Approach: Adopting an intersectional approach that recognizes the diverse experiences and needs of survivors based on their intersecting identities, such as race, class, and sexual orientation. This can help ensure that interventions are tailored to meet the specific needs of different groups.

Data Collection and Research: Improving data collection and research efforts to better understand the prevalence and impact of GBV, particularly during crises. This can help inform evidence-based policies and interventions.

Capacity Building: Building the capacity of service providers, including health care workers, social workers, and law enforcement officials, to effectively

respond to GBV. This includes providing training on trauma-informed care, cultural competency, and survivor-centered approaches.

Legal and Policy Reforms: Advocating for legal and policy reforms that strengthen protections for survivors of GBV and hold perpetrators accountable. This can include reforms to criminalize GBV, improve access to justice for survivors, and enhance support services.

Community Engagement: Engaging communities in efforts to prevent and respond to GBV, including through community-led initiatives, grassroots campaigns, and partnerships with local organizations.

Global Collaboration: Fostering global collaboration and knowledge sharing on best practices for addressing GBV, particularly in the context of crises. This includes sharing resources, lessons learned, and innovative approaches to GBV prevention and response.

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can work towards a more comprehensive and effective response to GBV, particularly in the context of crises where vulnerabilities are often heightened.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the intersection of crisis theory and feminist theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing gender-based violence. Crisis theory highlights how crises can exacerbate existing inequalities and vulnerabilities, leading to increased rates of violence against women and marginalized genders. Feminist perspective, on the other hand, emphasizes the structural and systemic roots of gender-based violence, highlighting the importance of addressing gender inequalities and challenging harmful gender norms.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, policymakers, activists, and practitioners can develop more effective strategies for preventing and responding to gender-based violence during crises. This includes implementing policies that prioritize gender equality, social justice, and human rights, as well as promoting survivor-centered approaches that address the diverse needs and experiences of survivors. Overall, the intersection of crisis theory and feminist theory underscores the need for holistic and integrated responses to gender-based violence that address the root causes of violence and promote gender equality in all aspects of society.

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