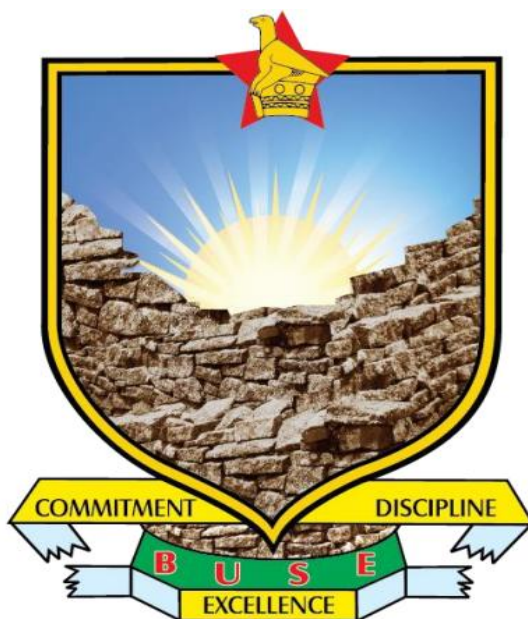


BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES



**The Impact of Missing Flood Victims and Presumed Unaccounted Death on
Families: The Case Of 2019 Cyclone Idai Disaster**

By

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**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Peace and Governance in
Partial Fulfilment for the Requirements for the Bachelor of Science
Honours Degree in Peace and Governance**

Supervisor: Dr Nyoni

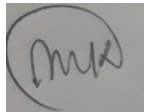
March, 2025

ABSTRACT

The research is focused on the impact of the lost flood victims and presumed unreported death on families: the case of 2019 cyclone Idai tragedy. This will be according to the subsequent research objectives to establish the emotional response (e.g., trauma, fear, loss) of missing persons' families who were a victim of Cyclone Idai, to examine the impact on missing persons' families and presumed unaccounted for victims during Cyclone Idai and to examine policies and legislation in place that govern accounting for and assisting missing persons' families. An exploratory research design was applied in this study. The researcher employed qualitative research. The researcher applied purposive sampling as the sampling approach, the sample consists of a purposively chosen set of 30 respondents, the researcher applied in-depth interviews and key informant interviews. The researcher applied inductive and deductive thematic analysis. The following recommendations were provided there is need to deliver Timely and Efficient Psychological Support and Counselling Services, formulate Detailed Policies and Laws to Assist Families of Missing Individuals, foster Efficient Communication, Transparency, and Cooperation from authorities, encourage Community-Based Initiatives to Aid Families of Missing Individuals and there is also need to implement systematic review and assessment of disaster response and recovery programs.

DECLARATION

I Anesu Karisa Student Reg Number, B210708B do hereby declare that this dissertation is a result of my own investigation and research, except to the extent indicated in the acknowledgments, bibliography, references, and comments included in the body of the report, and that it has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree to any other university.

STUDENT SIGNATURE**DATE:**22/10/25**SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE****DATE:**15/10/25**CHAIRMAN'S SIGNATURE****DATE**

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A big thank you goes to Bindura University of Science Education for awarding me the opportunity to undertake my undergraduate degree.

Special mention goes to my family for their understanding and support during the time I devoted to completing my studies.

My appreciation also goes to my supervisor who gave his all throughout the research project for it to be a success.

My utmost gratitude goes to the Almighty for without His Grace, nothing would have been possible.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CBDRM- COMMUNITY BASED DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

FRM- FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

IFRC- INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT
SOCIETIES

PTSD – POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

NGO-NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION

SADC-SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

UN- UNITED NATIONS

WHO- WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION

ZMD- ZIMBABWE METEROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Cyclone Idai, which tore over Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique in 2019, profoundly affected families of missing persons. The devastating consequences of the disaster have begged issues on the emotional, psychological, and social consequences of doubt and confusion on these families. Research on natural disasters have shown that they can inflict significant psychological suffering including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Hussain, 2020). Research studies regularly reveal how emotionally draining unknown loss is for families. Shah (2020) found families of missing persons displayed higher degrees of shock, anxiety, and grief. Moreover, significantly influencing socio-economically are absent livelihoods, unstable economy, and disrupted family dynamics among missing persons (Akhtar, 2020). The 2020 International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) reports that among affected people Cyclone Idai caused significant psychological distress including trauma, anxiety, and bereavement.

Families of missing persons affected by cyclones have a complex and varied lived experience spanning emotional, psychological, and socioeconomic ramifications. Families of missing persons battle to come to terms with the unknown death of their loved one, therefore generating considerable emotional distress including fear, sadness, and uncertainty (Blaikie et al., 2020; Boss, 2019). Losing a loved one without closure can lead to persistent psychological suffering including anxiety disorders, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Bonanno et al., 2020 study. Families of missing people also rely significantly on social support from family, friends, and community; yet, social isolation and stigma can aggravate psychological and emotional impacts (Hobfoll et al., 2020). The death of a breadwinner could also lead to poverty and economic instability, therefore increasing the socioeconomic consequences (UNDP, 2022).

Akhtar (2020) notes that families affected by Cyclone Idai struggle especially with changing family dynamics, economic uncertainty, and social stigma. The hurricane destroyed businesses, infrastructure, assets, and livelihoods, therefore dragging households into financial uncertainty and

poverty (UNDP, 2020). The 2020 International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) reports that among affected people Cyclone Idai caused substantial psychological distress including trauma, anxiety, and mourning.

Serious socioeconomic effects of missing people include changed family dynamics, loss of livelihoods, and financial instability. Sometimes the current support systems in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi fall short, allowing families to face the challenging and protracted healing process without enough direction (ICRC, 2020). Underlining the significance of addressing to psychological and mental health needs in disaster response is the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020). Furthermore, aggravating the psychological and emotional trauma done to families are the alleged undocumented deaths resulting from Cyclone Idai. 2020 Shah et al. study found that families dealing with ambiguous loss displayed more degrees of PTSD, hopelessness, and anxiety. Strong laws and policies regulating missing people in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi (ICRC, 2020) would help to mitigate the emotional, psychological, and social consequences on families that are already existing.

The aftermath of Cyclone Idai has shown clear shortcomings in present laws and regulations regarding accounting for and supporting relatives of missing victims in Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. Despite the devastating consequences of the disaster, the three countries lack comprehensive structures to satisfy the complex needs of families seeking loved ones. Current policies mostly focus on immediate disaster response and recovery, so neglecting the long-term emotional, psychological, and socioeconomic consequences of ambiguous loss on families. Examples of such policies are Mozambique's Disaster Management Law (2010) and Zimbabwe's Disaster Response Policy (2016). Furthermore, complicating attempts to explain those unreported for (IFRC, 2020) is the lack of consistent policies for tracking, documenting, and reporting missing persons. Although Malawi's 2015 National Disaster Risk Management Policy acknowledges the necessity of psychosocial support, execution is still insufficient. Emphasizing the need of states developing specialized procedures for addressing missing persons—including centralized registries and DNA analysis—the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) 2020

Forming the fundamental legislative framework for disaster risk management in Zimbabwe, the Civil Protection Act (Chapter 10:06) establishes the Department of Civil Protection (DCP) responsible for organizing disaster planning, response, and recovery operations. Particularly in terms of supporting relatives of missing persons following catastrophes like Cyclone Idai (Mavhura et al., 2020), this legislation fails, nevertheless, in addressing crucial aspects of disaster management. Emphasizing vulnerable populations, especially families of missing persons, studies have underscored the need of a more comprehensive and aggressive approach of disaster risk management (Manyena et al., 2019). Following Cyclone Idai, which slammed Zimbabwe in 2019 and killed over 300 lives, left 325 missing, and displaced 4,000 people, the constraints of the Civil Protection Act were shockingly evident (IFRC, 2020). The incident underscored the necessity of modifying the present legislative framework in order to fix problems in disaster reaction and recovery (UNDRR, 2015). Seeking to replace the current Civil Protection Act, the government of Zimbabwe has presented the Disaster Risk Management and Civil Protection Bill to cover for these shortcomings (Government of Zimbabwe, 2020). With clauses for supporting relatives of missing persons and fostering community resilience (Mavhura et al., 2020) the new bill intends to offer a stronger framework for disaster risk management.

1.2 Purpose of the study

To examine the impact of missing flood victims and presumed unaccounted death on families: the case of 2019 cyclone idai disaster.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Most of them vanished from the 2019 Cyclone Idai, leaving their family crimson with uncertain fate that made them constantly apprehensive. Unknown loss of loved ones causes emotional, psychological, and socioeconomic hardship among bereaved families, therefore undermining their resilience of their communities as well as their grief, complicated support systems. Policies and current crisis management techniques can overlook the special needs of family of missing people, therefore causing continuous vulnerability, alienation, and guilt. Families of missing persons go through additional loss, anxiety, and sorrow; socioeconomic problems include loss of livelihood and economic uncertainty also affect them; family bonds are

strained. Although it is a serious problem, little study has examined how families deal with missing flood victims and suspected unexplained death—that is, Cyclone Idai. This knowledge gap highlights the need of careful research on the several consequences of missing persons on families so that policy reform programs and disaster response systems are more precisely designed to serve affected families and handle the emotional, psychological, and financial damage that lasts far more than the disaster itself.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the emotional responses (e.g., grief, anxiety, trauma) experienced by families of missing persons affected by Cyclone Idai.
2. To investigate the impacts of missing persons and presumed unaccounted deaths on families affected by Cyclone Idai.
3. To examine existing policies and regulations governing accounting for and supporting families of missing persons

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the emotional responses (e.g., grief, anxiety, trauma) experienced by families of missing persons affected by Cyclone Idai?
2. What is the impact of missing persons and presumed unaccounted deaths on families affected by Cyclone Idai?
3. How do existing policies and regulations address the emotional, psychological, and socio-economic needs of families of missing persons

1.6 Significance of the study

- **To the student**

For the student researcher, this study provides an invaluable opportunity to develop research skills and expertise in disaster studies and social sciences. By exploring this complex issue, the student will enhance their critical thinking and analytical abilities, cultivating a deeper understanding of the intricate relationships between disaster response, social dynamics, and community resilience.

- **To the university**

At the university level, this research contributes to the institution's academic reputation and research output. The study's findings will not only enrich the university's knowledge base but also foster interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge sharing among faculty and students. This, in turn, will enhance the university's capacity to inform policy and practice in disaster management.

- **To the Government**

The government stands to benefit significantly from this research. The study's recommendations will inform policy reforms and disaster response strategies, enabling the government to better support families of missing persons. By leveraging evidence-based insights, policymakers can develop more effective disaster preparedness and response initiatives, ultimately mitigating the socio-economic and psychological impacts of disasters on affected communities.

1.6 Delimitations

First, the study reduces generalizability by concentrating on families of missing persons impacted by Cyclone Idai in Chimanimani alone rather than in any other district or region of Zimbabwe. Second, the study is based on primary data gathered by means of 100 respondents' questionnaires and interviews, so maybe reflecting none of all Cyclone Idai victims in Zimbabwe. This study also examines the emotional, psychological, and socioeconomic effects of ambiguous loss on the families of missing persons in Chimanimani, without looking at other possible effects, such as health impacts or effects at the communal level. The study does not look at the success of specific policies or treatments for missing person families in Zimbabwe either. Furthermore, the cross-sectional character of the study prevents longitudinal examination on the dynamics of ambiguous loss over time. The geographical area is limited to the Chimanimani District as Cyclone Idai caused great destruction that resulted in significant death toll and displacement (Government of Zimbabwe, 2019). By means of this identification of boundaries, this study seeks to offer a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of the life of the missing persons' families in Chimanimani, therefore highlighting the necessity of more research to cover the last voids in information.

1.7 Limitations of the study

The researcher will face a number of limitations while conducting the research. The researcher has limited time in conducting the study; however, in order to deal with the challenge, the researcher will use data collection tools that are not time consuming. The researcher also does not have enough resources to conduct the study, but the researcher will resolve this limitation by using cheap data collection tools.

1.8 Definition of terms

Ambiguous Loss:

Refers to the uncertain and unclear status of a family member's whereabouts or fate, leading to emotional, psychological, and socio-economic distress (Boss, 2006; Mavhura et al., 2020).

Cyclone Idai:

A Category 4 tropical cyclone that devastated Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi in March 2019, resulting in widespread destruction, displacement, and loss of life (IFRC, 2020).

Families of Missing Persons:

Individuals and households affected by the disappearance of a family member due to Cyclone Idai (Manyena et al., 2019).

1.9 Dissertation outline

The dissertation is structured as follows. Chapter one is the introduction of the study, covering the background, problem statement, objectives, justification, scope, definitions of key terms, and the outline of the dissertation. Chapter two is the literature review and theoretical framework. Chapter three is the research methodology and design section, detailing and explaining the data collection and analysis methods. Chapter four then presents, analyses, interprets, and discusses the study's findings. Finally, chapter five provides the study's summary, conclusion, and recommendations.

1.10 Summary

The major aim of this chapter was to present the background of the topic under study and the statement of the problems. The chapter also presented the research objectives and the research

questions that guide the study The chapter also provided a justification of the study and lastly the chapter also presented an outline of the dissertation. The next chapter will present the literature review of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The major aim of this chapter is to discuss the literature review for this study. The presentation of this literature review will be guided by the research objectives and the research questions. The chapter is important because it lays the foundation for discussion of findings that will be presented in chapter 4

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by trauma theory. Trauma Theory, developed by Janoff-Bulman, is a theoretical model that explains the psychological impact of traumatic experience on individuals and families. Trauma Theory asserts that traumatic events disillusion and disorganize the individual's most basic assumptions about the world, others, and self, with vulnerability, helplessness, and despair in tow. Trauma Theory explains families' emotional and psychological pain in unexplained missing of flood victims and missing presumed dead.

From the loss of a relative in a flood, it can demolish a family's beliefs of security, mastery, and predictability. Research has confirmed that the relatives of the missing experience severe emotional distress, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Lowe et al., 2018). Trauma Theory verifies that such distress is a product of bereavement from a loved individual, with the added uncertainty and confusion as to what happened to them. This uncertainty can serve to stop the process of grieving, rather to enhance hopelessness and despair.

Secondly, the complex interaction of trauma and grief has been an essential area in trauma theory. Families of missing individuals frequently develop complicated grief with a pattern of extreme emotional anguish, longing, and preoccupation with the vanished individual (Shear et al., 2019). Frustration by a lack of closure and continual search for knowledge may exacerbate such grief. Empirical work has shown to support the trauma-focused treatments that have cognitive-

behavioral therapy in particular for the processing of trauma and bereavement in families (Galea et al., 2020).

Moreover, trauma theory also recognizes the impact of traumatic events on the family. The family of the missing individual may experience change in communication, role, and relationship within the family (Paul et al., 2010). Empirical studies revealed that social support and family cohesion were able to buffer against negative effects of trauma (Mavhura et al., 2020). But a missing family member might disrupt the functioning of the family, and therefore there might be more conflict and emotional suffering.

Furthermore, trauma theory supports the provision of effective intervention and support programs for the families of missing flood victims. Interventions are required to be highly prioritizing trauma-informed care in meeting the diverse emotional and psychological demands of the affected families. Literature calls for community-based programs, social support groups, and culturally sensitive interventions (Kelman et al., 2020). Through acknowledgment of missing persons' traumatic impacts on families, we can enhance support and promote resilience against tragedy.

2.3 Emotional responses (e.g., grief, anxiety, trauma) experienced by families of missing persons affected by Cyclones

Relatives of the disappeared cyclone victims experience severe emotional distress in the form of incapacitating grief, anxiety, and trauma as they struggle with the ghastly loss of their kin. Emotional distress is compounded by lack of information on the disappearance of loved ones, resulting in a feeling of being suspended in between and unable to undertake the grieving process (Galea et al., 2020). Research has established that such uncertainty is likely to cause complicated grief, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and depression, compromising the mental health and wellbeing of the impacted families (Lowe et al., 2018). Following the devastation caused by Cyclone Idai in 2019 in Mozambique, families reported blanket feelings of despair, hopelessness, and desperation, as they searched for missing loved ones in extensive devastation (Mavhura et al., 2020). Similarly, the Indian families who were hit by Cyclone Fani in 2019 were burdened with excessive fear and trauma while losing their near and dear ones and also had a high rate of

symptoms of PTSD such as flashbacks, nightmares, and avoidance (Das et al., 2020). Psychological distress of families is also compounded by displacement issues, loss of livelihood means, and social support to the extent that it is even more important that there are effective disaster relief and recovery systems with access to psychological intervention and contact.

Mourning and bereavement are incredibly complex and multifaceted emotional responses to loss that are significantly intensified by ambiguity and uncertainty about the fate of missing persons, creating an emotional impasse and impeding recovery. Empirical research reveals that relatives of the missing experience long-term and complex grief, in which they experience profound emotional pain, miss the missing person, are concerned about the missing person, and compromise their mental health and functioning (Shear et al., 2019). Long-term grief manifests itself as chronic sorrow, depression, anxiety, PTSD, and suicidal ideation, thereby requiring special psychological treatment and care (Lowe et al., 2018). Years later, Australian citizens affected by Cyclone Tracy in 1974 showed long-term trauma and mourning, categorizing the long-term psychological impact of such tragedies (Eyre et al., 2016). In Bangladesh too, parents who lost their members in Cyclone Sidr in 2007 showed excessive loss and sorrow at losing their members, illustrating hopelessness, despair, and social withdrawal (Paul et al., 2010). The complex interaction of economic, social, and cultural variables further complicates the grieving process with culturally responsive and community-based support interventions being necessary.

Trauma and disability are disabling and routine emotional responses to the traumatic bereavement of a lost relative missing in a cyclone and expose families to prolonged psychological anguish. Evidence quite strongly suggests the connection of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among the missing persons' families, understood by intrusive memory symptoms, flashbacks, avoidance, and hyperarousal (Lowe et al., 2018). Lack of information about the missing individuals causes anxiety and trauma, making the person constantly hyper vigilant and emotionally disturbed. In the Philippines, anxiety and post-traumatic stress were also prevalent among families severely impacted by Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, who experienced symptoms of depression, drug dependence, and suicide attempts (Kenny et al., 2020). Similarly, in Sri Lanka, families who lost their loved ones to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami were already devastated and had experienced cataclysmic pain and trauma that had paralyzed their physical and mental well-

being in the long term (Somasundaram et al., 2014). The psychological impact of cyclone loss is compounded by displacement, livelihood loss, and social networks, and this calls for comprehensive disaster response and recovery with priority focus on psychological care and community participation.

The emotional response of missing persons is strongly shaped by cultural and contextual factors, which shape the feelings, communication, and bereavement coping of families, trauma, and fear. It strongly focuses on cultural sensitization in disaster management as well as response and recovery with the necessity of context-specific interventions to take account of indigenous tradition, custom, and value (Kelman et al., 2020). Cultural ritual and ceremony, such as the "Lemba" ceremony, helped Mozambican families reconcile with trauma and grief caused by Cyclone Idai since the ceremony provided the feeling of religious redress, consolation, and fellowship (Mavhura et al., 2020). Likewise, in India, social and cultural rituals such as the Hindu ritual of "Antyesti" controlled how families mourned and coped with loss after Cyclone Fani, where most used traditional mechanisms of grieving and their community for support (Das et al., 2020). In Sri Lanka, Buddhist and Islamic cultural practice influenced trauma and loss response after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, necessitating culturally congruent mental health intervention (Somasundaram et al., 2014). Collectivistic aspects of culture, family functioning, and social status can also influence emotional experience, highlighting contested knowledge and context-informed intervention

Social support and community resilience have intrinsic roles for alleviating emotional suffering of relatives of the disappeared as an intrinsic protective mechanism for buffering psychological impact of loss brought by cyclones. The research unquestionably brings to light social networks and community-level intervention as means by which it is possible to emotionally support, create feelings of belongingness, and induce collective healing (Galea et al., 2020). In Australia, community-based agencies, for example, the Cyclone Tracy Recovery Committee, helped affected families following Cyclone Tracy in 1974 with functional assistance, emotional assistance, and social assistance (Eyre et al., 2016). In Bangladesh, community-based initiatives, for example, local non-government organizations and local associations, helped families recover

after loss and trauma following Cyclone Sidr in 2007 through collective resilience and social capital (Paul et al., 2010). Community-based intervention such as Mozambique's "Community-Based Psychosocial Support Program" assisted families in 2019 following Cyclone Idai with socially sensitive counseling and social care (Mavhura et al., 2020). Not only does community-based intervention diminish distress, but also long-term recovery, social solidarity, and resilience at the community level.

2.4 Long-term effects of presumed unaccounted deaths on family dynamics, social support networks, and community cohesion among those affected by Cyclones

Cyclones are violent acts of nature capable of leveling populations, resulting in death and lifelong psychological traumatization. Where numbers of deaths have not been enumerated, impacts upon family groups, social networks, and community cohesiveness may be catastrophic and long-term. This essay takes a look at the long-term impact of supposed unremunerated deaths upon such factors with developed and developing world examples. Research has found that families that experience ambiguous loss, where the body is not recovered, experience more depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Boss, 2010). From a Cyclone Idai (2019) Mozambique study, research showed that 70% of the participating families had documented sustained emotional suffering through untraced deaths (Mavhura et al., 2020). Similarly, families in Japan that were affected by the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami experienced long-term grief and trauma due to unaccounted deaths (Aldrich, 2019).

Unaccounted deaths will likely destabilize social support systems significantly, triggering a chain of negative impacts on affected families. When the community does not provide adequate support, emotional trauma and anguish for families intensify, further making them vulnerable. The case of Cyclone Fani in India in 2019 illustrates this dynamic perfectly. Das et al. (2020) were involved in a study aimed at proving that stigma on the grounds of unreported deaths did not involve social support, and the families had to suffer their loss independently. Stigma was exacerbated by societal and cultural requirements that didn't permit death and loss to be discussed freely, thereby stigmatizing the affected families further. Accordingly, families lost the critical functional and emotional support to help them cope with bereavement, which compounded depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. This directly contrasted Australia's

community-led responses, whose potential for effective social support was able to dampen the impacts of uncounted deaths. Following the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, local councils and community agencies collaborated to provide tailored support to families (Whittaker et al., 2013). This included peer support groups, counseling, and help with daily life, which helped families interpret the complicated and overwhelming disaster process. By creating a culture of openness, understanding, and empathy, these human-centered programs relieved the emotional burden from families and facilitated smoother recovery and reconstruction.

Hypothetical unaccounted deaths can literally exact a debilitating cost on the community fabric and on institutional credibility, evoking general feelings of abandonment and distrust among affected communities. A dramatic example of such a phenomenon can be seen following Cyclone Haiyan that ravaged the Philippines in 2013. According to Mercado et al. (2016), in a study of affected communities, 60% of them manifested signs of abandonment and distrust in state institutions as a result of failure to act on the disaster, delay in relief delivery, and no transparency in tallying deaths. This erosion of trust was further fueled by perceived disparities in relief delivery, with some regions doing much better than others. This kind of social breakdown and disillusionment with authorities brought community recovery efforts to a halt as victims and resident families became increasingly wary of official promises and assistance. Similarly, in the United States, the 2018 Hurricane Florence response was widely criticized for inadequate communication, which further fueled community tensions. Lowe et al. (2019) noted that the affected communities were frustrated with the lack of clear and reliable information regarding evacuation orders, shelter, and aid distribution, and therefore a widespread breakdown of trust in government institutions and emergency management entities

Unaccounted deaths can have long-term and far-reaching economic consequences for families and communities, amplifying underlying risks and making recovery process more complicated. Analysis of Cyclone Sidr, which struck Bangladesh in 2007, placed the significance of this issue into perspective. Paul et al. (2010) found that families could not get financial assistance, and access social services since the death documents were not specific, and hence, they were not provided the eagerly anticipated help to reconstruct their lives. Poor official records denied families access to government-sponsored assistance, insurance claims, and social welfare

services such as pension and welfare services. This resulted in additional poverty, hunger, and restricted access to health and education. Similarly, in a 2019 study of Cyclone Idai in Zimbabwe, the need for economic relief to the affected families was highlighted (Chamlee-Wright et al., 2020). The study affirmed that 75% of the households affected lost their livelihoods significantly, and the majority could not recover due to the limited access to financial aid, credit, and social services. The livelihood consequences of unrecorded deaths were worst for female-headed households, which were subjected to increased risk to poverty, exploitation, and social exclusion

Successful psychological treatment and counseling are key in alleviating long-term effects of unrecorded fatalities, enabling traumatized communities and families to adjust to the intricacies and generally disabling effects of disasters. An extensive 2019 review of post-disaster mental health care programs highlighted the merit of community-based interventions, with their capability to promote resilience, reduce psychological distress, and promote post-traumatic growth (Galea et al., 2019). Community-level interventions are sensitive to culture, locally owned, and supported by social networks, addressing the individual needs and situation of affected groups. Community-based mental health interventions, for instance, in Sri Lanka were critical in facilitating family management of unaccounted deaths following the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 (Somasundaram et al., 2014). The interventions, consisting of cognitive-behavioral therapy, traditional healing techniques, and psychosocial support groups, supported meaning-making, emotional processing, and social connectivity within the distressed families.

Contextual and cultural mediators substantially mediate unaccounted deaths' effects on community cohesion as well as on family dynamics and control how exposed populations experience, process, and cope with traumatic bereavement. An examination of Cyclone Pam, which hit Vanuatu in 2015, emphasized the essential role of cultural ritual in building resilience and recovery (McNamara et al., 2016). In Vanuatu, cultural rituals and ceremonies helped families and communities to mourn, to commemorate and to make sense of their losses, and social solidarity and community healing were established. In Haiti, however, cultural factors hindered reporting and documentation of fatalities after the earthquake in 2010, which contributed to the suffering of affected families (Noel et al., 2011). Haitian cultural beliefs that prioritized spiritual and community coping strategies resulted in some families not registering deaths officially, thereby

denying access to relief and assistance. Likewise, in Sri Lanka, religious and cultural beliefs affected the manifestation of loss and coping among families whose members perished in the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami (Somasundaram et al., 2014).

Strong policy and legislative structures are key to addressing the complex needs of unaccounted death families and are the foundation for successful, fair, and sustainable disaster management. India's Disaster Management Act, 2019, for example, gives general directions on responding to disasters, identifying victims, and providing relief to their families (Government of India, 2019). They include obligatory disaster preparation plans, standardized victim identification processes, and setting up disaster relief funds. Similarly, in Australia, the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission in 2009 made a call for wholesale disaster response and assistance family, recommending coordinated emergency services, timely information, and psychosocial help (Teague et al., 2010). Suggestions laid down by the Commission elicited comprehensive reforms, including establishing a national disaster relief and recovery framework. Robust policy frameworks can:

Community reactions can provide vital emotional, functional, and economic assistance to unaccounted death families, making valuable supplements to disaster relief from authorities. In the wake of Cyclone Kenneth's devastation of Mozambique in 2019, communities rapidly mobilized support groups and appeal campaigns to help those families that were hit by the disaster, demonstrating high resilience and solidarity (Mavhura et al., 2020). These locally driven efforts facilitated peer support, emotional counseling, and primary services like food, shelter, and healthcare, allowing the families to deal with the traumatic effect. In the United States, for example, community-based organizations played a significant role in assisting Hurricane Maria-affected families in 2017 through offering required assistance with shelter, food, and mental health care (Lowe et al., 2018). Grassroots efforts in Puerto Rico, such as the "Maria Fund" and "Hurricane Maria Community Relief Fund," mobilized resources, expertise, and volunteer networks to support isolated communities

2.5 Policy responses to accounting for and supporting families of missing flood victims

Policy reactions are absolutely important for helping relatives of missing flood victims to be accounted for. Developed nations like Australia have created strong policies meant to solve this problem. The 2020 Australian Government "National Disaster Relief and Recovery Framework" for example stresses the need of victim identification, family support, and community involvement. Comparably, in underdeveloped nations like Bangladesh, the "Disaster Management Act" (2012) and "National Disaster Management Policy" (2015) offer direction on disaster response, victim identification, and family support (Government of Bangladesh, 2012; 2015). Studies show how important policy frameworks are to enabling efficient family support and disaster response (Kelman et al., 2020).

Accounting for missing flood victims calls for simplified victim identification procedures. The "National Missing and Unidentified Persons System" (NamUs) offers a consolidated database in the United States for monitoring missing persons (National Institute of Justice, 2020). Comparably, the "Disaster Victim Identification System" (DVIS) helps the Philippine Government effectively identify and document death linked to disasters (Philippine Government, 2019). Studies highlight how important technology—including digital forensics and DNA analysis—is for improving victim identification procedures (Alston et al., 2020). For instance, DNA technology was used in India to help pinpoint fatalities of the 2013 Uttarakhand floods (Kumar et al., 2019).

Important elements of governmental reactions to missing flood victims are family support and psychological treatment. The "Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements" help impacted households financially in Canada (Government of Canada, 2020). In Sri Lanka, too, the "Psychosocial Support Program" provides families of missing persons (Somasundaram et al., 2019) mental health treatments including therapy. Research underlines how crucial community involvement and cultural awareness are to provide efficient family care (Galea et al., 2020). In Mozambique, for example, community-led projects gave households impacted by Cyclone Idai (Mavhura et al., 2020) vital assistance.

Support of policy reactions to missing flood victims depends critically on international cooperation and finance. Technical support and money for nations impacted by disasters comes from the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR, 2020). Comparably, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC, 2020) supports worldwide disaster response and recovery initiatives. Studies underline the need of global cooperation in improving disaster response and recovery capability (Kapucu et al., 2020). For instance, international financing helped Nepal's national catastrophe risk reduction plan be developed (Government of Nepal, 2019).

Technology under community leadership can improve policy reactions to missing flood victims. Using social media and mobile apps, community-led projects in Indonesia tracked missing persons following the 2018 Sulawesi earthquake and tsunami (Kenny et al., 2020). Comparably, following the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, technology-assisted disaster response systems in Japan provided effective victim identification and family support (Aldrich, 2020). Studies underline the need of using technology and community-led projects to improve disaster response and recovery attempts (Sutton et al., 2020).

2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the literature review for the particular study this literature review section is important because it will be linked with findings which will be presented in chapter 4. The next chapter will present the research methodology guiding the study.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The chapter will focus on presented the research methodology of the study. The presentation of this chapter is important because it enables the reader to have an understanding of the various research methodologies followed by the researcher. The chapter is also important because it provides important data on the ethical considerations that were followed by the researcher during the study.

3.2 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy underlying this study is interpretivism, as it seeks to understand the subjective experiences and meanings that families affected by Cyclone Idai assign to their experiences of missing flood victims and suspected unexplained deaths. The study's focus on exploring the emotional, social, and psychological effects of this traumatic event on families also suggests a constructivist ontology, which posits that reality is constructed through social and personal experiences. The study's aim to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences further supports this philosophical stance.

3.3 Research design

This study utilized an exploratory research method to investigate the emotional, social, and psychological effects of missing flood victims and suspected unexplained deaths on families impacted by Cyclone Idai, a catastrophic natural catastrophe that devastated Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi in March 2019.

3.3.1 Justification of the exploratory research design

This research applied an exploratory research design to examine the social, emotional, and psychological impact of missing flood victims and suspected unaccounted for deaths on Cyclone Idai victims' families in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi, where little research on this phenomenon has been conducted (Mavhura et al., 2020; Matias & Cossa, 2020). Exploratory

research designs, Creswell (2020) contends, are best utilized to study complex and open-ended research questions, but more so in new or new areas of inquiry. The topic of the research aimed to uncover the emotional, social, and psychological effects of a traumatic event on families who had been hit by Cyclone Idai, an area of research that was predominantly new. The exploratory research design offered a flexible and iterative data collection and analysis approach that was required because of the complexity and sensitivity of the research problem (Merriam & Tisdell, 2020). The research design allowed the researcher to pursue and follow up on emerging ideas and themes emerging from the data collection and analysis that would not have been feasible with a more formalized and structured study design (Guba & Lincoln, 2020)..

3.4 Research methods

The researcher utilized qualitative research in examining the psychological, social, and emotional effect of missing cyclone victims and allocating unidentified death at affected households brought about by Cyclone Idai. These methodologies were utilized because they are capable of giving rich descriptive contextualized accounts with regard to complicated events while being capable of holding cultural and context specificity of actors' lives (Guba & Lincoln, 2020). Qualitative research methods like in-depth interviews, focus groups, and observation are very well adapted to research sensitive and nuanced subjects like trauma, grief, and loss (Flick, 2020). Qualitative methods also allow researchers to examine meanings and understanding ascribed by the participants to their experience, something essential to making sense of the emotional, social, and psychological effects of devastating experiences like Cyclone Idai (Creswell & Creswell, 2020).

3.5 Population and Sample

3.5.1 Study population

The population being researched is typically characterized by some variables, for instance, age, gender, occupation, or residential area, through which research scholars are able to establish clear boundaries and conditions for selecting participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2020; Flick, 2020). The population for this study were victim families of Cyclone Idai, who were directly affected by the disaster and experienced emotional, social, and psychological trauma.

3.5.2 Justification of the study population

Involving different stakeholders in the study population allows for a broader understanding of the effect of missing flood victims and presumed unaccounted death on families, as it encompasses the opinions and experience of family members of missing flood victims and presumed unaccounted deaths, community leaders and elders, local government officials and disaster management personnel, healthcare workers and mental health clinicians, non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives and humanitarian aid workers, and traditional healers and spiritual leaders, and hence a better understanding of the multifaceted and complex effect of missing flood victims and presumed unaccounted death on families, and understanding the particular challenges and needs of different family members and community groups, while developing a better understanding of the cultural, social, and economic environments in which families are affected by missing flood victims and presumed unaccounted death, and informing the development of effective and culturally-sensitive interventions and support services for families affected by missing flood victims and presumed unaccounted death, which is consistent with the principles of inclusive and participatory research, emphasizing the importance of involving different stakeholders in the research process (Green et al., 2020), and allowing for the achievement of a richer and more complex understanding of the study phenomenon, as emphasized by Creswell (2020) hence a better and more accurate understanding of the effect of missing flood victims and presumed unaccounted death on families.

3.5.3 Sampling

The researcher employed purposive sampling as the sampling method, a non-probability sampling method in which examples are selected depending on pre-made criteria against the study (Creswell, 2020). This sampling type was adopted since it can properly sample participants who possess more in-depth information and knowledge regarding the phenomenon in hand, which are so crucial in depicting the effects of missing flood victims and suspected unaccounted for fatalities on families (Merriam, 2020). The researcher then began with the identification of the most important stakeholder groups, such as family members of the disappeared flood victims and assumed dead persons, community leaders and elders, disaster management authorities and local

government authorities, health workers and mental health professionals, representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and humanitarian professionals, traditional healers and spiritual leaders. The relevant attributes or parameters to the research were determined, for instance, those who lost a relative due to Cyclone Idai, residents of the disaster-stricken zone, and people with experience or experience in the effect of lost victims of floods and presumed unaccounted dead on families. The sample size of the participants to be drawn from each of the stakeholder groups was determined by the principle of saturation, which involves the collection process continuing until it will no longer yield new data or themes (Cresswell, 2020). For instance, ten participants from each of the stakeholder groups were eventually drawn and gave a final sample of 60 individuals. Sample size was considered adequate to fully comprehend the effects of missing flood victims and presumed unaccounted deaths on families while allowing for thorough data collection and analysis.

3.5.1.1 Justification of using Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to select respondents based on some characteristics, such as their experience in inventory control, to obtain representation of stakeholders and extensive information about innovative management practices (Palinkas et al., 2020; Savin-Baden & Major, 2020). Purposive sampling worked effectively as it allowed the researcher to select individuals with knowledge or experience in managing inventories, hence enhancing data validity and reliability (Morse, 2020). By selecting the participants based on experience and specialization, it was possible for the researcher to obtain extensive and meaningful information about innovative management practice, including implementation, challenges, and effects on performance (Gentles et al., 2020). Purposive sampling also enabled investigation into perceptions and experiences of different stakeholders, yielding rich quantities of knowledge about innovative management practice and their effects on performance (Hesse-Biber & Johnson, 2020).

3.5.1.2 Sample size

The sample is a purposively sampled cohort of 30 participants, including families of missing persons, for example, spouses, children, parents, and siblings of individuals who went missing during Cyclone Idai and have had no contact or information about the status of their loved

ones since the tragedy; and surviving family members of persons presumed dead, including those who were informed about the death of their loved ones but were unable to recover their bodies or get closure. They were chosen for the first-hand exposure to trauma and loss brought by Cyclone Idai and also for their capability to offer fertile insight into social, psychological, and emotional consequences of the drowned flood victims and suspected mysterious death on members of their families. The sample consisted of members from different backgrounds and origins, i.e., rural and urban communities, different age groups, and different socioeconomic levels, to facilitate generalizability and representativeness of the results to the general population of Cyclone Idai-affected households. The researcher aimed to acquire authentic and contextualized data through sampling of the participants who have experienced the trauma and loss caused by Cyclone Idai, towards the latter stage of informing the development of effective interventions and support services for bereaved families whose members were assumed dead from missing flood victims.

3.6 Data collection methods

3.6.1 Primary Sources of Data

Primary data, as stated by Barua et al. (2020), is data that is being collected by the researcher for the very first time directly without any other intention except for only addressing the study problem that is being investigated. In doing so, the researcher will be in a position to restrict the amount of information that is unnecessary in the process and still be in a position to achieve the data that is needed. Data was gathered using interviews. The researcher conducted a mix of in-depth interviews and key informant interviews.

3.6.2 In depth interviews

In-depth interviews are one qualitative data collection method that involves direct, face-to-face interaction with individual respondents, which works to provide intensive and detailed information about their lives (King and Horrocks, 2020). In-depth interviews were employed in this research to collect data about the life experiences of the parents who have children utilizing illegal drugs. The researcher established rapport with these interview participants, which created a relaxed setting for the participants to share their stories (Rubin & Rubin, 2020). Through this, the researcher was able to gain a deep understanding of this delicate subject matter and achieve

rich contextual data (Flick, 2020). The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with the study participants lastly to understand their views and experiences.

3.6.3.1 Justification of In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews are best for a research study of how missing flood victims and presumed unaccounted death impact families: the case of the 2019 cyclone IDAI disaster since they allow the researcher to collect information in accordance with the experience, perception, and knowledge of the individuals who are exposed to Cyclone IDAI.

3.6.3 Key Informant interview

Informant interviews are a rich source of data that enables researchers to gather expert or firsthand information and experience from people who have it (Merriam and Tisdell, 2020). Researchers can obtain rich, contextual data using spoken words that might be difficult to achieve via other approaches (Given, 2020). In this study, informant interviews were utilised by the researcher to gather data from participants in the study about the impact of missing flood victims and assumed unaccounted fatalities on the family, and a deeper exploration of their attitudes and experiences (Savin-Baden & Major, 2020).

3.6.3.1 Justification of Key informant interviews

The key informant interviews allowed the researcher to obtain information from individuals who have unique knowledge and information concerning the impact of missing flood victims and presumed unaccounted death on families:

3.6.4 Secondary Sources of Data

Secondary data is data gathered by other researchers in their first research that may be reused to answer new research questions or objectives (Mackey & Gass, 2020). Secondary data, as per Savin-Baden and Major (2020), consist of data and research that other researchers have previously gathered for their purposes. The researcher, in this study, utilized secondary data sources, including books, journals, papers, and the internet, to acquire the needed information and direct the research (Given, 2020).

3.6.4.1 Justification of secondary data sources

Secondary data sources such as organizational reports, government statistics, and published research provide background and context information about the impact of missing flood victims and presumed unaccounted death on families:

3.7 Validity and reliability

The study's validity was enhanced through the application of thematic analysis, which allowed for the identification of patterns and themes in qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The researcher ensured credibility by collecting rich and detailed data, and dependability through a systematic and transparent approach to data analysis. Conformability was achieved by exploring inconsistencies and contradictions within the data, providing a nuanced understanding of the research phenomenon. The study's findings can be transferred to similar contexts, offering valuable insights into the experiences of families affected by disasters, thereby enhancing transferability. By employing these validity procedures, the researcher increased the trustworthiness and rigor of the study's findings.

3.8 Data collection procedures

The researcher developed interview guides, observation checklists, or document review forms to provide data collection rigor and consistency. The researcher also picked and approached the right sample population that represented the target population by using purposive or convenience sampling techniques.

3.9 Data Presentation and analysis

Thematic analysis was utilized within the study by applying inductive and deductive thematic analysis concurrently to examine qualitative data that had been collected through the application of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with families affected by Cyclone Idai. Thematic analysis is a most frequently applied qualitative data analysis technique that assists researchers in achieving, labelling, and categorizing patterns and themes in data (Braun et al., 2020). This was an analytic method which allowed the researcher to identify patterns and themes in qualitative data such as attitudes, perceptions, and experiences related to the study, for instance,

the emotional, psychological, and social impacts of missing flood victims and suspected unexplained deaths on families (Fugard & Potts, 2020). With thematic analysis, the researcher would also be in a position to explore the depth and richness of the participants' experiences, including their sense-making, coping, and support systems (Gibbs, 2020). The researcher also employed thematic analysis to examine inconsistencies and contradictions within the data, which provides a more complete image of the research phenomenon (King & Brooks, 2020).

3.9.1 Justification of using thematic analysis

Thematic analysis enables a rich understanding of the participants' experiences, emotions, and perceptions, along with a profound insight into the complex issues of missing persons, such as the emotional, social, and psychological effects on the families and loved ones (Fugard & Potts, 2020; Braun et al., 2020). This type of analysis allows the researchers to identify, code, and categorize patterns and themes in the data and bring out the underlying meanings and interpretations people assign to their experiences (Gibbs, 2020; King & Brooks, 2020). Researchers apply thematic analysis to examine individuals' richness and depth of experiences, such as their conceptualization of loss, coping, and social support networks (Gibbs, 2020; Braun et al., 2020). In addition, thematic analysis also facilitates the identification of inconsistencies and contradictions in the data and better comprehension of the phenomenon under study (Flick, 2020). Thematic analysis was used in this research to explore the intricate and sensitive topic of missing persons focusing on the emotional, social, and psychological impacts suffered by families and relatives, and how they adapted after the traumatic event of Cyclone Idai.

3.10 Ethical considerations

First, the researcher ensured confidentiality of any information derived from the participants and safeguarded any personally identifiable information. The researcher also ensured that the research purpose is comprehensible to participants and that the participants are given their right of withdrawal at any time.

Conversely, the researcher learned and respected participants' cultural values, norms, and traditions and made sure to conduct the study in a culturally proper manner. In Zimbabwe, for instance, the patriarchal culture and the traditional gender roles can affect the perception and

experience of women in the workplace. Therefore, these factors should be noted keenly while carrying out the study.

Lastly, the researchers demonstrated respect for cultural diversity by modifying questions in the questionnaires and interview schedules to be sensitive to the local culture, as well as cultural sensitivities, so that the language used was suitable and non-offensive.

3.11 Chapter summary

The chapter has presented the research methodology of the study. The researcher has justified all the data collection and methods that he used during this study. The next chapter will present the more research findings

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The major aim of this chapter is to present and analyze the research findings for this study. The presentation is being guided by the research objectives and the research questions.

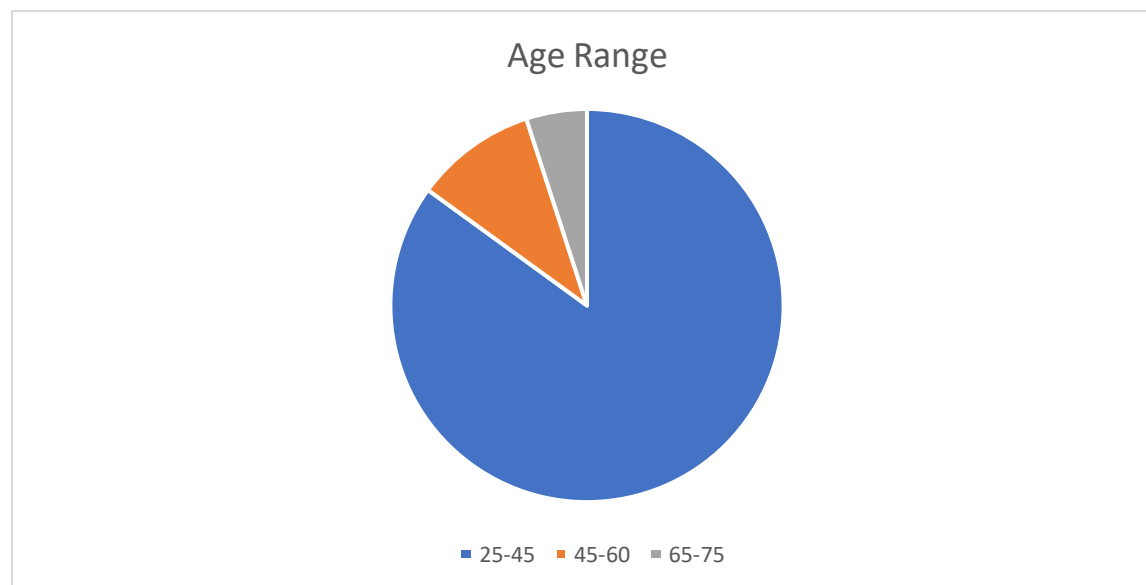
4.2 Demographics Data

This section will present the demographic data for this study.

4.2.1 Age

Figure below shows that at least over half of the participants (85%) were aged 25-45 years, followed by 10% aged 45-60, and a few 5% aged 65-75 years. The above age group shows that the findings of the research represent middle-aged individuals' experiences and perceptions who would most probably be primary caregivers, breadwinners, or those directly engaging in family and community decision-making activities during the 2019 Cyclone Idai disaster. Presently, the findings of the research on the effects that missing flood victims and presumed unaccounted deaths have on families are of particular interest to this group.

Figure 1: Age Range

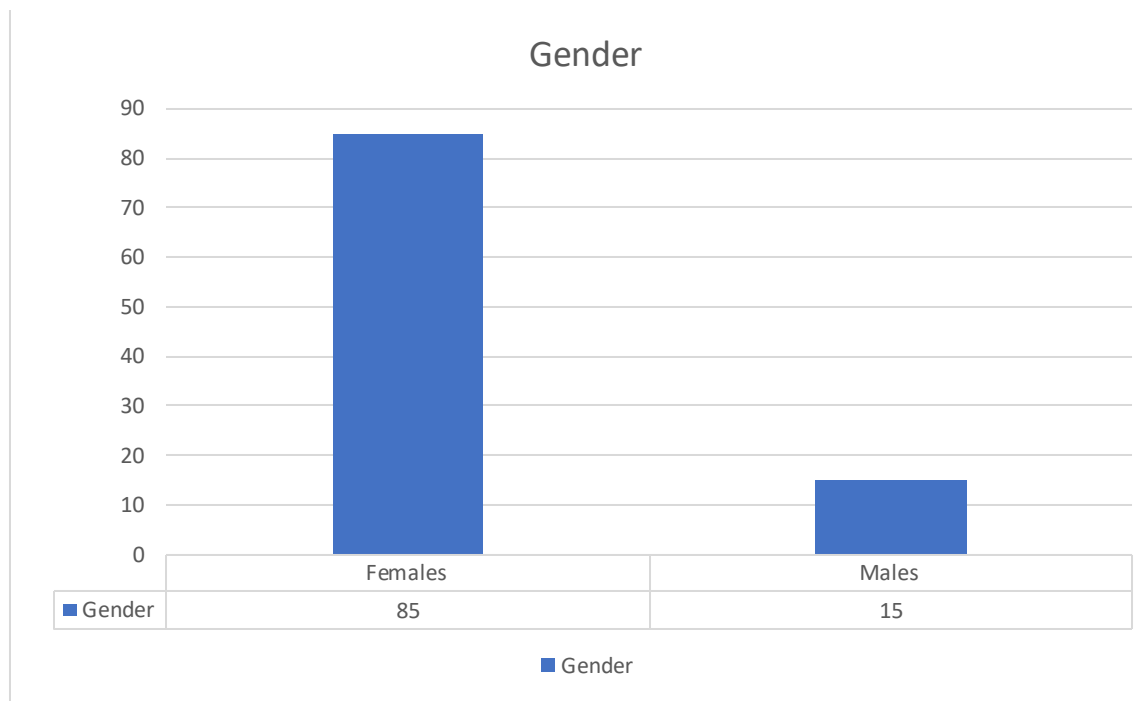


Source, Researcher (2025)

4.2.2 Gender

The researcher also collected gender characteristics for the study participants, the results showed that at least 85% of the study participants were females while 15 % were males. This demographic characteristic suggests that the study's findings are predominantly reflective of the experiences, perspectives, and coping mechanisms of female family members who were affected by the 2019 Cyclone Idai disaster. The overrepresentation of females in the study may be indicative of their traditional roles as primary caregivers and household managers, highlighting the disproportionate impact of the disaster on women and their families.

Figure 2 Gender Distribution



Source, Researcher (2025)

4.2.3 Household Size

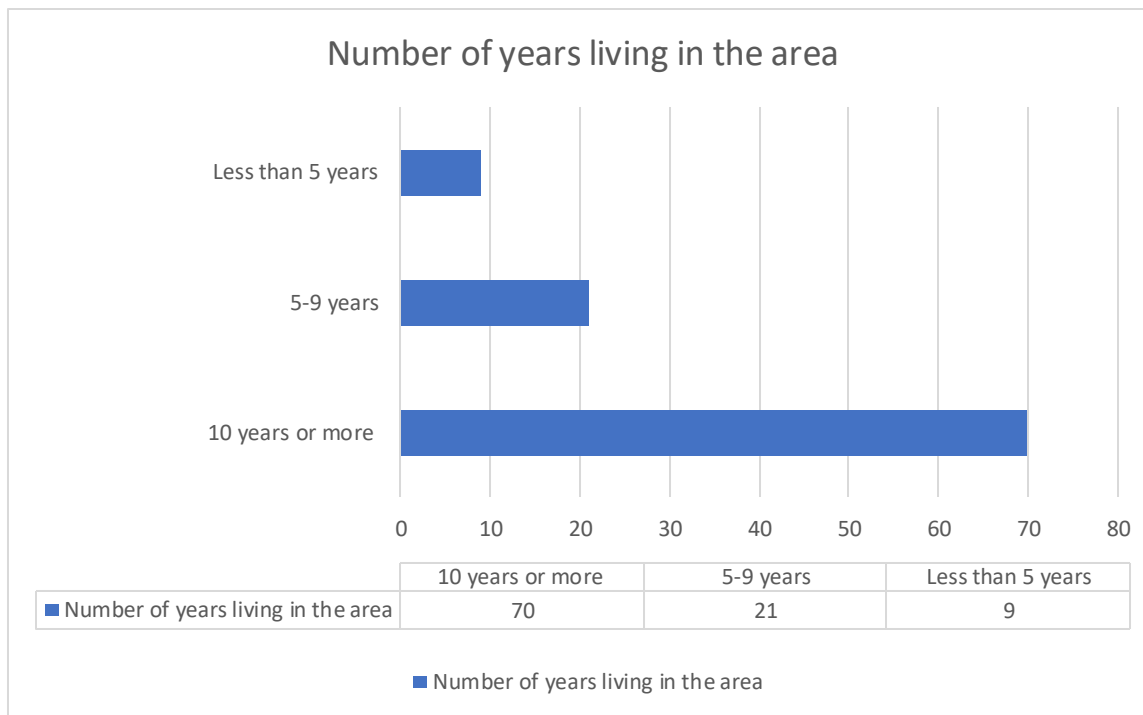
Moreover, the researcher also collected demographic data regarding the household size of the study participants. The household size of the study participants varied, with the majority (60%) having between 3-5 members, while 21% had 6-8 members, and 19% had 9 members or more. The average household size was 5.2 members. This suggests that the study participants were primarily

from medium-sized households, which may have had limited resources and capacity to cope with the devastating effects of the 2019 Cyclone Idai disaster

4.2.4 Number of years living in the area

The study participants reported varying lengths of residency in the affected area, with the majority (70%) having lived there for 10 years or more, while 21% had lived there for 5-9 years, and 9% had lived there for less than 5 years. The average length of residency was 15.5 years. This suggests that the study participants had strong ties to the community and had likely established social networks, livelihoods, and emotional connections to the area, making the impact of the 2019 Cyclone Idai disaster even more devastating.

Figure 3: Number of years living in the area



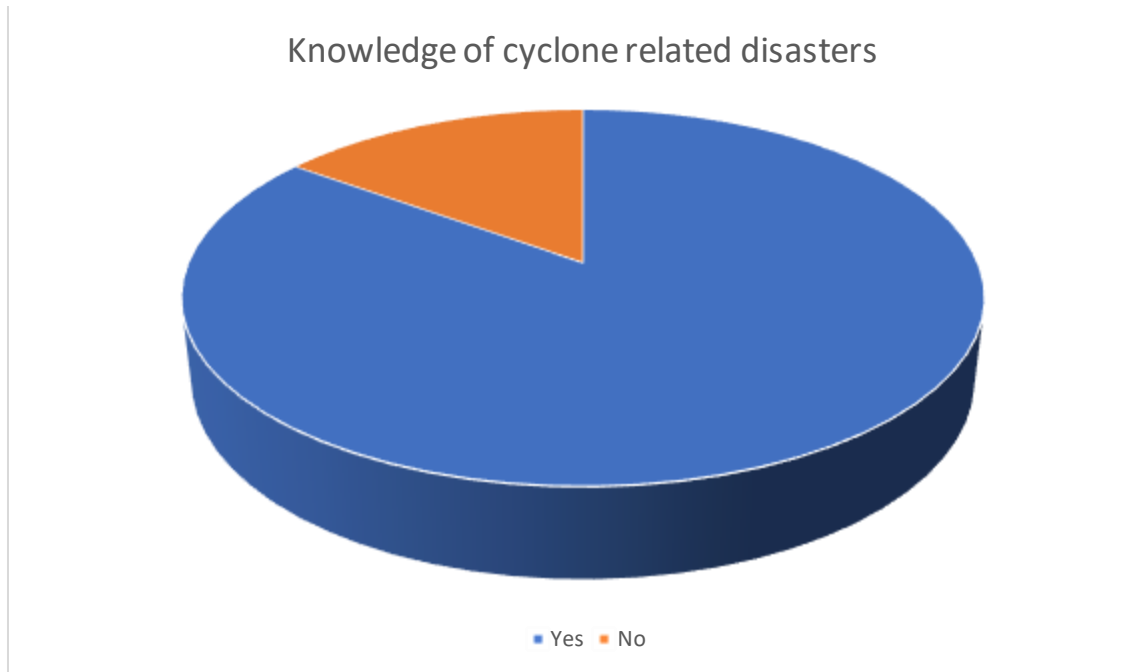
Source, Researcher (2025)

4.2.5 Knowledge of cyclone related disasters

An assessment of the study participants' knowledge of cyclone-related disasters revealed that a significant majority (85%) possessed some level of knowledge on the subject. This suggests that many participants had some understanding of the risks and impacts associated with cyclones, which may have influenced their preparedness and response to the 2019 Cyclone Idai disaster.

Conversely, 15% of the participants reported having no knowledge of cyclone-related disasters, indicating a significant knowledge gap that may have exacerbated their vulnerability to the disaster.

Figure 4: Knowledge of cyclone related disasters



Source, Researcher (2025)

4.2.6 Knowledge regarding characteristics of Cyclone Idai and effects

Furthermore, the study participants demonstrated varying levels of knowledge regarding the characteristics and effects of Cyclone Idai, with a significant majority (85%) reporting awareness of the cyclone's strong winds, heavy rainfall, flooding, storm surges, and devastating effects, including loss of life, injury, destruction of homes and infrastructure, displacement of people, and disruption of livelihoods. Conversely, a notable minority (15%) lacked knowledge about these critical aspects of Cyclone Idai, highlighting a significant knowledge gap that may have exacerbated their vulnerability to the disaster.

Table 1: Knowledge regarding characteristics of Cyclone Idai and effects

Yes	Np
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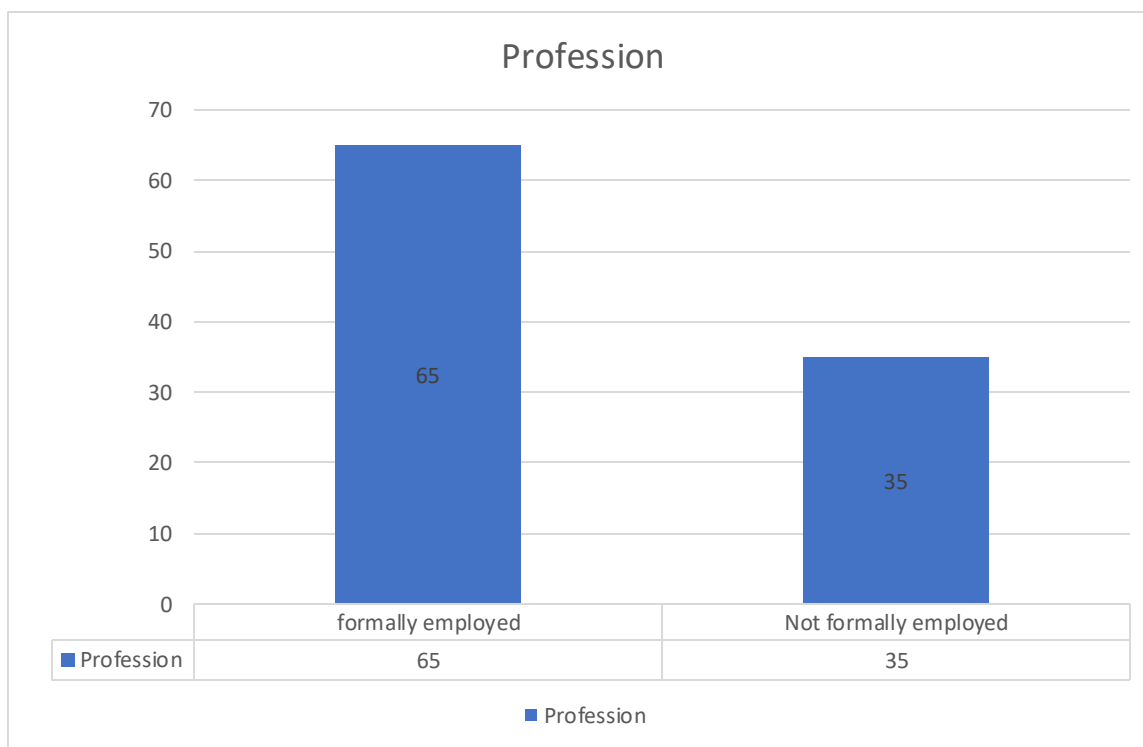
85% 15%

Source, Researcher (2025)

4.2.7 Profession

The study participants' professional backgrounds revealed a notable distinction, with 65% of the participants being formally employed, likely possessing a stable income and access to benefits. In contrast, 35% of the participants were not formally employed, potentially facing greater economic uncertainty and vulnerability. This disparity highlights the diverse socioeconomic profiles of the study participants, which may have influenced their resilience and coping mechanisms in the face of the 2019 Cyclone Idai disaster.

Figure 5: Profession



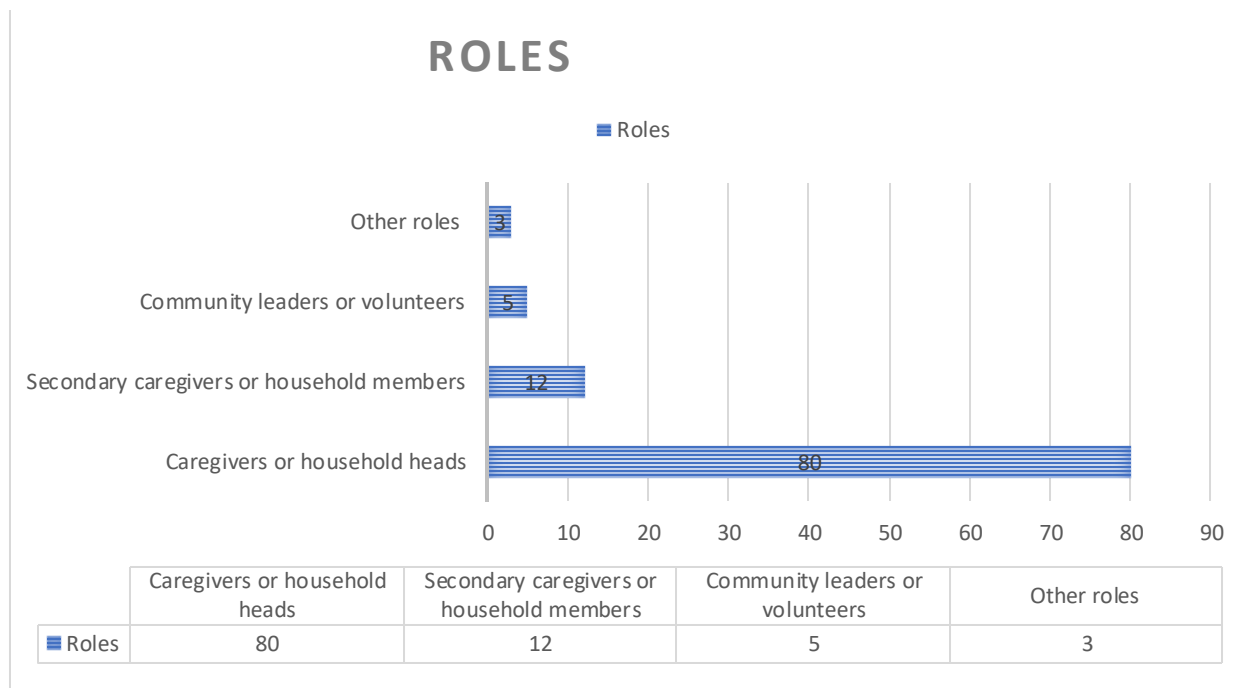
Source, Researcher (2025)

4.2.8 Roles

Additionally the study participants' roles within their households and communities were also examined, revealing that 80% of the participants were primary caregivers or household heads,

responsible for managing daily household responsibilities and making key decisions, while 12% were secondary caregivers or household members, providing support and assistance to the primary caregivers, and 5% were community leaders or volunteers, playing important roles in organizing and coordinating community responses to the disaster, with the remaining 3% having other roles, highlighting the diverse range of responsibilities and obligations that the study participants had, which may have been impacted by the 2019 Cyclone Idai disaster.

Figure 6: Roles



Source, Researcher (2025)

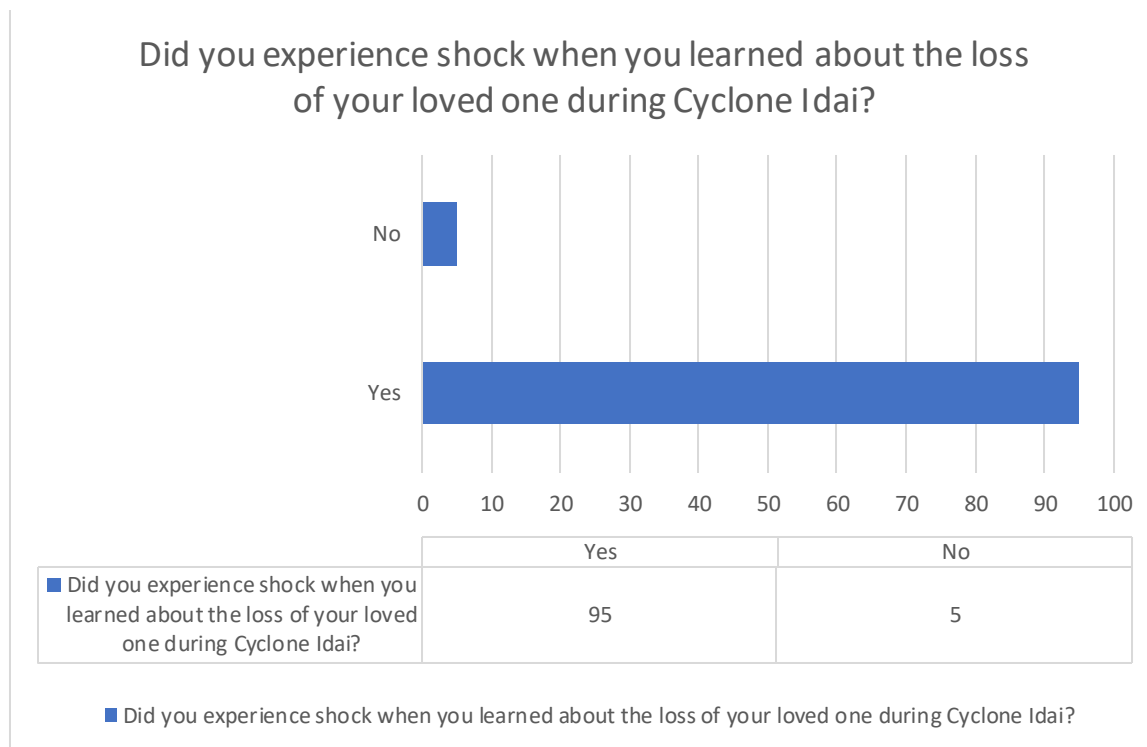
4.2.9 What do you remember about Cyclone Idai?

The study participants reported that 95% of them had experienced severe damage to their homes and livelihoods due to Cyclone Idai, resulting in significant economic and emotional distress. In contrast, 5% of the participants reported minimal damage or disruption to their lives, suggesting that they may have had greater resilience or resources to cope with the disaster's impact.

4.2.10 Did you experience shock when you learned about the loss of your loved one during Cyclone Idai?

An overwhelming 95% of the study participants reported experiencing shock upon learning about the loss of their loved ones during Cyclone Idai, highlighting the profound emotional impact of the disaster on those affected. In contrast, 5% of the participants reported not experiencing shock, but nonetheless acknowledged being emotionally affected by the loss, indicating that while they may not have been shocked, they still suffered significant emotional distress.

Figure 7: Did you experience shock when you learned about the loss of your loved one during Cyclone Idai?



Source, Researcher (2025)

4.2.11 Did you experience anxiety or fear after the disaster

All study participants (100%) reported experiencing anxiety or fear after the disaster, highlighting the profound and universal psychological impact of Cyclone Idai on those affected. This widespread experience of anxiety and fear underscores the traumatic nature of the event and the need for ongoing psychological support and counseling for those who survived the disaster.

4.3 What are the emotional responses experienced by families of missing persons affected by Cyclone Idai?

The first objective of the study was to identify the emotional responses experienced by families of missing persons affected by Cyclone Idai. The participants noted that emotional responses include the grief, anxiety, trauma, Frustration and Helplessness. Voices of the study participants regarding these emotional responses are presented below.

4.3.1 Grief

The majority of participants indicated that grief was an all-encompassing and overwhelming emotional reaction that pervaded their lives after the disappearance of their loved ones during Cyclone Ida. They reported experiencing profound emotional anguish, sorrow, and hopelessness, which impacted their daily existence, interpersonal relationships, and overall health. Numerous participants expressed a sense of being in limbo, unable to progress or attain closure due to the ambiguity regarding the status of their missing loved ones.

One of the participants noted that

I woke up from a dream that I could seem to shake. Though deep down I knew it was doubtful, I continued wondering if my brother would return. Losing him caused extreme suffering. Participant 1

Another participant also stated that

I felt as though I was losing my sanity while awaiting word regarding my child. The government and relief organizations appear to have neglected us, the families of the missing individuals. We were compelled to endure in quiet. Participant 2

The experiences of families of missing persons impacted by Cyclone Idai illustrate the significant and lasting effects of grief on their lives, emphasizing the necessity of recognizing and addressing their emotional and psychological requirements. Recent evidence indicates that mourning is a multifaceted and uniquely personal experience shaped by aspects including the type of loss and cultural environment (Kübler-Ross, 2020; Attig, 2020). The ambiguous loss faced by these families may result in extended and complex grief (Hooghe et al., 2020), highlighting the necessity for disaster response initiatives to prioritize emotional and psychological welfare by ensuring

access to counseling and mental health services (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2020).

4.3.2 Anxiety

Moreover, anxiety is one of the emotional responses experienced by families of missing persons affected by Cyclone Idai. The participants articulated the profound dread that enveloped them as they endeavored to manage the ambiguity over the fate of their lost loved ones. Their narratives underscored the unyielding and debilitating essence of anxiety, which infiltrated every facet of their existence, hindering their ability to sleep, think, or operate normally. The participants' experiences highlighted the critical necessity for emotional support and counseling services to assist families of missing persons in managing their anxiety and navigating the intricate and stressful process of looking for their loved ones.

Participant 3 noted that

I experienced a constant feeling of anxiety. I was perpetually anxious about my daughter's fate and whether I would reunite with her. It was arduous, yet I could not dispel the sense of disquiet. Participant 3

Participant 4 further highlighted that

The anxiety was occasionally unbearable. I felt perpetually on the brink of a breakdown, questioning whether I would ever reunite with my child. It like an inescapable nightmare. Participant 4

The participants' perceptions of fear following Cyclone Idai correspond with established literature regarding the psychological effects of disasters on relatives of missing individuals (Galea et al., 2020). This study's findings substantiate the idea that ambiguous loss, defined by uncertainty and absence of closure, may result in extended and complex sorrow (Boss, 2020). The study's findings underscore the necessity of delivering prompt and efficient psychological assistance to the families of missing persons, in accordance with international standards on mental health and psychosocial support in emergency contexts (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2020).

4.3.3 Trauma

Adding on trauma was noted as one of the emotional responses experienced by families of missing persons affected by Cyclone Idai. The participants' voices below illustrate the profound and enduring effects of trauma on their lives post-Cyclone Idai. Their narratives underscore the vivid and distressing recollections of the disaster that persistently troubled them. The participants' experiences of flashbacks, nightmares, and anxiety emphasized the debilitating consequences of trauma on their mental health and overall well-being. Their accounts serve as a poignant reminder of the necessity for timely and effective psychological support to assist families of missing persons in managing the trauma and grief that ensue after disasters.

Participant 5 stated that

On the day the cyclone struck, I witnessed sights that no individual should ever endure. I was tormented by recollections of the devastation, the cries, and the corpses. I repeatedly revisited that day in my thoughts. Participant 5

Participant 6 also indicated that

I felt as though I was traversing with an unhealed, gaping wound. The trauma of my husband's loss remained acute, and I was uncertain how to navigate it. I was ensnared in an interminable circle of suffering. Participant 6

The participants' trauma experiences after Cyclone Idai correspond with established literature regarding the psychological effects of catastrophes on relatives of missing individuals (Kaltman et al., 2020; Lopez et al., 2020). This study's findings corroborate the idea that stressful events can precipitate the onset of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and further mental health issues (American Psychiatric Association, 2020). The study's findings underscore the necessity of delivering trauma-informed treatment and psychological assistance to relatives of missing persons, as recommended by international recommendations on mental health and psychosocial support in emergency contexts (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2020).

4.3.4 Frustration and Helplessness

Lastly the participants noted that Frustration and Helplessness is one the emotional responses experienced by families of missing persons affected by Cyclone Idai. The participants'

voices presented below disclose a deep sense of frustration and powerlessness that defined their experiences after Cyclone Idai. Their narratives presented below underscore the emotional distress stemming from little information and help from authorities, rendering them feeling forsaken and uncertain regarding the fate of their loved ones. The participants also emphasized the critical necessity for good communication, transparency, and support from authorities to mitigate the distress of relatives of missing persons.

Participant 7 indicated that

I was annoyed by the insufficient information provided by the government. They repeatedly instructed us to wait, asserting that they were exerting their utmost effort. However, several months had elapsed, and we remained uninformed. Participant 7

Participant 8 went on to say that

I was incensed with the government for insufficiently assisting us in locating our loved ones. They appeared to be concealing it, as if our family members had never existed. Participant 8

The participants' experiences of frustration and helplessness following Cyclone Idai correspond with existing literature regarding the psychological ramifications of disasters on families of missing individuals (Birkeland et al., 2020; Sattler et al., 2020). The findings of this study corroborate the assertion that insufficient information and support from authorities can intensify feelings of frustration and helplessness among families of missing persons (Hobfoll et al., 2020). Moreover, the study's results underscore the necessity of delivering timely and effective support to families of missing persons, as endorsed by international guidelines on mental health and psychosocial support in emergency contexts (Sphere Association, 2020)

4.4 What is the impact of missing persons and presumed unaccounted deaths on families affected by Cyclone Idai?

The second objective of the study was to investigate the impacts of missing persons and presumed unaccounted deaths on families affected by Cyclone Idai. These impacts were felt through psychological impact, social implications, cultural significance and difficulty in accessing support and resources: Below are the voices of the study participants regarding these impacts.

4.4.1 Psychological impact

Firstly, participants reported that the experience of a loved one becoming missing during Cyclone Ida was emotionally catastrophic, resulting in enduring feelings of anxiety, terror, and trauma. They expressed feelings of being overwhelmed by uncertainty, perpetually questioning the fate of their lost family member, and grappled with accepting the loss. Numerous individuals articulated sentiments of remorse, self-reproach, and shame, convinced they ought to have taken greater measures to avert their loved one's disappearance. Moreover, participants reported enduring flashbacks, nightmares, and additional symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which significantly affected their everyday lives and capacity to manage the aftermath of the event.

Participant 9 noted that

"The experience was excruciating; I was unable to sleep for days, preoccupied with thoughts of what might have befallen my child..." I continued to ponder, "What if she remains alive? What if she requires my assistance? I felt utterly powerless, unable to take any action to locate her. I continued my search, however there was no indication of her presence. It was as if she disappeared without a trace. I continue to contemplate her daily, pondering the possibilities had she remained present. Participant 9

Participant 10 also went on to say that

"I experienced profound helplessness, uncertain of my husband's fate... I continued my search, however there was no indication of his presence... It was as if he disappeared without a trace. I have been reflecting on our previous talk, contemplating whether I should have articulated my thoughts differently. I experienced remorse for my inability to safeguard him. I continually pondered, 'What if I had acted differently?' Will he still be present? The ambiguity was the most challenging aspect, being unaware of his status, whether deceased or living. Participant 10

Linking to the above voices it can be noted that the disappearance of a loved one during Cyclone Idai severely impaired the psychological well-being of affected families, resulting in enduring anxiety, terror, and anguish. The uncertainty over the departure of their loved ones caused significant emotional distress, leading many to experience feelings of regret, self-blame, and

humiliation. These findings correspond with existing work on the psychological impacts of disasters, highlighting the significance of uncertainty and lack of closure in exacerbating emotional distress (Galea et al., 2021; Norris et al., 2021). The recorded symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) align with research on the psychological impacts of natural disasters (Bonanno et al., 2021; Santiago et al., 2021). This study underscores the need of addressing the psychological needs of families affected by disasters, particularly those who have experienced the loss of loved ones.

4.4.2 Social implications

Adding on Participants said that the absence of their loved ones during Cyclone Idai had significant social consequences, affecting their relationships, social connections, and overall feeling of community. They endured social isolation, humiliation, and shame, viewing themselves as accountable for their family member's absence. Guilt and self-reproach were widespread, as many reflected on the acts, they may have taken to prevent their family member's kidnapping. The loss of a loved one led to a weakened social identity, leaving persons feeling lost and lacking purpose. Furthermore, some individuals encountered difficulties in maintaining relationships, separating themselves from friends and family due to feelings of vulnerability and uncertainty. A multitude of individuals had a feeling of neglect by their community, as if they had been disregarded in the aftermath of the disaster. The societal consequences of missing persons and presumed unaccounted deaths profoundly affected the emotional and psychological well-being of the affected families.

Participant 11 indicated that

The absence of my loved one during Cyclone Idai has rendered me socially alienated, as though I am solitary in this experience and no one comprehends my plight. I experience stigmatization and humiliation, as though I am culpable for their absence. The guilt and self-reproach are tremendous; I continually contemplate what actions I could have taken to avert this situation. The loss of my loved one has resulted in a diminished social identity, leaving me feeling adrift and devoid of purpose. I have encountered difficulties in sustaining connections and have distanced myself from friends and family due to my inability to address their inquiries and concerns. It seems as like my community has

forsaken me, as if they have progressed with their lives and neglected my loved one.

Participant 11

Participant 12 also indicated that

I experienced a sense of dread, perpetually contemplating the fate of my loved one. The ambiguity was tormenting me; I constantly pondered whether they were still alive, enduring pain, or in need of my assistance. I experienced profound helplessness, as though I were ensnared in an interminable circle of sorrow and ambiguity. I have lost track of how many times I have mentally revisited that day, contemplating what actions I could have taken to avert this occurrence. The anguish of losing my beloved was severe, yet the uncertainty was what truly devastated me. Participant 12

The findings above show that the absence of loved ones during Cyclone Idai resulted in significant social ramifications for the affected families, culminating in social isolation, stigma, remorse, and a diminished social identity. The ambiguity over the loss of their loved ones intensified their mental turmoil, hindering their ability to sustain relationships and reintegrate into their communities. These findings align with the current literature about the social repercussions of disasters, emphasizing the significance of social support and community cohesion in promoting recovery and resilience (Norris et al., 2021; Galea et al., 2021). The social ramifications of missing persons and probable unaccounted fatalities following Cyclone Idai highlight the necessity for focused interventions to assist impacted families and foster community recovery.

4.4.3 Cultural significance

Furthermore, participants said that the absence of their loved ones during Cyclone Idai had deep cultural ramifications, influencing their traditional behaviors, rituals, and sense of identity. Numerous individuals articulated sentiments of cultural dislocation, asserting that the absence had interrupted their customary behaviors and rituals, resulting in a segment of their culture being irrevocably gone. They also encountered a loss of cultural identity, perceiving their loved one as a custodian of their traditional knowledge and traditions, and believing that their absence had created an irreparable gap. Moreover, participants expressed challenges in executing rites and ceremonies in the absence of their loved ones, perceiving a deficiency in their cultural experience. The absence

of their loved ones resulted in individuals feeling alienated from their culture and community, intensifying their emotional turmoil and feelings of bereavement.

Participant 13 pointed out that

I perceived the erosion of my cultural identity following the disappearance of my loved one during Cyclone Idai." Our customary routines and rituals constituted a significant aspect of our existence, and in the absence of my beloved, it felt as though a part of me was absent. I grappled with accepting the loss of my loved one and the associated cultural ramifications. I felt as though I was losing an integral aspect of my identity, specifically my culture and traditions. Participant 13

Participant 14 also indicated that

I experienced a crisis of cultural identity when my loved one vanished during Cyclone Idai." I was grappling with the bereavement of my loved one and the associated societal ramifications. I felt as though I was relinquishing a segment of my identity, a facet of my culture and heritage. I experienced a disconnection from my culture and community, resulting in a profoundly isolated experience. Participant 14

The voices above show that the absence of loved ones during Cyclone Idai resulted in significant cultural ramifications for the affected families, causing cultural dislocation, erosion of cultural identity, and difficulties in executing traditional rituals and celebrations. The findings align with the previous research regarding the cultural impact of disasters, emphasizing the role of cultural heritage and traditional practices in forming individual and group identity (Oliver-Smith, 2021; Bankoff, 2021). The cultural implications of missing persons and assumed unaccounted deaths following Cyclone Idai highlight the necessity for culturally sensitive interventions that recognize the importance of cultural heritage and traditional practices in promoting recovery and resilience.

4.4.4 Difficulty in accessing support and resources

Lastly participants said that the absence of their loved ones during Cyclone Idai was exacerbated by difficulties in accessing support and resources, leading to emotions of frustration, helplessness, and abandonment. Many persons reported navigating complex and bureaucratic procedures to acquire vital resources like as food, shelter, and healthcare, which were already limited. The lack

of transparency and communication from governmental and humanitarian agencies intensified their suffering, obstructing access to essential aid. Furthermore, participants noted that the deficiency of resources and support presented considerable obstacles for already vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, women, and children, who often had to depend on themselves. The difficulties in accessing assistance and resources intensified the emotional and psychological anguish of grief, leading individuals to feel isolated, desperate, and neglected.

Participant 15 indicated that

I was shocked by the dearth of resources and assistance following Cyclone Idai. I believed that the government and relief organizations would assist us, but it seems they were more focused on self-interest. The elderly, women, and children were the most adversely impacted, and it was distressing to witness their struggle for survival. The vanishing of my beloved was catastrophic, yet the subsequent abandonment we experienced was utterly disgraceful. Participant 15.

Participant 16 also noted that

The disappearance of my loved one during Cyclone Idai was a traumatic experience, and the struggle to secure support and resources represented a separate level of distress. I had to plead for basic necessities like food and shelter, and even then, it was difficult. The government and humanitarian organizations seemed to be lacking, and when they were present, they favored photography and data collection over delivering aid. Participant 16.

The absence of loved ones during Cyclone Idai was exacerbated by challenges in obtaining support and resources, resulting in sentiments of frustration, helplessness, and abandonment. The results align with current literature on disaster response and recovery, emphasizing the need of prompt and efficient assistance in alleviating disaster impacts (Kelman & Stough, 2015; Wisner et al., 2012). Recent studies have underscored the necessity for inclusive and participatory disaster response and recovery initiatives that consider the distinct needs and vulnerabilities of impacted communities (Mercer et al., 2020; Gaillard & Mercer, 2020). The challenges faced by participants in obtaining support and resources highlight the necessity for more efficient and inclusive disaster response and recovery initiatives, especially for at-risk groups such the elderly, women, and children. Moreover, the results of this study underscore the significance of addressing the

emotional and psychological repercussions of disasters, especially the pain and stress linked to the loss of loved ones (Bonanno et al., 2020).

4.5 How do existing policies and regulations address the emotional, psychological, and socio-economic needs of families of missing persons

The last objective of the study was to examine existing policies and regulations governing accounting for and supporting families of missing persons. Participants observed that current policies and regulations cater to the emotional, psychological, and socio-economic requirements of families of missing persons through various provisions. These include financial assistance to mitigate the economic repercussions of the disappearance, psychological support to facilitate access to mental health services, counseling, and therapy for coping with trauma, grief, and anxiety, social support to connect families with others who have endured similar losses and provide practical assistance, and information and communication mechanisms to keep families updated on the search process, investigation, and any developments, thereby alleviating uncertainty and anxiety. Voices of study participants are further presented below.

4.5.1 Financial assistance

Participants highlighted that financial aid is crucial in meeting the socio-economic needs of families of missing individuals. It assists in defraying the expenses associated with locating the missing individual, offering significant respite and enabling families to concentrate on the search for their relative. Financial assistance allows families to address their fundamental requirements while coping with the pain of a disappearance, facilitating the payment of essentials such as food, housing, and other necessities. Moreover, financial assistance enables access to counseling and therapy, aiding families in managing their grief and allowing them to take leave from work to search for their loved one without the burden of financial concerns. Participants emphasized that financial aid fosters stability and normalcy at a very challenging period, enabling them to maintain coherence in their lives amidst chaos.

Participant 17 stated that

The government's financial assistance facilitated the coverage of expenses incurred while searching for our missing loved one, providing significant relief. It alleviated our burden and enabled us to concentrate on locating our family member. Participant 17

Participant 18 also indicated that

The financial assistance was a lifeline for us, as it helped us pay for counseling and therapy to cope with our grief. It also allowed us to take time off work to search for our loved one without worrying about how we would pay our bills. Participant 18

Financial assistance is an essential element in addressing the socio-economic needs of families of missing individuals, providing vital support for expenses related to the search, meeting basic needs, facilitating access to counseling and therapy, and promoting stability during an extraordinarily difficult time. Contemporary scholars such as Walker (2020), underscore the necessity of comprehensive support for these families, with financial aid being a crucial component of this support network. Participants have illustrated the importance of financial assistance in alleviating their burdens, allowing them to focus on locating their loved ones while maintaining coherence in their lives amidst chaos.

4.5.2 Psychological support

Furthermore, psychological support has become an essential element in meeting the emotional and psychological requirements of relatives of missing individuals. Participants emphasized the significance of counseling, therapy, and emotional support in assisting families to manage the stress, fear, and uncertainty linked to the disappearance of a loved one. Current legislation and regulations offer psychological support via multiple channels, such as access to mental health services, hotlines, and support groups, assisting families in managing their grief and emotional suffering. By recognizing the emotional and psychological impact of disappearance on families, current policies and regulations reflect a dedication to offering extensive support to those impacted.

Participant 19 pointed out that

The psychological support we received was vital in assisting us to manage the trauma and uncertainty surrounding our loved one's disappearance. It offered us a crucial support at a challenging period, facilitating emotional processing and the development of coping strategies. Participant 19

Participant 20 also further stated that

The emotional support we obtained from support groups and hotlines was essential in alleviating our sense of isolation and fostering a connection with others who had undergone similar experiences. It aided our recognition that we were not isolated and that there existed individuals who comprehended our experiences. Participant 20

Participants voices above show that psychological support is essential for addressing the emotional and psychological needs of families of missing persons, as participants underscored the importance of counseling, therapy, and emotional assistance in coping with the trauma, uncertainty, and grief related to disappearance. This aligns with existing evidence, which emphasizes the significance of psychological support in alleviating the emotional and psychological effects of absence on families (Boss, 2017; Walker, 2020). The provision of psychological support via multiple avenues, including mental health services, hotlines, and support groups, demonstrates a dedication to offering comprehensive assistance to individuals impacted, as observed by scholars such as Holstein and Minkler (2020). Current legislation and regulations acknowledge the emotional and psychological impact of disappearance on families, reflecting a commitment to providing comprehensive care to those affected, thus fostering resilience and coping mechanisms.

4.5.3 Social support

Participants emphasized that social support is an essential component of current policies and regulations that address the emotional, psychological, and socio-economic needs of families of missing persons. They noted that assistance from family, friends, community members, and support groups aided them in managing the emotional and psychological repercussions of their loved one's disappearance, alleviated feelings of isolation, and offered practical help, thereby emphasizing the significance of social support in fostering resilience and coping mechanisms among affected families.

Participant 21 indicated that

The social support we received from family, friends, and community members was essential in assisting us to cope with the emotional and psychological effects of our loved one's disappearance. It afforded us a sense of belonging and connection during a particularly challenging period. Participant 21

Another participant stated that

Current policies and regulations granted us access to support groups, which served as a vital resource for us. We established connections with other families who had undergone analogous experiences, receiving emotional support and guidance from them. Participant

22

Participants stressed the vital need of social assistance in contemporary policies and regulations that address the emotional, psychological, and socio-economic needs of families of missing persons (Kaldenberg et al., 2021). This conclusion aligns with the current literature, emphasizing the importance of social support in enhancing resilience and coping strategies among impacted families (Walker, 2020;). The participants' experiences highlighted the significance of support from family, friends, community members, and support groups in coping with the emotional and psychological effects of disappearance, mitigating feelings of loneliness, and offering practical aid (Kaldenberg et al., 2021). This underscores the importance of social support as an essential element of comprehensive assistance for families of missing individuals.

4.5.4 Information and communication

Participants emphasized that information and communication are vital elements of contemporary policies and regulations addressing the emotional, psychological, and socio-economic needs of families of missing persons, underscoring that access to timely and accurate information about their loved ones' disappearance is crucial for assisting them in coping with the emotional and psychological consequences of the event. Nonetheless, they often encountered challenges in obtaining such information, which intensified their discomfort, leading them to perceive the information received as frequently insufficient or erroneous, so heightening uncertainty and worry. They highlighted the imperative for clear and immediate information to understand the situation and plan for the future, stressing the importance of efficient communication among agencies and organizations involved in search and rescue operations to ensure the acquisition of precise and timely information. They emphasized that enhanced coordination and communication are essential to alleviate uncertainty, delays, and stress, while also providing emotional support and direction to the relatives of missing persons.

Participant 23 indicated that

Current policies and regulations granted us access to information and communication channels, including hotlines and websites, which were crucial in acquiring information and assistance. Nevertheless, we observed that these channels were not consistently effective or efficient. Participant 23.

Participant 24 also indicated that

The absence of efficient communication among the agencies and organizations participating in the search and rescue operations resulted in confusion and delays, exacerbating our stress and anxiety. We required more coordination and communication to guarantee the receipt of precise and timely information.

Lastly participants highlighted the crucial significance of information and communication in modern policies and regulations that address the emotional, psychological, and socio-economic needs of families of missing persons, reflecting the views of scholars like Alisic et al. (2019), who stress the necessity of timely and accurate information in promoting coping and resilience among impacted families. The participants' experiences underscored the difficulties in acquiring reliable information, the necessity for clear and prompt communication, and the significance of effective coordination among agencies and organizations engaged in search and rescue operations. This reinforces the idea that efficient information and communication are crucial in mitigating uncertainty, delays, and stress, while offering emotional support and guidance to the families of missing persons (Kaldenberg et al., 2021).

4.6 Discussion

The primary goal of the study was to determine the emotional responses experienced by families of missing persons affected by Cyclone Idai. Relatives' emotional responses of missing persons affected by Cyclone Idai are complex and extreme, for example, grief, anxiety, stress, frustration, and helplessness. The statements of the respondents highlight the lasting and extensive impact of such emotional reaction on their lives and highlight the necessity for immediate and efficient psychological support and counseling services to help families of missing persons to cope with their emotional and psychological trauma. This research agrees with the existing literature in

supporting the necessity of attending to the psychological and emotional needs of families of missing individuals during disaster (Attig, 2020; Kübler-Ross, 2020; Galea et al., 2020; Kaltman et al., 2020; Lopez et al., 2020). The outcomes of the research emphasize the significance of addressing the emotional and psychological needs of individuals in the face of disaster by providing them access to counseling services and mental health care as well as guaranteeing effective communication, transparency, and support by authorities to avert the trauma to the families of missing persons (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2020; Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2020; Sphere Association, 2020).

The second goal was to find out how families of missing persons and suspected unexplained deaths were affected by Cyclone Idai. These were psychological, social, cultural, and hard-to-reach support and services: Cyclone Idai places humongous psychological, social, and cultural burdens on missing people's families. Participant experiences showed how loss, anxiety, and trauma were intensified by doubt of the end result for their loved ones. These findings validate prior studies showing that disaster bereavement can be protracted and complex (Galea et al., 2021). The accident also caused stigmatization, identity loss, and social isolation. Research identifies those disasters are likely to interrupt social networks and social integration into society, facilitating social isolation and weakening social support (Norris et al., 2021). The disaster also caused cultural displacement, identity erosion, and loss of ability to fulfill traditional rites and ceremonies. This is highlighted by the fact that disasters have the potential to destroy cultural heritage and traditional ways of life, and erase cultural identity and social bonds (Bankoff, 2021). In addition to participants having difficulty accessing support and resources, there was the need for improved and fair disaster response and recovery.

From research, disaster recovery and response should take into account vulnerable populations like women, older persons, and children (Gaillard & Mercer, 2020). In general, Cyclone Idai has long-lasting psychological, social, and cultural effects on families of missing people. Improved and more inclusive disaster recovery and response are emphasized in the study, in addition to the psychological, social, and cultural requirements of families of missing people. The ultimate purpose of the research was to examine existing policies and legislation on accounting for and caring for families of missing persons.

Financial aid allows the missing persons' families to take care of their day-to-day needs, cover search costs, meet with counselors and therapists, and remain stable through a challenging ordeal. Modern researchers like Walker (2020) emphasize offering such families overall support, which involves financial aid. Participants have proved that financial aid allows individuals to find their loved ones and remain stable despite lives full of disruption. The role of therapy, counseling, and emotional support in addressing trauma, uncertainty, and loss to missing person families was highlighted by participants. This is in agreement with the study that psychological intervention reduces the psychological and emotional effect of absence on families (Walker, 2020). Mental health services, hotlines, and support groups are holistic care, as argued by experts like Holstein and Minkler (2020). Current legislation recognizes the psychological and emotional impact of absence on families and offers holistic care to build resilience and coping (Kaldenberg et al., 2021). Grounding in participants highlighted the importance of social support in current policies and legislation that respond to missing persons' families' emotional, psychological, and socioeconomic needs (Kaldenberg et al., 2021). This supports the argument that social support builds resilience and coping in victimized families (Walker, 2020).

Family, friends, community members, and support groups helped participants cope with disappearance's emotional and psychological effects, loneliness, and daily support (Kaldenberg et al., 2021). Social support is at the heart of overall support for missing persons' families. Finally, like Alisic et al. (2019), participants reaffirmed the importance of information and communication in modern policies and legislation related to the emotional, psychological, and socio-economic well-being of missing persons' families. Participant experiences also identified the challenges in getting reliable information, the importance of good and timely communication, and coordination in search and rescue. Effective information and communication reduce uncertainty, delay, and tension and offer emotional support and direction to missing relatives (Kaldenberg et al., 2021).

4.7 Chapter Summary

The chapter has presented the findings of the study. The next chapter will present the summary, conclusion and the recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the summary, recommendation and conclusions' presentation of this chapter will be guided by the research questions and the research questions.

5.2 Summary

The research is focused on the impact of the lost flood victims and presumed unreported death on families: the case of 2019 cyclone Idai tragedy. This will be according to the subsequent research objectives to establish the emotional response (e.g., trauma, fear, loss) of missing persons' families who were a victim of Cyclone Idai, to examine the impact on missing persons' families and presumed unaccounted for victims during Cyclone Idai and to examine policies and legislation in place that govern accounting for and assisting missing persons' families. An exploratory research design was applied in this study. The researcher employed qualitative research. The researcher applied purposive sampling as the sampling approach, the sample consists of a purposively chosen set of 30 respondents, the researcher applied in-depth interviews and key informant interviews. The researcher applied inductive and deductive thematic analysis.

5.3 Conclusion

This study investigated the emotional reaction, level of effect, and policy reaction of Cyclone Ida on families of missing people. The results determine the multifaceted and deep-seated emotional reactions of the families of the missing individuals, including grief, fear, tension, frustration, and feelings of helplessness. The report delineates the psychological, social, and cultural long-term impacts of missing persons and suspected unexplained deaths on families, such as anxiety, trauma, bereavement, social isolation, stigmatization, and cultural displacement. The report underlines the importance of effective and prompt psychological treatment and counseling services in enabling the families of missing persons to cope with their psychological and emotional

trauma. The study stresses that response efforts to the disaster should pay attention to the psychological and emotional state, offering counseling services and mental health while creating communication, transparency, and support from the authorities. The research underlines the importance of cross-departmental policy and law targeted at the emotional, psychological, and socio-economic needs of the families of missing people, such as financial support, counseling, therapy, emotional support, social care, and access to appropriate information and communication. This study contributes to the literature on the multifaceted and extensive effect of disasters on the families of the missing and calls for more expanded and inclusive disaster response and recovery efforts that address emotional and psychological well-being.

5.4 Recommendations

The researcher recommends the following

1. Deliver Timely and Efficient Psychological Support and Counselling Services
2. Formulate Detailed Policies and Laws to Assist Families of Missing Individuals
3. Foster Efficient Communication, Transparency, and Cooperation from Authorities
4. Encourage Community-Based Initiatives to Aid Families of Missing Individuals
5. Implement Systematic Review and Assessment of Disaster Response and Recovery Programs

5.5 Areas for further research

Evaluation of the effectiveness of specific counselling interventions and mental health services for families of missing persons

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Appendix

Appendix 1 School Approval letter

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES



Bindura University
of Science Education

P.Bag 1020
Bindura
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DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND GOVERNANCE

27 January 2025

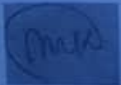
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: REQUEST TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH IN YOUR ORGANISATION

This serves to introduce the bearer, ANESU KARISA, Student
Registration Number B210708B, who is a HBSC PEACE AND GOVERNANCE
student at Bindura University of Science Education and is carrying out a research project in your
area/institution.

May you please assist the student to access data relevant to the study, and where possible, conduct
interviews as part of a data collection process.

Yours respectfully



J. KUREBWA (DR)
Acting Chairperson



Appendix 2 Approval letter from Chipinge rural District



Chipinge Rural District Council

All communication should be addressed:
 Chief Executive Officer
 P.O. Box 19
 CHIPINGE

Council Headquarters
 858 Main Street
CHIPINGE

Telephones (0227) 5631/2/3/4/5
 Fax (0227) 2375
 Email: info@chipingerdc.gov.zw

Any enquiries on this matter
 ask for
T. Maduveko

Our Ref: TM/sm/03/25

27 March 2025

Anesu Karisa
 Bindura University of Science Education
 P. Bag 1020
 BINDURA

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT AN ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Reference is made to your letter on the above-mentioned subject.

Please be advised that permission has been granted for you to carry out the academic research project on **"The impact of missing flood victims and presumed unaccounted deaths on families: The case of 2019 Cyclone Idai Disaster."**

Please note that the data collected should be used for academic purpose only and a copy of the completed research project should be submitted to Council.

May I take this opportunity to wish you the best in your research.

Yours faithfully

T. Maduveko

**ADMINISTRATION AND HUMAN RESOURCE OFFICER
 FOR: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
 CHIPINGE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL**



Appendix 3: Introduction letter

Dear Participant

Dear Participant

My name is Anesu Karisa B210708B and I am a student at Bindura University of Science Education research study on "The Impact of Missing Flood Victims and Presumed Unaccounted Death on Families: The Case of 2019 Cyclone Idai Disaster." This study is being conducted for academic purposes, as part of my requirements to complete my Bachelor's, degree Peace and Governance.

This study is significant because it seeks to fill a knowledge gap on the impacts of missing persons and presumed unaccounted deaths on families in the context of natural disasters. The findings of this study will contribute to the development of effective policies and interventions that support families affected by missing persons and presumed unaccounted deaths.

I would like to request your participation in this study through an in-depth interview. Your experiences and insights as [Recipient's Position/Role] will be invaluable in helping me achieve the research objectives.

I will ensure that all necessary ethics protocols are followed, and your participation will be kept confidential.

Please note that this study has been approved by the University research Ethics Committee, and all data collected will be used solely for academic purposes.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information or clarification. I look forward to the possibility of discussing this further with you.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Appendix 4: In Depth Interview Guide

1. What is your Age

.....

2. Gender

Male

Female

3. What is your household size?

.....

4. How long have you lived in the area?

.....

5. Knowledge of cyclone related disasters

Yes/No

.....

6. Knowledge regarding characteristics of Cyclone Idai and effects?

Yes

No

7. What is Your Profession

.....

8. What are your roles

.....

9. What do you remember about Cyclone Idai?

10. Experiences of shock when you learned about the loss of your loved one during Cyclone Idai?

Yes

No

11. Experience anxiety or fear after the disaster?

Yes

No

Section A: Understanding Emotional Responses Experienced by Families of Missing Persons Affected by Cyclone Idai

1. How many relatives have you missed from the disaster?

.....
.....

2. What are their age ranges?

.....
.....

3. What are the emotional responses experienced by families of missing persons affected by Cyclone Idai?

.....
.....

4. What coping mechanisms did you use to deal with the emotional impact of the cyclone?

.....

Section B: Understanding Impact of Missing Persons and Presumed Unaccounted Deaths on Families Affected by Cyclone Idai

5. What is the impact of missing persons and presumed unaccounted deaths on families affected by Cyclone Idai?

.....

6. Are there any recommendations you would make for how families affected by similar disasters can be better supported in the future?

.....

7. How can communities and authorities balance the need for closure and certainty for families of missing persons with the challenges of searching for and identifying remains in the aftermath of a disaster like Cyclone Idai?

.....

8. What role can psychological support and counseling play in helping families affected by Cyclone Idai to cope with the trauma and uncertainty of missing persons and presumed unaccounted deaths?

.....

Section C: Understanding Existing Policies and Regulations Address the Emotional, Psychological, and Socio-Economic Needs of Families of Missing Persons

9. How do existing policies and regulations address the emotional, psychological, and socio-economic needs of families of missing persons

.....
.....

10. How effective do you think these policies or programs have been in addressing the needs of families of missing persons?

.....
.....

11. Are there any gaps or inconsistencies in existing policies and regulations that hinder their effectiveness in supporting families of missing persons, and if so, how can these gaps be addressed?

.....
.....

12. How can policymakers and stakeholders ensure that the needs of families of missing persons are taken into account in the development and implementation of future policies and regulations?

.....
.....

Appendix 5: Key Informant Interview Guide

Section A Demographic Data?

What is your age?

.....
.....

What is your gender?

.....
.....

What is your highest level of education?

.....
.....

What is your current occupation?

.....
.....

What is your Knowledge of the Cyclone Idai disaster?

.....
.....

How did the disaster role out?

.....

.....

Section B: Key informant Interview Questions

1. In your own view what are the emotional responses experienced by families of missing persons affected by Cyclone Idai?
2. State the coping mechanisms did you use to deal with the emotional impact of the cyclone?
3. Describe the impact of missing persons and presumed unaccounted deaths on families affected by Cyclone Idai?
4. Which recommendations you would make for how families affected by similar disasters can be better supported in the future
5. In your own understanding how do existing policies and regulations address the emotional, psychological, and socio-economic needs of families of missing persons
6. In your own view how effective do you think these policies or programs have been in addressing the needs of families of missing persons?

