

Cyclone Idai–related losses and the coping strategies of adolescent survivors in the Odzi community of Manicaland Province, Zimbabwe

Sifelani Innocent, Matsikure Cheure Memory, Songo Sifikile, Kwembeya Maurice, Kudejira Denboy

South African Journal of Psychology

Volume 52 Issue 4

423–435

2022

doi.org/10.1177/00812463221077608

Abstract

Climate change has been identified as one of the leading threats to human health in Southern Africa. Climate change–induced natural disasters often leave behind a trail of destruction characterized by multidimensional losses such as loss of infrastructure, physical health, and psychological health. Adolescents are among the most vulnerable groups during and after a natural disaster. This article presents findings of a research whose aim was to establish cyclone Idai–related losses and post disaster coping strategies among adolescent survivors. Based on qualitative data collected from 15 participants in the Odzi community of Manicaland Province in Zimbabwe, the article reveals that participants experienced diverse disaster-related losses, such as loss of independence and sense of control over their lives and general life satisfaction. The study notes that the impact of disaster-related losses had a toll on adolescents’ psychological, social, and physical well-being. From the study, it is established that in the aftermath of natural disasters, adolescents adopted two-pronged coping strategies, namely, personal coping strategies that include positive thinking and self-talk, and the utilization of social support such as instrumental and counseling support. This study suggests, among other recommendations, school-based training to equip adolescents with personal coping strategies.

Keywords

climate, cyclone, disaster, adolescents, Southern Africa