

**Disastrous Violence: A Feminist Exploration of  
Gendered Vulnerability in the Climate Disaster  
Typhoon Haiyan**

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## **Abstract**

Disaster studies, and climate policymaking has been primarily approached from a natural science-based perspective. However, gender is an important factor that determines an individual's vulnerability to climate extremes and disasters and needs to be recognized in policymaking and disaster-risk reduction management. One form of such gendered vulnerability is vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence. Studies have shown that in the wake of a climate disasters, (sexual) violence against women increases. One such example is the case study of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. In the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, reports of increasing violence against women were alarming.

Through an intersectional, ecofeminist gender analysis, this thesis seeks to identify causes for the increase in violence after Typhoon Haiyan by considering humanitarian challenges the typhoon posed, as well as how the typhoon intersected with existing societal and patriarchal structures of inequality creating and enabling gendered violence. Through the example of the case study, this thesis examines how insights on gendered dynamics in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan can be used to strengthen policy frameworks on disaster-risk reduction and climate mitigation to reduce gendered vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence.

Gender, disasters, and climate change can no longer be treated as separate issues. An intersectional, ecofeminist and gender-transformative approach to policy frameworks is essential to treat gender, disaster-risk reduction, and climate change goals as inseparable, as the move towards sustainability and climate justice cannot be achieved without addressing and transforming inequalities producing gendered vulnerabilities.

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## Introduction

Climate change poses one of the greatest current societal challenges. Scientific data on climate change is alarming. The accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere has increased global temperatures, alternating weather patterns, and led to an increase in climate disasters, including wildfires, heat waves, hurricanes, typhoons, and floods (IPPC 2014)<sup>1</sup>. This has had devastating impacts on humans, such as food insecurity, water shortages, social instability, threats to health and safety, or the spread of vector-borne diseases (Gaard 2015).

Due to the increasing number, and intensity of climate disasters, over the last decades, disaster-risk reduction studies have gained traction in academia (including Crutzen 2000; Fordham 2013; Galaz 2017; Hewitt 1997; Oliver Smith 1999; Wisner et al. 2003) and policy making. Disaster-risk reduction involves identifying, assessing, and reducing the risks of disasters. With it comes the recognition that vulnerabilities and resilience to disasters varies, based on social, economic, and political factors (Zibulewsky 2001). Whilst climate change is a global threat, its effects are unequally experienced, as countries and individuals facing the greatest risk tend to be the least responsible for climate change, and the least capable for mitigating or adapting to its effects (Eastin and Dupuy 2021). The world's poor and marginalized populations are especially at risk of facing adverse effects of climate disasters, as their livelihoods are more sensitive to climate disruption, they have fewer resources to invest in livelihood diversification and other adaptation strategies, and often lack decision-making power to compel political action (Burton 1993; Eastin and Dupuy 2021; Nobre et al. 1992).

Recognizing distinctions in the levels of people's vulnerability to climate disasters is essential to not only understand but also reduce vulnerabilities and increase resilience. However, to properly understand various factors contributing to vulnerability, a feminist intervention of disaster-risk studies developed in recent years (including Aurora-Johnson 2017; Enarson and Pease 2016; Fordham et al. 2013; Rydstrom and Kinnvall 2019). Feminists have argued that consequences of climate disasters are not gender neutral. Gender is an important

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<sup>1</sup> A disaster is commonly defined as a "serious disruption of a community or a society causing widespread human, material, economic, or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources" (UNISDRR 2009). This definition includes disasters caused by natural hazards, as well as human actions, such as war or terrorism (NSVRC 2021). Disasters are expected to increase in the common decades due to climate change (Flavelle and Fountain 2020). The number, intensity, duration, and impact of these events are predicted to climb as increasing global temperatures lead to rising sea levels and more precipitation, flooding, droughts, and heatwaves (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2015; Kaplan 2020).

factor that determines one's vulnerability. Research has focused on reframing discourses around disasters, an area of study that has been dominated by natural sciences, in order to make women visible in the debate around climate change and disasters. For instance, research highlighted how women are more likely to die in disasters, women have unequal access to resources, suffer under gendered divisions of labour, and decision-making powers, which negatively affects their abilities to respond to climate disasters (Babugura 2010; Bradshaw 2013; Denton 2002; Gaard 2015; Le Masson et al. 2019; Thomas 2020).

What is more, studies have highlighted how violence against women in the aftermath of a climate disaster can increase (Amnesty International 2011; Baker and Cunningham 2005; Le Masson et al. 2019). One such example is Typhoon Haiyan that caused devastating destruction and major humanitarian challenges in the Philippines in 2013. In the wake of Typhoon Haiyan, reports of high rates of violence against women were alarming. Different forms of violence against women were reported, including sexual assault and rape, intimate partner and domestic violence, sex trafficking, and psychological violence in forms of threats of violent acts.

Given the recognition that spiking violence against women, and climate disasters, are connected; in this thesis, I argue that violence against women is a form of gendered vulnerability that undermines women's resilience in times of a disaster. Moreover, this thesis is an effort to understand why violence against women, and gendered vulnerability to violence emerged after the climate disaster Typhoon Haiyan. I aim to identify how the humanitarian challenges that the typhoon created amplified violence; as well as how deeper, and underlying structures of inequality construct gendered vulnerability that creates violence against women, subordinates them, and undermines their resilience capabilities. Furthermore, in a second step, I explore lessons that can be learned from the case study in terms of identifying, addressing, and transforming vulnerability through a feminist intervention to disaster-risk management and climate mitigation policies.

Whilst I specifically focus on the subject of women in this thesis, I pay much attention to larger systems of gender and oppression and consider the intersectionality of gender with other systems of inequalities.

This research is situated within a broader debate on gender, climate change, and disasters, that places the social construction of gendered vulnerability at its focus and aims to contribute to feminist critiques of climate change and disaster risk reduction policy frameworks.

The research questions are the following: How have patterns of gender-based violence in the Philippines in the aftermath of the climate disaster Typhoon Haiyan intersected with, and exacerbated gendered vulnerability and pre-existing cultural and social inequalities? How were

women specifically affected by Typhoon Haiyan and what insights can be drawn from these gendered effects on the relation between gender and climate change? How has the national and international climate and disaster-risk policy considered gender differences in the management of the effects of the Typhoon? And why is an ecofeminist and intersectional gender-transformative approach to climate mitigation and disaster-risk reduction necessary to reduce gendered vulnerability to climate disasters and achieve climate justice?

To answer these questions, I make use of theoretical scholarship both from disaster-risk studies, as well as feminist theory, including on ecofeminism and on violence against women, which I elaborate on in the first chapter. After describing the methods, epistemologies, and positionality of this research in chapter two, I analyse the case study in chapter three. This chapter provides empirical context information on the Philippines and Typhoon Haiyan, as well as on the state of gender equality in the country. Moreover, I examine the rise of cases of sexual violence against women after the Typhoon, and analyse reasons for this violence, both as a result of conditions the disaster created through its destructiveness, insufficient disaster management mechanisms, as well as due to underlying gender systems that produce inequalities between genders. In chapter four, I discuss lessons that can be learned from the case study for the development of an intersectional, ecofeminist, and gender-transformative intervention to disaster-risk reduction, and climate mitigation policies.

The topic of this research is of high relevance, as the increasing number of climate disasters pose unprecedented social challenges. The case study of Typhoon Haiyan is one example of how a disaster negatively affected women, based on gendered vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities need to be understood and addressed in societies and disaster-risk management to prevent disproportionate human suffering from continuing to happen in times of crises and to increase resilience capabilities. Climate justice, and the move towards sustainability, cannot be achieved if matrixes of oppression, including gender inequality, continue to exist.



# Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

In this thesis, I analyse why gendered vulnerability to sexual violence against women and girls increases after a climate disaster, as analysed through the case study of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. Furthermore, I aim to show how the lived experiences of survivors of sexual violence after Typhoon Haiyan can be used as a learning lesson for the development of disaster-risk and climate mitigation policy frameworks, that place addressing underlying causes of violence against women and girls at the forefront of reducing gendered vulnerability to violence after climate disasters. To develop these arguments, a thorough theoretical framework building on disaster-risk studies and feminist theory is necessary. I do this by first elaborating how the concept of vulnerability is understood in this thesis, and what the connections between gender and vulnerability are. Then I proceed to discuss ecofeminist theory and intersectional approaches to political ecology, to examine why an ecofeminist analysis is useful to understand gender as a complex and intersectional factor contributing to vulnerability in climate disasters. Lastly, to understand the emergence of sexual violence against women and girls after a climate disaster, I will discuss disaster-risk and feminist theory on causes of violence against women.

## 1.1 Vulnerability and Gender

To understand how gendered vulnerability in the context of the Philippines has led to violence against women and girls, in the following section I elaborate on the relation between the concept of vulnerability and that of gender. The concept of vulnerability allows me to further understand how power operates in the context of climate disasters and determine how differential levels of vulnerability based on multiple and intersecting factors, including gender, emerge from societal power structures.

### 1.1.1 Vulnerability and Disaster-Risk Studies

Vulnerability is a central concept that is widely applied in disaster-risk management and studies. As an effort to understand and reduce disaster risks, vulnerability has been determined as one of the principal factors to assess the differentiated levels of disaster-risk (Kim et al. 2021).

According to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR 2022), vulnerability refers to “the conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes which increase susceptibility of an individual, a community,

assets or systems to the impacts of hazards.”<sup>2</sup> From the perspective of the United Nations, vulnerability involves a multitude and combination of factors that determine the degree to which someone’s life, property, or livelihood, are put at risk by crises or conflicts. This definition has been taken up by various disaster-risk scholars (Fordham 1999; Hewitt 1997; Wisner et al. 2003).

Maureen Fordham (1999) relates varying degrees of a person’s vulnerability in the aftermath of a disaster to larger systems of social power. On a similar note, Kenneth Hewitt (1997) calls for a mapping of “geographies of vulnerability” (164) to understand how states of social equality prior to and after disasters affect vulnerability. Mapping vulnerabilities leads to the understanding that some groups of people, based on various factors, are more vulnerable to disasters than others and it means understanding the causes for such vulnerability (Rydstrom and Kinnvall 2019).<sup>3</sup>

Vulnerability theory thus is not only concerned with the understanding of vulnerability but also with the building of resilience, as well as paying attention to the societal dynamics that structure the vulnerability/resilience relation (Fordham et al. 2013; Oliver-Smith 1999; Rydstrom and Kinnvall 2019).

### 1.1.2 Women, Gender, and Vulnerability in Disasters

A central tenant of vulnerability theory, as framed by the United Nations, as well as a multitude of disaster-risk scholars, has been that “women always tend to suffer most from the impact of disasters” (UN/ADPC 2010, 6), positioning them as the most vulnerable group (Agarwal 2010; Aguilar 2007; Burton 1993; Gaard 2015). Studies conducted by scholars, as well as the UN, have highlighted how women were more likely to die in climate disasters (Aguilar 2007; Thomas 2020)<sup>4</sup>, had less resources to sustain livelihoods (Babugura 2010), were more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and trafficking during a crisis (LeMasson et al. 2019), or how women and girls were less likely to be provided with food during times of food scarcity, making them more susceptible to malnutrition and disease (Thomas 2020).

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.undrr.org/terminology/vulnerability>

<sup>3</sup> For instance, scholars have largely identified that the Global South disproportionately struggles with climate-related disasters, compared to the Global North (Crutzen 2000; Galaz 2017; Rydstrom and Kinnvall 2019). Some reasons for this discrepancy are related to how local communities’ living conditions, livelihoods, autonomy, legal protection, and rights are already being compromised, which exacerbates their vulnerability to disasters (Babugura et al. 1992; Burton 1993; Nobre et al. 1992; Rydstrom and Kinnvall 2019).

<sup>4</sup> A study by Aguilar (2007) showed how women were 14 times more likely to die during an ecological disaster compared to men. Another study about the cyclone and flood in Bangladesh in 1991 showed that women constituted 90 percent of victims (Gaard 2015). Moreover, during the 2004 tsunami in Aceh Sumatra, more than 75 percent of those that died were women (Thomas 2020).

Scholars have highlighted how these vulnerabilities result from existing inequalities within a society, such as unequal access to resources, gendered divisions of labour, and lack of decision-making power, which negatively affects women's ability to respond to effects of climate change and disasters (Babugura 2010; Kabeer and Sweetman 2015; Le Masson et al. 2019). Thus, whilst women, are more vulnerable to climate change, their vulnerability is not innate, but a result of inequalities produced through gendered roles, discrimination, and poverty, and more general patriarchy (Gaard 2015). A crisis such as a climate disaster does not arrive in a socio-economic and political void (Rydstrom and Kinvall 2019), as the autonomy and rights of women and girls might have been already limited before the crisis. A disaster intersects with gender specific inequalities that already underpin social life in ordinary times, and might, in doing so, exacerbate gender inequality (Enarson and Chakrabarti 2009; Enarson and Pease 2016).

Furthermore, gender inequalities should not be understood in a gender essentialist way. It is my argument that biological differences do not determine vulnerability, but that vulnerability results from the social construction of gender roles and relations creating power inequalities. The argument that the social construction of gender constructs differentiated gendered vulnerability will be explored in greater detail with the case study of Typhoon Haiyan in chapter three.

Indeed, gender is understood in this thesis as a social construct. Gender, as introduced by Simone de Beauvoir in 1949, refers to sex as a bodily materiality upon which a socially constructed sex, called gender, is formatted. The argument of a social construction of gender positions society, not biological sex differences, as the basis for gender identity. As gender identities are hegemonically constructed into a binary of male and female, gender determines what is expected and valued in a woman or man in a society, as well as how it shapes relationships between genders. These gender attributes, relationships, and expectations are socially constructed and learned through a socialization process that is context- and time specific, and not fixed.

Moreover, gender is consolidated at particular sites through intersections with other defining identity factors such as sexuality, race, class, age and disability (Crenshaw 1989).

An intersectional lens to disaster-risk studies has been taken up in more current feminist scholarship discussing the relation between women and the environment (Enarson 1998; Fothergill 1999; Fordham 2011). Scholars have emphasised that gender is not the sole driving factor determining one's vulnerability but interacts with other existing and emerging inequalities in resource access and distribution, economic and social opportunities, and

historical patterns of social domination and marginalisation (Enarson 1998). Moreover, this intersectional approach to disaster-risk studies has highlighted that social factors contributing to vulnerability are susceptible to change and can be renegotiated under new drivers of change, which is why degrees of vulnerability and resilience may change in new or developing social situations (Ravera et al. 2016). The argument of the intersectionality of factors contributing to vulnerability are closely linked to recent ecofeminist arguments on intersectionality that I elaborate on in the following section of this chapter.

## 1.2 Ecofeminist Theory and Intersectional Approaches to Political Ecology

Arguments from disaster-risk studies around the connections between gender and vulnerability, deriving from unequal power structures, disadvantaging disproportionately women, are closely connected to ecofeminist theories regarding the connections between women and nature. In the following section, I outline the evolution of ecofeminist arguments, starting from early arguments on women's connection to nature, to more contemporary understandings of ecofeminism that highlight social constructions around women's positionality to nature, and the need for an intersectional gender analysis. With this, I elaborate on why contemporary intersectional ecofeminist theories are useful for disaster-risk studies, and addressing women's vulnerabilities in a disaster, based on an analysis of power relations.

Ecofeminism emerged in the 1970s and 1980s from the intersections of the feminist and environmentalist movements. The term 'ecofeminism' was first coined by Francoise d'Eaubonne (1974) to refer to the connection between feminist issues and ecological concerns emerging as an outcome of male oppression. Additionally, ecofeminist theory was spearheaded by works such as Susan Griffin's *Women and Nature* (1978) and Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature* (1980).

Griffin's (1978) *Women and Nature* examined "the ways that the feminized status of women, animals, nature, and feminized others [...] have been conceived as separate and inferior in order to legitimate their subordination under an elite and often violent and militarized male-dominant social order" (Gaard 2015, 28). Similarly, in *The Death of Nature*, Merchant (1980) outlines how the domination of women and nature have shared roots in science and capitalism.

Moreover, early ecofeminist scholars have theorized that women were closer connected to nature than men, positioning the need for women's agency over the management of the biodiversity of plants, and natural resources at the forefront of the 'green revolution' (Shiva

1988; Mies and Shiva 1993). Similar theories have linked the degradation of nature to the oppression of women through patriarchy, arguing that the liberation of nature from exploitation cannot be achieved without the liberation of women (Mallory 2010; Meinzen-Dick et al. 2014; Leach 2016). Central to such early ecofeminist argument is the belief that systems of power, gender, and the environment are strongly intertwined. The domination of women is therefore ideologically linked with the domination of nature. According to Freya Mathews (2017), this stems from the recognition, specifically in Western traditions, that the category of female is constructed in opposition to male, whilst the category of nature is constructed in opposition to culture (57). This opposition is hierarchical in the sense that it not only dichotomizes male and female, but also places men above women, and culture above nature. Women are made synonymous with nature to man's culture, therefore justifying men's/culture's domination over women/nature.

Additionally, a subset of ecofeminist scholarship, called "women, environment, and development" emerged, that has centred their research on a particular feminine subject, typically a woman from the Global South specifically vulnerable to environmental degradation, who simultaneously holds the potential of being an 'agent of change' for environmental care and protection (Dankelman and Davidson 1988; Sontheimer 1991; Rodda 1993). I argue that this argument aligns itself with much research on women in disaster studies and climate research that I have detailed earlier. Instead of analysing the broader and more complex category of gender, in this research, women are framed both as victims of environmental degradation and climate disasters, as well as caretakers of their environment that possess unique knowledge (Resurreccion 2017).

However, "women, environment, and development" scholarship, and early ecofeminist theory have been heavily criticised for being too essentialising and creating a universal subject of women that fails to recognise the diversity of social situations and environmental realities that women are located in. For instance, Brinda Rao (1991) has suggested that instead of accepting a perception of feminine roles in environmental discourses, women need to be contextualized as they respond to complex environmental realities and to consider how their location and engagement with institutions and nature are socially determined and resource-dependent (Resurreccion 2017). The same disavowal of the perceived natural connection between women and the environment is also highlighted by feminist scholar Cecile Jackson (1993). She challenges essentialist perceptions of an inherent connection between women and nature and highlights how historically and socially constructed power relations between genders

are continuously reformulated, entailing that there is no fixed relationship between women and nature.

Furthermore, Bina Agarwal (1992) criticized the essentialized relationship between women and nature, as it failed to understand the diversity of women's experiences and the complex material realities of their interactions with the environment. Agarwal understands women's interactions with the environment as socially constructed, instead of there being an inherent connection between women and nature. Gender, class, and caste divisions, among others, shape women's experiences of environmental change and their knowledge and responses to environmental degradation. Women's relationship with nature is not a universal experience, but is shaped through a complex interplay of ideology, power, and inequality.

Bernadetta Resurreccion (2019) refers to a growing body of scholarship (including Harris 2006; Elmhirst 2011, Leach 2015; Nightingale 2006; Sundberg 2017), referred to as "Feminist Political Ecology", that emerged as a response to these interventions. These scholars focus on complex gendered and social experiences of loss, disadvantage, dispossession, and displacement in the ecologies and structures that humans are embedded in (Resurreccion 2017). Feminist political ecology takes on an intersectional analysis of societal and environmental relations and rejects single-axis analysis of subjectivities (May 2014). Contemporary ecofeminist theory has argued that in the production of gender, subjectivities are dynamic, intersectional, and continuously evolving, which locates a depart from an essentialist feminine subject (Nightingale 2003). Thus, intersectionality has become an increasingly critical concept constituting ecofeminist theory.

The concept of intersectionality was first conceptualized by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Crenshaw developed the concept within the context of Black Feminism to show the unique position of black women in relation to experiences of discrimination, based on the intersectionality of gender and race. Intersectionality shows the interlocking nature of systems of oppression, tied to the intersectional nature of identity. Whilst the concept of intersectionality originated in critical race studies and black feminism, focusing particularly on the intersections between race and gender, the concept was soon taken up by many feminist scholars to analyse a variety of intersecting factors of advantages and disadvantages, including gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, religion, and disability.

The concept of intersectionality has gained relevance in many different subsets of feminist scholarship, including ecofeminism. Intersectionality has provided ecofeminism with the opportunity to confront problems of earlier essentialising and exclusionary theories that I have detailed above (Kings 2017). An intersectional approach to ecofeminist theory aims to

understand women's, men's, and other gender identities relationship with the environment by considering interactions between gender and class, varying ecological dimensions, and the effects of climate change and climate disasters (Agarwal 1992; Seager 2003). Moreover, through the ideological shift from 'women to gender' as a subject of analysis, intersectionality aims to understand how different axes of experience and identity, such as gender, sexuality, class, caste, race, age, or education intersect and produce different effects that cannot be explained by analysing just a single category (Crenshaw 1989; Nightingale 2011).

What is more, feminist political ecology, or contemporary ecofeminism, recognizes the importance of conducting science from the 'bottom up' by examining people's embodied experiences of environmental degradation and climate disasters, as these connect to scales of power, and decision-making (Harding 2008; Hanson 2015). In addition, feminist political ecology interrogates knowledge production, governance, and policymaking, and argues for new feminist interventions.

Whilst contemporary ecofeminist theory, or 'feminist political ecology' is its own academic field, arguments around the social construction of gender and nature, and the importance of an intersectional analysis of interactions between gender, nature, and other social identifying factors, are closely connected and overlap with feminist approaches to disaster-risk studies that I have detailed earlier. The combination of ecofeminist and feminist disaster-risk theory provides a helpful theoretical framework for this analysis, as their understanding of complex societal interactions between gender, power, and inequalities is necessary to understand the construction of gendered vulnerability within societies. Moreover, both theoretical fields recognise intersectionality as the basis for an analysis of vulnerability in disasters, as gender interacts with multiple and intersecting systems of discrimination that create unique conditions of vulnerability.

Taking intersectional feminist political ecology, and contemporary ecofeminist theory, as well as the closely connected feminist approaches to disaster-risk studies, as a framework for analysis in my thesis is essential to understand the complexity of gendered vulnerability in my case study, and the need for ecofeminist approaches to policy making.

Whilst this thesis primarily focuses on the connection between gender and vulnerability, more specifically the vulnerabilities of the socially constructed subject of women, this thesis does analyse women's embeddedness in larger structural systems of gendered oppression, and recognises that the mere essence of 'being a woman' is not enough to understand the complexity

of factors determining vulnerability, but that gender is *one* factor intersecting with others that contribute to an individual's level of vulnerability.

## 1.3 Violence Theory

Alongside contemporary ecofeminist, and feminist disaster-risk studies theory, (feminist) theory on violence is equally important to this thesis. The feminist recognition that women's relationship with, and vulnerability to the environment, are socially constructed through systems of inequality aligns itself with feminist theory on violence that identifies structures of subordination creating violence, and thus, subsequently, creating vulnerability to violence that increases in a climate disaster. In the following section of this chapter, I explore theory on violence both from disaster-risk studies that identifies factors enabling violence that are directly linked to disasters, as well as feminist theory on violence that aims to identify deeper, unequal patriarchal structures, in which violence is used as a tool to maintain power, and subordinate women.

### 1.3.1 Theory on Violence from Disaster-Risk Studies

Whilst disaggregated data on sexual violence in the aftermath of disasters is still limited, some scholarship from disaster-risk studies identify several potential causes for the increasing violence after a disaster (Bradshaw 2013; Denton 2002; NSVRC 2021).

Disasters can cause significant trauma, stress, and losses, including loss of homes, livelihoods, and loved ones. According to the National Sexual Violence Research Centre (NSVRC) (2021), these experiences can “overwhelm an individual's abilities to cope while simultaneously limiting access to their usual strategies for dealing with challenges” (11). Coping mechanisms to manage trauma and stress may include use of drugs and/or alcohol. Drug and alcohol abuse may increase a person's likelihood to commit (sexual) violence according to the NSVRC (2021). Similarly, scholars (Bradshaw 2013; Denton 2002; Rystrom and Kinnvall 2019) have argued that stress due to the destruction of homes and livelihoods, frustration over unemployment and lack of income, prolonged waiting in shelters, insufficient support systems, and trauma may increase (sexual) violence in times of a disaster. Moreover, violence may also increase due to higher levels of stranger violence, as social systems and structures of protection



break down, for instance in crowded and unprotected emergency shelters (Bradshaw and Fordham 2013).

Furthermore, Paul Bancroft (2018) has suggested that as people struggle to cope with a disaster and its aftermath, dynamics can change, and tensions can grow in familial and other relationships. As a result, family stress and conflict, or an emotionally unsupportive family environment may contribute to increased risk of (sexual) violence.

Weak legal and institutional support from police and judicial systems in communities may also contribute to the increased likelihood of perpetration of sexual violence. If these systems were already lacking in accessibility and helpfulness pre-disaster, they are likely to become even less responsive and adequate post-disaster. In addition, law enforcement may be overwhelmed with the immediate disaster response, are unavailable, or not prioritizing reports on (sexual) violence. Sexual offences can also be viewed as a lower priority for local police forces in relation to other crimes in a disaster setting (Thurston et al. 2021; WHO 2005).

In my analysis of the case study in chapter three, I examine how these factors are present in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan and have contributed to violence against women in the wake of the disaster. However, whilst these are important factors to consider, they are insufficient to understand the complexity of violence against women, specifically since violence against women is not a phenomenon exclusive to disasters, but present in everyday life. As such, there must be other factors creating and normalising violence in the ‘everyday’ experiences of women, that must be identified. As Allen Barton (1970) notes, for violence to increase after disasters, other factors must be present. The disaster itself is not enough to cause violence (253). To identify underlying societal causes for gender-based violence, I consider feminist theory on violence and rape, that offers insights into gendered power dynamics contributing to violence, in the following section.

### 1.3.2 Feminist Violence Theory

Susan Brownmiller was one of the pioneers of feminist anti-rape theory. Brownmiller was a Western feminist activist of the second wave/radical feminism, which was a period of feminist activity that was particularly concerned about issues of sexuality, reproductive rights, and male-dominated patriarchal institutions. In *Against Our Will* (1975), Brownmiller argues that rape is neither an act of lust, nor an act of passion on the part of men, but a tool of power that men use to oppress women. She further suggests that rape “is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear” (7). This state of fear oppresses women and ensures the domination of men.

Building on Brownmiller's theory, scholars have suggested that gender-based violence can be viewed as a manifestation of difference in power relations in its most extreme form. Violence is about reasserting, and or renegotiating power relations. As such, violence is an extreme form of communicating power, control, and domination (Myrntinen 2012). According to Henrietta Moore (1994), male violence against women is a form of dealing with the "struggle for the maintenance of certain fantasies of identity and power" (70). In addition, Jeff Hearn (2013) points out that "men's violence can be a source of pride, be shameful or routine in reaffirming power, or be backlash reactions to loss or perceived threat to power" (12).

Whilst violence is something that women typically experience at the personal level, such as domestic violence and intimate partner violence, structures of violence are enabled and performed at the broader societal level (Baker and Cunningham 2005; Bograd 1988; Jansinski and Williams 1998; Yodanis 2004).

What is more, feminist theory on violence places fear as a central agent in this process of power. Theory on criminology have highlighted the 'fear-victimization paradox', stating that although men are more likely to be victims of violent crimes, women are more fearful (Pain 1997). Whilst this is paradoxical from a statistical perspective, feminist theory argues that the creation of women's fear is a necessary tool to control women, and thereby maintain male-dominated social institutions. Not every man must be violent towards women for "violence to control women's behaviour" (Yodanis 2004, 658). Instead, knowing that women have been victims of violent crimes is enough to control their behaviour, and limit their movement in a society. Thus, rather than the physical act of violence itself, the creation of a "culture of fear" (Yodanis 2004, 658) is enough to secure men's domination over women (Brownmiller 1975; Riger and Gordon 1981; Stanko 1990; Yodanis 2004)

Numerous theories link women's status in a society to violence against women (Rydstrom and Kinnvall 2019; Yllö and Bograd 1998; Yodanis 2004). According to this theoretical thought, when men dominate the family, as well as political, economic, and other social institutions, both in number of representatives and in power, the "policies and practices of these institutions are likely to embody, reproduce, and legitimate male domination over women. Men's power will be considered 'natural' not only in these institutions, but also throughout society in general" (Yodanis 2004, 657). Therefore, in male-dominated societies and institutions, violence is a tool that men use to continuously subordinate women, thereby maintaining their male control and power (Yodanis 2004). Given this reason, male violence is likely not stopped or punished, but may subtly or overtly be condoned or even encouraged (Dobash and Dobash 1979; MacKinnon 1979; Walby 1990).

What is more, feminist research has linked traditional attitudes on gender roles and attributes to rape and other forms of violence against women (Burt 1980; Carr and VanDeusen 2004; Check and Malamuth 1983; Rosenthal et al. 1995; York 2011). Gender constructs determine the types of roles that people fill in their daily lives socially, economically, politically, and domestically (York 2011). Moreover, gender roles are normative behaviours and attitudes which are expected from individuals based on their perceived gender, and which are often learned through a socialization process (Ben-David and Schneider 2005). Research around the correlation between gender roles and violence suggests that attitudes toward women are strongly connected to traditional gender or sex role beliefs, and in regard to distinct roles attributed between the constructed binary between male and female in the family, workplace, and other social areas (Hilton et al. 2003; Marciniak 1998; York 2011). In many cultural settings, men are taught to be competitive, aggressive, and dominant to women. Thus, socialized gender attributes may lead to “hyper-masculinity” (Burt 1980). When there is a general belief that men should be dominant over submissive women, it has been argued that a social environment that supports rape, sexual assault and violence against women is created (Burt 1980; York 2011). As such, scholars have argued that men often resort to physical violence against women to reinforce their patriarchal power of the household or to force their female partners in heteronormative relationships to behave according to their expected gender roles (Adler 2003).

Furthermore, James Messerschmidt (1993) theorizes that crime is a way for men to “do gender” when they do not have the resources to accomplish masculinity, such as through economic disadvantages. Some of these disadvantaged men may engage in intimate partner violence, rape, or sexual harassment to accomplish the goal of performing their masculinity.

However, whilst cultural beliefs about the role of women in society can accelerate violence, cultural beliefs about gender roles and attributes, structural power imbalances between the construction of male and female, and the conditions created by a crisis needs to be considered in their complex interactions to determine the extent, types of violence, and reasons for violence used against women. Thus, as I have outlined in this section, neither theories of violence from disaster-studies alone, nor feminist theories generally are sufficient to fully grasp the complexities in which a climate disaster meets power imbalances, inequalities, and constructed gender roles. Therefore, I will consider all the above listed arguments, both from disaster-risk-, and feminist studies in my analysis of the case study of Typhoon Haiyan to examine how and why violence against women as a form of gendered vulnerability has increased after Typhoon Haiyan.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

To gain insights into the connections between gender inequality, vulnerability to sexual violence, and climate disasters, I make use of a case study. My main analysis method is that of a secondary analysis of data and literature on Typhoon Haiyan, and a feminist policy analysis of relevant Philippine and international climate mitigation, and disaster-risk reduction policy frameworks. The collection of literature on Typhoon Haiyan is analysed through a secondary literature analysis, and the policies are analysed through a material gender analysis, to consider how gender is incorporated in disaster-risk reduction and climate mitigation plans. Combining a case study of a climate disaster with a policy analysis allows me to examine what lessons can be taken from the case study to strengthen relevant policy frameworks to reduce gendered vulnerability to climate disasters and prevent (sexual) violence against women. In this chapter, I discuss the reasoning for such methodology and research design, as well as my positionality as a researcher.

### 2.1 Research Design

For the research design of this thesis, I have chosen a case study approach, combined with a material gender analysis of important policy frameworks for disaster-risk and climate mitigation frameworks. Considering the limits of this M.A. thesis, and the overwhelmingly broad topical intersections between gender and climate disasters, I consider that such a specific focus of one case study allows me to do a more nuanced analysis of a particular climate disaster in relation to gendered violence. This type of research is suited particularly well for studying disasters because it allows for the investigation of a phenomenon, such as sexual violence after a disaster, from multiple units, layers, and dimensions of analysis (Su and Tanyag 2020). Moreover, the case study allows me to open a broader discussion on the need for gender-responsive policy frameworks necessary to mitigate future disaster-risk.

#### 2.1.1 The Case Study

In this thesis, I analyse a case study about sexual and gender-based violence experienced by women in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan. Typhoon Haiyan, locally known as Yolanda, was

one of the most powerful tropical cyclones ever recorded in the Philippines. On making landfall on November 8, 2013, in the province of Eastern Samar in the Philippines, Haiyan devastated significant portions of Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines. The typhoon caused catastrophic destruction in the Philippines, particularly in the islands of Samar and Leyte, and had devastating consequences on people's health, security, and livelihoods. One such consequence, as is the focus of my case study, was the rise of reports of (sexual) violence against women in the aftermath of the typhoon. My case study is designed to identify causes for this spike of violence, both as immediate consequences connected to Typhoon Haiyan, as well as deeper structural forms of inequality in the Philippines that are influenced by hegemonic gender constructs.

### *Secondary Analysis of the Case Study*

Various researchers (Abano 2016; Evensen 2014; GBC 2013; Nguyen 2019; Su and Tanyag 2020) have conducted qualitative research, mainly deriving from fieldwork conducted in the Philippines, to investigate (sexual) violence against women in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan. As I was unable to gather my own primary data, due to the limitations of this thesis, I rely on secondary data produced by the researchers listed above. As such, I have chosen a secondary literature analysis method to analyse my case study. This is a methodology for doing research using pre-existing data (Heaton 2004), that is both qualitative and quantitative in its form.

Secondary analysis can both verify the primary research, add to the existing research in a supplementary way, or transcend the primary research through a "supra-analysis" that applies a new theoretical perspective on the research focus, to develop further analyses of pre-existing data (Heaton 2004). As such, secondary analysis is not designed as a methodology for the synthesis of previous research, but rather as a methodology for investigating new research questions under new theoretical perspectives, or empirical or methodological questions (Heaton 2004).

For the secondary analysis, I have collected different academic and non-academic literature from scholars, media and journal articles, and UN and other international bodies' reports.

The academic qualitative data I consider through my secondary analysis consists primarily of the work of Huong Thu Nguyen (2019), who has researched male-to-female

violence in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, based on interviews they conducted with survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in Eastern Visayas in 2015.

Other qualitative data derives from (inter)national news and journal articles from Imelda Abano (2016), Taylor Evensen (2014), and Hanna Reyes Morales (2017).

Moreover, I consider quantitative empirical data from research institutes such as the United Nations Population Fund (2015), as well as local reports of sexual violence cases shared by the Philippines' Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the local police.

Moreover, to better understand the case study of Typhoon Haiyan contextually, I use related academic studies of violence and gendered vulnerability after disasters as secondary data (including Bradshaw and Fordham 2013; Corrin 1996; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2015; MacKinnon 1979; Neumayer and Plümper 2007; Peterson 2007; Rydstrom and Kinnvall 2019).

The secondary analysis is not an effort to merely reproduce how other researchers have interpreted their primary data on the topic, but a “supra-analysis” (Heaton 2004) that exceeds existing research outcomes. Whilst the primary data collected by these researchers is invaluable, they have primarily focused their interpretation of data on direct links between Typhoon Haiyan and emerging violence, based on causes such as a breakdown of social order and lack of security (Abano 2016; Evensen 2014). However, as I argue in this thesis, these are only partial reasons that can explain violence against women in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan. To understand the case study on a deeper level, a more complex analysis considering deeply entrenched structural gender inequalities in the Philippines as underlying causes for violence is necessary. Here, through my theoretical framework of ecofeminist, and feminist theory on violence, I can offer new theoretical and practical ideas that extend the scope of research that I am analysing through the secondary analysis. Moreover, existing research does not, or only partially, connect the documented lived experiences of women to broader frameworks of policies which I identify as a shortcoming, and will add to with my thesis.

### *Material Gender Analysis*

Closely connected with the secondary analysis, I perform a material policy gender analysis. I consider the Philippines National Disaster-Risk Protocol, Philippine policies on gender equality, as well as relevant international policies, influencing the disaster risk-management in

the Philippines, including the Hyogo (2005) and Sendai Framework for Action (2015), the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Committee of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (2018). I examine these policies through a gender analysis, to determine how gender is considered in these disaster-risk reduction, and climate mitigation frameworks. Moreover, I consider how differentiated gendered vulnerabilities, particularly violence against women, is considered in the management of relief efforts after climate disasters, and in broader climate mitigation policies.

The combination of a secondary analysis of the case study, and a material gender analysis of relevant policies allows me to map out ways in which policies can be strengthened through a feminist intervention, based on the central research outcomes of the case study.

## 2.2. Reflexivity

This thesis is influenced by a feminist epistemology and reflexivity. A central epistemological underpinning of this thesis is standpoint feminism. Standpoint feminism aims to renegotiate what counts as hegemonic knowledge produced in a society.

Standpoint feminist epistemology was coined by feminist scholars such as Nancy Hartsock (1983), Donna Haraway (1988), and Sandra Harding (1991). According to Sandra Harding (1991), standpoint theorists argue for “starting off thought from the lives of marginalized people” (56).<sup>5</sup>

In this thesis, I use local women’s experiences as a starting point of my analysis. Their experiences offer crucial insights into dynamics of gender, inequality, class, and other power dynamics that are, as I argue, essential to consider to fully understand the complexity of why violence emerged after Typhoon Haiyan. Taking the personal experiences of women as a ground for analysis provides a more critical vantage point of social reality because of their experienced patriarchal subordination. Thus, women’s local experiences serve as an analytical tool to trace patriarchal structures within the Philippine society that intersect with and are exacerbated by a climate disaster such as Typhoon Haiyan.

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<sup>5</sup> Feminist standpoint theory positions the experiences of marginalized people, specifically women, at the forefront of knowledge production. Traditionally, in societies and institutions, male knowledge has been established as the hegemonic and accepted source of knowledge. Feminist standpoint theory argues that women hold different types of knowledge. Women’s subordinate position in society allows women to understand society in ways that challenge male-biased, and conventional knowledge (Narayan 1989).

Using the experiences of local Filipina women as an epistemological underpinning of this thesis also allows me to balance potential power imbalances, based on my personal positionality as a researcher from the Global North, conducting research on people in the Global South. As I am positioned in a place of power based on my identity, and geographical location that provides certain privileges - and I was not personally affected by Typhoon Haiyan myself - a feminist standpoint approach allows me to centre the lived experiences of local women in the Philippines and produce research from the 'bottom up', instead of the 'top-down'.

Moreover, I have decided to include personal, and sometimes vulnerable accounts of violence against women, as I believed it is important to listen and learn from these experiences, and their experiences provide helpful grounds for an analysis to understand local contexts and situated knowledges. What is more, as I will argue in chapter four of this thesis, including different and diverse knowledges and personal experiences of local and marginalized communities and individuals is important to develop adequate climate mitigation, and disaster-risk reduction policy that recognises the individual needs of communities.



## Chapter 3: The Case Study

In this chapter, I analyse reasons for the increase in violence against women after Typhoon Haiyan, and why violence has been a form of vulnerability to women in the post-Haiyan recovery. To examine these factors, I perform a secondary analysis of literature on the typhoon. For the secondary analysis, I consider both qualitative data that detail lived experiences of survivors of sexual and gender-based, and quantitative data from research institutes and the UN, as well as data offering empirical information about the Philippines and Typhoon Haiyan. Furthermore, I perform a material gender analysis on the Philippine's disaster-risk protocol, and policies on gender equality, to examine how gender and gender equality is considered and prioritised in the national disaster-response. Moreover, I apply theory from both disaster-risk studies and feminism.

The aim of this chapter is to identify various factors that enabled the rise of violence against women after Typhoon Haiyan and how they intersected with each other. On the one hand, I consider factors that were created by the typhoon itself through its destructiveness and disruption of ordinary life, as well as mismanagement in the disaster response. On the other hand, I consider how underlying conditions of gender inequality and gender constructions in the Philippines have enabled and normalised violence not just in times of a disaster, but in the 'everyday' experiences of Filipina women. With this, my aim is to show how the disaster did not create violence against women but has exacerbated structures of violence that have already been in place and have negatively affected women. As such, I argue that it is not sufficient enough to simply 'blame' the typhoon itself, and the harmful conditions it created through its devastation, but that underlying unequal patriarchal conditions of gender need to be addressed and transformed to prevent violence against women.

This chapter is structured in three broad sections. The first section provides empirical information about the Philippines, its geographical location, and general information about Typhoon Haiyan and the destruction it caused. The second section identifies the increase in sexual and gender-based violence after Typhoon Haiyan as a major form of vulnerability that women faced in the aftermath of the Typhoon. The third section explores reasons for the increase in violence. This section is structured by two broader arguments. The first of these two sections links the devastation, lack of security and safe housing, human suffering caused by the typhoon, as well as insufficient disaster response to the increase in violence. The second section identifies gender inequality, harmful gender constructions, and patriarchy as underlying causes for violence against women.

## 3.1 Context

### 3.1.1 Empirical Context: The Philippines and Disasters

The Philippines is a densely populated country of ninety-seven million and located in one of the most disaster-prone areas in the world (Nguyen 2019). The country lies at the edge of the Western Pacific Basin, and in the geographical area known as the ‘fire ring’, an area frequently exposed to typhoons and other geological risks such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and tsunamis (Yee 2018). Because of this, the Philippines is currently ranked as the second highest country most vulnerable to climate disasters in the world, and the eight highest country vulnerable to effects of climate change (Bowen 2015).<sup>6</sup>

The exposure to natural hazards is compounded by high rates of poverty. Much of the Philippine population lives just above the poverty line, cycling in and out of poverty.<sup>7</sup> This negatively affects the ability of people to implement adaptation measures against disasters, and the long-term effects of climate change (Yee 2018). Households living in poverty have fewer resources to manage disaster-risk and cope with the effects of disasters.<sup>8</sup>

### 3.1.2 Typhoon Haiyan

In November of 2013, with wind speeds exceeding 300 km/h, Typhoon Haiyan was the most powerful storm that made landfall in the history of recorded storms in the Philippines, with storm surges that were over four meters high in some regions. Typhoon Haiyan cut a path directly across the central Philippines, especially affecting the Eastern, Central, and Western Visayas, and Northern Palawan (Bowen 2015).

Typhoon Haiyan had devastating consequences for the populations affected. It damaged or destroyed much infrastructure, daily life routines, and societal structures (Nguyen 2019). After the storm, the death toll was placed at 6200, with over a thousand people still missing (NDRRMC 2014). In the immediate aftermath of the typhoon, approximately 11.8 million people (about twelve percent of the overall population) were affected, and about 4.1 million people were displaced (Bowen 2015; IASC 2013). It is estimated that Typhoon Haiyan cost the

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<sup>6</sup> In addition, out of the ten cities identified to be most exposed to natural disasters in the world, eight are located in the Philippines, including the capital Manila, which is ranked fourth (Bowen 2015).

<sup>7</sup> Between 2003 to 2004, 44 percent of the population was estimated to have been poor at least once, and of that 44 percent, two out of three households moved in and out of poverty (Bowen 2015).

<sup>8</sup> This can lead to negative coping strategies, such as selling assets, reducing food consumption, and removing children from school to work for additional income (Bowen 2015).

Philippines about P571.2 billion (USD 12.9 billion) in damages with over a million homes and public infrastructure damaged or destroyed (Bowen 2015).

The typhoon caused a humanitarian crisis. The UN response highlighted the need for immediate food aid for at least 2.5 million people; water, sanitation, and hygiene support for 500.000 people; basic health services for 9.8 million people; and shelter and household items for 562.000 people (IASC 2013).

As an immediate response to the destruction, the Department of Social Welfare and Development implemented various social protection and welfare programs. The programs mainly focused on categories of distribution of relief items, cash transfers, shelters, and community driven reconstruction developments (Bowen 2015).

Moreover, in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, the disaster relief reconstruction phase was massively militarized. The Philippine military was immediately mobilized after the typhoon to restore communication with affected regions, clear roads, and offer other types of humanitarian first response (Yee 2018).

### 3.2 Sexual and Gender-Based Violence After Typhoon Haiyan

Apart from the massive destruction, and loss of life that Typhoon Haiyan caused, the aftermath of the catastrophe also exacerbated violence and abusive behaviours, particularly directed at women (Nguyen 2019). The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that 5000 women were exposed to sexual violence in December of 2013 alone, only one month after the typhoon hit (Evensen 2014). What is more, the UNFPA estimated that this number could rise to 65.000 (UN News 2013).

Whilst these are already alarming numbers, incidents of sexual abuse and violence were likely much higher, as many cases go unreported, especially in times of a crisis. Forms of violence that women and girls faced after Typhoon Haiyan included intimate partner violence, rape, sexual violence, sex trafficking, and forced prostitution (UNFPA 2015).

Amongst the 21 women that researcher Huong Thu Nguyen interviewed in their fieldwork in Eastern Visayas in the Philippines in 2015, they found that seven women were victims of intimate partner violence, nine of sexual violence, and five of incest. Among the nine sexual violence cases, seven perpetrators were acquaintances such as friends or neighbours. One case occurred in an evacuation centre, and two after they had returned home. Six of the participants did not report the violence to their local authorities and three cases were investigated or prosecuted. Moreover, there were three cases of multiple rapes by different

perpetrators at different times. Moreover, five of Nguyen's participants described being beaten by their husbands after the disaster. (Nguyen 2019, 425-426). Thus, Nguyen's fieldwork identified two main forms of violence against women, intimate and domestic partner violence perpetrated by husbands/partners, and sexual violence, such as rape mainly perpetrated by men known to their victims.

It is also predicted that there were high numbers of rape perpetrated by members of state security forces, police, and militarily, who might have misused their position of power and possession of weapons (Carcamo 2014; Nguyen 2019). However, due to the challenges to reporting these cases, numbers of cases are unknown.<sup>9</sup>

Sex trafficking has also reportedly increased after Typhoon Haiyan. Dalene Pajarito, head of the Philippines' State Department's anti trafficking unit, described the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan as a "feast for human traffickers" (quoted in Reyes Morales 2017).

For instance, 28-year-old Elena was trafficked from her village and taken to Manila, where she was forced to work in the sex trade. She escaped from a den and went back to Tacloban City. She did not report her case to local authorities as she was too afraid to file a police report (Abano 2016). Moreover, photographer Hanna Reyes Morales and journalist Aurora Almendral, who conducted fieldwork on sex trafficking in 2016, met a woman who was trafficked out of an evacuation centre after Typhoon Haiyan. Another woman they met was trafficked into a cyber den when she was pregnant at sixteen. Both were trafficked to the red-light district of Angeles City in the Philippines, which is dubbed the "supermarket of sex" (Reyes Morales 2017).

### 3.2.1 Violence as a Form of Gendered Vulnerability

Because of the widespread phenomena of sexual violence emerging after climate disasters<sup>10</sup>, including Typhoon Haiyan, I argue that violence is a major form of gendered vulnerability after a disaster. Violence, or the threat of violence, undermines an individual's capacity to recover

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<sup>9</sup> Despite of the increase in police and security persons, there was also a reported lack of female police officers. In Tacloban City, for example, of the 1300 police officers deployed in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, only two were female. This may have further discouraged women from reporting cases of assault, meaning that the actual number of cases of (sexual) violence may be much higher (Evensen 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Various studies have documented the increase of gender-based violence after a climate disaster (including International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2015; Rydstrom and Kinnvall 2019). For instance, the UN reported widespread sexual abuse and exploitation following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti; and a study published by the Global Justice Clinic/Center for Human Rights and Global Justice in 2012 has shown that 14 percent of households reported at least one household member as a victim of sexual assault following the earthquake in Haiti (Horton 2012).

from a disaster, and build resilience to its effects, at the individual, household, and community level (Le Masson et al. 2019).

Violence can have a multitude of harmful effects on individuals. (Sexual) violence and abuse can have immediate health impacts, including sexually transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancies, gynaecological complications, unsafe abortions, miscarriages, poor overall health, physical injuries and pain, mental health problems, and post-traumatic stress, or fatal outcomes such as homicide or suicide (UN Women).<sup>11</sup> As Typhoon Haiyan has destroyed many health facilities, already worsening women's sexual and reproductive health, these consequences are compounded, leading to even greater risks to victim's overall health.

Furthermore, abortion is prohibited in the Philippines, and criminalized, even in cases of rape.<sup>12</sup> The strict laws on abortion further victimize women, as they are forced to carry out pregnancies that were the result of rape, which may undermine their financial recovery, and capacity to adapt to new social situations in the aftermath of the typhoon.

As such, I argue that violence against women is a form of gendered vulnerability that has an array of harmful consequences, affecting women's health, safety, and economic productivity, which negatively undermines their recovery, which can lead to greater rates of poverty, and reduce adaptive capacities to future disasters.

Recognizing that the vulnerability to violence in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan has negatively affected women is an important observation. However, it poses questions as to why women were more vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence after Typhoon Haiyan, and why violence has increased. In the following section, resulting from my feminist, and disaster-risk analysis, I propose several contributing factors.

### 3.3 Factors Contributing to the Rise in Violence Post-Haiyan

In this section, I argue that there are a multitude of factors directly caused by Typhoon Haiyan that have increased rates of violence against women in its aftermath. On the one hand, this can be contributed to a lack of gender-sensitive disaster response and the fact that gender was not prioritised in the initial government and humanitarian aid response. Vulnerability to violence has also been compounded by significant social and institutional challenges to reporting cases

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.uncclearn.org/wp-content/uploads/library/unwomen701.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> The Philippines abortion law is among the strictest in the world. Abortion is illegal and criminalized in the Philippines under all circumstances and is highly stigmatized. There are no explicit exceptions that allow abortion in cases of rape, incest, or fetal impairment (Finer and Hussain 2013).

of (sexual) violence. On the other hand, the typhoon caused the destruction of much infrastructure, including safe housing, and the breakdown of social security systems, in which there were increasing opportunities for perpetrators to commit sexual and violent crimes during a 'state of exception'. Moreover, trauma, and stress over loss of livelihoods has likely compelled men to use violence as a tool to overcome feelings of powerlessness and reassert control over women.

### 3.3.1 Disaster-Risk Management in the Philippines

Despite an extensive disaster-risk reduction and management protocol, the Philippine's disaster response plan does not adequately incorporate gender, and gender-differentiated needs into its agenda. I argue that the lack of gender-prioritisation in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan has likely contributed to the violence that took place, as women's needs were not adequately addressed, and women's safety was not guaranteed.

The central disaster-risk protocol in the Philippines is the "National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan 2011-2028" (NDRRMP). The overarching goal of the Philippines Disaster Response, as defined by the NDRRMP, is to "provide life preservation and meet the basic subsistence needs of the affected population based on acceptable standards during or immediately after a disaster" (26).<sup>13</sup> Moreover, another central element of the NDRRMP is to understand underlying causes of people's vulnerability, to address them, and reduce vulnerability and exposure of communities to build resilience (6). The NDRRMP is enforced at the national, regional, and local level for increased vertical integration of disaster-risk management.

The NDRRMP only marginally addresses gender as a factor contributing to vulnerability. The NDRRMP proposes gender-mainstreaming as a method of addressing "the different roles, needs, capacities and vulnerabilities of men, women, children, people with disabilities, older persons and other groups" (32), and to promote "gender-sensitive vulnerability and capacity analysis in all disaster-risk reduction and management activities" (32).

Whilst it is positive that gender is specifically included in the NDRRMP, no concrete suggestions of how to mainstream gender in disaster-risk reduction are included. Moreover, the

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<sup>13</sup> Additionally, in this plan, the Philippine government is specifically committed to four priority actions for disaster-risk reduction: 1.) understanding disaster risk; 2.) Strengthening disaster governance to manage disaster risk; 3.) Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience; and 4.) enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to build back better, in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction (Bowen 2015).

NDRRMP states that “gender roles and rights should always be ensured” (28). The inclusion of gender rights is important, but it is questionable what the NDRRMP means by ensuring gender roles. Because, as I will argue in the following sections of this chapter, the construction, and manifestation of gender roles through social and political practices can serve as a factor increasing gendered vulnerability, specifically to gender-based violence.

In addition, there are no mentions of sexual and gender-based violence in the NDRRMP. There is no direct protocol on how to prevent sexual and gender-based violence in the aftermath of disasters, or any concrete governmental guidelines specified in the NDRRMP as to how to ensure safety against violence, such as in evacuation centres, or, how to react to violence against women.

In the wake of Typhoon Haiyan, the Philippine Government recognized that violence against women is a prevalent issue worth investigating. The Department of Social Welfare Development (DSWD) reactivated violence against women desks in 138 cities to assist victims in assessing services and legal protection, and to address the issue of gender-based violence at the community level (Abano 2016). The DSWD has also collaborated with other government agencies and international and local NGOs in implementing programs such as training of *barangay*<sup>14</sup> officials, volunteers, and facilitators in temporary and permanent shelters, and monitoring of cases of abuse (Abano 2016). However, these have only been reactionary measures, implemented only after cases of violence have rung alarm bells, and have not served to prevent the violence from happening in the first place.

Moreover, it has been noted by locals, NGO workers, and scholars that in the aftermath of Haiyan, security, especially for women, was not prioritized (Nguyen 2019). According to a female NGO worker that was interviewed by scholars Su and Tanyang (2020) in Huian, Samar in 2015, “humanitarian mindset is still that gender must come later...much later in emergency settings. The focus is really more on the façade...just the physical rebuilding” (1517). Gender differentiated needs in the management of disaster-risk after the typhoon have not been prioritized by the national response, or by local and international humanitarian aid organizations.

Thus, insufficient guidelines on gender, and the lack of prioritisation of gender in the Philippines disaster-risk response are likely a potential reason for the spike in violence against women after Typhoon Haiyan.

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<sup>14</sup> In the Philippines, the *barangay* is the smallest administrative division, and is the native Filipino term for a village.

### 3.3.2 Lack of Protection

The destruction that Typhoon Haiyan has caused led to humanitarian challenges and unsafe conditions that, as I argue, further contributed to the increase in gender-based violence.

There is evidence that sexual and gender-based violence increases in post-disaster settings, when infrastructure is damaged and unsafe, living conditions are poor, and security services are inadequate (Duramy 2011). Typhoon Haiyan widely destroyed infrastructure, and homes. In the aftermath of the typhoon, many had to flee their communities, often to the capital of Manila, and lived with friends or extended family, or in evacuation centres and temporary shelters. In evacuation centres, sleeping quarters were often unprotected and had poor lighting. Washing facilities were not always separated by gender, lacked privacy, and had inadequate bathing and latrine facilities, or were located in insecure areas (Aquino Valerio 2016; GBC 2013). Moreover, evacuation centres were reported to be overcrowded, and had limited security. Consequently, women reported feeling insecure and fearful particularly at night (GBC 2013). Nolibelyn Macabagdala, a Filipina social worker, reported that “you have a lot of people in overcrowded places, without much to do. There is no electricity, so a lot of places are not well lit. These are all factors that put women and girls at increased risk of violence” (quoted in Evensen 2014).

The destruction that Typhoon Haiyan caused, especially the damaging of homes and living facilities has exposed women to more violence, especially during displacement. Therefore, violence against women may have increased as there was simply more opportunity for perpetrators to commit violent acts. Moreover, in the immediate aftermath of the typhoon, violent advances may have been overlooked, or not noticed, due to the chaotic situation, as people struggled to find missing loved ones, shelter, or food. The chaotic situation has likely caused a ‘state of exception’, where normal juridical systems were suspended. As police, the military, and communities were occupied with the first response after the typhoon and were prioritising ‘saving lives’ and searching for missing people, it is likely that a state of exception emerged in which protection systems vanished, and in which violence against women was either not noticed, ignored, or even condoned at a time where any form of ‘normalcy’ vanished.

What is more, the chaotic situation also damaged the physical barriers between victims and perpetrators. For instance, Typhoon Haiyan destroyed prisons, resulting in inmates being reportedly able to escape (Evensen 2014). Violet Duzur, a survivor of Typhoon Haiyan from Tacloban City noted that “it’s the criminals who escaped from prison. They’re raping the women” (quoted in Evensen 2014). For instance, Agnes, one of Nguyen’s interviewees (2019)



was raped at the age of eleven by a neighbour who was 29 at the time. After a trial that lasted seven years, her rapist was finally convicted to a life sentence. Haiyan damaged the prison he was located in. He was able to escape and return to his parents, in close proximity to Agnes, who was extremely worried of a repetition of a rape. Whilst Agnes's rapist was soon captured again, Agnes's story emphasizes the threat that damaged protection systems posed to the local communities in the wake of the disaster.

In summary, the massive destruction that Typhoon Haiyan caused, and the subsequent chaotic situation, as people tried to recover from the typhoon, has led to unsafe situations that created opportunities for male perpetrators to commit violent and sexual crimes. Women were more exposed to violence, as emergency shelters were often not gender-sensitive, and deemed unsafe for women, contributing to the increase in violence. Moreover, the breakdown of social protection systems, such as prisons may have further contributed to the problem.

### 3.3.3. Trauma, Stress, and the Struggle for Control

From a social psychological perspective, Typhoon Haiyan has likely increased feelings of powerlessness, trauma, stress, and uncertainty, which are connected to the loss of family members and loved ones, livelihood, and homes. I argue that violence may have been a tool used by men to try to overcome these negative feelings and reassert feelings of power and control back into their lives.

According to Sarah Fisher (2010), frustrations over being helpless to disasters may cause aggression, violence, and alcohol or substance abuse as coping mechanisms. If men took feelings of power and control for granted before the disaster, violence may be used to reassert the authority and power that has been taken by the disaster back.

For instance, five of Nguyen's study participants (2019) described being beaten by their husbands after the disaster which they blamed on the family's financial instability. They described that often, their husbands would get home from work, find nothing to eat, get angry and beat them. Ted, one of the participants, described how she was financially completely dependent on her husband, which is why she did not see the option to leave the abusive relationship (433-4).

The experiences of Nguyen's participants shows how feelings of powerlessness over the uncertain economic and social situation the typhoon posed, can compel men to use violence as a tool to cope with their frustrations over not being able to provide food and income for their families, which they then take out on their wives or partners. The experience of Ted also shows

that due to the economic challenges that the typhoon caused, victims of domestic violence such as Ted felt that they are unable to leave their abusive husband/partner, as they were financially unstable and felt that they did not have the economic and social opportunity to provide a livelihood for themselves. Thus, the typhoon can not only cause violence over the stress of losing livelihoods but can compel victims to stay in abusive situations due to the loss of livelihood and uncertainty posed by the typhoon.

Moreover, reasserting violence as a means of regaining control, can be viewed as reasserting, remaking, or ‘performing’ masculinity. This will be explored further in later sections of this chapter.

### 3.3.4 Challenges to Reporting Cases

All the above listed factors contributing to violence are compounded by significant challenges to reporting cases of sexual violence, which further exacerbates the problem, and as I argue, likely contributed to even higher rates of violence.

The Philippines has an extensive legal framework to protect women against rape and other forms of (sexual) violence. Legal provisions have been established since the late 1990s, including the Anti-Rape Law of 1997<sup>15</sup>, the Anti-Trafficking Persons Act of 2003, and the Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act of 2004<sup>16</sup>.

Despite legal frameworks set in place to respond to gender-based violence, the U.S. Department of State’s Country Report on Human Rights Practices (2014) evaluates that the “present state of the Philippine criminal justice system is weak and overburdened with a meagre record of prosecutions and lengthy procedural legal and widespread official corruption and abuse of power” (cited in Nguyen 2019, 428).

There are significant challenges to reporting cases of (sexual) violence, that are both institutional and social in their nature. Discriminatory institutional practices discourage many women from reporting violence in the Philippines, as there is a culture of ‘victim-blaming’ present in law enforcement and juridical systems. Many women fear not being believed by police officers. Police officers also commonly judge women and girls as either ‘good/bad’, or ‘virtuous/slut’, and many cases are not taken seriously based on these judgments (Nguyen

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<sup>15</sup> The Anti-Rape Law of 1997 reclassified rape as a crime, defining it as a public rather than private crime. It also recognizes marital rape and questions marital obligations to sex. The law also increased penalties against rape (Santos 2014).

<sup>16</sup> The Anti Violence Against Women and their Children Act (2004) seeks to address violence against women and children, particularly by intimate partners (Santos 2014).

2019). Moreover, many reported cases of violence against women and girls are treated as “Women [and Girls] in Especially Difficult Circumstances”, which means that these cases cannot be further investigated (Randhawa 2010).

According to Marian, a female lawyer from Manila,

There is obviously a lack of sincerity and seriousness on the part of law enforcement authorities. You don't see that (sincerity and seriousness) in court, among police officers, especially at barangay (village) level. They have no commitment to their jobs at all. So what can we expect from them? They should change their mindset (quoted in Nguyen 2019, 429).

Moreover, many cases were perpetrated by men known to the victims, such as neighbours, friends, family members, or partners/spouses. This made it especially difficult to report the violence (Su and Tanya 2020). Su and Tanyag (2020) note that in the wake of a disaster such as Typhoon Haiyan, recovery efforts often underline the idea of the community working together to rebuild. In the wake of disasters, “survival myths that romanticize the community tend to mask violence and insecurities perpetrated from within” (1525). As such, as an effort to ‘keep the peace’ after the disaster, women were likely encouraged to stay silent on their experienced abuse as a means to project an image of the unity of the family, or community, in their joint effort for recovery, which provides further social challenges to reporting violence.

These insufficient legal mechanisms, enabled by socio-political practices that invalidate women's experiences of violence, further enable men's abuse of women in the domestic and public sphere (Rydstrom and Kinnvall 2019). As violence is likely not stopped, or punished due to these male-defined policies, men may find themselves emboldened by their chances of facing no consequences for violent actions, further increasing the likelihood of violence.

What is more, these institutional and social challenges to punishing violence have been exacerbated by Typhoon Haiyan, as the typhoon created conditions in which law enforcement was primarily occupied by first response and did not prioritise responding to reports of violence.

All in all, Typhoon Haiyan itself has caused unsafe humanitarian conditions, a breakdown of social security systems posed, for instance, by damaged or destroyed prisons, that caused an overall chaotic situation that has led women to be more exposed to violence, which, as I have argued, have likely been contributing factors for the increase in violence against women. At the same time, a lack of gender-sensitive disaster response plans, in which gender differentiated needs were not prioritised, has further contributed to the problem. As there

were no concrete guidelines on gender-sensitive care, such as in evacuation centres, formulated in the NDRRMP, measures against sexual and gender-based violence, such as the VAW desks have only been reactionary, and did not work to prevent the violence from happening in the first place. Moreover, discriminatory institutional challenges to persecuting cases of violence, and social obstacles, have not only discouraged women from reporting violence, but has subsequently, emboldened men to continue committing violent acts, further contributing to the problem.

### 3.4 Pre-Existent Reasons for Gendered Vulnerability to Violence in the Philippines

Whilst the combination of the factors that I have described in the previous section may have exacerbated violence, it did not cause it, as rates of violence against women were already high before Typhoon Haiyan.

The UNFPA (2015) has estimated that approximately 379,000 women and girls have experienced sexual violence in the affected areas of Typhoon Haiyan prior to the disaster. Furthermore, a demographic health survey conducted in 2013 showed that nearly one in five women aged 15 to 49 had experienced physical violence and that six percent of women had experienced sexual violence, the majority of which were perpetrated by their spouses/partners (Global Women's Institute 2015).

This data shows that whilst Typhoon Haiyan exacerbated violence in the affected regions, it did not cause it. As Bradshaw and Fordham (2013) note, gender-based violence post-disasters is not just triggered by these events. It is exacerbating what has already been there. Structures normalising violence, that made violence into 'everyday experiences' for women and girls, were already set in place. As such, other factors creating gender-based violence must be present. This section identifies the post-disaster violence that emerged after Typhoon Haiyan as a heightened manifestation of pre-disaster vulnerability to violence (Enarson 2006). The following section of this chapter aims to trace this vulnerability to violence and identify societal structures that were already set in place before Typhoon Haiyan hit, that enabled violence against women. Through this, I argue that gender inequalities based on harmful gender constructions are underlying causes that create and normalise violence in the Philippines. Filipina women are not innately more vulnerable to violence after a disaster such as Typhoon Haiyan, but their vulnerability to violence is constructed through the unequal societal structures

between genders that were already existent in Philippine society before the typhoon. The typhoon has exposed these structures of ongoing societal inequalities and exacerbated them even further. As such, I argue that it is essential to place underlying inequalities at the centre of the gender-disaster debate, to understand how violence after disasters are exposing, as well as are the result of larger structural problems of gender inequality, and patriarchal structures.

In the following section, I identify several factors, including harmful gender constructions, such as hegemonic Filipino masculinity, that enable violence, as well as Catholic values, and the unity of the family in Philippine culture that contribute to a 'culture of violence' against women. Whilst the factors I identify are contributing to the creation and maintenance of male-defined and patriarchal societal and institutional structures, they are not exhaustive, but only some factors that, I argue, are of central importance to consider, as they offer perspectives into larger structural gender problems in the Philippines that need to be considered.

### 3.4.3 Gender Constructions, Roles, and Attributes in the Philippines

Central to the emergence of violence both pre-, and post disaster are questions of power imbalances within a society. Gendered power imbalances are established and maintained through gender roles between male and female. These gender roles are not biologically determined, but socially constructed (De Beauvoir 1949). I argue that these constructed gender roles influence attitudes and behaviours between genders that create systems that normalise and encourage male-to-female violence. Society positions the socially constructed gender of male in a position of power and dominance. As I have detailed earlier, in male-dominated societies, violence is used as a tool to both establish, and maintain patriarchal power and subordinate women in the process (Bograd 1988). As such, high rates of violence against women perpetrated by men are an indicator that gendered structures of inequality are present in a society (Brownmiller 1975; Dobash and Dobash 1979). I argue that the Philippines is a male-dominated country, both through its policies, and societal practices, particularly in its construction of a hegemonic, aggressive, and dominant Filipino masculinity, in which Filipino men resort to violence as a means to assert power and control over women (Fisher 2010). This process of power maintenance through performed and enacted masculinity is especially prominent in heterosexual relationships and family structures, which may be one indicator why rates of domestic violence in the Philippines are so high (Nguyen 2019). In the following sections, this will be explored further, through a specific focus on hegemonic Filipino masculinity, and heteronormative family structures shaped by Catholic values.

### *Hegemonic Filipino Masculinity*

In traditional, heteronormative family constructions in the Philippines, the most authoritative figure tends to be a man. This is connected to constructions of “hegemonic masculinity” (Connell 2000) of Filipino man. Hegemonic masculinity is a culturally dominant form of masculinity that is manifested in a range of different settings. Such a masculinity is constructed and not a fixed identity. It is promoted as desirable to boys and young men and treated as aspirational. Hegemonic masculinity, in most parts of the world, aligns itself with heterosexual, aggressive, and authoritative behaviours (Connell 2000).

Studies have shown that domestic abuse in the Philippines is common. Filipino men are the sources of violence in eight out of ten cases of domestic abuse (Guerrero and Sobritchea 1997). Another study by Romeo Lee (2004) that, whilst not representative of all Filipino men, conceptualizes hegemonic views on masculinity and gender roles amongst Filipino men in heterosexual relationships/marriages. Lee found that there were general views that men were “symbols of power and strength in the family” (424). Men were seen as the main source of authority and provision in the family. This includes guiding their wife or partner, disciplining the children, or “leading the family close to God” (424). Lee also found that men were seen as the stronger sex, and their physical strength led to natural positions of leadership. At the same time, many of the men in Lee’s study were unable to provide for the family, due to socio-economic trouble, which meant that their partners/wives had to obtain paid work. This “failure” to fulfil their family roles led to alcohol problems, aggression, womanising, and gambling. On the other hand, perceived female gender roles were that woman should be responsible of household chores, manage family income, and care for the children. Men also expected their partners/wives to be “clean” and make themselves available and desirable for sexual interactions (Lee 2004).

Dominant gender attitudes, particularly of Filipino men, reveal that men in this society come from a traditional position of power, dominance, and privilege. Thus, the Filipino construction of masculinity plays a role in sexual and gender-based violence, as a sign of male dominance and patriarchy. On the other hand, when men cannot fulfil these roles due to socio-economic challenges, or consequences of a disaster such as Typhoon Haiyan, violence can be used as a tool to overcome feelings of vulnerability, frustration, and powerlessness (Myrntinen 2012), and to reinforce this hegemonic vision of dominant masculinity.

## *Catholicism and the Family*

Religious and colonial discourses, specifically Catholicism, continue to be pervasive in Philippine society, and influence gender roles (Cruz 2012). More than eighty-six percent of the population is Roman Catholic (Miller 2022). The widespread Catholicism in the Philippines can be dated back to the Spanish colonial rule in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as early settlers' goal was largely to evangelize nearby civilisations.

In catholic Philippine discourses, mothers are described as “*ilaw ng tahanan*” (the light of the home) and are mainly defined as care providers for the family, whilst men are referred to as “*haligi ng tahanan*” (the stronghold of the home) and as economic providers (Nguyen 2019, 431). This is a construction of gender identity that is deeply rooted in colonial and postcolonial experiences such as the remaking of the caste and dutiful Maria Clara (Rosces 2015), and is tied up with Catholic moralities, in which “women are obliged to maintain and strengthen the family foundation. In this process, they are bound to accept a life-long marriage contract, open to possible violence and maltreatment from their spouse” (Nguyen 2019, 431). As such, Catholicism plays a large role in societal views on the unity of the family.

For instance, Lisa (52), a university lecturer from Eastern Samar notes that:

We grow up in a kind of culture in which women are taught to be submissive and shouldered with the task of taking care of the family. Women should stay in the relationship no matter what happens to them. Because we do not expect that the family can be broken just because the husband batters his wife. It is as if women's experiences of violence has become a part of raising a family. My husband is addicted to gambling, drinking, cock-fighting. He had an affair with a woman he met in one of these settings. She sold food and snacks there. He was able to hide this from me for about ten years. During that time I was busy with my work and my study. I went to Leyte to study for my Master's degree, then my PhD. In addition I was not in good health, I had some operations, and was bleeding. He used to be a good person but he was under bad influence from his barkada (peers) Here you know men keep on drinking even when there is no food at home (to feed the family) I talked to his parents and siblings about his violent behavior. They advised me: 'Just ignore the affair. Try to behave and act in a way as if you were not hit.' Culturally speaking there is a belief that men at that particular age are likely to test their masculinity, i.e. by having extra-marital relationship, wife battering etc. Once he forced me to have sex. I didn't resist because the day before we had quarreled and he threatened to kill me with a knife. So I was just submissive (quoted in Nguyen 2019, 431-2).

Lisa's pursuit of an education, and her professional success subverts traditional gender roles. This “induces men to remake their masculinities” (Pingol 2001, cited in Nguyen 2019, 43), where patriarchal power is reasserted through violence. Here, violence is a form of communication, in which Lisa's husband is communicating his position of power in the family and over Lisa. As such, his use of violence against Lisa is a tool to maintain male power, control, and domination, and an effort to subordinate his wife. This is further enabled by dominant Catholic values on family in Philippine culture. Lisa felt that she had no other choice than to

stay with her husband, in order to project the image of the unity of her family, and to fulfil the aspiration of a happy family life that is dictated through societal and religious values.

Moreover, Ted shares similar views to Lisa, saying that:

My first priority is keeping the family as a whole including mother, father and kids. I think it is (an ideal of) a happy family. But this cannot really happen. I really feel nervous and really want to live without any fear of my husband – someone who could easily get like a child, not the way an adult male should behave. I do not have any rights in making decisions. Even if it's not my fault or even if I do make mistake with intention, he just easily gets mad at me. He does not have the patience. I am really tired of carrying the family as I feel weak physically, even just the sound of his voice could make me tremble and feel freeze. I feel that the right of being a wife is not given to me, except for making children for him" (quoted in Nguyen 2019, 431).

Discourses around the cohesion of the family, shaped by catholic values, drives victims of domestic abuse to not report their cases to protect their family's reputation. In Eastern Samar for instance, women are more reluctant to separate (divorce is forbidden), as it may affect marriage prospects of their children due to the stigma a 'broken family' brings (Nguyen 2019). Other reason for Filipina women to stay in abusive relationships are also lack of personal resources, or lack of financial and social support, due to gender constructions that make obtaining work for women, and being financially independent, harder (Global Women's Institute 2015).

### 3.5. Chapter Conclusion

All in all, my analysis of Typhoon Haiyan has shown that the assumption that Typhoon Haiyan caused violence against women is incorrect. Whilst the typhoon caused conditions that exacerbated violence, including unsafe living conditions, loss of livelihood, trauma, stress, and feelings of powerlessness, these factors intersected with political, as well as underlying societal power structures. As feminist theory on violence has demonstrated, patriarchal structures enable violence as a tool to demarcate dominance and power over women. I argue that the violence that emerged post-Haiyan is both a result of insufficient gender-sensitive disaster-risk management, the fact that gender was not prioritized in first response, the breakdown of social systems of protection, as well as violence being a tool for the reassertion of gender norms, and as a means to overcome feelings of frustration and powerlessness. As such, violence is not a result of Typhoon Haiyan, but has exacerbated a culture of violence that was already pre-existent in Philippine society due to patriarchal structures shaped by Catholic and hegemonic gender constructions, that normalise a culture of silence around domestic and sexual violence. Thus, it is central to recognize that the disaster of Typhoon Haiyan did not meet a political void, and that vulnerability of male-to-female violence is not innate, or biologically determined, but



constructed through the complex factors listed above that create unique conditions for the emergence of violence.

What is more, as my analysis of the case study has shown, whilst strengthening disaster-management plans, and including a stronger gender-perspective is an important step to protect women from violence after a disaster, it will likely not stop violence against women overall. If societies continue to be male-dominated, and women are subordinated, women will continue to be victimized by violence.

## **Chapter 4: Learning from Typhoon Haiyan: Recommendations for the Integration of a Feminist Perspective on Disaster-Risk, and Climate Mitigation Policies**

This chapter aims to discuss what can be learned from the analysis of Typhoon Haiyan in terms of strengthening policies relevant to disaster-risk management, and climate mitigation, through an intersectional, ecofeminist, and gender-transformative approach, in order to prevent violence against women both pre- and post-disasters and reduce gendered vulnerabilities. I argue that whilst efforts have been made in recent disaster-risk reduction policies and frameworks to include gender in policy goals, reducing gendered vulnerabilities to disasters and climate change has still not been prioritised, which needs to change. The case study of Typhoon Haiyan offers crucial insights as to how to improve existing disaster-risk response to include stronger, gender-sensitive care in the aftermath of a disaster. However, as Typhoon Haiyan did not cause vulnerability to violence, but has exacerbated structures of violence already present in Philippine society, systems of gender inequality creating violence need to be transformed to prevent violence from continuing to happen. As such, policies need to include more ambitious gender-transformative goals.

In the following chapter, I analyse shortcomings of current disaster-risk reduction, and climate mitigation policy frameworks through a material gender analysis, and discuss why policy goals of gender equality, climate mitigation, and disaster-risk reduction need to be connected to achieve climate justice and a more sustainable and just future. Furthermore, I develop recommendations for an ecofeminist, and gender-transformative intervention to these policy frameworks, based on lessons learned from the case study of Typhoon Haiyan. With this, my aim is to open a broader feminist discussion on ways to improve policy frameworks for disaster-risk reduction, and climate mitigation.

## 4.1. Shortcomings in Disaster-Risk Reduction, and Climate Mitigation Policy Frameworks

In recent years, efforts have been made to include a gender-perspective in international policy frameworks, including in the recommendations from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)<sup>17</sup> (2018); the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005)<sup>18</sup>; the Sendai Framework for Action (2015)<sup>19</sup>, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>20</sup>; and the checklist developed by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR)<sup>21</sup>.

However, in these international agreements, the complex interactions between gender as a societal construction, and the effects of climate change, such as climate disasters, and disaster-risk management are not considered enough. In the past, climate change and development frameworks have treated gender, climate, and disasters as separate entities (UNFCCC). As such, from a feminist perspective, the problem remains at the highest level of international climate and disaster-risk discussions, where “climate change is cast as a human crisis in which gender has no relevance” (MacGregor 2010). Whilst gender mainstreaming has entered disaster and climate mitigation rhetoric, gender is still far from being mainstreamed in policies (Bradshaw and Fordham 2013). Moreover, even with the inclusion of gender concerns in policies, how gender is incorporated and translated in governance practices needs to be scrutinised, as there is “a danger of oversimplifying how gender shapes responses to disasters

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<sup>17</sup> General Recommendation 37 of CEDAW stresses the obligation in addressing gender-related dimensions of disaster risks and climate change. As stated, “states parties should ensure that all policies, legislation, plans, programs, budgets, and other activities related to disaster risk reduction and climate change are gender-responsive and grounded in human-rights based principles (7).

<sup>18</sup> The Hyogo Framework for Action is the predecessor of the Sendai Framework for Action. It states that a gender perspective should be “integrated into all disaster-risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, and education and training” (4). However, it does not explicitly state how this gender-perspective should be integrated, which suggests a lack of a full commitment to adopting this gender perspective, which is also reflected by other international agreements (Bradshaw and Fordham 2013).

<sup>19</sup> The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 expresses commitments to gender equality within disaster-risk reduction. It states that, “women and their participation is critical to effectively managing disaster risk and designing, resourcing and implementing gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programmes, and adequate capacity building measures need to be taken to empower women for preparedness as well as to build their capacity to secure alternate means of livelihoods in post-disaster solutions.” (UNDRR 2015).

<sup>20</sup> The United Nations’ 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development highlights that current sustainability challenges are about equality and social justice as much as about biodiversity, ecosystems and the environment and they need to be addressed as an “indivisible whole” (Nilsson et al. 2016).

<sup>21</sup> The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) developed a checklist in 2011 to make disaster-risk reduction gender sensitive. It states that gender is integral to the cycle of disaster-risk reduction, beginning with how problems are understood, the mobilisation and allocation of resources, prioritization of issues, decision-making, and the practice and implementation of disaster-risk reduction in development and humanitarian programmes.

and is responsible for generating certain kinds of vulnerabilities or strengths” (Cupples 2007, 155).

Moreover, how gender is framed in these policies often only focuses on the binary between male and female and reflects heteronormative societal beliefs about gender. Subsequently, sexual and gender minorities are often completely excluded from the discussion (Gaard 2015).

What is more, a central tenant of gender-mainstreaming goals within these policies, and specifically within the UN, is the inclusion of women and other minorities in policy making. Women are still underrepresented at the regional, national, and international level of environmental-, and disaster-risk reduction decision-making (Hemmati and Rohr 2009; IUCN GG0 2015), and climate change mitigation is still considered male-dominated (Djoudi et al. 2016). Women should be represented at different levels of governance. According to Tanyag and True (2019), “ensuring that women representing communities at the margins of society and geopolitics are able to participate at the highest level in climate governance is crucial to advancing gender equality and climate justice” (35).

Gender-representation and balance is crucial but does not automatically translate into gender-transformative climate and disaster-risk reduction policy (Rohr 2012). Rethinking the traditionally patriarchal and ideological underpinnings of climate governance is essential (Kaijser and Kronsell 2014; Tanyag and True 2019). With this, a wider transformation of institutions and politics is needed, in which people are prepared to question gender roles and norms, and work together to uncover “the embedded gender and power relations in climate change policy and mitigation strategies” (Rohr 2012, 2).

## 4.2. Towards a Feminist, Gender-Transformative Framework for Disaster-Risk Reduction, and Climate Change Mitigation

### 4.2.1 The Case Study, Standpoint Feminism, and Situated Knowledges

Given the problems of existing disaster-risk reduction and climate change mitigation frameworks, specifically their weak commitments to recognizing the importance of addressing gendered vulnerabilities, in this section, I question what can be done, from a feminist perspective, to strengthen goals of these policies regarding gender. Furthermore, I examine how

the knowledge derived from my analysis of Typhoon Haiyan can be used to develop a new feminist framework to policy decisions.

As outlined earlier, standpoint feminism argues that women's lived experiences provide a more critical vantage point on social reality, because of their experienced patriarchal structures of subordination (Tanyag and True 2019). Here, the 'everyday experiences' of women and other marginalized groups are essential. The concept of 'everyday' has been used by feminist researchers to explain relations of power structures experienced in daily life that affect global processes (Bee et al. 2015; Dyck 2005). The everyday is the time/place where knowledge, action, and experience come together. Analysing those experiences brings attention to issues of embodiment, difference, and inequality in the lived experiences of different people (Bee et al. 2015).

Women, by being in marginalised positions of power, can better understand the unequal nature of current systems and how they work to maintain inequality. Consequently, "women have a standpoint on both what is wrong with the current system and how to change it based on their lived experiences. Those in positions of power imbued by a 'view from the top' cannot conceive alternatives to the status quo because they substantially benefit from - and have vested interests in maintaining - it" (Tanyag and True 2019, 36). Furthermore, by using women's experiences as a starting point, one can "map environmental realities that have been obscured from top-down governance" which tends to be masculine decision-making spaces that are male dominated or biased to behaviours considered masculine (Buckingham 2015, cited in Tanyag and True 2019, 35).

In climate mitigation, and disaster-risk reduction policymaking, there is a need for more grounded and localized understandings of climate change, and vulnerabilities to disasters that recognize the experiences of marginalized individuals and communities in local places (Adger et al. 2009; Brace and Geoghegan 2011).

The case study of Typhoon Haiyan has shown how important lived experiences and localised knowledge of affected individuals are to understand different vulnerabilities both pre- and after a disaster. Ted, Lisa, Jenny, Maya, and Elena's stories of abuse before and after Haiyan directly show that violence against women is a prevalent issue in the Philippines that needs to be addressed. Engaging in discourses around violence is essential to break the culture of silence surrounding it. Their experiences also offer important insights into causes for violence, such as hegemonic family structures and harmful gender norms that enable violence.

Moreover, the case study has shown that lived experiences of violence are context-specific and situated because of the specific challenges, policy and humanitarian failures, and gender norms that interact within the local context of the Philippines. Recognizing these “situated knowledges” in climate mitigation and disaster-risk reduction should be a key approach to mediating geographical and context-specific needs.

#### 4.2.2 Gender Transformation

Not only do we need to learn from local survivors of climate disasters, and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence on how to improve policy frameworks, and include localised and situated knowledges, but we need a more radical shift from resilience building to transformation in policy goals (Pelling 2010; Raju 2019).

Virginie Le Masson et al. (2019) define transformation as the goal to “eliminate or reduce risk factors, vulnerability, and inequality, to lessen the long-term impact of crises on the poor and the victims of discrimination as a priority. Transformation differs from adaption in that it deliberately seeks to change the state of being, instead of (simply) adjusting practices to fit new conditions” (258).

The case study of Typhoon Haiyan demonstrates that gendered vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence is not just the result of inadequate gender-sensitive disaster-risk reduction protocols, or a direct result from the challenging humanitarian conditions created by the typhoon, but it is also grounded in deep-rooted structural issues of gender inequality. Consequently, simply improving, or integrating a stronger gender-response to disaster-risk reduction management will not be enough to prevent violence against women from happening. Instead, addressing gender in these policies and plans needs to be about addressing deep-rooted, socio-structural issues, such as patriarchal power dynamics (Raju 2019).

The experiences of Ted or Lisa for example have demonstrated that the violence they have endured is deeply rooted in unequal power dynamics between them and their husbands, and other social factors such as the construction of heteronormative family structures, hegemonic gender roles, and Catholic values that are entrenched in misogyny and patriarchy. Identifying underlying social structures shows that policies need to address, and work to transform structural issues of gender constructions, that cause gendered vulnerability in the first place. As such, to prevent sexual and gender-based violence, I propose that a feminist, gender-transformative framework should view violence as the manifestation of unequal gendered

power dynamics and work to transform them to move away from male-dominated societies that enable violence against women.

Furthermore, gender-transformation is heavily linked to goals of ecofeminism. As such, ecofeminism provides useful grounds for the development of feminist, and gender-transformative approaches to policy development. An ecofeminist approach to gender-transformation explores the twin oppression of women and nature, and the idea that humanity is inseparable from nature, and that the damage inflicted upon nature by humans invariably leads to harm being inflicted upon all humans, not just women (Dobson 1995). The ecofeminist recognition that women cannot be liberated without the liberation of nature heavily ties in with feminist approaches to climate justice.<sup>22</sup>

Feminist climate justice means that the climate crisis, and climate disasters, cannot be treated as a simply environmental problem, but a complex social justice problem, placing the protection of the most vulnerable populations at its centre (OCI 2019). It is central to adopt a feminist climate justice, under ecofeminist and transformational principles, that links human- and gender rights and development to climate mitigation, and disaster-risk reduction, to protect and strengthen the rights of the most vulnerable.

However, with the ecofeminist understanding that unequal gender structures need to be transformed in policies to reduce gendered vulnerability to climate disasters, and achieve climate justice, transformational policies need to recognize that gender is not the only factor determining vulnerability, and that needs to be transformed to build resilience. It is crucial to understand and address how different systems of oppressions, based on identity markers that intersect with each other, create unique forms of vulnerabilities that should be considered in transformational policy frameworks.

Gender is consolidated at particular sites through intersections with other defining factors, such as race/ethnicity, sexuality, class, ability/disability, or age (Crenshaw 1989; Rydstrom and Kinnvall 2019). Intersectional approaches to ecofeminist transformation should aim to understand women's and men's relationship with the environment by considering interactions between gender and class, different ecological dimensions, and the effects of climate change and climate disasters (Agarwal 1992; Seager 2003).

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<sup>22</sup> Climate justice links human rights and development goals to achieve a human-centred approach, safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable and sharing the burdens and benefits of climate change and its resolutions equitably and fairly (MRF 2011). Climate justice means addressing the climate crisis not merely as an environmental problem, but as a complex social justice problem, placing at the centre populations that are particularly vulnerable to its impacts (OCI 2019).

Through an intersectional lens, one can address the intersectional character of gender and power relations in resilience and adaptation building capacities of climate mitigation, and disaster-risk reduction frameworks (Ravera et al. 2016).

Thus, a feminist approach to climate justice should address the issue of climate change, and climate disasters, as a complex social issue through an intersectional analysis that challenges unequal power relations based on gender and other factors. This type of analysis advocates for strategies that address the root causes of inequality, transform power relations, and promote gender and human rights (OCI 2019).

### 4.3. Chapter Conclusion

All in all, the case study of Typhoon Haiyan has shown that gender equality needs to be integrated into the objectives of environmental and disaster-risk policies. A more holistic understanding of sustainability and climate justice needs to be integrated in policy frameworks, which should include a sustainable transition towards environmental, economic, and social dimensions of equalities.

To properly address different vulnerabilities to climate change and climate disasters, underlying causes of vulnerability must be identified and transformed. This includes harmful gender constructs present in male-dominated societies, in which violence is used as a tool to perform specific versions of gender identity and power, and in which women are subjugated, and victimized.

Ecofeminism provides a useful framework to show how systems of inequalities are related to environmental degradation and the consequences of disasters. Thus, an adequate, and just transition towards sustainable policy frameworks should not only focus on environmental sustainability, but also social transformation. Gender, and other intersectional social factors need to be transformed to work through unequal societal power dynamics causing (gendered) vulnerability. As such, environmental and human/gender rights agendas should be treated as interconnected issues, in which one goal is dependent on the other.

Alongside ecofeminism, standpoint feminism provides a useful approach to policy frameworks, as women and other marginalized groups, offer unique and localised perspectives and knowledge on power dynamics leading to vulnerability in times of crises. As such, policymakers should include diverse local and marginalized knowledge to develop policies



designed from the 'bottom up' that properly address context-specific and localised vulnerabilities.

Thus, central elements of an intersectional, ecofeminist, gender transformative framework, based on a feminist standpoint perspective should include: 1. Properly addressing underlying, and intersectional factors of vulnerability, including based on gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, class, disability, age, etc. 2. Gender-inclusive, and diverse representation, and equal participation in climate, and disaster-risk governance, including marginalized and local participation. 3. Recognizing gender/social constructions, such as norms, and attitudes as underlying causes of vulnerability and violence, and transforming them to build resilience against climate disasters and other effects of climate change.

## Conclusion

This thesis has explored causes of gendered vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence after climate disasters, through the case study of Typhoon Haiyan. Central research objectives were to explore reasons for the increase of violence against women after Typhoon Haiyan, both resulting from the challenging conditions caused by the disaster itself, policy failures, as well as deeper underlying structures of gender inequality enabling violence. Moreover, a second aim of this thesis was to identify central lessons that can be learned from Typhoon Haiyan for a feminist policy intervention that addresses gendered vulnerabilities and works to transform them to build resilience.

The analysis of the case study of Typhoon Haiyan in chapter three has demonstrated that whilst the typhoon has exacerbated violence against women in the wake of the disaster, it did not cause it, as violence had already been an ‘everyday’ experience of women before the disaster. My analysis has provided various reasons for the increase of violence in the aftermath of the typhoon. On the one hand, the disaster caused the breakdown of social systems of protection which led to a state of exception where violence against women was either not noticed, ignored, or even condoned. Insufficient gender-sensitive disaster-risk reduction plans, and the lack of gender-prioritization in first response further contributed to unsafe situations in which women were more exposed to the risk of violence, consequently exacerbating instances of violence. Moreover, trauma, stress, and feelings of powerlessness over the loss of livelihood and autonomy led men to use violence to overcome these feelings and reassert some form of control back to them. Institutional challenges to reporting cases, and the high stigmatization of victims of (sexual) violence, provided additional challenges to reporting and prosecuting cases, which may have further encouraged male perpetrators to commit violent acts.

On the other hand, violence against women was also created by patriarchal structures of gender inequality in the Philippines. Philippine society is heavily influenced by constructed gender identities of masculine and feminine, which are largely enacted through heteronormative family structures, in which men are placed in traditional positions of power and dominance and women are subordinated. Through these unequal gender dynamics, violence is used as a tool in which male power and control is reasserted, and masculinity performed. Catholicism further exacerbates traditional gender constructions through their strong influence on gender roles, and their enforced narratives around the unity of the family, which discourages victims of (domestic) violence from reporting their cases and creates a culture of silence around domestic

and (sexual) violence, further enabling it and contributing to its normalisation. These pre-existing gender inequalities and harmful gender roles created precursors of violence, which were then exacerbated by the typhoon through a combination of the above listed factors.

In chapter four, I have discussed important insights of the case study of Typhoon Haiyan that can be used to strengthen policy frameworks of disaster-risk reduction and climate mitigation and reduce gendered vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence. An ecofeminist understanding of the connection between gender inequality and environmental degradation is necessary to understand that gender, disasters, and climate change can no longer be treated as separate issues. Sustainability and climate justice cannot be achieved without achieving gender equality. To prevent violence against women, and subsequently reduce gendered vulnerability to disasters, traditional patriarchal underpinnings of social and institutional structures, causing gender inequality, need to be transformed, both in societal ideologies, as well as through extensive gender equality policies. What is more, standpoint feminism provides a helpful starting point for the development of feminist policies, as the inclusion of marginalised experiences and knowledges offer critical vantage points on structures of oppression that need to be transformed through an intersectional, ecofeminist, and gender-transformative policy framework.

It is important to acknowledge that the scope of this thesis has been limited to analysing violence against women and girls as *one* form of vulnerability to a climate disaster. Moreover, the case study of Typhoon Haiyan only serves as *one* example of how a disaster is intersecting with, and intensifying gender inequality. As such, the knowledge I have produced through this research is situated and differentiated. Additional research is helpful to address other forms of gendered vulnerability to climate disasters in different contexts that undermine people's resilience capacities to a disaster.

Moreover, as highlighted earlier, gender is not the sole factor determining one's vulnerability to a climate disaster. Additional research highlighting interactions of different matrixes of oppression, including racism, ableism, and heteronormativity is necessary to understand the complexity of such interactions. Intersectional and interdisciplinary gender analyses of climate related events and the climate crisis are essential and should be considered in future research.

All in all, this research has aimed to contribute to the growing body of feminist disaster-risk studies, and ecofeminist theory focusing on climate change and climate disasters that analyses how larger systems of gender oppression construct specific gender-differentiated vulnerabilities that are exacerbated by the effects of climate change, and climate disasters.

Whilst the scope of this thesis has been somewhat limited, this thesis contributes to this body of research by showing how violence as a form of gendered vulnerability in a climate disaster can offer crucial insights into larger systems of gender oppression that need to be transformed through feminist policies and structural change.

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