

Living in Perpetual Crisis: How Do Global Events Shape Our Anxiety and Resilience?

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Abstract

Living in an era noted by multiple social issues, such as pandemic, political conflicts, gender problems, climate changes and natural disasters, people receive various types of information, making nuances to their mental status and feeling suspended in a sense of bewilderment. This mist does not simply obscure the future: it penetrates into individuals' daily life, intensifying vulnerability to anxiety, learned helplessness, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Still, although global events increase risks of anxiety and stress, they also present opportunities for resilience and post-traumatic growth. This paper aims to explore how these crises affect and shape anxiety and resilience through psychological mechanisms of post-trauma stress disorder, uncertainty, learned helplessness, social support, and coping strategies. By drawing on empirical studies and theoretical models, the paper underscores how the interaction between anxiety and resilience is not a simple either-or but a dynamic and mutual process that can produce both risk and opportunity.

Keywords: anxiety, resilience, crises, post-traumatic growth, uncertainty

1. Introduction

The tremendous number of global crises, from COVID-19 to climate emergencies, enormously shattered individuals' information limit state, with panic remarks from the medias and many propagandas relating to the tensions and games between authorities. Gradually, the mood of panic and freight have permeated throughout the society due to the exposures to large-scale threats, raising the question about how people undergo the pressure under worldwide uncertainty, which infer ways individuals dealing with mental pressure in ordinary life.

2. Anxiety In Response to Global Changes

Uncertainty is the fundamental cause of anxiety (Grupe & Nitschke, 2013). According to cognitive-behavioral models, uncertainty is a key driver of generalized anxiety, as individuals struggle to adapt to ever-changing risks. Several crises are account for the heightened anxiety, fostering uncertainty and perceived lack of control. First is the pandemic, unprecedented to the human beings. During the COVID-19 pandemic, anxiety levels increased globally, driven by fear of infection, economic insecurity, and isolation (Salari, 2020). Each morning, people checking their phones have to encounter a flood of alarming headlines of news talking about death tolls and resources shortage setting the tone for an entire day of unease and agitation. Similarly, media coverage of wars and climate disasters amplifies distress by maintaining constant exposure to threatening information (Garfin, Silver, & Holman, 2020). Consequently, crises entrench in people's fear, causing deep emotional burdens on

public. Anxiety, grief, anger, fear, helplessness. The emotional toll of climate change is broad-ranging, especially among young people. ... Some young people wonder whether it's moral to bring children into the world (AP News, 2025).

Moreover, proposed by Seligman in 1975, Learned helplessness theory, meaning that people develop an inability to make a decision or engage actively in purposeful behavior when they are repeatedly exposed to stressors beyond their controls, further explains how repeated experiences of uncontrollable crisis—for instance, students feeling that no matter how hard they study online during lockdowns, exams remain unpredictable—can lead to the belief that effort is futile, worsening anxiety and depressive symptoms. Besides, Lazarus's cognitive appraisal theory, emphasizing that anxiety is not just about the stressor itself but about how people interpret it, also gives credit to people's depressive symptoms in a cognitive way. Provided two individuals exposed to the same news of climate change may react differently, one might see it as an overwhelming catastrophe, leading to despair, while another may interpret it as a call to action, sparking engagement and resilience.

In addition to uncertainty, gender dynamics is a contributor to the development of anxiety when experiencing crises. Women, for example, often report higher levels of stress and anxiety due to the disproportionate burden of caregiving, domestic responsibilities, and vulnerability to job loss during global disruptions (Alon, 2020). The crisis has a large impact on gender equality: while men's and women's employment both fall in recessions, women's employment is likely to fall more

during the COVID-19 pandemic (Alon, 2020). At the same time, both women and men may experience cultural pressures to display strength and suppress emotional vulnerability. Being in such a suppressive environment holding conventional gender roles and expectations and closure can lead to self-confusions and maladaptive coping strategies. These gendered experiences of crisis show the contribution of social roles and expectations to mental health vulnerabilities, amplifying the psychological consequences of global events.

Cultural background also acts as a pivotal function. In collectivist countries such as South Korea or Japan, individuals may become anxious when they feel they cannot fulfill obligations to identified groups. In the period of COVID-19, the rapid adoption of mask-wearing is not only the effort of the government's command but also the cultural norm, for the majority, of avoiding bringing inconvenience to others. In contrast, in individualistic cultures, anxiety may derive from fears of personal failure or loss of independence.

3. Resilience in Times of Crisis

Acute stressors can destabilize individuals and workplaces for an extended period, but they also are catalysts to positive adaptation and growth, that is, resilience (Liu, Ein, Gervasio, & Vickers, 2019). At the individual level, people's response vary from maladaptive reactions to growth-oriented adjustments, and is reflected on distinct trajectories (Fisher, Ragsdale, & Fisher, 2019; Tedeschi, Calhoun, Shakespeare-Finch, & Taku, 2018). Before the formal discussion, what types of resilience are generated

needs to be figured out. Resilience in the face of crisis may be expressed three forms: survival, recovery, or thriving. The survival trajectory is characterized by impaired functioning and depleted resources as individuals struggle to cope with the acute demands of the crisis. The recovery trajectory reflects a gradual return to baseline functioning as resources are replenished and coping mechanisms prove effective. The thriving trajectory, akin to post-traumatic growth, involves not only recovery but also the acquisition of new resources, skills, and perspectives as a consequence of the crisis (Kuntz, 2021). Centering on these descriptions and categories, one can receive an overview of resilience when crises occur.

Considering on these trajectories shows how global crises to some extent activate resilience mechanisms. Resilience refers to the ability to adapt positively despite adversity (Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick, & Yehuda, 2014). For instance, while climate change is associated with negative psychological outcomes, it can also motivate constructive engagement and action (Clayton, 2020). Research during the pandemic revealed that social support and optimism helped individuals buffer distress (Killgore, Taylor, Cloonan, & Dailey, 2020). In everyday terms, this meant people staying connected with friends through video calls, or joining local volunteering initiatives. For example, by participating in group activities, students with climate change anxiety that participated in collective activism tended to have significantly less depressive symptoms (Yale Daily News, 2022).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs helps explain why resilience may emerge in layered forms. When basic needs for safety and stability are threatened, communities often mobilize to meet them collectively—neighbors delivering groceries, friends acting as a listener and offering solace, or governments distributing protective equipment. Once basic needs are addressed, higher-level needs such as belonging and self-actualization can support resilience by giving crises meaning and purpose.

The relationship between resilience and social anxiety varied significantly by country and sex, underscoring the contextual nature of resilience (Jefferies, Höltge, & Ungar, 2021). Take East Asian communities as an example again. They often emphasized collective coping such as mask-wearing and neighborhood solidarity, whereas Western contexts leaned more on individual therapy and exercise routines.

At the same time, exposure to trauma can result in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which includes symptoms such as flashbacks, hyperarousal, avoidance, and nightmares triggered by reminders of the horrors. Refugees from war-torn regions, for example, may find fireworks triggering intense fear. Yet PTSD does not preclude positive outcomes; posttraumatic growth is the experience of positive change that occurs as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life crises (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). In the reality, posttraumatic growth navigates victims to find the light of new life and hope, getting rid of the torment of horrors. Some individuals develop new strengths, appreciation for life, or stronger relationships after crises.

4. The Interaction of Anxiety and Resilience

The relationship between anxiety and resilience is complex, overlapping and coexisting with each other sometimes. According to Yerkes-Dodson Law, excessive distress may hamper coping, but moderate stress can promote proactive behaviors such as seeking information and strengthening social ties; thus, from this process, this is where we see the risk and opportunity. Under the pressure of the flu, medical workers applied and utilized strict hygiene scrutiny, consistent use of PPE, and systematic risk monitoring.

Resilience was a protective factor, buffering against the negative psychological impact of COVID-19. (Prati & Mancini, 2021). Neocleous (2012) critiques how discourses of trauma and resilience can reinforce a culture of insecurity, highlighting the need for critical reflection in psychological research. Moret-Tatay and Murphy (2022) also stress that local conditions, such as access to healthcare or community trust, significantly shape how anxiety and resilience manifest during global crises.

Furthermore, in the stance of developmental psychology, children and adolescents are especially vulnerable but also showcase remarkably adaptability. Back to the period of pandemic, high school students facing the disruption of standardized testing during COVID-19 experienced heightened anxiety, but many also developed digital literacy and other coping skills. These outcomes show that crises rebuild developmental trajectories in both detrimental and positive paths.

5. Implications and Conclusion

Perpetual crisis highlights the reciprocal role of global events in shaping psychological outcomes. It is the obligation of Clinicians and policymakers to recognize that interventions should not only address rising surficial mental problems but also foster resilience by promoting social connectedness, adaptive coping, and collective action. Public awareness, supportive policy, and interventions such as CBT, group therapy, and positive psychology are essential to shift outcomes from harm to growth. Organizations that reframed stress and provided resources were better positioned to foster resilience (Kuntz, 2021).

The world alters every day, casting unknown--something surprise, something troublesome--in people's minds. By acknowledging both the shadows of anxiety and the light of resilience, societies navigate the fog of uncertainty that defines our times.

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