Gender Perspectives in Technology for Emergency Management – A Brief Systematic Literature Study

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ABSTRACT

What is the position of gender and intersectional analysis within ISCRAM's research community, and how has it developed over time? In this paper, we conduct a systematic literature review exploring the presence of gender perspectives and intersectionality in the ISCRAM digital library from 2004 to 2025, and we outline a research agenda based on our findings. Using the theoretical frameworks of feminist technoscience studies and intersectionality studies, we have categorised papers in the digital library. The identified articles fall into four categories, ranging from studies that treat gender as one of many variables for statistical purposes to papers offering a deeper analysis grounded in gender theory and intersectionality. Our analysis highlights growing momentum within the ISCRAM community to more fully integrate gender-sensitive perspectives, potentially aided by broader inclusion of social science scholars in the conference and its network.

Keywords

Gender, intersectionality, marginalised groups, vulnerable groups, race, ethnicity, feminist technoscience studies, feminist epistemology, feminist methodology.

INTRODUCTION

In much of the Western world, science and technology are regarded as central elements of culture, closely interwoven with social discourses and practices (Weber 2006). Technology has become a key part of work and leisure life, education, information sharing, communication, and health-care systems — though its role and use vary across contexts. As a result, technology affects a wide range of users and intersects with gender, age, social class, and race. However, technology is not neutral. It is often described as a masculine domain embedded in patriarchal structures (Weber 2006). Anthropologist Francesca Bray (2007) reflects on what she calls the "modernist association of technology with masculinity," which, she argues, "translates into everyday experiences of gender, narratives, employment practices, education, the design of new technologies, and the distribution of power across a global society in which technology is seen as the driving force of progress" (Bray, 2007:38).

Early feminist critiques in technoscience studies observed that new technologies could be the basis for differential treatment of men and women (Cockburn 1985). Ruth Cowan's influential study of the technological revolution in the home (Cowan 1976) examined not only how women use technology but also how its use reflects and reinforces power relations at the household and societal level. Feminist technoscience scholarship emerging in the 1990s emphasised the need to study how gender and technology mutually shape one another (Wajcman 2002, 2004.) As Lohan and Faulkner argue (2004), "since technology and gender are both socially constructed and socially pervasive, we can never fully understand one without also understanding the other" (Lohan and Faulkner 2004, 139). Focusing on these mutual relationships also helps avoid essentializing either technology or gender (Weber 2006).

A growing body of research also indicates that gender is increasingly seen as a critical determinant of vulnerability, response capacity, and recovery outcomes across the phases of emergency management (see for instance, Akanga et al, 2025; Fatouros and Capetola 2021). Neymayer and Plümper (2007) document gendered differences in mortality and exposure in disasters. Another important work is that of Fothergill (1996), who shows how gendered norms shape mobility, access to information, and caregiving burdens during and after crises. Research on technology in the field of development further demonstrates differential access to communication technologies. This includes information flows and economic opportunities in ways that are gendered (see for instance Sekabira and Qaim 2017). Such patterns are important to be aware of due to potential implications for technology-mediated emergency interventions such as early-warning systems, cash transfers, and digitally enabled relief coordination.

Taken together, these bodies of literature indicate the urgency of extending gender and intersectional analyses within the fields of technology and emergency management, also in a development context, where emergencies are part of the everyday challenges for many people, particularly the poorer parts of the population who are often among the more vulnerable.

As researchers with backgrounds in gender and development studies, and information systems and studies of universal design, we are interested in the "gender question" within integrated emergency management. As noted above, it took time for gender to become a topic within science and technology studies and for that scholarship to influence conversations about the beneficiaries of technology—who technology is designed for and who it serves. A similar evolution has occurred within development studies, which shifted from "women in development" to debates about "gender and development" (Miller and Shara 1995), increasingly also acknowledging intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989, Hill-Collins 2019). Such an intersectional lens recognises how social and political identities—such as age, gender, class, and race—overlap to produce privilege or discrimination. Situated within a feminist epistemology, applying intersectional perspectives also implies advocacy and desire for structural change that improves the lives of marginalised groups and actors. In the context of emergency management, this means that the use of an intersectional approach may enable us to better plan for and reach a diversity of groups.

RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

In this paper, which is work in progress, we explore what has been the focus on gender and intersectionality within ISCRAM (Information Systems for Crisis Response and Management), a nonprofit community of researchers and practitioners established in 2004 that focuses on the design, development, and use of information systems for managing emergencies, disasters, and crises. Since 2004, the yearly international ISCRAM conference has grown to become the most important gathering of researchers within information systems and technology in crisis management. The proceedings of papers from these conferences are openly available in the ISCRAM Digital Library. Hence, the objective of this paper is to explore *how and to what extent gender appears in previous publications from the ISCRAM digital library*.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As outlined in the introduction, this paper builds on feminist technoscience and intersectionality as guiding theoretical frameworks to examine the relationship between gender and technology in crisis and emergency management research, specifically by exploring publications in the ISCRAM library. Feminist technoscience challenges views that treat technology as neutral, autonomous, or solely instrumental. Instead, a central argument within feminist technoscience is how technologies and social categories (such as, for example, gender) are mutually constitutive (Wajcman 2004, Åsberg and Lykke, 2010). This means that while technologies are gendered in their design, deployment, and use, gendered relations can be either reinforced or transformed through technological artefacts and practices (Wajcman 2004). Consequently, feminist technoscience draws on social constructivist approaches (Åkerstrøm and Lykke, 2010)—and so do we as a research team working across disciplinary boundaries.

Building on this foundation, we also incorporate Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality (1989) to prevent discussing gender as the sole axis of difference, but instead position gender within overlapping structures of power, such as class, race, age, disability, migratory status, and geographical locations. Such overlapping structures often result in increased vulnerability of individuals, groups and thus potentially leading to increased marginalisation.

By applying feminist technoscience and intersectionality as analytical lenses, we can reveal how crisis technologies both embody and produce diverse experiences, vulnerabilities, and capacities. More importantly,

examining the ISCRAM literature through this lens raises awareness within our research community of how such vulnerabilities may be produced, sometimes unintentionally, by failing to engage with particular groups or perspectives. As outlined in the introduction, an intersectional approach enables us to better plan for and reach disparate groups.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted as a systematic literature review (Panic et al., 2013) within the digital library of ISCRAM. Systematic literature reviews involve searching, identifying and evaluating results from published articles in a given field in a rigorous and reproducible manner, and is as such a good approach to identify research gaps. We identified the following key terms to be used for the search; *gender, intersectional(ity), marginali(z/s)ed, lgbtq, queer, ethnicity, vulnerable groups, marginalised groups*. These search terms have been selected to reflect current topics in feminist research with an intersectional perspective, but we acknowledge that they may not catch all relevant papers and will consider expanding with more search terms in future work. Two of the authors independently performed the search to ensure reproducibility, and all three authors evaluated the different identified articles for relevance.

The ISCRAM digital library (IDL) was moved to a new location for conferences starting from 2024, while the old digital library covered the years from the first conference in 2004 to 2023. The old library contains around 2000 papers, while the new library contains an estimated 150-200 papers. Our search ranges from the start in 2004 until the last publications available at the time of writing from ISCRAM 2025, including findings from both libraries. In both cases, we used the built-in search mechanism on *all fields*, including title, abstract, and keywords.

All the authors have read through the selected articles, paying particular attention to whether gender and the other search words race, marginalised/vulnerable groups or ethnicity are merely used as statistical characteristics for data collection, or whether the articles describe a wider gender related theme, apply an intersectional approach or use a feminist approach as seen in feminist technoscience studies both in methodology and analysis. Based on the theoretical framework presented in the previous section, the authors have identified four distinct categories, highlighting to what degree the articles display gender-theoretical foundations:

1. Gender treated as one variable among many, included in statistical descriptions.
2. Gender (or other factors such as class, age, disability, race) considered as a distinct theme, with emphasis on exploring mechanisms behind observed differences.
3. Papers that adopt an intersectional approach, analysing gender together with other differentiating factors.
4. Papers that embed a deeper gender-theory framing in both design and analysis, explicitly arguing for feminist epistemology and/or methodology.

The findings from the literature review are contrasted with the research front on feminist technoscience, and based on the identified research gaps, a preliminary research agenda is described. We have applied the University of Oslo's privacy-friendly ChatGPT services to provide a summary of each article and used this as a starting point for our interpretation in terms of our research question.

REVIEW FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The search found a total of 51 papers, two in the new library, both from 2024, and 49 from the old, ranging from the first ISCRAM conference in 2004 to 2023.

Independent manual checks performed by the authors found that 36 of the papers returned by the search were false positives, where for example the IDL search function triggered on parts of words like "engender", or "race" as part of Grace or trace, or meaning "competition".

In total, we reviewed 51 articles identified using the specified keywords and after removing false positives, 15 papers were selected for further analysis.

The keywords that provided results in the final selection after removing false positives were "gender" (5) "woman" (3), "ethnicity" (1), "marginalisation" (1), "vulnerable groups" (5) and "race" (1). Other keyword terms like intersectionality did not bring results.

We have categorised the papers not only by the search terms but also by how those terms were applied—whether

as single differentiating factors or as part of a broader intersectional perspective, as shown in Table 1. Using our theoretical framework as a backdrop, we organise the articles according to how they treat gender and intersectionality.

Table 1: Identified papers in the different categories.

Category	Gender handling	Articles identified
Category 0	False positives	36
Category 1	Variable	3
Category 2	Distinct theme	6
Category 3	Intersectional approach	5
Category 4	Deep gender theory framing	1

CATEGORY 1

An example of the first category treating gender as a variable is Horsch et al. (2013). The authors compare USAR robot operator performance and situation awareness (SA) in virtual versus real tasks and report largely similar outcomes with a few task-specific differences. The study includes gender as an individual-difference variable (N = 12; 6 male / 6 female) and notes a single gender-related effect. In short, the paper's gender focus is limited to a binary comparison with one significant finding. The small, homogeneous sample constrains any generalisation about gendered or intersecting social influences on SA and performance.

Similarly in its treatment of gender is the work of Konstantoudakis et al. (2020), evaluating two one-hand UAV control modes (finger-based and palm orientation) in simulation with 39 participants (27 men, 12 women), including eight first responders. The paper has useful descriptive gender splits and raises operational equity issues (e.g., handedness). Gender is used as a categorical descriptor, but other social dimensions (race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, more detailed age stratification) are not examined. Thus, it does not advance an intersectional understanding.

Moving to country-level quantitative work, Liu et al. (2024) use the Global Terrorism Database and World Bank socioeconomic indicators to run Spearman and Grey correlations across eight Gulf states, exploring links between terrorist incidents and factors such as per-capita GDP, unemployment, net migration, military strength and adolescent fertility rates. The study is framed explicitly as preliminary and correlational (not causal). Adolescent fertility is included (an indicator with clear gendered implications), but the analysis treats these measures as aggregate demographics rather than unpacking gendered mechanisms or intersecting identities (race/ethnicity, class, religion, displacement) that might mediate observed relationships. Thus, while informative at the macro level, the paper does not foreground gender or intersectionality and is thus placed in category one.

CATEGORY 2

Transitioning from variable-based studies to those that take gender or other socially differentiating factors as a thematic concern, the work of Potemski et al. (2020) is illustrative of category two. Using knowledge-management visual tools (MASK history and genealogy models) and contrasting case studies (women returning from ISIS/Daesh; "Solar Mamas" training), the paper centres women's lived trajectories under violence, tradition and poverty. It foregrounds gendered domination, unpaid care work and gendered violence, and aims to inform gender-targeted interventions.

Broadening our search with keywords such as "vulnerability" uncovers papers that identify multiple socially differentiating factors. These are, however, often treated separately rather than jointly. Johansson et al. (2020), for example, qualitatively analyse observation protocols and audio from 14 multi-stakeholder simulation exercises about a prolonged card-payment outage in southern Sweden. The authors identify eight recurrent themes (coordination, payment options, cash circulation, fuel/transportation, security, information/media, hoarding/rationing, and vulnerable groups) and highlight fragilities arising from low payment-option diversity. Their discussion of "vulnerable groups" (elderly, migrants, people without smartphones or formal IDs, those with addictions) is very valuable. The article fits category two as the study does not analyse how these vulnerabilities intersect.

A comparable focus appears in the work of van Laere et al. (2017), which maps how a prolonged card-payment disruption could cascade across critical infrastructures and identifies seven cross-functional resilience challenges. The paper is highly relevant in a crisis management context as it recognises differential vulnerabilities (economically marginal groups, urban–rural differences, people without smartphones/IDs). The paper is categorised in group two as vulnerability is treated as broad categories and does not disaggregate impacts by gender or examine how gendered roles (caregiving, access to transport/cash, exposure to security risks) might shape outcomes.

Tsai et al. (2023) present NutritionBot, a GPT-powered chatbot co-designed to generate personalised pregnancy nutrition advice for a low-SES persona. The study foregrounds social determinants (SES, food deserts, limited health literacy) and uses co-design and personas to surface usability and access issues (web vs SMS, simplified interfaces). In the paper, gender is primarily treated as the domain of use (pregnancy), which in itself is an important focus. A furthering of the work could have disaggregated evaluation across intersecting axes such as race/ethnicity, age, disability, single parenthood or employment precarity and included discussions of gendered power relations or caregiving roles.

Population-level vulnerability measurement also aggregates axes rather than trace their intersections. Haque et al. (2021) link mass gatherings and multiple hazards to COVID-19 infection dynamics using vulnerability indices (SoVI, CDC SVI, a COVID-19 Pandemic Vulnerability Index) and quantify multidimensional vulnerability across demographic, socioeconomic and household factors. The paper discusses race/ethnicity and structural inequalities and thus point to important socially differentiating factors. A furthering of the finding with reference to intersectionality, operationalising gender × race × class × disability interactions could provide further insights into how overlapping identities jointly shape risk.

Gao et al. (2024) develop a multimodal CNN–LSTM to infer Twitter users' gender, age group and prosocial posting tendency from images, bios and pre-COVID tweets, then link these features to expressed adherence to a COVID-19 vaccine norm. The study finds a statistically significant gender effect (male users are more likely to express adherence), of importance to the emergency management field. A further examination of intersectional dynamics could be advanced and systematically examined, emphasising interactions with race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status or disability.

Computational studies often use inferred demographic labels as predictors but often do not interrogate their social complexity. The above limitations point toward category three: papers that thematically engage socially differentiating factors reflecting intersectional or participatory approaches without necessarily employing an intersectional analysis or a gender theoretical framework.

CATEGORY 3

One example of this category is Petersen et al. (2021), who report the PROACTIVE CBRNe app development using universal-design and co-creation methods, where four participatory workshops with representatives of many vulnerable groups. These methods have produced concrete accessibility changes (simpler wording, icon redesign, text-to-speech, easy-read options) and the decision to deliver one universally accessible app rather than multiple special-purpose versions. The paper clearly focuses on inclusivity in design goals, emphasising how the user community cannot be understood as homogenous. The paper explicitly names groups such as blind/visually impaired users, people who use wheelchairs, deaf/hard-of-hearing persons, autistic people, LGBTQIA+, the homeless, pregnant women and older persons and seeks these stakeholders to drive iterative usability changes. This is a paper that is committed to including a diversity of stakeholders and aiming to develop an app catering for various needs. The work does not provide an intersectional or gender analysis, or discuss how overlapping identities (e.g., gender x race × disability) may produce distinct barriers. However, with the inclusive recruitment and universal design focus this paper fits in category three.

Another article reporting on the same app development is that of Petersen et al. (2022) describing PROACTIVE, a co-creation process for the universally designed CBRNe disaster app that involved a Civil Society Advisory Board and workshops with diverse vulnerable groups (people with sensory/physical disabilities, older adults, pregnant women, homeless people, immigrants, LGBTQIA+ representatives). The project explicitly centres marginalised users and generated concrete Universal Design and WCAG requirements. The paper reveals important socially differentiating factors, but as it does not systematically examine how social axes interact or produce compound vulnerabilities and develop a sustained gender analysis (e.g., caregiving roles, gendered access

to devices or transport) it is categorised as a paper within category three.

Poblet et al. (2018) similarly analyse emergency organisations' social-media messaging during extreme weather in Victoria, Australia, finding scant targeted outreach to named vulnerable groups (older people, people with disabilities, migrants, those living alone). The paper recognises multiple axes of vulnerability and criticises treating such groups as homogeneous, acknowledging a further need for attention. A furthering of the theme could have included an empirical analysis demonstrating how intersecting identities (gender × age × migration status, etc.) create distinct information needs or barriers.

Other studies offer such traces of intersectional thinking without full operationalisation. Gayle et al. (2023) segment focus groups by age × race/ethnicity to reveal trust and privacy variations for the NYS contact-tracing app. The paper recognises community heterogeneity, yet gender typically appears only as a basic demographic rather than a focal or intersecting analytic axis.

Easton (2014) brings a policy focus to digital inclusion and accessibility, arguing that neglecting inclusive design marginalises disabled people and older adults and framing inclusion as a justice/capabilities issue. The paper is strong on disability and the digital divide, and particularly relevant to the field of emergency. A furthering of the discussion could have shown how gender combines with disability, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status or age to generate compound emergency vulnerabilities.

The above examples reveal an interest in examining vulnerabilities within the ISCRAM community and also show that there is a platform to work from to advance gender and intersectional analysis within ISCRAM scholarship in the future. Up until now, few papers within the ISCRAM library fully takes on a gender analytical or theoretical framework, and thus an aim could be to advance in this direction.

CATEGORY 4

Moving to category four, research that explicitly adopts feminist theory and intersectional methods and analysis, we find that this category is scarce in the ISCRAM literature. One notable exception is Sefyrin and Pilemalm (2016), who combine interviews with STS/feminist technoscience framing to examine how gender, age, disability and ethnicity are (not) represented in Swedish Rescue Services' information systems. Using a "doing gender" lens, they show that frontline systems often omit demographic and vulnerability markers because speed and simplicity are prioritised, even though respondents acknowledge that such markers can be operationally relevant (children, pregnant women, care homes, migrants). The paper foregrounds intersectionality conceptually, but does not fully operationalise it in empirical analysis.

What the above sections show is how ISCRAM scholarship can be sorted into the four categories established in this WiP. Scholars use gender as a variable, document gendered effects or identify multiple vulnerable groups. All important to the emergency management field. Having said that, variable-based and computational studies frequently reduce gender to a binary predictor; thematic and vulnerability-focused work often lists multiple at-risk groups without analysing their overlap; participatory projects include diverse users but stop short of examining how axes interact. What could be advanced, building on what is already there, would be to embed gender as a theoretically grounded, intersectional axis in ISCRAM scholarly work.

GAPS AND PRELIMINARY RESEARCH AGENDA

As shown above, many ISCRAM papers treat gender and other diversity characteristics (age, class, race, ability) as variables within statistical analyses, reporting gender- or diversity-related effects. Diverse papers also address gender and other socially differentiating factors thematically. Fewer papers adopt an intersectional analytic lens, and we observe a greater number focusing on broadly defined "vulnerable groups" (including socioeconomic status, age, and disabilities), with fewer contributions focusing on gender or race specifically. There are some attempts to employ intersectional analysis, particularly in studies of vulnerable populations. Overall, mainly categories 1–3 appear in the ISCRAM paper library. It should, however, be noted that there is an increased focus on these issues over the later years compared to the first years of the ISCRAM conference, as illustrated in Figure 1.

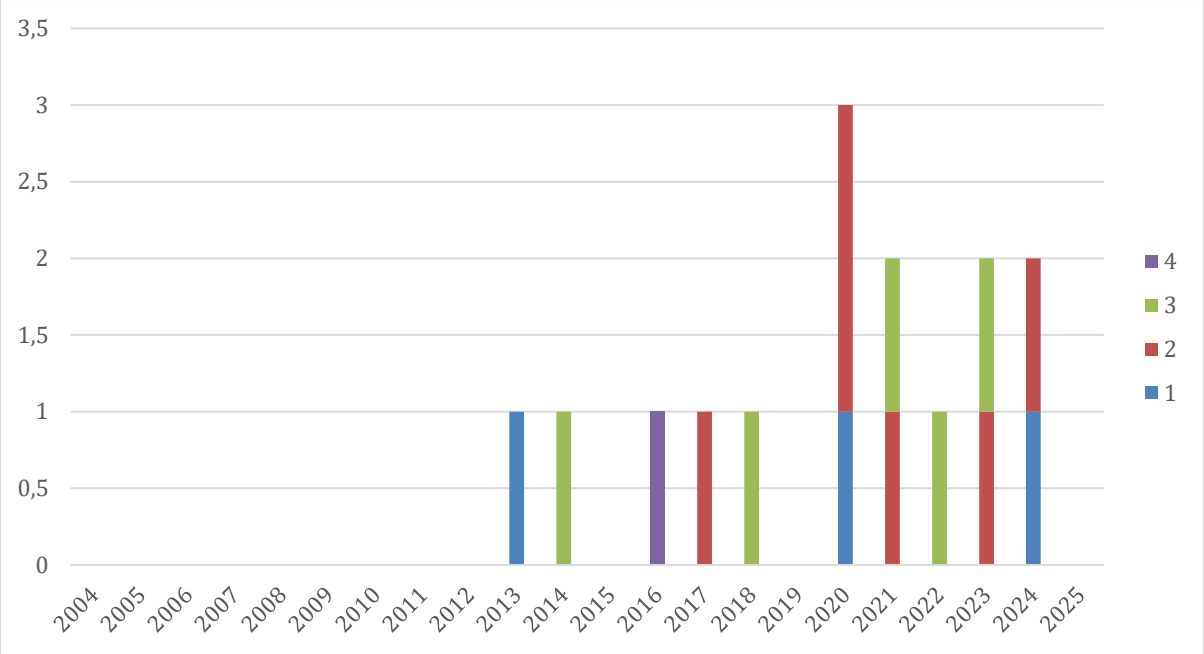

Figure 1. Distribution of the identified articles and categories during the years of ISCRAM conferences.

What is still noticeably absent are papers that take a feminist starting point and a feminist theory approach: studies that explicitly call for change, centre gender and intersectionality in their framing, or critique the absence of gendered and intersectional perspectives. Such explicitly feminist and intersectional contributions seem to be sparse across ISCRAM tracks. Thus, there is a potential to build on existing interest in gender and vulnerabilities to include and encourage such contributions.

In this work, we can draw on related fields familiar to the authors, including feminist technology studies (FTS), as outlined at the start of the paper. Disaster management research outside ISCRAM that emphasises gender and diversity could also be explored. These literatures treat gender, race, age, class, and ability as more than control variables or descriptive categories, placing gender and intersectionality at the centre of analysis. FTS in particular advances feminist epistemologies and methodologies; likewise, disaster studies include numerous thematically driven and feminist-positioned publications that incorporate intersectionality (see, for example, Alburo-Cañete, 2024).

There is still much work to be done if the technological dimension of emergency management is to reflect the mutually constitutive relationship between technology and social categories such as gender and intersectionality. Within the identified literature when vulnerable groups are mentioned, it is presented as a broad category containing a variety of "those in particularly strong need of assistance during crises" that are sometimes presented with reference to socio-economically disadvantaged, persons with disabilities, immigrants, etc; but the similarities and differences between the individuals and groups contained within this broad category, and in particular overlapping identities i.e. intersectionality, is most often not properly unpacked or reflected on. Further research on gender issues and intersectionality in technology for emergency management is therefore clearly needed.

Our analysis highlights increased momentum for a shift in the ISCRAM community to more fully integrate gender-sensitive perspectives, potentially supported by a broader inclusion of social science scholars within the conference and its networks. The authors plan to extend this work outlined in this paper by reviewing a broader range of literature on technology for emergency management beyond the ISCRAM library and by proposing a research agenda to promote a more equitable, gender-aware field. Encouraging submissions to ISCRAM that address these dimensions could strengthen ISCRAM scholarship and may attract more social science scholars to the conference and its network.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our limited sample from the review shows a growing number of publications that include keywords such as

"gender," "ethnicity," or "vulnerable groups," which may indicate a slow but steady increase in awareness of the need to attend to differences among user groups. This awareness seems to be growing with time (more emerging around 2020 onwards, possibly also reflecting a broader societal concern with gender). Having said that, few articles actively engage with gender as an analytical category or present results disaggregated by gender or informed by gendered roles (e.g., caregiving responsibilities, differential access to devices or time). Within ISCRAM scholarship, intersectionality is largely implicit rather than explicit: while multiple axes of difference (age, disability, socioeconomic status, ethnicity) are sometimes acknowledged, there is no systematic intersectional framing or analysis of how these axes combine to produce compound vulnerabilities. This is an important gap that ISCRAM researchers should note and address in follow-up work.

We therefore call for broader inclusivity within the ISCRAM community: gender and diversity should be treated as central, critical dimensions of emergency management research, in addition to descriptive categories and purely statistical variables. Integrating feminist and intersectional approaches will further deepen theoretical insight and improve the relevance of ISCRAM scholarship to diverse populations and real-world emergency contexts.

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