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Occupational marginalisation in everyday life from fear of gender-based violence.

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Introduction

Whilst the risk of gender-based violence (GBV) in the UK is low compared to global rates, feminist scholars suggest that *fear* of GBV is enough for women to change their behaviour (Yodanis, 2004).

Rudman (2018) challenges occupational science to critically situate and politicise occupation.

- Situate** - viewing as inseparable from the social environment.
- Politicise** - addressing systemic power dynamics that affect access to occupation.

The purpose of this study was to describe the impact of fear of gender-based violence on occupational participation.

Note: there is a continuum of GBV, from more subtle violations like catcalling to serious assault and rape. The term GBV recognises that people who identify outside the gender binary as well as women, including transwomen, may be victims.

Method

A descriptive phenomenological approach was used to reveal the fundamental 'essence' (Finlay, 2011) of participants' collective experience.

Participants: The study was open to anyone 18+, currently living in the UK who identified as a woman or non-binary. From passive online recruitment, 8 people took part. 7 participants identified as cis-women and 1 as non-binary.

Procedure: Semi-structured interviews were conducted online via Microsoft Teams. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed in full.

Analysis: Transcripts were analysed following Colaizzi's seven-step method as described by Shosha (2012).

Findings

3 themes and 6 subthemes were distilled from participant interview data. These are shown in Figure 1 below alongside key illustrative quotes.

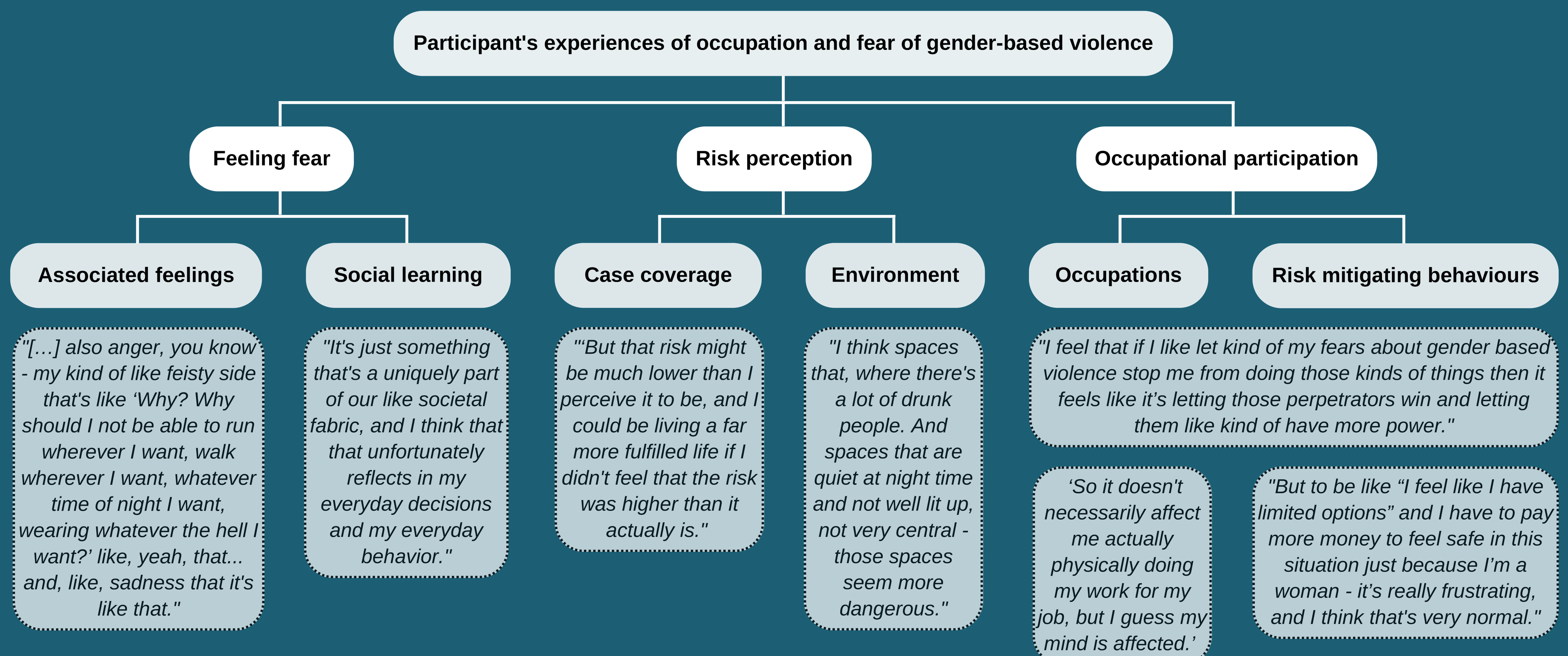


Figure 1: Thematic map of collected data with illustrative quotes.

Discussion

Participants described experiences that indicate occupational marginalisation - a type of occupational injustice characterised by restricted choice and control (Townsend and Wilcock, 2004) through conditioned cultural norms and societal attitudes. People change when and how they participate, and introduce risk mitigating behaviours.

Conclusion

This study supported feminist scholars' supposition that people change the way they participate in occupations due to *fear* of GBV, suggesting they experience occupational marginalisation in everyday life.

Implications for Occupational Science

- Encourage utilisation of research for activism and social transformation.
- Supports the idea that injustice does not always arise from overt forces.
- Moves beyond individualism and person-environment dualism.

Findings support a transactional view of occupation (Dickie, Cutchin and Humphrey, 2006). People use doing as a way of negotiating the person-environment relationship and mitigating fear. Occupation can also be used as a site of resistance, through participant's continued participation. Person and environment are co-constitutive. Participants learnt fear from their social environment, but the way people participate in everyday occupations may also inadvertently perpetuate fear and marginalisation.

References

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Ethics: The conduct of this research was fully approved by the Rehabilitation Ethics Committee at the University of Cumbria.

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