



# The impact of Climate Change on Women and Mental Health

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## Abstract

Climate change brings exposure to heat, air, pollution, poorer quality food, and infectious diseases that have a significant direct impact on gender and mental health. It acts as a health risk amplifier and reinforces inequalities. These environmental impacts are multifaceted in their consequences and raise risks of depression, suicide, violent victimization, post-traumatic stress disorder, and various other psychiatric symptoms. Women also suffer increased climate psychological risks. Therefore, this study seeks to examine how climate change has impacted the mental health of women and it explores the role of religion and its effect on women's mental health. The study employed the scoping review methodology where relevant literature across applicable disciplines comprehensively reviewed the multiple pathways through which climate change interacts with gender and mental health. These climate change-fuel disasters are causing harmful impacts on women's mental health such as post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD), depression, anxiety, increased substance use or misuse, and suicidal thoughts. Furthermore, the effects of climate change extend to an individual's overall well-being. Considering the multiple and interconnected pathways of climate impacts and their influence on mental health determinants, we must inform evidence-based interventions. Thus, appropriate action like social support, family therapy, and bibliotherapy in depression and anxiety. Also, population-level interventions, changes in mental health policies, and psychosocial treatments that center on climate justice can reduce the current and future mental health burden, while simultaneously improving the conditions that nurture well-being and equality. Hence, climate change impacts on mental health and the role religion plays must be given greater attention in policy, practice, and research.

**Keywords:** climate change, depression, health, mental health, psychiatric symptom, women.

## Introduction

In modern times, humans are facing many severe and life-threatening environmental problems. Problems of climate change and its adverse effects on human health. Clayton, Manning, and Speiser (2021) noted that knowledge of the human health impacts of climate change offers a primer for learning the interconnected relationship of physical, mental, and community health and well-being (Clayton et al, 2021: 5). It is a challenge not only to the environment or humans but also to human health. The changing patterns of weather brings exposure to heat, drought, pollution, growing food and water insecurity, floods, and infectious diseases that have a significant direct impact on gender and mental health, especially the psychological health of women. According to Business Today Desk (2024) report:



Projections suggest that by the end of 2024, global temperatures will be at least 1.55 °C warmer than pre-industrial levels, according to data from the European Copernicus Climate Change Service making 2024 warmer than the previous years. Thus, it is now certain that 2024 will be the hottest year on record, marked by severe heatwaves and devastating storms, according to projections from the European climate service (Business Today Desk, 2024, para.1&2). Temperatures for the year, 2024 are on track to exceed 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, making 2024 the first year to surpass this symbolic threshold

As temperatures rises, it will affect weather patterns leading to more adverse effects on human existence and physical health.

The physical health impacts of climate change include respiratory issues such as asthma, increased risk of heat stroke, intensified and prolonged pollen season, increased spread of vector-borne diseases such as Lyme disease and dengue fever, and worsened cardiorespiratory functioning due to worsening air pollution (D'Amato, G., Cecchi, L., D'Amato, M., & Annesi-Maesano, 2014). Food and water security are increasingly at risk due to drought, flooding, and ice melting, which can impact human nutrition (Clayton et al., 2021: 14). Although there is much literature (Heshmati, 2020; Hsiang & Kopp, 2018) on the physical effects as well as the science behind climate change, there are often lesser, overlooked effects of climate change and its impact on women and mental health and the role religion plays in mitigating the effect of climate on women's psychological health.

Mental health refers not just to mental illness, mental problems, and mental disorders but also includes states of mental wellness, emotional resilience, and psychosocial well-being (WHO, 2017). Psychosocial well-being is the interplay between social and psychological conditions that shape human welfare. It is a broad term that encompasses the states of being mentally healthy, experiencing mental problems, and experiencing mental illness (CAMH, 2012). Alston (2013), indicated that women are disproportionately affected by the varying impacts of climate change. Due to pre-existing inequities facing women, such as poverty, gender-based violence (GBV), unequal access to resources and education, constraints on movement and freedom, and disproportionate caring responsibilities, women are particularly vulnerable to climate change (UN WomenWatch, para. 2).

Such situations negatively affect women and further impede their ability to adapt to extreme events and changes in their environment. During extreme events such as drought, floods, and other climate-related disasters, women are disproportionately affected by climate change facing heightened risks of poverty, violence (GBV) or unintended pregnancies (Berninger, 2024). On the contrary, women are also agents with important perspectives and indigenous knowledge, which can inform and influence solutions to address climate change (Alam et al., 2015: 11). Women act as farmers, workers, consumers, household managers, activists, leaders, and entrepreneurs. (United Nations Climate Action).

Evidence abounds on scholarly studies on the scientific and physical effects of climate change. However, the impacts of climate change on women and their mental health in relation to religion have not attracted the needed scholarly attention. There is a lot of research (National Institute of Health, 2024; Machalaba et al., 2021) done in the area of the physical health impacts of climate change, and women, as well as climate change and religion but very little, in relation to the mental health impacts. The scarcity of research works related to the impact of climate change on women and mental health from a religious perspective could be because the field of religious studies has



not yet reckoned with the psychological dimension of climate change and its effects on women's mental health. The climate scientist Mike Hulme argues, "The idea of climate exists as much in the human mind and the matrices of cultural practices as it exists as an independent and objective physical category" (Hulme, 2009: 28). As such, understanding it should include investigating how religious patterns of mind and formations of practice interpret climate change. Hulme has emphasized the influence of religious people, institutions, and ideas in constructing the meanings of climate change. Arguing for improved public understanding of the religious heterogeneity through which climate change is experienced and politicized, he writes that, "Science is never enough to resolve problems that are cultural in origin" (Hulme, 2017: 246). This implies that science alone cannot solve the challenges of climate change and its impacts on women's mental health. There must be a cultural indicator like home education or community lectures that teach people how to solve the issue of Climate change.

Therefore, the purpose of this scoping review is to understand what is known from existing literature regarding the impacts of climate change on women and mental health, as well as explore the role of religion and how it affects women's mental health. The researcher searched for relevant studies using a general internet Google search and several electronic databases, including Google Scholar, for publications that discuss women, mental health, and climate change and screening for relevant work; a few met the inclusion criteria and were included in the review. Themes derived from the reviewed studies include gender-based violence, burdens of care and responsibility, depression, and psychiatric symptoms. Despite an exploration of the literature on climate change and women as well as climate change and mental health, there are few works of literature on climate change impacts on mental health and women where religion is an underlying variable to consider. Could this be because religion has not yet reckoned with the impacts of climate change on women and mental health?

## **Materials and Methods**

The researcher followed the Arksey and O'Malley framework (2005) for a scoping review. By searching databases for publications that discuss women, mental health, religion, and climate change, and screening for relevant work. Seven studies that met inclusion criteria were included in the review. The research focus is climate change's impact on women and mental health. This study aimed to 1) examine how climate change has impacted the mental health of women and 2) explored the role of religion and how it affects women's mental health. Using Arksey and O'Malley's five stage framework for a scoping review, stage one begins with identifying the research questions. The research questions for the study is as follows: 1). what is known from existing literature about the impact of climate change on women and mental health? 2). what is the role of religion in affecting the mental health of women due to climate impacts?

The second stage identifies relevant studies, by searching electronic databases and reference lists, as well as by hand-searching key journals, Google Scholar, and existing networks.

The third stage comprised of study selection, with the establishment of inclusion/exclusion criteria. The researcher selected the appropriate studies and eliminated studies that were not central to the research question. Arksey and O'Malley suggest charting the data from all the selected studies and sorting information according to key issues and themes in the fourth stage.

The fifth stage is collating, summarizing, and reporting the results, which provides both a descriptive and numerical summary of the data and a thematic analysis. The sixth stage which is consultation was omitted due to scoping reviews help to discover the expanse of knowledge on emerging, understudied, and complex topics, making the impact of climate change on women



and mental health an appropriate topic for review. From these findings, there is a clear need for religious policies, practices, and research on adaptation and mitigation to reflect the importance of women's needs to ensure their safety and psychological health.

**Table 1: Key Search Terms**

Climate change	Mental health	Women	Religion
Climate, change, OR global warming OR greenhouses or gases	Health, psychological, psychic, mental, emotional	woman, gender, young women	Christianity, Islam, Christians, Muslims, African Indigenous Religion, traditions.

**Table 2: Inclusions and exclusions criteria**

Inclusion	Exclusion
Publications relevant to the work from 2007 to 2024 to have a wide range of materials to sort from when carrying out inclusion/exclusion criteria	Publications before 2007
Publications in English	Publications in a language other than English
Publications that include the experiences of women, young women, two-spirit people, gender, and religion	Publications that focus solely on the health of both men and women as well as children, and religion.
Publications that include the main concepts: climate change (weather patterns, knowledge of climate change, climate events and disasters), women (woman, young women, two-spirit people, female, gender), mental health	Publications that strictly focus on physical health or do not mention women, gender, or religion in their study results.

**Table 3: Charting Data**

Authors, year, country	Study purpose	Population	Design/Methodology	Key points
Cianconi et al, 2020	To argue that specific literature concerning climate events in relation to psychiatric disorders is still lacking and undefined.	N/A	Systematic Descriptive Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The effects of climate change can be direct or indirect.</li> <li>The consequences of exposure to extreme weather-related events can be delayed, encompassing disorders such as post-traumatic stress</li> </ul>
Stone et al, 2022	To understand what is known from existing literature regarding the mental health impacts of climate change on women	Women	Scoping Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The recognition of mental health and gender-based violence information by policymakers, especially in the field of emergency</li> </ul>



				<p>preparedness and response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of the burden of care and responsibility women experience by policymakers and how it is amplified by climate change.</li> <li>• Mental health initiative programs should consider the connection between women, land, and culture as strengthening these connections may promote human health.</li> </ul>
Ajibade et al, 2013	To explore the impact of the June 2011 flood event on women's lives, livelihoods, and health	Low, middle, and high-income women in Urban Lagos, Nigeria.	A mixed method of qualitative and quantitative analysis, including interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women advocate for access to safe housing and social amenities like clean water, which is a high priority.</li> <li>• There is a need for gendered responsibility sharing for child care and family care, which would reduce the stress load on women.</li> <li>• Women's participation in local and national disasters will build their resilience against climate change.</li> </ul>
Charlson et al, 2021	To assess original research studies related to mental health and climate change using online academic databases	N/A	Scoping Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence-based mitigation and adaptation in the area of climate change and mental health</li> <li>• Lack of research in the area of climate change and mental health</li> <li>• Lack of policies to safeguard mental health in the face of climate change.</li> </ul>
Jenkins et al, 2018	To understand the religious aspects of the cultural dimensions of climate change	Indigenous people	Literature Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the cultural dimensions of climate change requires understanding its religious aspects</li> </ul>



				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious interpretations of climate change arise from many traditions like formal statements, confessional scholarships, and public interpretations of climate change</li> <li>• Arguments over how to interpret climate change sometimes raise questions about human self-understanding, Earth's destiny, and cosmology.</li> </ul>
Rose Mensah Kutin, (2007-2008)	Overview of climate change in Ghana, its implications for women's livelihood, security and gender equality.	Women in Ghana	Review of the literature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survival spirit of women amidst climate disasters by developing coping strategies, including providing a meal daily to family members.</li> <li>• Incorporation of gender concerns into climate change discourse and processes.</li> </ul>
Hulme, Mike, 2018	To explore religious engagements with climate change	N/A	Commentary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious faith offers thick accounts of moral reasoning for acting in the world.</li> <li>• Religious traditions influence the cosmologies of believers and unbelievers.</li> <li>• Humanity's ecological relations have religious and cultural dimensions</li> </ul>

### Search Strategy

The search strategy used in this review was electronic databases. Potential publications to consider for this review were found by searching the databases. Key topics used included climate change, women, mental health, and religion. Key search terms provided in Table 1 were used for searches in each database. Search terms included "climate change," "disaster events," "mental health," "women," "depression," "PTSD," "GBV," "vector-borne disease," "drought," "floods," or "religion" or resilience" or "mitigation." Appropriate subject headings were then used in each database for key concepts. Most studies on climate change and mental health are primarily focused on the effects of extreme weather events. In order to refine the search, maintain a tightly linked focus on climate change, and guarantee that this was not a review of solely catastrophic



weather occurrences, the included studies had to have addressed climate change, even in passing, as possibly relevant to their primary area of study. Therefore, the three main search terms are still closely linked to the main topic of this review but are likely to capture a large number of studies on extreme weather events with religious underlying.

### **Selection of Relevant Studies**

The review included studies published with the key topics that discussed women's mental health in relation to climate change as well as religion concerning climate change. It included published journals, articles, reports, and commentaries from 2007 to 2024. Using the Arksey and O'Malley framework (2005), the title and abstracts of research studies were first screened followed by the researcher reading most studies to select relevant ones. The researcher then charted the relevant studies according to Arksey and O'Malley's descriptive-analytical approach (shown in Table 3).

## **Results**

### **Search Outcome**

By using the database search, 30 studies were screened, and the reference list of all publications was searched for relevant work that fit the inclusion and exclusion criteria. This process resulted in seven relevant publications being included in this review. Although this review included literature from the past years, most studies were from recent years. There was a wide range of study locations, with several taking in Nigeria, Ghana, and other parts of the world. Seven studies were assessed at full text for eligibility. Of the included studies, only three focused on all three of this review's key concepts – climate change, women, and mental health fully and equally. Most included studies focused on climate change and mental health or climate change and religion with a lesser focus on women. Other studies focused on climate change and gender, but mental health was not a primary component. A few studies focused on women and mental health but less focused on climate change, whereas others focused on physical health. Although most studies did not focus on women and mental health, all studies recommend that mental health be considered in climate discussions and adaptations or that responses and policies need to consider gender and/or the voices of women.

### **Themes**

Five themes emerged from the various articles read by the researcher. These themes were developed through thematic analysis: climate, women, mental health, and religion. Others include gender-based violence (GBV), culture, and tradition, and the importance of intersectionality.

### **Climate change and mental health outcomes**

A vast body of work on climate change and mental health is now emerging (Bourque & Willox, 2014. p. 415-22). Lancet, (2024) reports reveal that health threats of climate change have reached record-breaking levels. Changing weather patterns are causing an increase in natural disasters, which can have a direct negative impact on mental health (Liu, Vargahese, Hansen et al. 2021). Individuals exposed to extreme weather events such as droughts, heat waves, cyclones, floods, storms are also at increased risk of mental disorders including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and fear (Liu et al., 2021). Walinski (2023) assert, "The severity and duration of mental disorders following natural disasters may be increased by psychosocial stressors such as personal and financial loss and forced migration, by vulnerabilities such as pre-existing mental



disorders and low social support, and by insufficient mental health care of the which women are the most affected” (Lancet, 2024, para. 3).

Women Watch report on Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change states that when it comes to climate change and its effects on the environment and humans, women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than men. This is because women constitute the majority of the world's 1.3 billion poor and are more dependent on their livelihood are largely dependent on natural resources that are threatened by climate change. Women also face social, economic, and political barriers that limit their coping capacity (UN WomenWatch, para. 2) ). Hollands notes that "The climate crisis negatively affects mental health, thus escalating the vulnerabilities of marginalized communities, including women, who already face disproportionate consequences to climate change" (Hollands, 2023, para. 1).

Although women are forced to bear the brunt of the consequences of climate change, they have been systematically excluded from decision-making mechanisms and denied agency in deciding when and how to overcome the vulnerabilities they face (Alam et al., 2015: 11). From the studies of Ajibade et al. (2013) women in Nigeria reported feeling anxious regarding the health and safety of their children after flooding (p.13). This was due to the heightened risk of falling into a stream or contracting infectious water-borne diseases (Stone et al., 2022: 228). Boetto and McKinnon (2013) show that other studies reported women worrying about the well-being of their fellow women due to financial hardships caused by climate change. Women worry more than men about climate change (p. 234-247).

The World Health Organization (2013), Mental Health Action Plan states that worry is an emotion that, if not curbed, can lead to mental distress, as well as depression. However, worry has not been proven to be a mental health disorder. It has the tendency to lead one to depression or anxiety, which are mental health disorders. Climate change can cause mental health stress and distress symptoms like post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and suicidal thoughts (WHO, 2013). Post-disaster sites can also be physically dangerous for women, leading to depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), increased substance use or misuse, and suicidal thoughts (US Global Change, 2016).

### **Religion and Climate Change**

Jenkins, Berry, and Kreider (2018) claim that to fully have a grasp of climate change, one must understand its religious aspects, particularly how religion influences human experiences and human responses to climate change. Studies have advanced in the area of religion and climate change due to the relatedness of both themes. Varying scholarly research on climate and religion, as well as the significance of religion and climate change, among others, have generated scholarship with far-reaching implications. Jenkins et al (2018) argue that most scientists view climate change as a physical phenomenon that can be described apart from cultural influence but understanding the cultural dimensions of climate change requires understanding its religious aspects (p. 92). Taylor (2015) indicates that studies show that just because climate change is cultural, it does not mean that religious responses to it are intrinsically helpful (p. 7-18).

However, Hulme (2016), mentions that, there is a growing sense that religion –religious thought, institutions, and practices might have a part to play in shaping human responses to climate change (p. 239). Religion shapes the morals of humans as stated in a 2016 editorial in *Science*, the flagship journal of the American Association for the advancement of Science, Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo and Veerabhadran Ramanathan (2016), argued that "the resolution of major environmental problems facing society such as climate change] requires a fundamental





reorientation in our behavior and attitude toward nature and toward each other –this is a moral revolution" (p. 747). Although there are religious discourses, writings, and arguments on religion and climate change, there are fewer publications on the role of religion in the impact of climate change on women and mental health. Religious studies need to focus on the need to contribute religiously to the mental health of women occasioned by the impact of climate change.

### **Gender-based violence**

A review of some studies notes that there is an increase in gender-based violence (GBV) following extreme climatic events (Alston, 2013: 351). For example, Hayes (2019) states that after the 2013 flood in Alberta, Canada, High River experienced increased rates of sexual assault (Hayes, 2013). In the studies of Stone et al. (2022), they cited Demetriade and Esplen who suggested "that women and girls face domestic and sexual violence after a disaster, with adolescent girls reporting especially high rates of sexual violence and lack of privacy" (2009: 24). Rural women, women living in poverty, and low socio-economic women are prone to GBV. For example, women with low socio-economic status in Lagos, Nigeria, face high rates of domestic violence and other gender inequalities that make daily life challenging (Ajibade et al., 2013:13). Furthermore, women are the caretakers of their homes, and the increasing demand for livelihood and the need for survival has made most young women and girls vulnerable to gender-based violence. Sexual violence against women rises during and after extreme weather events, and this leads to women facing depression and emotional distress.

### **Vulnerable population**

The researcher identified a body of research related to populations and contexts that are viewed to be more vulnerable to climate change and mental health impacts. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Assessment Reports defines vulnerability as: "the propensity or predisposition to be adversely affected. Vulnerability encompasses a variety of concepts and elements including sensitivity or susceptibility to harm and lack of capacity to adapt. A broad set of factors such as wealth, social status, and gender determine vulnerability and exposure to climate-related risks" (Oppenheimer et al., 2014: 1048).

Charlson et al. (2021) mention that, the vulnerable population were the youth, indigenous people, women in rural communities, low socio-economic women, women living in poverty as well as young girls (Charlson et al., 2021). Women, young people, and people with low socioeconomic status are more vulnerable to anxiety and mood disorders related to disasters. For example, during floods, women, especially those who are part of an ethnic minority or have a lower level of schooling become especially susceptible to mental illness (Hollands, 2023). Ajibade et al. (2013) suggest that to prevent women from being discriminated due to their vulnerability in society, an approach like mentoring for local impact, empowering female entrepreneurs, and advocating for education ( that promotes women's empowerment and resourcefulness is required (p. 3).

### **Importance of Intersectionality**

There are intersections of gender, religion, race, socio-economic status, political frontiers, age, and women and men in discussing both recommendations, policies, and mitigations. For example, Ajibade et al. (2013) suggest that gender equality is needed in the labor market and the household; it is also noted that being middle or upper class protects women against the worst effects of gender biases and disaster impacts. Therefore, to protect women, it is advocated that the intersection of gender relations and roles, class, location, employment, status, and social entitlements like healthcare be addressed. Authors contend that when talking about the difficulties



posed by climate change, intersections of race, sexuality, age, and geography need to be considered (Demetriades & Esplen, 2015: 30).

## Discussion

This scoping review reveals a growing body of research on the impacts of climate change on women and mental health. There are vast studies with diversity in design and findings, but similar in their thematic developments. While the themes are different, they are sometimes related, particularly when it comes to the intersectionality theme, which addresses how race, age, income, socio-economic status, geography, and women and men can impact mental health outcomes, gender-based violence (GBV), religion, and traditions. The theme details women's experiences and outcomes within a changing climate. Women go through several emotions due to climate change than men. Studies show (Cianconi et al., 2020) that women experience certain psychological disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), mild to moderate depression (MMD), eco-anxiety, and mood disorders. However, it could not be determined that climate change disasters or extreme weather events are the only cause of negative emotional influence on women's mental health. Women's mental health was discussed concerning the increase in gender-based violence that women can experience post-disaster, where different studies discuss the psychological and emotional damage caused by domestic violence.

The effects of extreme weather and shifting weather patterns were another theme that aligned well with other literature. Most recent research (Ajibade et al., 2013) suggests that the impacts of extreme weather and changing weather patterns indicate that floods, wildfires, storms, drought, air and water pollution, and heat waves, as well as more chronic changes in weather patterns, such as sea level rise, melting permafrost, and ice, can all impact mental health negatively (Stone et al, 2022). There is a strong link between natural disasters and mental disorders. It has been determined that climate change will increase the frequency of extreme weather in the future (Cianconi et al., 2020 ). The physical attributes of the environment can cause behavioral changes, and the weather can have an impact on daily activities. Furthermore, themes on gender-based violence and women being sexually violated and responsible for the care of their families are consistent with broader literature. For instance, Meyiwa et al (2014) address the effects of gender-based violence and the unequal distribution of labor of which the World Health Organization, 2017, believes may be factored in the disproportionate number of mental health issues that women face globally. In contrast, there was less discussion of women's ties to land, culture, and tradition in the broader body of literature. Although recent literature has started to address the value of nature for women and girls (Spencer et al., 2021), this topic has not been covered about climate change, so it adds to the body of knowledge.

Another theme that connected well with other literature was religion and climate change. Religious engagement with climate change is very important since religion has a role in shaping ideas of climate change and at the same time, climate acts on religion. Therefore, research into both need to take into account that reflexive relationship. However, Pattinama and Ayhuan (2018) believe that, there is less literature on the role religion plays when it comes to the impact of climate change on women and mental health.

Religion is a matter of belief that helps a person to find an identity, behave nobly, and uphold the values of life, holiness, worship, honesty, and devotion to spirituality (Mangunjaya & Keseimbangan, 2016). Prianto et al. (2021) note that the major religions in the world (Christianity and Catholicism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism) have moral values that can be utilized in preventing climate change disasters and the implementation of teachings for sustainable actions. Nonetheless, these religious traditions appear to have failed in their role responsibility at curbing



climate change's impact on women and mental health. Research (Jenkins et al, 2018) continuously points to the commitment of religious stakeholders in combating the impact of climate change and extreme weather disasters affecting the environment but neglects the adverse impacts of these events on the vulnerable population, which is less represented in almost every facet of life –women and their psychological well-being. Religious scholars have not done much work when it comes to the mental health of women and how they are being affected by changes in weather patterns.

This review revealed gaps in the literature, where lack of focus on women, age, and awareness of climate change was present in many studies. Understandably, most literature focused on the religious implications of climate change, mental health risks of climate change, the importance of considering mental health within climate change, and how climate change affects women mentally compared to men. Six studies focused on climate change impacts on women and the effects it has on them. Five studies focused on the need for religions to be involved in the fight against climate change and the mechanisms to put in place.

Two studies focused on protective factors used in coping with mental health challenges and how to appropriately respond to them. An in-depth understanding of which characteristics constitute 'resilience' in the context of climate change would lead to a more nuanced picture of the relationship between climate change and mental health (Weissbecker, 2011), and could be helpful when devising programs and policies for those heavily impacted by climate change (Charlson et al., 2021).

There should be climate mitigation and adaptation actions that ensure that women and men benefit equally from mental health. These include actions such as providing good housing, equitable access to nature, and improving energy efficiency of housing. Implementation of appropriate strategies to manage and reduce the severity of negative mental health impacts on women are some of the actions that can be equally adopted. Furthermore, feminist theologians should prioritize the need for a framework for building confidence and resilience in women to rise from their dark circles and voice up. These actions will lead to an overall social justice, human security, and gender equality for women.

Also, young women and girls should be educated by their fathers and mothers on how to defend themselves when they face abusive situations and to voice out any form of abuse or gender violence they may encounter. They should also be equipped with the needed knowledge on how to handle post-traumatic stress disorders, respiratory diseases, and depressive situations caused by extreme weather conditions.

Further research should focus on women, mental health, and climate change impacts and religions' role in addressing these issues. This will help fill the gaps in the literature. More robust and methodological shreds of evidence linking religion's role in the link between climate change, mental health, and women. This will assist in knowing what interventions, policies, and decision-making mechanisms can be put in place to mitigate the psychological impact of climate change on women and the role of religion since climate change represents the greatest global threat to the world.

Finally, there was a lack of publications dedicated to analyzing the role of religion in handling the emotional and psychological distress associated with the knowledge of climate change events and mental health issues, which has been identified by several authors as an important area of study (Albrecht et al., 2007, p. 95).



## Recommendations for Future Research

To address the identified gaps in the literature, future research should specifically explore the experiences of women and climate change. More attention should be paid by religious stakeholders in faith and practice on how to either engage with or potentially engage with climate change and its impacts on women and mental health. Also, a better understanding is needed of how individual believers interpret doctrinal, ethical, and behavioral statements on climate change disasters, causes and effects of mental health, of people more vulnerable to climatic events issued by faith leaders, and how these are understood by followers.

Future research should explore the gendered impact of knowledge and awareness of the overarching problems humans worldwide face due to climate change with religious influence, as there is currently little study on this topic with a gendered lens (Stone et al., 2022). Contemporary research should investigate religious engagements with the most vulnerable in society: women and young girls. What are the policies and interventions religious leaders engage in to address the climatic impact on the mental health of women? How do they evaluate the effectiveness of these policies and interventions?

The author recommends investigation of social interventions at religious gatherings where various health professionals, including mental health nurses, clinical psychologists, and psychiatrists, will outline ways of handling mental health problems related to climate change within clinical practice and broader policy, highlighting the strong willingness to act in the medical community.

The clergy and laity have the responsibility to protect the health of their women and future generations and this calls for both governmental and religious interventions. The author suggests the need for policies aimed at safeguarding the mental health of women in the face of climate change at various religious institutions.

Finally, as further research emerges on women, mental health, religion, and climate change, it is suggested that future research should compare and contrast women's experiences across the globe and throughout different environments, climates, and cultures (Stone et al. 2022).

## Limitations

This review identified studies examining women's mental health in the changing climate. To date, studies have primarily focused on gender and climate change, mental health and climate change, or religion and climate change. To the best of my knowledge, this may be the first review that has explored emerging fields, both secular and religious, to uncover what is known about women's mental health during climatic crisis. The researcher was unable to assess the quality of the literature since scoping reviews do not assess the quality of the literature. Also due to the limited number of publications with respect to this topic and the fact that climate change is a global phenomenon, it made it challenging to compare and contrast women's experiences around the world in different religious contexts. Again, only publications in English were reviewed making the scope of research more limited.

## Implications

The information on climate impact on women and mental health can help push forward equity-based interventions on climate adaptations and mitigation. As religious institutions are researching climate change's effects on the environment and human lives, more attention should be focused on its adverse effects on women's mental health and how preventive measures can



be put in place to manage the intensity and impacts. The information on mental health can help theologians come out with policies, especially in the field of emergency preparedness and response, as women tend to be affected or face an increased risk of violence after extreme weather. Religions should prioritize the mental health of their women as equally important to other fields of endeavors that seek attention since women together with men form a segment of society that can help in the fight against the adverse effects of climate change on the psychological health of women.

## Conclusion

This review has shown that climate change impact on the mental health of women and the role of religion and its effect on women's mental health represents a rapidly growing area of research. In order to respond with evidence-based mitigation, interventions and adaptation measures, it must accelerate and expand its scope as it is underdeveloped. Women from the selected studies experienced negative mental health outcomes such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, fear as well as gender-based violence as a result of climate changes. Studies also showed how sexual violence against women rises during and after extreme weather events, leading to depression and emotional distress.

The selected studies demonstrated that comprehending the religious dimensions of climate change can aid in understanding the phenomenon, particularly the role that religion plays in women's lives and the effects it has on their mental health when weather patterns change. Finally, studies showed the importance of intersectionality such as race, sexuality, age and geography in curbing women inequity.

Gaps from the literature include a lack of focus on women, religion and awareness of climate change. Given the significance of examining what interventions, policies, and decision-making mechanisms can be implemented to mitigate the effects of climate change on women's mental health as well as what can be done in various religious contexts, future research should concentrate on developing a more methodological, evidence-based link between the impact of climate change on women's mental health and the role of religion and its effects on women's mental health.

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> "Climate change' means a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable periods." UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), art. 1, May 9, 1992, 1771 U.N.T.S. 107, accessed May 29, 2024 [https://unfccc.int/files/essential\\_background/background\\_publications\\_htmlpdf/application/pdf/conveng.pdf](https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/background_publications_htmlpdf/application/pdf/conveng.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Mental health refers not just to mental illness, mental problems, and mental disorders but also includes states of mental wellness, emotional resilience, and psychosocial well-being. Psychosocial well-being is the interplay between social and psychological conditions that shape human welfare; a broad term encompassing the states of being mentally healthy, experiencing mental problems, and mental illness.

<sup>3</sup> "to map rapidly the key concepts underpinning a research area and the main sources and types of evidence available, and can be undertaken as standalone projects in their own right, especially where an area is complex or has not been reviewed comprehensively before." Mays, Arksey H, O'Malley L: *Scoping studies: towards a methodological framework. International Journal of Social Research Methodology: Theory & Practice*. 2005, 8:5. *Google Scholar*

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