

Title

The strength of belief systems: perceptions of survivors on natural disasters in Chipinge district, Zimbabwe

Author/s

Anotida Mavuka, Master of Social Work, University of Zimbabwe, amavuka@gmail.com

Belamino K. Chikwaiwa Senior Lecturer Department of Social Work University of Zimbabwe, bkchikwaiwa@rocketmail.com

Abstract

The study investigated the perceptions of survivors on natural disasters in Chipinge district, Zimbabwe. The study was driven by the realisation that information on the perceptions of survivors on natural disasters in Zimbabwe including their causes was ambiguous yet has a tremendous influence on the decentralisation of the disaster risk reduction which the government seeks to pursue. The qualitative research method was employed. The data collection process made use of in-depth interviews with the survivors of Cyclone Idai and the key informant interviews with the opinion leaders. The results were classified into three classes of perceptions. These were African; Christian and emerging perceptions. African perceptions included disregard of sacred places, dwindling influence of traditional leaders, the Ndunge narrative, waning practice of Kudira exercise and mermaid njuzu narratives as the causal factors to Cyclone Idai.

Christian perceptions on natural disasters included the view of Cyclone Idai as the work of Satan to make people curse God, punishment for rebellion against God and the advent narrative. The results classified as emerging perceptions on natural disasters from the survivors of Cyclone Idai included the century narrative, climate change and Robert Mugabe acuity. The study recommended that climate change be incorporated as a major taught subject in schools, social work and development, there is need for family trauma counselling and information centres within the affected communities, public consultations before decentralising disaster risk reduction, adoption of spiritual social work in disaster practice and adoption of relevant traditional knowledge in disaster policy formulation.

Key words

African beliefs, disasters, natural, survivor, Cyclone Idai, Chipinge, Zimbabwe

Introduction

The March 2019 Cyclone Idai in Zimbabwe destroyed nature, property and resulted in the loss of lives in the northern parts of Manicaland and Masvingo provinces. These regions had not been accustomed to the problem on a regular basis and high magnitude. The psychosocial trauma experienced during Cyclone Idai has an impact on the reconstructions and meanings that the survivors give to the causes of the cyclone which form perceptions. Therefore, there is need to understand the perceptions of these survivors on the phenomenon of Cyclones as this has an impact on the effectiveness of the decentralisation of disaster risk reduction which the government seeks to pursue. This study consequently, assesses the perceptions that Cyclone Idai survivors have on natural disasters in Zimbabwe.

Background information

The problem

The efforts by the government of the Republic of Zimbabwe to decentralise cyclone and floods risk reduction face hurdles without a comprehensive understanding of the perceptions that have been developed on the phenomenon of Cyclone Idai by survivors. Cyclone Idai left a trail of destruction on property, infrastructure, livestock, farm produce, savings and lives. Apart from the destruction on property and other material possessions, Cyclone Idai has left the survivors in shock and puzzled on why the Cyclone happened including its causes. This has brought about the psychological, social and economic unevenness amongst the survivors. As a result, the survivors have formed perceptions in trying to explain and give meaning to what happened. The attitudes, practices and the rich belief system within the region mediate the perceptions that individuals have on the occurrence of Cyclone Idai. In order to have a holistic understanding of the disaster, it is prudent to interrogate the beliefs and perceptions of those that were affected. Therefore, this study labours to provide answers to the challenge.

Theories that explain the problem

The theoretical framework that informed the study on the perception of survivors on natural disasters is the social constructionist theory. The social constructionist theory rejects the philosophies of causality and, stresses the intertwined nature of a variety of factors within the communities in the formation of perceptions that make up subjective reality. Thus the theory sets precedence challenging the seemingly most common sense and sources of knowledge, a typical example being the causes of the natural disasters that the study seeks to pursue from the perceptual context of the survivors in Zimbabwe (Cojacuru, 2013). The social constructionist theory is built on the premise of rejecting the positivist world view where reality is

pre-set. However, the social constructionist theory becomes more reflexive in nature due the subjective view of reality. The social constructionist theory maintains that human experience and perceptions are mediated historically, culturally and through language (Aragon-Durand, 2009). The way in which humanity understands natural phenomenon such as Cyclones and other natural disasters is both a product of a historical process of interaction and negotiation with their frame of reference (Andrews, 2012).

Individuals are considered as central within political processes, history and culture which consequently influence and mediate the psychological processes. It is these factors that influence subjective nature of the reality that generates perceptions on events and social context in day to day interactions. Subsequently, the perceptions that people have may not always reflect the objective conditions within the environment but rather the products of that condition or phenomenon that would have occurred. Therefore, participants are experts in their world view and relay to the researcher the perceptions that they have on natural disasters. The focus is on the meaning that is inherent within the communities. In context of the current study it is the constructions that the survivors give to the causes of natural disasters and not objective climatic studies that determine how the communities act. Thus language, culture, discursive and symbolic practices become central to perception formation and meaning making (Cojacuru and Bragaru, 2012). The theory further acknowledges the role of societal interactions and socialisation in the formation of perception and meaning making. Interaction of persons and groups of people who have the same natural shocks such as Cyclones in a social system results in perceptions forming over time, concepts or mental representations of the common phenomenon and how others reacted to it (Cojacuru, 2013).

Spirituality in social work

In instances where individuals social functioning is impaired they often turn for professional help from

social workers and psychologist amongst others. However, these individuals present themselves holistically including their spiritual beliefs which are integral in every day decision making. Therefore, the spiritual beliefs and orientation offer an important resource in the helping process. In social work spirituality has often been treated with caution because of the danger of possibly exerting practitioner's beliefs on the clients (Mabvurira and Nyanguru, 2013). Baskin (2002), noted that social work cannot be whole without considering the spirituality of the clients. Any practice that does so, fails to treat individuals as holistic beings and not the sum of fragmented social entities. Therefore, for many social work clients especially in Africa, individuals turn to supreme beings for strength and answers when they are overwhelmed by life's events and circumstances (Mabvurira and Nyanguru, 2013).

Social work has its roots in the religious and philanthropic motivations in the Charity Society Organisations in England. However, despite these obvious origins with religion social work has been slow to move beyond Christianity to embrace various religions as presented by the clientele groups. Therefore, being spiritually sensitive for social workers enables the profession to be socially active and be drivers of desired social change. Any attempt to exclude spirituality from the mental health practice leaves the clients caught between the secular and spiritual outlooks as a result of the desire in mental health to align itself to natural science (Gotterer, 2001). As a result, an important spectrum to various treatment trajectories is ignored. Therefore, the understanding of the need to indigenise social work practice to incorporate the spiritual facets of humanity becomes central to the understanding of the perceptions of survivors on natural disasters in Zimbabwe.

Literature scoping

The African worldviews present the creator of natural phenomenon as God. African spiritualism has deep respect and reverence for the environment: land, animals, mountains, rocks and forests. This is the basis of explaining why there are certain places that are considered sacred and revered. Hence, activities on such sacred places for example farming is highly considered to be unacceptable and taboo (Mbiti, 1992). It is within these natural phenomena that the ancestors connect with humanity hence, nature and humanity are interlinked. Within the African traditional religion mysteries, proverbs, metaphors are rich sources of the African Traditional worldview (Gumo et al., 2012). The emphasis of the African worldviews comes about in anthropomorphism, ancestral veneration, mystic

powers, ritualism and totems (Gumo et al., 2012:345). The oceans and lakes are often considered inhabited by spirits. Among the Nyala people in Kenya, Lake Victoria houses the great spirit called *nakhabuka* which may cause natural disasters and other misfortunes when provoked (Gumo et al., 2012). The Giriama and Digo people perceive the Indian ocean to harbour spirits that have extensive powers and may cause natural disasters when unhappy or provoked by the loss of morality amongst the people (Gumo et al., 2012). Within the African context ancestral spirits are responsible for the preservation of the ecology thus if individuals destroy the natural environment they are punished by death or serious misfortunes within the natural environment such as floods and Cyclones (Nyaundi, 2003). This therefore, shows that through the ATR lenses natural disasters can be caused by various factors such as disregard of important natural sites, and loose morality among other factors. However, though the African literature give allusions to the connection of ATR and natural disasters there is a gap on the actual perceptions that the adherents of this region have on natural disasters across Africa and in Zimbabwe.

Methodology

The study setting Chipinge district is located in the south eastern parts of Zimbabwe. The district is in the northern part of Manicaland province that was affected by Cyclone Idai. The area is originally resident to the Ndaou people though the land reform programme has led to the influx of different other tribes in search for a vibrant agricultural climate. The study had a total of 13 participants. The following the pseudo names that will be used to identify the participants that is Gondo, Peter, Tererai, Matondo, Evans, Pedzisai, Farai, Memory, Sengwezi, Kundai, Nothando, Tonderai and James. The qualitative research methods were used in the research. This provided extensive insight on how people and groups of people had divergent views on reality concerning the occurrence of Cyclone Idai which has both a psychological and social effect on their wellbeing. A more flexible and emergent process was employed with the use of open ended questions to harness in-depth understanding of the subject matter under discussion. The study used the in-depth interviews and key informant interviews as data collection methods. Focus group discussions were not used as the researcher failed to get authority to conduct them.

A letter from the University of Zimbabwe Department of Social Work was used in seeking permission to carry out the research. Permission to carry out the research was obtained from the Chipinge district administrator and the local traditional chief known as *Mutape*. Informed

consent of participants was obtained by the researcher before the commencement of the research. The participants signed an informed consent letter that was prepared in both the Shona and the English languages. The researcher reduced the risk of participants reliving the trauma by targeting the areas that were less affected. The researcher as a social worker offered trauma counselling to the participants where necessary and assured participants of confidentiality.

What was the research question?

- What are the perceptions of survivors on Cyclone Idai in Chipinge District?

Study findings

Findings from the study will be presented under this section. The study findings are categorised as African traditional, Christian and emerging perceptions on the occurrence of Cyclone Idai. Names utilised in identifying participants are false.

African traditional perceptions on Cyclone Idai

Disregard for sacred sites

Findings showed a strong belief that related the disregard for the sacred places within the area and the occurrence of Cyclone Idai in Chipinge district. In-depth and key informant interviews proffered the understanding that Cyclone Idai was directly a result of the disregard of the profane sites within the area. Tererai from the in-depth interview noted that:

The land reform exercise by the government was good but it made the profane common. People who had land as a result of resettlement do not consider sacred places important which resulted in us experiencing the Cyclone.

This narrative has it that the Cyclone was a result of the resettlement into Chipinge from areas such as Masvingo and Bulawayo who have little appreciation of the sacred places within the area. Thus the drive for farming has resulted in the disturbances to these places that were sacred, which invited the wrath of the ancestors in the form of Cyclone Idai. Another survivor Peter had this to say:

In sundry times, white Soil from Chishangano area was used when a calamity was predicted, it was given to the people by the chiefs to avert the disaster. However, farming at this sacred area made angry the ancestors which resulted in Cyclone Idai.

Failure to regard traditional sites was considered a key factor in the occurrence of cyclone Idai in Chipinge.

Dwindling influence of traditional leadership

The diminishing influence of traditional chiefs was noted as a significant cause of Cyclone Idai. Participants noted that influx into the area of different tribes for economic reasons had diminished the influence of traditional leaders which resulted in the ancestors causing Cyclone Idai as a cleansing exercise. Gondo a key informant noted that:

Traditional leaders from this area have lost their respect. People no longer respect them, everyone does as is right in their own eyes. They take the chiefs to the courts of law and a verdict is given against the Chief to allow the people to exercise their rights. This has made dynasties irritated, hence invited the Cyclone.

Peter from the in-depth interview had this to say:

The Council was notified by Chief Ngorima that they could not build around the Kopa area except farming alone. However, they disregarded that and proceeded with construction on the area. Consequently, the Cyclone came to cleanse the area.

Most participants from a traditional orientation considered the traditional leaders to be the custodians of culture hence, failure to respect them and diminish their influence would not go unpunished.

The waning of kudira or kupira exercise

The weakening exercises of paying traditional rites is considered one of the reasons why the calamity of Cyclone Idai befell the people of Chipinge District. Gondo from the key informant interview maintains that:

Abandonment of traditional rites resulted in Cyclone Idai. The traditional rites are no longer performed due to the infiltration by other tribes as economic migrants who have different ways of doing things. This caused the destruction within the area.

Due to failure by the traditional leaders in performing these rites the land is considered to have been unprotected by the cosmic world hence, Cyclone Idai and the accompanying destruction.

Mermaid (njuzu) narratives

One of the common perceptions on natural disasters amongst the survivors of Cyclone Idai in Chipinge district, were the narratives that mermaids from the sea had a significant part in the occurrence.

Matondo from the in-depth interview noted that:

The mermaids stirred the winds from the sea and waters destroyed people.

The narrative had it that waters that destroyed the mountains and pushed huge rocks and boulders could only have been stirred from the sea by the mermaids. Evans in support of the mermaid narrative noted that:

Mermaids were behind Cyclone Idai as the wind was hot and moving at an excessive speed. The hotness of the wind that accompanied the Cyclone caused the leaves of macadamia trees to wither after two days.

Pedzisai a key informant noted that:

People were sinning continually such as prostitution and killing each other amongst gold panners thus mermaids had to destroy people especially at Kopa.

More so, a unique narratives emerge from the school going children. Memory the interviewed school going child noted that:

The Whiteman took a child that belonged to the mermaid in the Mozambique sea. Thus the Cyclone was a result of a furious mermaid.

Despite the variations in the narratives on how exactly the mermaids were a causal factor to Cyclone Idai, it was apparently clear that their contribution was widely considered.

Ndunge account

The other account on the cause of Cyclone Idai was based on the death narrative of Sekuru Ndunge a popular traditional leader in Chipinge. Sekuru Ndunge offered his services for Zimbabweans from all over the country and foreigners from as far as the United Kingdom. Thus it is widely believed that the death of such a great man that is widely respected across cultures cannot be one that is ordinary. Pedzisai a survivor from cyclone Idai noted that:

The death of a great person such as Ndunge cannot just happen. Before the death of a person such as Ndunge many people have to die first in preparation for his death.

Another interviewed key informant Evans concurred that:

Even when you consider the death of Tshaka's mother in History you will realise that many girls died together with her because she was a great person. Similarly, Sekuru Ndunge had to have many people die before his death. On the 1st of April Sekuru Ndunge died because the Cyclone had already claimed lives required to make clear his paths.

Nature therefore, has to change course in different ways to signify that the death of a great persons is nigh.

Perceptions on Cyclone Idai based on Christian beliefs

Christian beliefs influenced the perceptions that the survivors of Cyclone Idai had on natural disasters in Chipinge district. The following are central themes that emanated from the Christian community in Chipinge district:

The work of Satan to make people curse God

Some of the Christians presumed that Cyclone Idai was the work of Satan that was designed to weaken the Christians into cursing God for the problems that befell them. Sengwezi during an in-depth interview was of the view that:

If we read from Revelations 12 it is said Satan vomited water to destroy the church. The Angles of Satan travel through strong winds as in the stories of Job. Therefore, when strong winds combined with water people are destroyed and they curse God.

The participants that subscribed to this understanding noted that the evil world an active participant in the disaster in order for people to curse their God.

Rebellion against God

The rebellion narrative maintained that disasters happen amongst the people because of disobedience to the will and statutes of God. Sengwezi noted that:

Within Christianity Cyclones are a result of the people rebelling in sin against God. When people rebel God gives them power to fall into the hands of Satan to be destroyed.

Farai from the in-depth interview noted that:

God was not happy with prostitution and killings for Gold in areas such as Kopa and Chimanimani. In Chimanimani there were mysterious disappearance of people. It is believed that is you do not kill a person for rituals you cannot find gold as a panner. But if you sacrifice a person you will be lucky. Thus God brought Cyclone Idai to cleanse the area of the insurant evils. Morality has vanished due to gold panning.

The participants who were Christian understood Cyclone Idai as the wrath of God, due to the increasing levels of immorality.

Advent narrative

Christians viewed the occurrence of Cyclone Idai within the narrative of the second coming of Christ.

Therefore, the survivors viewed Cyclone Idai as a sign that the second coming of Christ that was promised was nigh. Kundai a Christian survivor noted that:

If we look from the bible in Mathew 24 the bible says that wars, earthquakes and Cyclones are the beginning of troubles. Consequently, Cyclone Idai is the beginning of troubles which signifies that Jesus is coming.

For the Christians in the area the Cyclone was caused by the fact that Christ was nearing his second coming hence, had to warn people to prepare through repentance.

Emerging perceptions

The century view

The century view was one of the isolated cases which could neither be classified as traditional or part of the Christology narrative. Hence, only a few of the participants associated their perceptions on natural disasters to the century ideology. Nothando a survivor from cyclone Idai had this to say:

Myself I think that after a hundred years a natural disaster of a great magnitude happens. So Cyclone Idai happened simply because a hundred years had lapsed.

These participants considered cyclones to have a systematic pattern that they follow. This cycle was considered a hundred-day cycle.

Climate change

This was the most emerging view amongst the majority of the survivors of Cyclone Idai in Chipinge. The survivors that gave a glimpse of climate change presumed ignorance on the specifics of what exactly was happening. Furthermore, most of these survivors highlighted that they came across the information on radio and at school. James from in-depth interviews highlighted that:

I just heard through the radio that scientists presume climate change as the cause of Cyclone Idai. However, I do not understand the science for me to explain it.

Another participant from the in-depth interviews Tonderai noted that:

In class we learnt that climate change was the cause of Cyclone Idai

Despite the participants who associated climate change to cyclone Idai, there was apparent lack of detail on what exactly would be happening.

Robert Mugabe acuity

Few of the participants within the research noted that Cyclone Idai was as a result of the angry ancestors and God over the removal of Robert Mugabe from the Zimbabwean presidency in 2017. Memory was of the view that:

It was God who punished people for removing former President Robert Mugabe from office hence, destruction.

Pedzisai noted that:

The spirit mediums spoke long ago about the life Presidency of Mugabe, therefore his removal brought us Cyclone Idai.

Thus the participants sought to link the leadership change in Zimbabwe with the occurrence of cyclone Idai. This was so despite failure by many to justify geographical selection of the most affected areas.

Discussion of findings

The disregard of sacred places is considered a cause of Cyclone Idai by its survivors. The disregard of the advice to the local council by Chief Ngorima that they should not build on the Kopa area is believed to have resulted in the Cyclone. This observation is largely hinged upon the understanding that the ancestors wanted to cleanse all rebellious elements to traditional leaders. Therefore, the Cyclone with the accompanying loss of life and destruction of all housing units within the traditionally prohibited Kopa area is regarded as the direct hand of the ancestors for disregarding the traditional voice on sacred places. Thus in light of the above, it can be noted that disregard for sacred sites is regarded as a direct root for Cyclone Idai. Another sacred place that was made profane is the *Chishangano* area. This area is thought to have been producing the soil that was white and unique. This soil in case of any disaster being predicted through *kuvuka* or foretelling the future would be taken by the chiefs and given to people under their jurisdiction. Such a process had the powers to avert the disaster. Accordingly, farming activities at the area have made the white soil to seize hence, Cyclone Idai could not be averted. The perception that is widely guarded by the survivors on Cyclone Idai in Chipinge, is that destruction of sacred places such as *ngorima* and *Chishangano* invited the wrath of the ancestors in form of the Cyclone. This perception is largely tied to the rites and rituals termed *Kudira* presided over by the traditional leaders and ensured protection from danger and destruction. Therefore, any attempt to disregard the influence of the traditional leadership is a direct rebellion on the ancestral spirits. Such humiliation of traditional leaders is said to have reduced their influence and invited the fury of the ancestors and the God hence,

combined to cause Cyclone Idai as retribitional judgement

It is expedient to understand that Cyclone Idai amongst the Christians in Paidamoyo is considered a result of an increasingly frustrated God by the sins that are committed within the area. These sins included the sexual immorality at the Kopa area and ritual killings in Chimanimani. Thus the Cyclone destroyed the entire Kopa and Risitu areas to the ground because of ritual killings for luck within gold panning and general moral decay. As a result, God removed the protection over the area in order that Satan may trouble them as a form of punishment. This was designed to ensure survivors turn away from their sins and seeks the Lord. This resonated with the discovery by Johnson (2005), that survivors of floods attributed the disaster to the manifestation of the power of God. Furthermore, Stalling (2006), noted that survivors of Hurricane Katrina in the city of New Orleans perceived the disaster to be the punishment from God for the sexual sins and plans to hold a gay and lesbian convention. The perception that Cyclone Idai was a punishment for immorality is strengthened by geographical selection of areas such as Chimanimani and Kopa which were considered centres of immorality. However, contrary to the discovery in Italy that the earthquake as a natural disaster was perceived to be a fulfilment of the prophecy by the Sant'Emidio, the perceptions of Cyclone Idai survivors within the Christian fraternity are never centred on prophets and prophecies.

Furthermore, the allusion to Satan as a work piece of God for punishing people was missing within the literature on the perceptions of Christian survivors on natural disasters. Analysis of the findings resulted in the discovery that African traditional literature noted the forces of evil as the cause of natural disasters yet it was not evident amongst the ATR survivors in Chipinge (Machoko, 2013). However, the allusion to Satan (evil forces) was evident in a Christian perspective yet Christian literature on natural disasters is silent on the perception. Thus the social constructionist perspective in explaining the uniqueness of the perceptions that people have on natural disasters posits that reality is socially constructed, sustained by the social process and a reflexivity in human beings is emphasized (Cojocar and Bragaru, 2012). This is in tandem with the spiritual social work perspective that suggests that practice that ignores beliefs fail to treat individuals as holistic beings and not the sum of fragmented social entities. Mabvurira and Nyanguru (2013), concurred that many social work clients in Zimbabwe, turn to supreme beings for strength and answers when they are overwhelmed by life's events and circumstances.

The advent narratives perceived, the soon coming of Jesus Christ as a cause for Cyclones. Christians within the area that subscribe to this advent understanding of Cyclones presume that they act as predictors of what will soon happen. More so, those with such perceptions postulated that nothing can be done to avert the problem of Cyclones hence, will grow serious and deadly both in magnitude and coverage with time. These findings were similar to the discovery by Holmgaard (2019), that among tsunami survivors in Samoa the Tsunami was considered a sign of the second coming of Jesus an important figure within the main line Christian family. Thus Christians collectively rejoiced and presumed with boldness that until the coming of Jesus these disasters had to increase in magnitude and they would be reunited with their God.

The century view maintains that after a hundred years in any country there are disasters of great magnitude that happen. Thus due to the fact that few people live for over a century it is difficult to keep track for most people. Thus it is problematic to predict when another disaster of a great magnitude will happen. The century view was part of the emerging perceptions with little allusions within the disaster literature. The century view because of its isolation amongst participants can be explained within the social constructionist theory as a function of acute psychological strain which impede the thought processes hence, development of uncommon perceptions on natural disasters (Andrews, 2012). Furthermore, some of the participants perceived Cyclone Idai a punishment for the role that the Zimbabweans had taken in the removal of Robert Mugabe as President. The participants holding this view had an understanding that the former President was chosen by the ancestors to lead Zimbabwe for life. This view is reflected within the social constructionist theory that when there are radical changes within the social, political and cultural contexts perceptions of the people towards any phenomenon can be changed in that direction (Cojacuru, 2013). Thus the view that the removal of Robert Mugabe caused the Cyclone is immediately influenced by recent politics. Consequently, this resonated with the discovery that perceptions on natural disasters are complex mosaic with the influence of political factors (Massazza et al., 2019). More so, Stalling (2006), discovered that politicians and pundits knew who was to blame for the catastrophe on the gulf coast and they were sure it was not a result of mother nature. It becomes apparently clear that the politicians and political processes cannot be overlooked as perception setters. Thus any attempt to impede the political will of the ancestors by humanity would not go unpunished hence, the incidence of Cyclone Idai. Consequently, the study adds to the understanding of perceptions by survivors on natural disasters.

Despite isolated cases where survivors strongly perceived climate change as the cause of Cyclone Idai, they still did not have enough information to explain to others the narrative. Other school children at Mafumise secondary noted that they either heard about climate change at school and in books as the cause of natural disasters. However, most participants were reserved to give detail of how exactly climate change was a cause to Cyclone Idai. This concurred with the discovery by Stalling (2006), that survivors of hurricane Katrina perceived it to be a result of global warming that upsets the climatic balance causing persistent rains and winds. However, the level of understanding of climate change differed substantially with survivors in Paidamoyo having limited knowledge of climate change hence, it was limited to classroom and radio news.

Implication for development in Africa

Based on the study findings on the perceptions of survivors on natural disasters the study recommends that:

- Climate change to be incorporated as the major taught subject in primary and secondary education.
- The introduction of family disaster trauma counselling and information centres within the affected community in Chipinge District.
- The government should consider public consultations within the natural disaster

affected areas before decentralising disaster risk reduction in order to address areas of divergent views such as perceptions on natural disasters.

- The use of relevant Traditional knowledge in disaster policy formulation especially around risk management. These may include the ability to traditionally predict natural disasters using bird and animal behaviour among many others.
- Spiritual social work in Zimbabwe needs to move beyond Christianity and embrace all religions as they have an integral part in perception formulation for individuals which informs effective intervention trajectories.

Conclusion

The paper utilised the social constructionist theory in explaining how the survivors of natural disasters form perceptions on the disasters themselves which has a bearing on their attitudes towards disaster efforts. The literature scope revealed that Africa is imbued with a worldview that explains the relationship between the comic and the natural disasters without showing the impact of such in the perceptions developed on natural disasters. Thus a gap that the article positively addressed. The paper articulated on the qualitative research methodology that was used. Lastly the paper presented the study findings under the African traditional, Christian and emerging perceptions. These perceptions were discussed.

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