



AN EXPLORATION OF THE ROLE OF CHILD AND YOUTH CARE WORKERS DURING THE APRIL 2022 FLOODS IN eTHEKWINI, KWAZULU-NATAL.

This work is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the Master of Child and Youth Care Degree at the Durban
University of Technology, KwaZulu-Natal.

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DECLARATION

I, Nonkululeko Princess Ngcobo, hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work. I assert that I have conducted the research, analysis, and writing presented in this document independently and that all contributions from others have been properly acknowledged and cited. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree or qualification.

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ABSTRACT

Flooding has become a global issue, affecting countries worldwide, leading to significant humanitarian crises. This disaster occurs when excessive water overflows onto land, often due to intense rainfall, melting snow, or powerful storms along coastlines. They rank among the most common and destructive catastrophic events, posing significant threats to human settlements, infrastructure, and ecosystems. Natural disasters such as floods significantly impact the lives and environments of people, leading to substantial socio-economic and environmental repercussions. They also threaten the well-being and safety of children and families, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and creating new ones. In addition, the growing frequency and impact of flood events underscore the need for enhanced preparedness measures and adaptive response strategies to mitigate vulnerability.

Social service professionals can make a substantial contribution to facilitating recovery and stability among affected populations. This study seeks to examine the specific contributions of professionals in child and youth care work in aiding young people and their families affected by floods. Although research has explored the responsibilities of these practitioners in various life contexts, there has been limited investigation into their significant contributions to providing support and assistance during flooding to affected populations. The study focuses on investigating the involvement of these workers during the April 2022 floods.

A qualitative approach was taken to understand the perspectives of fifteen child and youth care professionals. This study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the roles played by child and youth care workers during the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) floods, particularly regarding their services during and after the floods. Participants were identified and recruited through the National Association of Child and Youth Care Workers (NACCW). Non-probability sampling methods, purposive sampling was used to select a minimum of fifteen (15) participants. Data was collected until saturation. Semi-structured interviews were utilised to obtain data. Data collection involved using an interview guide for this research. The raw data from the samples was analysed

using thematic analysis. The researcher took great care to uphold ethical considerations, maintaining research integrity and validity.

The data collected revealed five significant themes, which led to the emergence of twelve sub-themes. The five (5) significant themes were as follows: (1) the impact and effects of floods, (2) the destruction of child and family life, (3) children and family protection, (4) response and intervention strategies and (5) training and preparedness. The study highlighted the crucial role of child and youth care practitioners in enhancing the well-being and stability of young individuals and families. Findings highlighted their vital role in advocating for and meeting the needs of young people during a flood disaster. This research also revealed that these professionals provided crucial psychosocial support, fostering resilience and the coping mechanisms of victims and their families.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my supportive parents, Themba Reginald Gambushe and Nonhlanhla Reginah Gambushe.

Your support, guidance, and faith in me made this accomplishment achievable.

“The parent-child relationship is the most influential in a child’s life. Parent support and involvement in their children’s education can have a lasting impact on their academic achievement and future success.”

-Dr. Joyce Epstein

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List of Acronyms

CYCW	Child and youth care worker
SA	South Africa
NACCW	National Association of Child and Youth Care Workers
MDT	Multidisciplinary team
SASSA	South African Social Service
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
SAPS	South African Police Services

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The world is grappling with unprecedented complexities related to extreme natural events (Goniewicz *et al.* 2023:01). Research findings from Kharb *et al.* (2022:01) revealed that over 11,000 natural disasters have occurred since 1960, and low-income nations suffer disproportionately higher disaster fatalities. Sweileh (2019:02) defined natural disasters as extreme events triggered by geological, hydrological, or atmospheric factors. Furthermore, Chan *et al.* (2019:91) asserted that climate-related disasters, such as floods, landslides, earthquakes, and storms, threaten human society, natural systems, and major infrastructures. Chaudhary and Piracha (2021:1101) noted that natural disasters impact communities, leading to social consequences which can disrupt societal functioning and cause severe harm to human life and infrastructure.

Research shows that populations are at an increased risk of being exposed to hazards, no matter where they are located. As noted by Saulnier *et al.* (2018:103), natural disasters have impacted over 2.6 billion people in the past decade. Burns *et al.* (2024:03) emphasise that natural disasters present a complex set of challenges, including damage to infrastructure and disruptions to essential services. Zheng *et al.* (2023:31) further explained that disasters can inflict severe damage to property, resulting in submerged or damaged homes, loss of irreplaceable personal items such as family photographs and heirlooms, and destruction of essential assets like vehicles.

According to Salvucci and Santos (2020:02), the sudden and catastrophic loss of property resulting from a disaster can induce a state of traumatic shock, leaving individuals feeling overwhelmed, vulnerable, and bereft of their sense of security and well-being. Ebi *et al.* (2021:03) found that, beyond the damage to infrastructure, natural disasters can affect the overall health of individuals. According to research by Dewi *et al.* (2024:03), the well-being of individuals and communities is significantly impacted by extreme weather conditions. These weather conditions can lead towards a variety of health issues, including respiratory problems, waterborne diseases, and mental health disorders. This has resulted in a loss of life. Shokane (2019:06) added

that the primary consequence of flooding is loss of human life, and people suffer from various physical impacts such as injuries and displacement.

Zheng *et al.* (2023:31) opined that globally, natural disasters have resulted in significant mortality and morbidity. A research study led by Ritchie *et al.* (2024:02) found that disasters have significant additional impacts on millions of people who are displaced, and some are left homeless. Overcrowding in temporary shelters is connected to the transmission of communicable diseases, such as sexually transmitted diseases, from sharing toilets. Natural disasters also present a significant and growing threat to the well-being of children. Hence, children are particularly vulnerable during natural disasters and experience increased problems regarding their physical health, mental health, and learning after exposure.

Ebi *et al.* (2021:03) revealed that when communities are exposed to such risks and challenges, they need urgent assistance and support to cope with the devastating impact. Therefore, when the lives of families and children are at risk, various organisations and practitioners in social services are required to provide therapeutic services to those affected by such crises. Dash *et al.* (2020:62) state that social workers and voluntary workers often assist families and communities in various ways during natural disasters. Dash *et al.* (2020: 62) note that social workers and volunteers often assist families and communities in several ways during natural disasters. Ebi *et al.* (2021:293) mentioned that health-sector professionals, emergency management officials, urban planners, and neighbourhood services staff play crucial roles in providing timely intervention, ensuring the safety and well-being of affected communities.

This chapter provides background information related to the study, followed by the problem statement and objectives of the study. The research questions and significance of the study are also discussed. This chapter includes key definitions, the theoretical framework, an overview of the research, the dissertation structure, and a conclusion.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Research has consistently shown that severe weather, like hurricanes, floods, and heatwaves, is increasing, thereby posing a significant threat to human life and safety

(Ritchie *et al.* 2022:03). According to Howe (2021:127), climate change is inextricably linked to the rising frequency and severity of extreme weather conditions. Paterson *et al.* (2018:02) explained that flooding is the most frequent calamity globally, and its impact is expected to increase in the future due to climate change, demographic shifts, and economic disparities.

Rentschler *et al.* (2022:02) stated that floods present a major risk to livelihoods and development prospects worldwide, worsening poverty and vulnerability. This impact is disproportionately felt in lower-income countries, where inadequate infrastructure, including drainage and flood protection systems, leaves communities particularly susceptible to flood-related devastation. Furthermore, findings from Obiorah *et al.* (2021:09) analysed income inequality and flood disasters in 67 middle and high-income countries between 1990 and 2018, revealing that developing countries tend to experience higher flood fatalities. According to Rentschler *et al.* (2022:02), approximately 1.47 billion people face flood risk, with 89% residing in low- and middle-income countries.

Obiorah *et al.* (2021:09) further stated that research has revealed that high levels of income inequality within countries can significantly amplify human losses resulting from natural hazards. A stark income divide often reflects that a substantial portion of the population is living in poverty, rendering them more vulnerable to disasters. For instance, individuals living in poverty lack the necessary resources to prepare for or evacuate during a flood, leaving them disproportionately exposed to the devastating consequences of such events. A study by Jewkes *et al.* (2023:01) further found that South Africa continues to grapple with the lingering effects of apartheid, manifesting in persistent racism and inequality. This has resulted in disproportionate barriers to economic opportunities, employment, and adequate housing for marginalised communities. Consequently, numerous impoverished black individuals reside in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. They face several challenges, often becoming trapped in a cycle of poverty. Furthermore, research by Jewkes *et al.* (2023:02) revealed that over 4,000 homes were damaged in poor neighbourhoods built on steep hills, making them prone to flooding and landslides due to poor construction and extreme poverty.

According to Naidoo (2022:36), KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa has been identified as one of the top regions affected by flooding. These floods have resulted in the loss of at least 425 lives and widespread property destruction. Kjeldsen *et al.* (2017:26) reported that since December 2010, floods in KwaZulu-Natal have resulted in 141 fatalities and caused millions of rands in damage. Furthermore, the Province has experienced annual flooding since 2016, primarily due to storms and heavy rainfall occurring over short periods (Dash *et al.* 2020:02).

The literature has indicated that the number of people vulnerable to disaster is increasing annually, mostly affecting developing nations such as South and East Sub-Saharan Africa, with poverty making them more disaster-prone (Rentschler *et al.* 2022:01). Hence, Kabir (2023:02) argued that flooding is a common crisis in several developing states like Bangladesh. The uncontrollable weather conditions have put vulnerable people at a high risk irrespective of their location on the globe, which has resulted in death, destruction, and environmental damage (Kawasaki 2024:03). Matthew *et al.* (2019: 88) opined that every year during the past decade, more than 300 natural catastrophes have affected millions of people and this has cost billions of dollars across the world. According to Zaidi and Memon (2023:10), Pakistan also faced a severe humanitarian crisis in 2022 due to heavy rainfall, resulting in widespread flooding and displacement.

Various scholars argue that severe weather events, such as floods, have caused significant disruptions for many families around the world. Mathews *et al.* (2011:71) stated that flood exposure caused damage to property and infrastructure, which also increased feelings of hopelessness. Xu *et al.* (2016:37) noted that displacement, loss of livelihoods, and social connections can lead to strain as people will feel overwhelmed and cannot control the situation. Naidoo (2022:30) also stated that people affected by flooding experienced a range of emotions, including fear, anger, frustration, and grief.

Therefore, the occurrence of floods has alerted many organisations, departments, and professionals, such as firefighters, police officers, service professionals, and nurses, to assist young people and families during such difficult times. According to Thumbadoo *et al.* (2013:12), child and youth care is a profession that focuses on children and families' developmental needs, in the context of their daily lives. They

serve in community settings, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, family environments, communities, day-care, in public spaces, and numerous other locations. Anglin (2001:11) stated that child and youth care is concerned with the totality of a child's functioning and focuses on ensuring that the children's environment is conducive, therapeutic, and growth-promoting. Kousky (2016:74) stated that natural disasters can have significant impacts on communities. Therefore, child and youth care workers must collaborate with other service providers to better meet the needs of individuals in their identified communities.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The devastating impact of floods on young people and their families is a pressing concern that warrants immediate attention. A study led by Sholihah *et al.* (2020:02) found that the occurrence of floods has become a recurring phenomenon globally, with devastating effects on individuals, families, and communities. Jewkes *et al.* (2023:06) reported that the KwaZulu-Natal region of South Africa has experienced severe flooding in recent years, resulting in significant disruption to family life. Hence, Thoithi *et al.* (2022:02) further revealed that the severe flooding in KZN in April 2022 was record-breaking.

The situation escalated into a humanitarian emergency, leading the government to declare a natural disaster. Dash *et al.* (2020:02) stated that the flash floods that occurred in April 2022 severely damaged KZN, South Africa, caused hundreds of fatalities and the destruction of thousands of dwellings and infrastructure. In addition, eThekweni faced widespread outages, with many areas losing electricity and water for extended periods due to infrastructure damage (Naidoo 2022:37). Despite research on the consequences of flooding on communities, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding the roles of professionals in child and youth development in assisting families rebuild after natural disasters, which are known as floods.

There is no documented research regarding the roles of workers in child and youth care; still, findings from Matlakala *et al.* (2022:26) focused more on the roles of social workers and other community workers. According to Kamrujjaman *et al.* (2018:03), the social work profession has long been involved with disaster management. Furthermore, Hay *et al.* (2023:65) highlight the role of social workers in disaster management within their professional duties in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The study

revealed that social workers played a crucial role in responding to disasters, necessitating the formation of new professional relationships, often in complex, multi-disciplinary contexts. Furthermore, social workers were required to rapidly orient themselves to the geographical location of the disaster and adapt to unfamiliar environments.

A research study by Dash *et al.* (2020:01) also highlighted that the severity of the flood crisis led social workers in practice and scholars in social work to work together in planning and delivering essential psychosocial services for the affected communities. These services included trauma counselling, emotional support, and stress management to help individuals cope with the devastating impacts of the floods. According to Bucker and Czepielewski (2024:91), providing psychosocial support is a critical first step in addressing the specific needs of people affected by a disaster, given the limited availability of mental healthcare professionals in disaster-prone areas. It is therefore essential to train individuals from other fields to provide psychosocial support, thereby meeting the overwhelming demand for these services. Molepo (2020: 01) stated that child and youth care workers play a vital role in addressing the complex psychosocial challenges faced by the young people in their care. In addition to fostering a supportive environment, CYCW strives to create spaces that embody the essential concepts of safety, normality, and therapeutic care.

Furthermore, a study by Chimange and Bond (2020:105) found that in Tshwane, child and youth care workers play a significant role in creating a welcoming environment for young people in their care. They ensure that the basic physiological needs of children are met, providing necessities such as food, shelter, and hygienic facilities. It is evident that CYCWs also provide critical psychosocial support, addressing the emotional and psychological needs of young people and their families. In the context of this study, information from UNAIDS (2020:13) indicates that there has been minimal data on the roles of youth and childcare providers. These workers play a crucial role in delivering psychosocial support and assisting families in rebuilding their lives after the floods. Current literature reveals a significant lack of research focusing on the specific contributions of these practitioners. Therefore, this study is important as it addresses the research gap.

1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY:

To explore the role that child and youth care workers had in rebuilding family life during the KZN floods in April 2022.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To understand the impact of the floods in KwaZulu-Natal on children, youth, and their families.
2. To investigate the roles child and youth care workers played in assisting children and their families during the floods.
3. To understand what material and therapeutic support was offered to children and families at shelters.
4. To explore how children and families are being supported in their new families in the community.
5. To inquire how prepared child and youth care workers were to deal with the disaster of the April 2022 floods.
6. To make recommendations regarding the professional preparedness of child and youth care workers regarding natural disasters.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions that the current research seeks to answer:

1. How were children, the youth, and their families affected during the floods in KwaZulu-Natal?
2. What roles did child and youth care workers play in assisting children and their families during the floods?
3. What material and therapeutic support was offered to children and families at shelters?
4. How were children and families supported in their new families in the community?
5. How were child and youth care workers prepared to deal with the disaster of the April 2022 flood?

6. What recommendations can be made regarding the professional preparedness of child and youth care workers related to natural disasters?

1.7 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

This section explains concepts used in the study, focusing on natural disasters, specifically floods, trauma, and the role of child and youth care workers.

1.7.1 Natural disaster

According to Sweileh (2019:02), “a natural disaster is defined as an unforeseen and often sudden event that causes great damage, destruction, and human suffering.” This type of disaster causes substantial harm to human populations and environment, hence Bakker *et al.* (2021:60) further explained that natural disasters are catastrophic phenomena with atmospheric, geological, and hydrological origins that can result in fatalities, property destruction, injuries, negative physical and mental health effects, and social and environmental disturbance. Furthermore, Zibulewsky (2001:144) noted that natural hazards include earthquakes, storms, hurricanes, and floods. This current study mainly focuses on floods as a natural disaster.

1.7.2 Floods

Luino (2016:01) described a flood as a large volume of water; hence, a place is flooded when there is an outflow of water. Floods are often caused by intense rainfall which results in widespread damage and causes a risk to human life. Echendu (2023:350) explained that flooding is a natural occurrence associated with rivers, where an excess of water causes it to overflow the riverbanks. Furthermore, Zbigniew *et al.* (2012:02) defined floods as the overflow of water beyond the normal confines of a stream or body of water, or the accumulation of water in areas that are typically dry. Furthermore, Dewi *et al.* (2024:01) noted that the occurrence of floods poses a serious threat to human well-being, exposing individuals to a range of complex challenges that can have lasting effects.

Moreover, Ebi *et al.* (2021:295) discussed that floods can inflict trauma on affected individuals, underscoring the importance of holistic assistance and strategic interventions to mitigate their adverse consequences.

1.7.3 Trauma

Ward *et al.* (2024:25) noted that trauma is a personal and subjective experience that can differ greatly between individuals. Trauma refers to an emotional response to a distressing experience, therefore an event is traumatic if it is perceived as harmful, threatening, or overwhelming. However, for this study, trauma refers to experiences that cause intense physical and psychological stress reactions.

Trauma experienced by individuals in the aftermath of flooding can be attributed to a multifaceted array of factors. Notably, research has identified a significant correlation between flooding-related stressors and negative mental health effects such as increased anxiety and depression. Castells-Quintana *et al.* (2022:27) found that several key factors contribute to negative outcomes, including household income levels, the severity of flooding, displacement during recovery efforts, and the effectiveness of mitigation actions.

1.7.4 Child and Youth Care Worker

Mkhize *et al.* (2022:02) described professional child and youth care workers as frontlines that provide daily care and support in various settings like group homes, community centres, and schools, and focusing on facilitating their development through planned intervention, utilizing everyday life events, while considering the complex needs of each individual and their family unit. Additionally, Phaswana and Erlank (2023:45) noted that these professionals engage in prolonged interactions with children, nurturing developmental relationships and providing support beyond necessities, thereby enhancing the child's overall well-being and social functionality.

These professionals provide supportive services and guidance to vulnerable children and adolescents to promote their wellbeing. Additionally, Chimange and Bond (2020:107), explained that child and youth care workers play a major role in ensuring that children are provided with services they are constitutionally entitled to. Furthermore, Swazen (2024:27) mentioned that their services are relevant everywhere in the ecology of childhood, that is, family, school, youth peer groups, and

community-based programs. Yakhnich (2022:1175) further explained that the key skills for these professionals include assessing needs and designing suitable intervention programs.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework provides the underlying structure that may hold or support the hypothesis of a methodological investigation (Hiebert *et al.* 2022:33). Luft *et al.* (2022:03) stated that a theoretical framework reveals the researcher's underlying assumptions and perspectives, promoting transparency and rigour in the research process. Therefore, the theoretical framework most relevant to this study is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. According to Golitaleb *et al.* (2022:45), the traumatic experience of flooding profoundly disrupts an individual's sense of well-being, compromising their basic needs for safety and security. Consequently, the loss of personal belongings further decreases an individual's sense of identity and belonging. This loss can diminish their ability to pursue goals and aspirations, ultimately hindering their journey toward self-actualisation. Therefore, child and youth care workers must consider the comprehensive well-being of young people and their families affected by floods, acknowledging the toll on their physical, social, and emotional health. By doing so, those in child and youth care roles can develop targeted interventions that address the unique needs of the affected population, promoting recovery and resilience. Rojas (2023:26) emphasised that this theory is relevant to this study because it provides a framework for understanding actions and resource mobilisation in response to existential stimuli.

This framework is particularly applicable here as it highlights that human are driven by five fundamental needs (Hopper 2020:02). When more than one need is lacking, individuals often prioritise meeting their physiological needs first. Channel (2021:14) noted that when a person's nutritional needs are significantly unmet, thoughts of food dominate their focus, making it difficult to engage in other activities.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a valuable framework for understanding and supporting individual well-being. For instance, children and families lost their homes, which is a need for shelter, they lost their loved ones, which is a need for belonging, the school children lost their schoolbooks, and schools had to be closed, which decreased their motivation towards schoolwork. The floods had a huge effect on young people's

behaviour. Spencer and Thompson (2024:15) noted that children experienced negative thoughts and were scared about the potential future consequences of such adversity.

1.8.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

According to Rojas *et al.* (2023:106), the human needs framework suggests that human necessities include basic physiological and safety needs at the base and esteem needs above. The pyramid implies a sequential fulfilment of needs, where lower-level needs must be met before progressing to higher-level ones. This visual representation has been interpreted as a normative guide for human development, where reaching the top of the pyramid represents the ultimate goal of self-actualisation. Moreover, according to Straten and Ncube (2023:03), Maslow's framework offers insight into individual motivation and provides a lens through which we can better understand human behaviour and well-being. In the subsections that follow, each level of Maslow's hierarchy, physiological, safety, belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation is examined in relation to the impact of floods on human needs.

1.8.2.1 Physiological

Maslow considered physiological needs to be the most essential needs. The physiological needs refer to the necessities for human survival. According to Straten and Ncube (2023:03), examples include the need for water, health, clothing, and shelter. For this study, the floods can have a devastating impact on these needs. For example, displaced individuals who faced disruptions to their shelter and food routine encountered health problems such as stomach diseases, waterborne diseases, and skin problems. Furthermore, introducing new food in shelters may cause stomach illnesses and allergic reactions, while exposure to contaminated water and unsanitary conditions can lead to skin problems.

1.8.2.2 Safety

After physiological needs are fulfilled, safety needs become the priority. According to Coxen *et al.* (2021:02), safety needs refer to the need for security, stability, and protection from harm. However, for this study, when floods occur, this need is severely compromised, particularly for families with children. For instance, parents who are typically the primary providers of safety and security may feel helpless regarding

protecting their children from the dangers posed by floodwaters. The loss of homes and belongings further exacerbates this sense of instability, eroding the feeling of safety and security that comes with having a stable and secure environment. Moreover, the disruption of family routines and the feeling of being uprooted can trigger emotions such as anxiety, fear, and vulnerability. This underscores the critical importance of addressing the need for safety in emergency response and recovery efforts.

1.8.2.3 Belonging

Human connection needs encompass the desire for meaningful social relationships and a sense of belonging. Straten and Ncube (2023:02) explained that a sense of belonging encompasses self-identity and relationships. The need for belonging is a fundamental human requirement that includes feelings of acceptance and love. However, floods can significantly disrupt this need, especially for children. For instance, as parents struggle to cope with the stress and frustration of damaged homes and displacement, they may inadvertently withdraw emotional support and display irritability towards their children, leading to a decline in the child's sense of belonging. Furthermore, the displacement to shelters and the subsequent need to share space with unfamiliar individuals from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds can exacerbate feelings of disconnection and isolation, making it challenging for children and their families to maintain a sense of belonging and identity.

1.8.2.4 Esteem

Esteem refers to the need for self-esteem, recognition, and respect. Rojas (2023:18) explained that esteem needs, as outlined in Maslow's hierarchy, encompass two key components. The need for self-respect and the need for respect from others. For instance, in the context of this study, parents who have experienced displacement due to flooding have their needs severely impacted. Losing their homes and possessions can lead to feelings of failure and worthlessness, undermining their self-respect and sense of competence. The destruction of their hard-earned assets and the need to rebuild can be demotivating, eroding their sense of achievement and confidence. Furthermore, the social recognition and respect they once received from their community may be diminished, exacerbating their esteem needs and leading to reduced motivation, confidence, and overall well-being.

1.8.2.5 Self-actualisation

Self-actualisation needs refer to personal growth, creativity, and fulfilment. According to Souza *et al.* (2024:12), self-actualisation is the capacity for disaster recovery and wellbeing restoration. At this stage, individuals have fulfilled their basic physiological, safety, love, and esteem needs, are driven to realise their full potential, pursue their passions, and cultivate a sense of purpose and meaning. For instance, during floods, children who have reached the self-actualisation level of needs may exhibit behaviours such as helping others, showing empathy and compassion towards those affected, and finding creative ways to cope with the disaster. These behaviours demonstrate a sense of purpose, creativity, and contribution, characteristic of the self-actualisation level of needs.

Maslow's Hierachy of School Needs

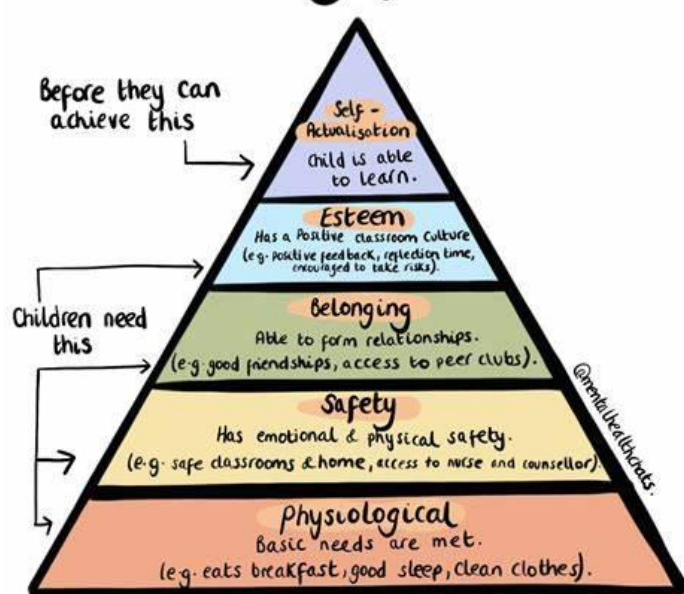


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for needs-based analysis for vulnerability to disaster.

1.9 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aims to provide insight into the specific roles that child and youth care workers played during the KwaZulu-Natal floods. Participants were identified and recruited through the National Association of Child and Youth Care Workers (NACCW). Non-probability sampling methods, primarily purposive sampling, were used to select a minimum of 15 participants. Data collection continued until saturation

was reached. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data. An interview schedule served as a tool to collect data. Thematic analysis guided the analysis of raw data into themes.

1.10 STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The research study is organised as shown below:

Chapter 1: Introduction:

This chapter outlines the research framework, covering the background, the research problem, objectives, methodology, and limitations.

Chapter 2: Literature review:

This chapter reviews and synthesises relevant research on the topic, including key concepts, theories, and findings. Additionally, this chapter reviews literature relevant to the study, supports the research gap, and emphasises the importance of the study.

Chapter 3: Research methodology:

This chapter examines the research methodology, detailing the methods of data collection, sampling techniques, the format of interview questions, and the procedures used to analyse the results.

Chapter 4: Data analysis and findings:

This chapter provides an examination of the conclusions drawn from the research study, where the data collected is analysed and interpreted to address the research questions. The results of the study are carefully analysed and explained in detail.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations:

The chapter presents conclusions drawn from the findings in Chapter 4. A summary of the research is provided, along with recommendations based on these findings.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an overview of the study, outlining the research questions and the objectives. The main objective of the research study was to investigate challenges faced by young people and families during the floods. Additionally, it aimed to explore

the role that child and youth care workers played in helping to rebuild family life during the KZN floods in April 2022. The second chapter reviews existing literature in the field and presents research findings from journal articles, textbooks, and various other sources. It discusses the different effects of floods and outlines the strategies employed by community volunteers and professionals in child and youth care. These strategies are aimed at providing financial and therapeutic services to families affected by flooding.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Snyder (2019:17) described the review of literature as a search and evaluation of available literature on a specific topic. Tenny *et al.* (2022:93) stated that it provides a foundation for further research, as it presents a logically structured argument based on a comprehensive understanding of the existing knowledge on the topic. Leite (2019: 10) emphasised the importance of the literature review, noting that it identifies gaps in the research, evaluates published information, and clarifies the assumptions underlying the study. Additionally, Synder (2024:10) pointed out that a literature review serves as a detailed examination of studies related to the research topic. Therefore, the current chapter discusses the effects of floods on the well-being of children and their families. It also provides an in-depth review of the literature concerning child and youth care professionals in promoting the well-being of young people and families exposed to floods.

According to Carrera-Rivera *et al.* (2022:19), the process of a literature review involves searching for, as well as evaluating, present literature about a specific topic. It discusses published information and highlights the underlying assumptions that inform the research. Page *et al.* (2021:17) noted that a literature review also reflects the broader knowledge the researcher has about the research topic and related fields. Busetto *et al.* (2020:52) argued that a literature review identifies research gaps, thus guiding researchers in understanding what other scholars have already discovered or explored. Rosario *et al.* (2025:19) emphasised that the review of relevant literature justifies the study, formulates the research question, and aids in selecting the most appropriate methodology by examining the strengths and weaknesses of existing

studies in the same area. It also allows researchers to demonstrate the originality and uniqueness of their work.

The study aims to explore the role that child and youth care workers had in rebuilding family life during the KZN floods in April 2022. The chapter is organised into three sections. The first section will describe how the researcher gathered literature and provide an overview of the findings within both global and local contexts.

The second section delves into the definitions and conceptual issues found in the literature related to natural disasters and floods. The final major section provides a comprehensive literature review related to the research topic, consistent with the research objectives.

2.2 SOURCING LITERATURE: THE JOURNEY AND THE RESULTS

This section of the chapter aims to position the study within the broader research context on natural disasters. This will be accomplished by outlining the researcher's method of collecting the literature and giving an overview of the body of work in both global and local contexts.

2.2.1 Sourcing Literature: The Journey

Page *et al.* (2021:19) defined a literature review as a thorough evaluation of existing knowledge about the area of investigation, the associated themes, and the diverse viewpoints on the topic. Valdés-León *et al.* (2022:29) state that a literature review allows researchers to demonstrate the value of their research. Cantero (2019:06), emphasizes that the research objectives and questions are crucial, as they guide the search for relevant information. In this study, the research objectives and questions formed the basis for sourcing literature. Snyder (2019:333) concurs that by synthesizing findings and perspectives from empirical research, a literature review can effectively address research questions.

The initial investigation and review of the existing literature revealed a limited amount of published work regarding the contributions of child and youth care practitioners in supporting families following floods. As the study progressed, more specific topics and

keywords were used to source relevant literature. However, this demonstrated that the literature review is a continuous process, and more information was found on floods and their causes in the South African context (Muzakar and Sugiyanto 2018:01). There is still a minimal amount of literature directly related to the topic and research by Matlakala *et al.* (2022:26) discovered that studies have focused on the roles of social workers and other community workers. Little literature, however, is available concerning the contribution of child and youth care workers.

The researcher utilized several platforms to search for literature, including Google Scholar and Summon (the library at the Durban University of Technology). Additionally, ProQuest, Sabinet, Sage Journals, Wiley Online Library Journal, Taylor and Francis Online Journal, EBSCOhost, Springer Link, and JSTOR were also used in the research process. Subsequently, relevant journal articles were accessed from online journals such as the *Jamaba: Journal of Disaster Risk Studies*, the *South African Journal on Child Abuse, Children and Family Well-being*, and the *Children and Youth Services Review*.

The following keywords and phrases were used in various combinations when sourcing literature: 'KZN floods 2022', 'floods impact', 'floods effect', 'child and youth care workers', 'counselling services', 'disease outbreak', 'psychological effects for children', 'psychological effects for families in communities', 'trauma patients', 'water-borne disease', 'infrastructure', 'child care', 'state of disaster', 'extreme weather', 'health care', 'health care facilities', 'climate change', 'mental health effects', 'preparation for flood', 'impact of education', 'social worker', 'community helpers', 'support', 'South Africa eThekweni', and 'the well-being theoretical framework.'

Overall, a few recent articles were uncovered when searching for articles directly related to the emotional and social difficulties faced by young people and families in the South African context (Shokane 2019:07). Existing global and local literature focused on various aspects of flood impacts and effects in general, rather than how children and youth were assisted after the floods, which was the focus of the current study (Zang *et al.* 2024:17). Literature related to floods and extreme weather conditions explored a variety of specific topics such as the damage caused by floods

within the context of individual and community dynamics (Sweileh 2019:09), the mental health effects of floods (Naidoo 2022:35), economic hardship after floods, due to the destruction of livestock, crops, and damage to food and economic infrastructure (Smith 2019:10218).

As the study progressed, more specific topics and keywords were utilized to source relevant literature. Therefore, more literature was found on children being a highly vulnerable population, as they are physically weak to both unexpected and recurring calamities (Raphela and Matsididi 2025:22). Information on floods related to impacts on the well-being of children and destruction of their academic life (Mohammed *et al.* 2017:60), an emphasis on the health burden of children, due to contaminated water (Ahlawat and Giri 2024:13), and an indication and estimation on the number of children and schools affected (UNICEF 2022).

Other aspects explored included:

CYCW's professional expectations when working with vulnerable children and their families (Mhiza and Nhedzi 2023:175), assistance from community helpers, social workers, and other health departments (Matlakala *et al.* 2022:23), UNAIDS partnership with the National Association for Child and Youth Care Workers NACCW child and youth care workers to provide therapeutic services (UNAIDS: 2022), roles of social workers with regards to their preparedness to deal with floods (Hay 2023:69), and the importance of risk and preparedness education (Ewenson 2025:07).

Other information about the flood disaster in KZN, community resilience, and lasting mental health impacts of floods in children was obtained from reference lists and through Google searches, which led the researcher to websites of flood management organisations, extreme weather and effects-related blogs, and other published and unpublished works. This information provides insights into the effects of floods in various contexts and practical implications for family life (Naidoo 2022:36)

2.2.2 Sourcing literature: the results

This section aims to present and engage with existing literature on floods and their consequences on the well-being of children and families. This will be achieved by

discussing and revealing discoveries made both internationally and locally. This will therefore lay the groundwork for this research and reveal the research gap it will fill.

2.2.2.1 Global Context: Themes in International Floods Literature

According to Suhr and Steininert (2022:268), flooding has been the most common type of natural disaster in the last 20 years, accounting for 47% of all recorded natural disasters and affecting 2.3 billion people worldwide. Although information about floods and their impact has been discovered in both the global and South African contexts, there is still limited literature that pertains to the research objectives and questions.

Globally, there was an abundance of literature based on flooding across the United States (U.S) regarding people in those communities, assets, and its long-term effects on welfare (McDermott 2022:01). Study findings by Manzoor *et al.* (2022:11), explored the impact of floods in Pakistan and focused specifically on social and economic conditions of the people. However, Lee *et al.* (2021:31) discussed the impact of floods on land use and the disruption of human activities in the Southeast of North America, South America, East Africa, South Europe, and South Asia.

Recent studies have focused on the relationship between flood disasters and climate change. One study by Rogers *et al.* (2025:276) examined climate change as a significant issue that leads to natural disasters, posing threats to human safety and damaging homes and infrastructure in Bangladesh. Flooding increases vulnerability, as it destroys livelihoods, homes, and working environments, leaving affected individuals with limited resources to recover from such crises. Recent studies have focused on the relationship between flood disasters and climate change. One study by Rogers *et al.* (2025:276) examined climate change as a significant issue that leads to natural disasters, posing threats to human safety and damaging homes and infrastructure in Bangladesh. Flooding increases vulnerability, as it destroys livelihoods, homes, and working environments, leaving affected individuals with limited resources to recover from such crises. Therefore, a recent study conducted by Yousuf *et al.* (2023:19) found that due to the occurrence of floods and the country's economic

dependence on agriculture, the citizens of Pakistan had mental health problems like depression and a sense of hopelessness.

Song (2025:17) investigated the emotional and mental health consequences in the aftermath of flooding for residents in the United Kingdom, Russia, Europe, and Turkey. They further mentioned the death of 5.6 million people in the past 10 years in communities. This resulted in fear, sadness, anxiety, and stress related to trauma, specifically for people who personally witnessed the loss of relatives. There was also an increase in the amount of literature on child well-being and mental disorders due to the occurrence of floods in China, Indonesia, Zimbabwe, and India (Islam 2024:23).

2.2.2.2 The South African Context

Literature related to natural disasters and their effects on human life and the environment in the local context is sparse. Raphela and Matsididi (2025:19) investigated the significant impact that floods had on infrastructure, livelihood, and agricultural production in the Manini and Tshilungwi villages of the Thulamela Municipality in the Limpopo province of South Africa. Others, such as Williams and Costa (2019:30), explored the high level of poverty, unemployment, and environmental risk caused by floods and climate change in Durban, South Africa.

Cilliers (2019:03) explored the injuries caused to children, loss of lives, and their health status in the Batlahaping Ba-Ga-Phuduhucwana tribal area located in the eastern part of the greater Taung Local Municipality. UNICEF (2022:12) also investigated the disturbance of education at schools, specifically in KwaZulu-Natal, the death rate, and the number of people still missing after the floods in April 2022. Matlakala *et al.* (2022: 26) and Shokane (2019:07) examined the impact on communities and families, as well as the role of social workers in providing therapeutic services after the floods during a natural hazard. Limited literature was, however, discovered on the mental health and emotional challenges experienced by children and families during and after floods, due to them being removed from their communities and not being in contact with each other in South Africa (Mboti 2022:10).

2.2.3 The context of the current study

Research indicates that extreme weather events, such as flooding, are increasing both globally and locally. Cilliers (2019:06) noted that flooding is a common natural hazard that can have severe negative effects on both humans and the built environment. It is evident from the literature that flooding has a huge impact and numerous negative effects. Hence, Merz *et al.* (2021:16) stated that floods put lives at risk, cause extensive damage to properties and businesses, destroy personal belongings, disrupt vital services, and impede access to necessary assistance. During such times, children and their families are at risk of danger. The stress and social disruption caused by these issues negatively affect people's holistic well-being. Furthermore, research led by Arshad *et al.* (2020:30) revealed that the floods also impact children's physical and emotional health.

The focus of the study is on children, families, and their best interests. During difficult times, young people and their families need to find support. Findings by Matlakala *et al.* (2022:45) revealed that social workers play a crucial role during natural disasters. This study aims to explore the roles that child and youth care workers have in providing quality services and assistance to children and their families during such events.

Previous research has shown that there is limited information regarding the roles of child and youth care workers in providing support. Shokane (2019:06) emphasized the contributions of social workers in helping individuals during floods in South Africa. This involves helping individuals cope with acute situations, enhancing community welfare, and examining how personal circumstances interact with external factors that influence well-being. Social workers conduct psychological evaluations and offer therapeutic interventions, helping vulnerable individuals effectively navigate their realities and become active participants during natural disasters.

2.3 DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTUAL ISSUES IN NATURAL DISASTER LITERATURE

This sub-section aims to explore the definitions and conceptual issues found in the literature. The sub-sections herein include (i) an introduction and definition of extreme weather conditions, (ii) exploring the term natural disaster, (iii) defining the type of

natural disaster (floods), and (iv) explaining the causes and effects of floods on young people and their families.

2.3.1 Description of Weather

The weather is an important part of our lives and cannot be controlled. Zaidi and Memon (2023: 18) further enlightened that it also affects daily life, physical, mental, and social health. Placide and Lollchund (2024:12) described weather as the condition of the atmosphere at a specific location and time, taking into account factors such as temperature, precipitation, and cloudiness. Similarly, Shiferaw (2024:14) describes weather as the state of the atmosphere at a particular place over a short period. Additionally, Wolfe (2021:10) elaborates that weather encompasses atmospheric phenomena, including temperature, humidity, precipitation (both type and amount), air pressure, wind, and cloud cover.

Research undertaken by Ritchie *et al.* (2024:15) discovered that weather influenced people's everyday activity patterns. Heshmati (2020:13) added that agricultural sectors rely heavily on precipitation and specific climatic conditions for optimal productivity; thus, flash floods and storms can cause widespread destruction to properties and buildings, resulting in economic disruption and job insecurity. This literature on weather indicates that it impacts a person's life, well-being, and health.

2.3.2 Introduction to extreme weather conditions

Extreme weather includes weather phenomena that are significantly different from average conditions, often causing disruption or damage. Therefore, severe weather conditions are regarded as natural hazards. According to Naidoo (2022:33), natural disasters such as droughts, earthquakes, floods, storms, and landslides result from atmospheric, geological, and hydrological factors, leading to devastating consequences. These disasters lead to fatalities such as injuries, adverse physical, mental health effects, and social and environmental disruptions. Ritchie *et al.* (2024: 17) described natural disasters as environmental hazards caused by weather-related events like storms and floods.

Ebi (2021:294) explained that extreme weather can significantly affect human lifestyles, food systems, and environmental comfort. Herring (2020:187) also noted that extreme temperatures, along with precipitation, can lead to discomfort and might contribute to the spread of health issues. Rogers *et al.* (2025:277) focused on other extreme weather conditions and asserted that weather-related disasters, including thunderstorms, tornadoes, hailstorms, and sleet storms, can harm agricultural produce, damage structures, and disrupt logistics. Pizzorni *et al.* (2024:10) also added that extreme weather conditions characterised by high winds and flooding can result in death, physical harm, and property damage.

Extreme weather is mostly linked to climate change. Nevertheless, Lonno (2024:16) described changes in climatic conditions as a shift in the usual weather found in a place. This could involve a change in the amount of rain a place typically receives in a year, or it could refer to a change in the usual temperature for a month or season in a specific location. Rogers *et al.* (2025: 278) stated that ecological disruption refers to alterations in the Earth's climate. However, Wu *et al.* (2024:189) noted that climate change has significantly impacted human lives and health in several ways, including an increase in malaria, diarrhea, and heat stress. Heshmati (2020:27) also mentioned that it threatens the basics of good health and could reverse decades of health progress.

Kessel (2025:10) noted that climate change has resulted in floods becoming more common and intense, as well as other weather-related events, occurring worldwide. According to Bakker, Koker, and Viljoen (2021:23), hazards become disasters when vulnerable communities are overwhelmed. Cianconi *et al.* (2020:20) further explained that these natural disasters arise when a risk overwhelms an extremely sensitive community, often resulting in death and health complications.

2.3.2.1 Definition of a natural disaster

Chaudhary and Piracha (2021:1105) define a natural disaster as a sudden and catastrophic event occurring in nature. March (2020:11) defined a natural disaster as an event that occurs in the future, overwhelming local resources and posing a threat to the safety and functionality of a community. Kessel (2025:10) noted that the topic

of natural disasters is extensive, explaining that they happen when the intensity of a hazard is too great, often leading to both mortality and morbidity. Literature indicates that natural disasters affect millions of people each year and identifies various types of natural disasters (Ritchie 2022:11). Different kinds of natural hazards include earthquakes, tornadoes, tsunamis, landslides, volcanic eruptions, and cyclones. However, this research study will focus specifically on floods.

2.3.3 Definition of natural disasters (floods)

Ritchie *et al.* (2022:12) described floods as a sudden onset of events where normally dry land is inundated with an overflow of accumulated water that it cannot absorb. Glago (2021:05) explained that a flood is a natural disaster characterized by an excess of water in a particular area, resulting in overflow. As Chmutina (2019:19) explains, flooding is the most frequent type of natural disaster. Madych (2019:10) noted that flooding occurs when the boundary between terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems fails to maintain balance. Zang *et al.* (2024:25) emphasized that high magnitude rainfall in short durations can cause flash floods, while moderate rainfall over several consecutive days can also pose significant risks. These weather conditions can cause rivers to overflow and dams to breach, resulting in water escaping its usual boundaries and flooding surrounding areas.

2.3.3.1 The causes and effects of floods

Floods can lead to numerous negative impacts and effects. According to Ashizawa *et al.* (2022:20), the physical effects of floods cause damage to roads, infrastructure, schools, buildings, utilities, and access to contaminated water, which then leads to gastrointestinal infections and diseases such as malaria. Baddianaah (2023:23) further emphasized that physical property damage is a leading cause of direct losses in flood events. Glago (2021:23) argued that floods can profoundly affect psychosocial well-being, including difficult-to-measure financial impacts. The intangible losses from the disaster included increased levels of anxiety and depression faced by those impacted by floods. Many individuals experience shock and stress during floods due to various economic pressures, the stress of rebuilding homes, the loss of loved ones, and unemployment, which can trigger emotions of powerlessness.

2.3.4 Natural disaster (floods) in the global context

Extreme weather conditions are becoming increasingly frequent and severe, presenting a global challenge. According to Sweileh (2019:08), disasters have occurred worldwide over these years, with storms, floods, extreme heat or cold, and mudslides being the most prevalent. Over the past decade, more than 300 natural disasters have impacted millions of people each year, resulting in costs amounting to billions of dollars. According to Ritchie *et al.* (2022:13), storms and floods, being the most common, have the most common and substantial economic consequences in countries such as India, China, Pakistan, the United States, Zimbabwe, and other nations that have experienced natural calamities (Chaudhary and Piracha 2021: 1111). Kharb (2022:13), also stated that flooding is the most common natural calamity in India. A study led by Pandey (2024:469) revealed that the death toll from natural disasters exceeded ten thousand in 2021.

Floods are the costliest and wide-reaching of all natural hazards, additionally, they expose the victims and survivors to diseases. According to Naidoo (2022:34), outbreaks of diseases are frequent, particularly in developing nations. In tropical countries, floods are often followed by outbreaks of waterborne diseases like malaria and typhoid. An estimated 300 million people in India and Bangladesh reside in areas susceptible to flooding (Jones *et al.* 2023:15). In addition, Herring (2020: 188) revealed that, the hidden impacts of the Easter Flood in the UK in 1998, included heightened stress, anxiety, fainting, panic attacks, sadness, lethargy, and exposure of people to diseases such as malaria.

2.3.5 Floods in South Africa

Intense rainfall in South Africa led to widespread flooding, causing fatalities, and damaging local homes and infrastructure. The deluge caused catastrophic floods and unexpected landslides in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, which devastated the area. UNICEF (2022:12) reported that 40,000 individuals were evicted from their homes after more than 12,000 houses were damaged. Naidoo (2022:32) stated that as from December 2010, 141 people have lost their lives to floods in KZN including millions of rands of damage.

Since 2016, the province of KwaZulu-Natal has experienced annual floods within a short timeframe (Hattingh 2022:25). However, over the period of “Easter floods” in April 2019, 85 fatalities were caused by severe storms. On April 11th and 12th, 2022, parts of KwaZulu-Natal experienced heavy rainfall. According to Bond and Galvin (2022:10), on 13 April, it was announced that 59 people were killed across KwaZulu-Natal, 45 in eThekwinini, and 14 in iLembe, and later that day, the number of reported deaths due to the flooding increased to 450.

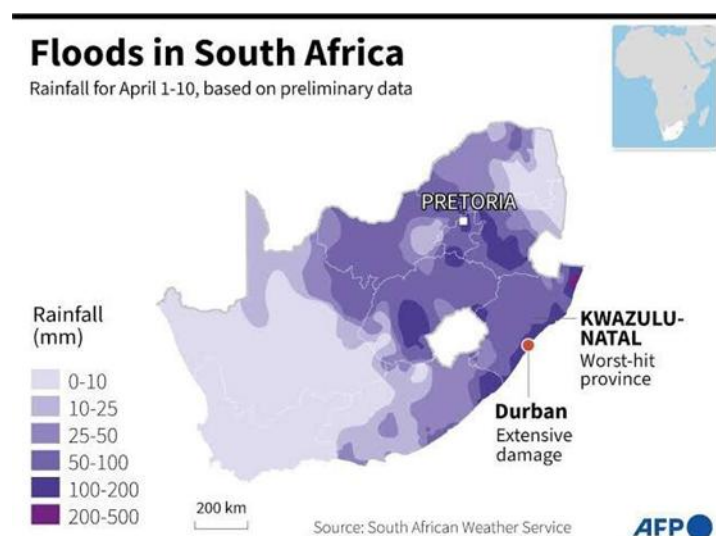


Figure 1: Map showing rainfall in April, and the spread and damage of floods in April 2022.

Bond and Galvin (2022:10) also stated that the province experienced significant rainfall impacts, with particularly eThekwinini metro being the most severely affected area. Heavy rainfall and subsequent flooding caused widespread destruction to infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and homes, particularly within the Port St Johns area. As of now, 443 people in total have lost their lives in KwaZulu-Natal. Matlakala *et al.* (2022:32) stated that approximately 48 people are missing and untraceable.

2.3.6 Effects on floods: Environment

According to Mtambo and Tao (2024:210), the floods also impacted and affected energy and water. Ashizawa *et al.* (2022:20) argued that the hydroelectric dam managed by Eskom was overwhelmed by the rising water, rendering it inoperable. Umgeni Water, the supplier of water to eThekweni and KZN, reported that two feeder lines were broken, and these two aqueducts supplied water to the Durban Heights reservoir. According to Manyane (2022:12), the floods were among the worst to hit the KwaZulu-Natal Province, which caused damage to infrastructure. The N2 coastal route was severely affected with significant washout damage, including the destruction of essential bridges.

Soil plays a crucial role in our ecosystem; however, flooding can lead to soil pores becoming saturated with water, resulting in reduced oxygen levels. Montsho (2022:14) noted that unsustainable development negatively impacts ecosystems and soil degradation, making it increasingly difficult for land to retain water during heavy rainfall. This situation contributes to poor land management practices and further degradation, making certain regions and communities especially vulnerable to flooding. Li (2022:15) stated that coastal communities are at greater risk due to threats from sea-level rise and storm surges. This is further exacerbated by little or poor flood planning and management. Smith (2019:10220) also revealed that most people who died in the floods, lived in informal settlements, so again, we are seeing how climate change disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable people.

2.3.7 Effect of floods on physical health

According to McKenzie (2022:23), floods, earthquakes, and tropical storms ravaged various parts of the world, having a major impact on the health and well-being of those affected. According to Wang *et al.* (2022:32), floodwaters are often polluted with sewage, which can lead to health issues and compromise access to safe drinking water. Mthembu *et al.* (2025:13) noted that infections, including cholera, hepatitis A and E, diarrhea, and other waterborne diseases, arise from the lack of clean water during floods. Typically, most sources of clean water become contaminated when flooding occurs. The health crisis is deepened by damage to health systems, infrastructure, and the displacement of people.

Chutel and Silva (2022:12) further explained that due to the damage to the riverbanks, outbreaks of dysentery and cholera swiftly spread, impacting individuals. survivors are vulnerable to the threat of starvation and malnutrition. Research has shown that children, like adults, can be impacted by physical health problems such as coughs, colds, and eczema (Dimitrova *et al.* 2022 :147). These health issues can arise from the strong winds during heavy rain and the contaminated water resulting from floods, which can affect them when they drink or bathe in it.

2.3.8. Effects of floods on emotional well-being

Emotional well-being, as described by Ronnie *et al.* (2022:22), involves creating positive emotions, managing emotional responses, and adapting to challenging situations. In addition, Yousuf *et al.* (2023:11) explain that natural disasters not only diminish the standard of living but also place a significant burden on the emotions and mental health of the affected population. Since research has indicated that natural disasters produce negative emotions in young people, such as depression, anger, and sadness, their emotional well-being is affected. Visser (2021:31) further stated that a young individual facing depression typically struggles with issues like insomnia, fatigue, and lethargy. This has provided evidence that depression can change and influence a person's thoughts and behavior.

According to Cui and Huang (2024:10), depression may occur when an individual experiences three specific factors, namely, feeling disconnected from life's purpose, feeling inadequate, and a diminished sense of fun. Loss of self-esteem affects one's inner self; meanwhile, the absence of playfulness is a key factor in depression. This includes grief due to loss, property loss and valuables, and housing insecurity. Therefore, due to exposure to a natural disaster, the young person's emotional well-being is affected by the challenges experienced. According to Ronnie *et al.* (2022: 23), the challenges experienced lead to stress. Consequently, stress plays a substantial role in contributing to anxiety and insomnia. As a result, emotional

responses to stress often appear as sleep disturbances, tension, restlessness, anxiety, and trembling (Hernandez-Florez *et al.* 2023:44).

Kamal *et al.* (2018:101) noted that young people exhibited high levels of intrusion and avoidance following floods. They were also removed from familiar surroundings, experienced the loss of parents, witnessed the passing of their loved ones, and faced separation from siblings. This caused a huge disruption to the lives of children and forced them to live a completely different life in such a short period. This also heightened feelings of depression. Hence, a depressed child affected by a flood may encounter emotional turmoil, manifested as feelings of sadness, despair, and detachment from everyday life. Children also suffered from psychological and emotional impacts as a result of flooding and could not cope if a similar event were to occur. Research findings from Ronnie *et al.* (2022:24) indicated that children were more likely to feel overwhelmed by emotions during heavy rain.

2.3.9 Effects of floods on social well-being

According to Mohammed *et al.* (2017:60), aspects impacting child development included loss of cherished personal items and family assets of sentimental value, social connections, comfortable surroundings, academic development; the feelings of fear, overwhelming pressures, insufficient flood awareness training in schools for students and staff, transport, communication, and health care.

Due to the severe consequences of flooding, schools were forced to close, and learners, including teachers, faced challenges in maintaining regular attendance. The extensive damage to roads and the treacherous conditions of river crossings made it impossible for individuals to commute safely to school. Naidoo (2022:23) also revealed that KZN schools were closed, and it was confirmed that 500 schools were not operating. As reported, 97 schools were damaged by the floods, leaving teachers and learners stranded. The Provincial Department had to arrange for boats and helicopters to rescue those who spent the night at Thululwazi Secondary School in Pinetown, south of Durban, due to the heavy rains. The Department released a statement that schools were temporarily closed due to the deadly floods, which had negatively affected teaching and learning.

According to Naidoo (2022:24), due to the floods, learners lost access to education. The KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Department of Education assessed the impact of floods on affected schools, learners, and teachers. The KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Department of Education visited the schools affected by the floods to assess the extent of the damage to the schools, students, and teachers. According to Naidoo (2022:29), classes reopened on April 19, 2022. Mudavanhu (2014:22) emphasised the significant impact of disruptions to education, highlighting that continuous learning is crucial for a child's development. Ncube-Phiri *et al.* (2014:22) noted that the floods resulted in reduced classroom time, increased absenteeism, and limited syllabus coverage, all of which negatively affected academic outcomes. Mudavanhu (2014:22) emphasized that disruptions to education are significant as education and ongoing learning are essential components of a child's development. Ncube-Phiri *et al.* (2014:22) observed that floods resulted in decreased class time, increased absenteeism, and limited syllabus coverage, all of which negatively impacted academic outcomes.

However, according to Riaga *et al.* (2021:22), not attending school or absenteeism can significantly impact the social development of young people, leading to social isolation, reduced social skills, and difficulty forming relationships. Mudavanhu (2014:26) stated that prolonged absenteeism can lead to social anxiety, low self-esteem, and limited social networks, making it harder to form healthy relationships with peers and adults. Floods can already be traumatic for children, and the additional loss of social support and structure from school can exacerbate the negative impacts.

2.3.10 Effects of Floods: Child Well-being

According to Pigaiani *et al.* (2020:33), well-being is a state of feeling positive and functioning effectively. A positive state that is strengthened by fulfilling personal and social ambitions. It includes measurable aspects like access to education and health status. However, Phaswana and Erlank (2019:49) stated that childhood well-being is a multifaceted concept that considers the whole child and their experiences, ensuring they grow up happy, healthy, and thriving. It encompasses a positive mental state, happiness, direction, and stress-coping skills.

Overall wellness encompasses various aspects of health, namely, physical, mental, and emotional dimensions. It is essential to care for all these areas to maintain overall healthy well-being. Additionally, external factors, such as economic and social conditions, can also significantly impact our well-being. The quality of a child's life, including health and overall circumstances, is often viewed as an indicator of well-being. This broad term encompasses various metrics for assessing a child's well-being, including health, education, family or social life, economic status, and safety or security issues.

Flooding can traumatize children and impact their overall well-being, posing significant threats to their physical, emotional, and psychological health. Displacement, loss of home and belongings, and separation from family and friends can cause immense stress, anxiety, and trauma. Children are the worst affected, as they are often the most vulnerable to the trauma and disruption caused by floods; hence, Raj *et al.* (2021:23) also ranked children as the leading exposed group, including women, older adults, and individuals with physical or mental disabilities due to natural catastrophes. Children are a highly vulnerable population, as they are physically vulnerable to both unexpected and recurring calamities due to their partial or whole reliance on adults.

Furthermore, according to Kousky (2016:76), floods can also impact children's well-being by exposing them to a hazardous environment, such as contaminated water, sharp debris, and fallen power lines. Agabiirwe (2022:33) noted that floodwaters can increase the risk of waterborne disease, injuries, and accidents, which compromise children's physical health. According to Ahlawat and Giri (2024:20), children are especially vulnerable to health risks during floods and disasters. The emotional toll of floods can be long-lasting. Agabiirwe (2022:20) expressed that the children experienced long-term effects, such as poor academic performance, traumatic stress and behavioural challenges such as withdrawal.

2.3.11 Effects of floods on Gender: (Health and well-being)

When disasters like flooding strike, women and children are more likely to die from drowning than men due to a lack of resources and communication, and in some instances, women are less likely to be able to swim than men. According to Katherine

(2020:22), in Indonesia, an average of 77% of the fatalities were women. Hence, women and girls had to leave their homes and move into displacement camps while the men went away to look for work. Katherine (2022:23) said that women were displaced and had trouble living in camps where they were temporarily placed, as they had specific needs around managing menstrual periods without access to toilets and running water.

Katherine (2020:25) also explained that violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, tends to increase during disasters as existing social structures are weakened or destroyed. Women also tend to take on new roles in the aftermath of a crisis, such as having to fetch water over larger distances, thereby placing them at additional risk. The risk of early and forced marriages is high in the aftermath of climate-change-related disasters, as families face income and livelihood stresses and further poverty. Girls are forced to drop out of school as unpaid care and domestic responsibilities at home may increase.

2.3.12 Psychological effects of floods

Lamond *et al.* (2018:05) stated that the long-term psychological impact of the distress and trauma caused by the memory of damage and losses associated with flooding in communities

remains an under-researched impact of flooding. Flooding can overwhelm the coping capacity of even the strongest individuals affected. Musyoki *et al.* (2016:08) found that several factors were associated with the prevalence of psychosocial symptoms in households affected by flooding. These factors included household income, the depth of flooding, the need to evacuate during reconstruction, and various mitigation actions. Among these, relocation and household income emerged as the most significant predictive factors.

Hendels (2021:32) differentiated between fear and anxiety and stated that anxiety and fear are used to describe similar emotional states but are not the same. According to Knight *et al.* (2019:25), anxiety is a feeling of fear or apprehension about what is to come. According to Kalin (2020:10), fear and anxiety were commonly observed in

victims because of the destruction to their properties, loss of belongings and items with emotional significance, including images and portraits.

2.3.13 Psychological effects of floods on families

According to Buthelezi *et al.* (2024:23), the disaster resulted in significant loss. Research in the United Kingdom by Mason *et al.* (2010:62) examined the psychological impact of flooding, with a total of 444 participants completing the survey. The study revealed that approximately 27.9% of participants met the criteria for symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), 24.5% for anxiety, and 35.1% for depression. Women scored higher than men on measures of PTSD, anxiety, and depression.

According to Kousky (2016:78), flooding affects people and communities, causing social, financial, and ecological damage. As a result, individuals may experience symptoms of stress, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other emotional and psychological difficulties, which can impact their daily functioning and overall well-being. Bond and Galvin (2022:2) stated that President Ramaphosa reported that the floods in KwaZulu-Natal caused damage to properties and infrastructure and swept people away. Families were left without homes and had to find alternate shelters to meet their basic needs. The displacement significantly altered their lives and triggered intense emotions of fear and anxiety. Nothling (2024:201) also revealed a variety of symptoms that included emotional distress, as people were relocated to a shelter and could not reach their friends and families.

According to Varughese and Mathews (2019: 6317), flood exposure may also increase suicidal ideation, and suicidal ideation was elevated for people who had their homes or businesses affected compared to those not directly affected. However, in another study conducted by Luk and Longman (2024:343), it was found that floods are known to amplify the risk factors for suicidal behavior among those directly exposed to these traumatic events. During floods, people often find ways to cope with their emotions and alleviate their distress. Oluka *et al.* (2022:43), however, stated that people leaned towards substances to escape stress-related emotions.

2.3.14 Mental Health Challenges

According to Burke *et al.* (2022:23), floods significantly impact mental health. Hence, Vinz (2015:03) stated that people whose households or businesses were inundated or evacuated had a higher risk of experiencing psychological distress and PTSD. Another long-term effect of flooding, which caused a huge mental breakdown in parents of families, is economic hardship. Fontaine *et al.* (2021:65) described economic hardship as the inability to afford essential living expenses, including food, housing, and healthcare.

According to Smith (2019:10225), this hardship results from agricultural losses and damage to food systems. Mohammed *et al.* (2017:50) stated that economic stress caused by floods leads families to struggle at work due to water damage. This results in being retrenched, having no financial support, and families feeling hopeless, agitated, and depressed. However, findings presented by Cherry *et al.* (2021:128) found that middle-aged adults are the most prone to mental health problems after disasters. According to Johnson (2018:22), this is because they are more prone to struggling with financial and health issues. The thought of rebuilding and relocating to safety shelters causes emotional distress because they were not prepared for this sudden, unfortunate event.

According to Pits (2021:44), higher floodwater levels in a person's business space were associated with increased symptoms of depression. The immediate aftermath of flooding can be traumatic, with frantic efforts to shield people and property from harm. In KwaZulu-Natal, Naidoo (2022:23) reported that the floods damaged businesses, forcing them to close due to infrastructural destruction. This caused depression and angered business people as they felt a sense of hopelessness since they could not protect their property. Pits (2021: 45) explained that business owners who experienced flooding in both their houses and companies were nearly six times more prone to depression. Moreover, entrepreneurs experiencing insurance disputes were four times more prone to depression. Additionally, businesses with flooding exceeding head height were associated with a four times higher risk of depressive symptoms. All these factors contribute to a surge in mental health concerns post-floods.

Most survivors of disasters bounce back with little to no long-term impact on their mental health. But there will always be some who deal with chronic pain (Wahlstrom et al, 2010:11). Several scholars have shown that the growth in physical and mental issues is one of the immediate and short-term repercussions of natural disasters. Even though mental issues may subside, the long-term effects are physical. The victims' physical and emotional conditions are quite severe and interlinked.

2.3.15 The roles of child and youth care workers in rebuilding families and reconstructing community life during the floods

Child and youth care centers prioritize the developmental needs of children and families, which are essential to their daily experiences and overall growth. These professionals are often employed by various organizations that provide support and services to children, youth, and their families. These professionals may work in residential centers, schools, hospitals, family homes, communities, daycares, on the streets, and in many more places. NACCW (2014:12) also explained that the work of these social service workers is distinct, often involving diverse settings and approaches. Hence, child and youth care workers may be employed by state institutions, including SASSA, to provide social assistance and psychosocial support to children, youth, and their families.

According to Ranahan (2013:25), children's and youth's developmental needs are met in their life space. Johannisen (2019:45) described the life space as working within the daily living situations of children and their families, including institutional settings, schools, healthcare facilities, and community spaces. They also assume roles that involve guiding, directing, and developing policies, and they prioritize frontline care and interaction. Similar to social workers, these professionals can offer young people emotional support and counselling during floods, helping them process their experiences and cope with the stress and trauma resulting from the disaster.

Child and youth care workers are integral members of a multidisciplinary team. Multidisciplinary teams (MDTS) play a crucial role in providing healthcare. As noted by Rodgers (2023:33), they provide comprehensive and quality services to children and youth. These teams typically comprise social workers, counsellors, teachers,

healthcare professionals, psychologists, and other specialists who collaborate to address the complex physical, emotional, and psychological needs of young people. By sharing their expertise and knowledge, child and youth care workers help develop individualized plans that promote healthy development, resilience, and well-being. This multidisciplinary approach ensures seamless and coordinated support, enabling children to navigate challenges and achieve their full potential. Through their participation in these teams, child and youth care workers play a vital role in fostering positive outcomes, promoting social and emotional learning, and empowering young people to thrive in all aspects of life.

Anglin (2001:32) stated that child and youth care work aims to support the young person's overall holistic development and concentrates on ensuring that young people's environment is conducive, therapeutic, and growth-promoting. A child and youth care worker aims to protect young people from any dangers, exploitation, and abuse. Thumbadoo *et al.* (2014:17) also stated that caring in childcare, especially in South African communities, connects the worker deeply to the child and family. Care is fundamental in the context of working with children and youth, given that it provides the foundation for building trust, fostering resilience, and promoting overall well-being. According to Cruse (2021:23), when children and youth receive care that is genuine, compassionate, and consistent, they feel seen, heard, and valued.

According to Jamieson *et al.* (2010:65), child and youth care workers work with vulnerable, abandoned children without homes and those without guardians. Therefore, in the state of disaster that occurred in KwaZulu-Natal, care workers needed to avail themselves and work with various departments to reach and arrange for the most essential needs. Additionally, Shokane (2019:05) stated that young people in communities facing poverty and grief require an intervention that heals and prevents further deterioration in their lives.

Parts of KwaZulu-Natal, mainly eThekweni, experienced significant flooding that caused extensive damage to infrastructure, roads, bridges, and buildings. This disaster led to many children and families losing their homes and loved ones, disrupting their daily lives and development. In response to the emergencies,

community workers, including child and youth care workers, social workers, rescue workers, police, and firefighters, played a crucial role in providing support to affected families. Among these professionals, social workers prioritized the health and well-being of children and their families during this crisis. According to Matlakala *et al.* (2022:10), social work practice is a cornerstone of societal support systems. It strives to enhance the social capabilities of individuals and communities.

Disasters negatively impact an individual's ability to function normally. Social workers serve as counsellors, providing support to individuals affected by various challenges. Additionally, child and youth care workers trained in trauma-informed care can assist individuals in understanding the emotional and psychological effects of disasters. By utilizing services that prioritize the needs of trauma survivors, they can create a supportive environment that promotes healing and recovery. According to Matlakala *et al.* (2022:17), social workers provided psychosocial counselling to families and children when they were terrified by the impact of natural hazards on their livelihood.

Matlakala *et al.* (2022:12) stated that the social work profession is vital to society as it aims to enhance the social functioning of individuals, groups, and communities. Social workers are guided by various roles during their interventions, regardless of the challenges they encounter during such emergencies. Parashar (2019:20) defined a broker as an individual who helps others reach agreements to make deals. Similarly, Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2017:15) described a broker as someone who assists clients in connecting with community resources and services. Shokane (2019:07) discussed that social workers assumed the role of a broker and assisted affected families and all individuals regardless of their socio-economic status. Sometimes, clients would mostly come to their offices seeking assistance. For instance, during natural disasters, people lose their documentation and seek assistance from social workers. In those instances, social workers would link those clients with the relevant agencies, such as the Department of Home Affairs.

In a study by Matlakala *et al.* (2022:30), it was found that social workers refer individuals who lost their identity documents due to natural disasters to the Department

of Home Affairs for service access. In addition, social workers also processed information on missing persons with the police department, and they dealt with missing children and facilitated the process of reuniting them with their families. Social workers advocated for change and transformation; they also ensured that victims understood government policies and procedures, such as the application for the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) flood relief grant.

Kirst-Ashman (2010:19) argued that social workers are essential in empowering as well as educating communities on ways to deal with natural hazards. Matlakala *et al.* (2022:23) stated that these professionals played an instrumental role in disaster management and recovery. Social workers actively provided support for the safe evacuation of victims to temporary shelters, including community halls and churches. Children were relocated to various child and youth care centres.

According to Rahman (2015:33), in these temporary shelters, victims could reestablish social connections, economic, and cultural status by providing essential support through food, clothing, and hygiene items. UNAIDS (2022:12) further stipulated that 20 child and youth care professionals with health registration distributed medical prescriptions and provided psychological support for those affected. The role of CYCWs during floods was to establish meaningful family relationships and collaborate with NGOs to deliver donated essentials.

Social workers play a crucial part in disaster preparation and response. These professionals manage community agencies that provide essential aid and identify at-risk groups to help safeguard them. Ekwesaranna (2021:22) stated that social workers may encourage good coping and rehabilitation after a disaster but doing so needs careful planning and a thorough comprehension of typical circumstances following a significant emergency occurrence.

In providing ways to mitigate and respond to climate change, Turksever and Omer (2021: 23) indicated that social workers use the community education model to educate the community about residing in areas that are prone to natural hazards. According to Kamil, Utaya, and Utomo (2020:15), proper safety education can

significantly improve one's chances of survival during a natural disaster. This highlights the importance of geographical literacy, as it helps victims understand their surroundings, learn about past events in those areas, and know how to evacuate or protect themselves during emergencies. Torani *et al.* (2019:85) also emphasized that disaster education programs become more effective when they target specific groups and individuals within a community. This method helps social workers identify individuals in flood-prone areas and to provide better education on emergency survival techniques.

According to Dash *et al.* (2020:63), social workers or individuals may volunteer their time and expertise to victims and survivors in various ways. Hence, they should provide community members with adaptation and response strategies that could be used in the face of natural disasters. According to Torani *et al.* (2019:85), the goal of disaster education is to equip people with knowledge to reduce disaster vulnerability. Akcay *et al.* (2023:146) confirmed that limited awareness and poor risk understanding impede preparedness and response efforts. Therefore, disaster literacy is important for families, as it helps them know what to do during a natural disaster. As a result, trained individuals can better protect themselves and others.

According to Mudavanhu (2014:22), the Children's Act requires government departments to work together to provide a wide range of services for children and their families. However, the high demand for protection and prevention services often leads to delays in children receiving the assistance they need from social service professionals. Therefore, it is a good idea for child and youth care centers to employ their social workers or to network with the nearest office of the Social Development Department and local non-governmental organizations that provide child protection, prevention, and early intervention services. Ranahan (2013:43) noted that professionals in child and youth care may collaborate with a multidisciplinary team of mental health and education professionals to provide care and support to children and adolescents. Child and youth care workers must engage with other service providers to further assist in meeting the essential needs of the people in communities they have identified.

2.3.16 Additional support that affected children and families received during the floods

The severe floods triggered a quick and united response from various organizations and departments. Hattingh (2022:26) stated that the Department of Social Development for social workers and other community development practitioners conducted a visit to the center to provide support and assess the well-being of families affected by the floods. An assessment was conducted to identify the needs and resources of communities, households, and individuals. Supportive counselling was provided to all affected individuals, which included debriefing sessions. Essential items such as water and food, as well as provisions like mattresses and blankets, were distributed. Additionally, family reunifications were facilitated. The affected individuals who were grieving families were also assisted with specialized funeral support and counselling services for trauma recovery.

According to Naidoo (2022:23), due to the multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral nature of disaster management, several political stakeholders visited the affected areas to assess the flooding in KZN. Stakeholders such as the South African police service (SAPS), Gift of the Givers, National Association for Child and Youth Care Workers, the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), and the South African National Defense Force (SANDF) were coordinated by COGTA (Disaster management) to provide their services such as providing hot meals, blankets, bottled water, sanitary towels, food parcels, school stationery and uniforms to the families affected. The Salvation Army has been providing relief to families and communities by offering food and clothing.

Grab and Nash (2023:476) shared that the NGO Islamic Relief South Africa also assisted those affected by providing food packs, hygiene kits, and mattresses to the affected areas in Durban, Pinetown, Port Shepstone, Umbumbulu, and many more. So far, the NGO has delivered 200 mattresses, 200 blankets, 300 food parcels, and 10,000 litres of clean water. The families received support from the Motsepe Foundation and AVBOB, which contributed to funeral expenses. According to Naidoo (2022:25), a donation of R30 million was made available, allowing the Motsepe

Foundation to cover all funeral costs. Additionally, AVBOB allocated R3 million toward burial expenses, providing R20,000 for each family.

According to UNAIDS (2022:10), Shoprite made a significant contribution to supporting families affected by floods by providing nutritious food in the form of warm soup, thereby alleviating hunger and offering comfort in a time of need. Shoprite is a well-known supermarket chain in South Africa. They not only provided nutritious food to families affected but also leveraged their #ActsforChange fund to make a meaningful impact. The retailer utilized its funds to support communities in need through its #ActsforChange initiative. This public donation initiative has been established, enabling customers to contribute a minimum of R5 towards disaster relief efforts. According to Naidoo (2022: 23), Shoprite also gave blankets and basic food packages to the Gift of the Givers Foundation and Ashraful Aid for distribution to families.

According to the Hollywood Foundation (2022:15), the Durban Child and Youth Care Centre based in Glenwood, which prioritizes the needs of vulnerable and orphaned children from within the region, was able to provide food hampers, toiletries, towels, blankets, water, and fresh bread to each of these families. This organization received a donation of R30,000 from the Hollywood Foundation to help reach out to family members of children affected by adverse weather conditions (Hollywood Foundation 2022:16).

According to Grab (2020:488), children can cope with natural disasters if there is support and assistance around them. UNAIDS (2022:12) stated that child and youth care practitioners should volunteer in various affected areas to help clean up the environment, attend to children who lost their medication after floods, and ensure that food hampers are received by those affected to ensure that the children and their families are in a safe and clean environment. Ahlawat and Giri (2024:12) emphasized the importance of community workers in maintaining family unity during difficult times. They should prioritize keeping families together, facilitating reunions as quickly as possible, and ensuring that children stay with their mothers and families. In stressful situations, children often look to their caregivers for guidance on how to respond.

Mohamed *et al.* (2017:45) highlighted the role of community workers, such as school social workers and volunteer coordinators, in training teachers on how to assist students impacted by flooding. Schools should actively support students whose homes have been affected, recognizing that even if the school itself remains unscathed, some students may still face significant challenges. It is crucial to provide both practical and emotional assistance to those dealing with housing issues, particularly for students who have been relocated far from their homes or are living in unsuitable conditions. These circumstances often result in increased stress levels for affected students. Munsaka and Mutasa (2020:24) also emphasized that it is essential for teachers to receive education and training on floods and their impact, enabling them to deliver impactful assistance to students and households impacted by these natural disasters.

According to Lassa *et al.* (2023:415), risk awareness and preparedness training may be particularly crucial for individuals who have relocated to areas susceptible to flooding. Those who have recently relocated to regional areas may not realize their proximity to flood-prone areas or understand the swift onset and severity of flooding. Williams and Erikson (2021:22) added that people are at heightened risk due to residing in areas with inherent dangers, such as floodplains and landslide-prone hills. Individuals are unaware of the environmental risks associated with a particular area when selecting a location to build their homes, leaving them vulnerable to the dangers of flooding. Therefore, Dash *et al.* (2020:67) stated that regardless of their economic status, all people should be educated about selecting a suitable environment in which to build their houses, so that when heavy rains hit again, there will be minimal damage.

According to Tolentino (2017:15), education on flooding and environmental awareness is crucial to empower individuals with the knowledge to understand their surroundings, make informed decisions, and take proactive steps to mitigate the impacts of floods. By learning about flood risks, causes, and consequences, people can develop a deeper appreciation for the interconnectedness of their environment. Chanla (2019: 84) added that environmental education also fosters a culture of sustainability, promoting practices that support the health and resilience of ecosystems, which is essential for building a safer and more resilient future.

2.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter reviewed the literature relevant to the aim of the current study. The study objectives guided the selection of literature. It evaluated and synthesised research concerning natural disasters, specifically how these events impact the well-being of young people and the role of child and youth care workers in the rebuilding process. The overarching theme that emerged from the review was that floods pose significant threats to the lives of children and their families. Therefore, assistance was needed to help them recover and bounce back. The chapter that follows focuses on the research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter three describes the research process. It further focuses on the methodology used to conduct the study, as well as a justification for using this method. It also provides an in-depth discussion of the multiple stages of the research, which includes the selection of participants, research method, ethical principles, the data collection process, and the process of data analysis (Priscilla 2022:12). Furthermore, the role of the researcher in qualitative research about reflexivity is also discussed. The chapter ends with a discussion on trustworthiness in qualitative research and how these five requirements were met in the study.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Turin (2024:17) explained that qualitative research is a systematic inquiry into social phenomena in natural settings. According to Busetto *et al.* (2020:30), these phenomena may include, but are not limited to, how people perceive different aspects of their lives, how individuals behave, how businesses operate, and how interactions influence interpersonal relationships. Mcleod *et al.* (2021:20) added that qualitative research methodology can be used to understand how an individual subjectively perceives and gives meaning to their social reality. Therefore, qualitative research is characterised by flexibility, openness, and responsiveness.

Aspers and Corte (2019:141) note that qualitative research enables researchers to ask in-depth questions, allowing them to explore which segments to investigate and how to do so effectively. McLeod *et al.* (2021:26) further emphasise that this approach enhances transparency and encourages participants to express their thoughts in their own words. As a result, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of an individual's interpretations of various situations. Oranga and Matere (2023:06) further said that the main methods used to collect data using qualitative research include, seeing people in their natural environment, conducting in-depth interviews and focus groups so that participants can recount their experiences, ideas, and behaviours, study documents and listening to discussions as contained in documents, speeches, and interviews. McLeod *et al.* (2021:32) added that qualitative methods provide a deeper understanding of how people perceive their social realities.

Bazen *et al.* (2021:241) noted that qualitative research can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions designed to change existing conditions. For instance, it evaluates the effectiveness of programs designed to reduce long-term claims. Additionally, Oranga and Matere (2023:06) mentioned that qualitative research generates suggestions for improvements and identifies potential areas for new research. This type of research provides a detailed insight into the strategies and interventions that support workers with long-term claims, as well as individuals facing social and environmental challenges. By capturing the lived experiences, perspectives, and meanings attributed to these challenges, qualitative research informs the development of effective support systems, resilience-building initiatives, and innovative solutions that address the complex needs of individuals and communities.

Therefore, qualitative research methodology was deemed most suitable and was adopted for this research study. The research was focused on exploring the role child and youth care workers played in rebuilding family life during the KZN floods in April 2022. Hence, a qualitative approach was relevant to this study because it reinforces an understanding and interpretation of meaning and the intentions underlying human interaction. Data will then be collected using in-depth interviews with the child and youth care workers registered with the National Association for Child and Youth Care Workers (NACCW).

3.3 DEFINITION OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

Tenny *et al.* (2022:95) described qualitative research as a method that investigates and provides deeper insights into real-world problems. In addition, qualitative research gathers participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviour. Oranga and Matere (2023:09) also explained that qualitative studies gather non-numerical data on how people live, think, and respond to different situations. Additionally, Lim (2024:05) stated that qualitative methods have emerged as an indispensable tool for garnering deep insights and understanding complex phenomena.

Strengths

Qualitative research, as noted by Mwita (2022:56), adopts a comprehensive approach that aims to understand specific social settings rather than making predictions about them. Furthermore, Busetto *et al.* (2020:21) emphasised that in qualitative research design, the researcher becomes the primary instrument of the study. This design allows for an acknowledgement of the researcher's own biases and ideological preferences. Xiong (2022:956) also highlighted that qualitative research designs incorporate informed consent decisions. By integrating informed consent into the research design, researchers prioritise ethical integrity, build trust with participants, and foster a collaborative and respectful research environment.

Limitations

Mwita (2022:58) opined that qualitative research requires a significant time investment, as it involves delving deeply into data to uncover rich insights and meaning. It also demands a considerable time commitment, as it requires a labour-intensive analysis process such as categorising, recording, and making notes. Bazen *et al.* (2021:242) added that qualitative research is time-intensive and may be more readily susceptible to researchers' biases. Kerr (2020:03) noted that gathering information from participants can be challenging due to difficulties in obtaining sufficient data and securing participation from those identified. Additionally, Hennink and Kaiser (2022:05) described qualitative research as focusing on a smaller, more specific group of individuals. Researchers must design effective questions and assess the relevance of the data, which may introduce biases that could influence the findings.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Sileyew (2019:02), a research design or strategy is determined by the nature of the research question and the subject being investigated. Tenny *et al.* (2022: 98) describe research design as the methods and processes employed to conduct a research project. According to Sileyew (2019:03), the research design refers to the overall strategy that a researcher chooses to integrate the different components of the study coherently and logically. Somasundaram (2019:13) stated that the purpose of a research design is to enable the researcher to ensure that the research produces high-quality and relevant data.

A well-planned research framework is essential for ensuring that the methods align with the research objectives. According to Sileyew (2019:05), this alignment facilitates the collection of high-quality data and enables the researcher to apply the appropriate analysis techniques to answer their questions, utilising credible sources. Busetto *et al.* (2020:15) emphasised that such a design allows researchers to draw valid and trustworthy conclusions and to gather sufficient information for their projects. Tenny *et al.* (2022:100) further explained that meticulous preparation of the research design is crucial; any mistakes can disrupt the entire project and delay the researcher's ability to collect and finalise information.

Tenny *et al.* (2022:99) emphasise the importance of research design, stating that it significantly affects the reliability of the results obtained. Thus, it serves as the foundation for the structure of the entire research effort. Therefore, the researcher must ensure that the research question, conceptual framework, design, and methods are well-aligned and compatible.

This study utilised a qualitative approach with an exploratory design, focusing on how the floods affected young people and their families, and how child and youth care workers helped rebuild family life after the floods. This research aims to explore and understand the meanings created by participants. Data collection and analysis techniques will be utilised to effectively address the research questions. This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How were children, the youth, and their families affected during the floods?
2. What roles did child and youth care workers play in assisting the children and families during the floods?
3. What material and therapeutic support was offered to children and their families at shelters?
4. How were children and families supported in their new families in the community?
5. How were child and youth care workers prepared to deal with the disaster of April 2022?

6. What recommendations can be made regarding the professional preparedness of child and youth care workers related to natural disasters?

3.5 THE RESEARCHER AND REFLEXIVITY

Reflexivity is important in qualitative research. It involves recognising one's role in the research process. According to Dodgson (2019:220), researcher reflexivity entails critically reflecting on your position as a researcher and considering how this perspective influences your work. Being reflective means being aware of the cultural, political, social, and ideological factors that shape your viewpoint. Reflection enables the researcher to empathise with participants' experiences and allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives. Stalmeijer *et. al.* (2022:34) stated that reflexivity should be oriented towards personal, interpersonal, methodological, and contextual issues in the research. Therefore, for this study, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal to document her thoughts, feelings, and insights throughout the research process, allowing her to keep track.

3.6 THE RESEARCHER IN CONTEXT

The researcher herself is a professional child and youth care practitioner and witnessed how floods affected people throughout KwaZulu-Natal, through social media and news, which was shared and broadcast over radio and television. She has a deep passion for helping children and families. However, it was impossible to reach out to all those affected communities. As reported by the media, several professionals have offered assistance to flood victims by cleaning up, providing food hampers, offering emotional support, temporary shelter, clothing, and financial aid.

Over the years, many publications have honoured the contributions of professionals who have made a positive impact on their communities, acknowledging their dedication and expertise. However, despite the numerous media reports, the researcher noticed a significant gap in the scholarly literature, with little attention being devoted to the contributions of child and youth care workers in helping families navigate floods. Therefore, the researcher pursued the current study to explore the role of child and youth care workers during the natural disaster of floods, and how the NACCW, an organisation for child and youth care workers, assisted in reconstructing family life and communities. The researcher hoped that by conducting this study, the

findings would ensure that these practitioners are acknowledged as important professionals in South Africa and for their efforts in working with affected communities during the natural disasters, particularly the floods that occurred in April 2022.

3.7 REFLECTING THROUGH DIARY KEEPING

Reflecting through keeping a diary is a great way for researchers to process their thoughts, feelings, and experiences during the research process. According to Troger (2021:04), reflexivity enables the researcher to secure a thorough knowledge of the significance of the topic being studied. This suggests that the researcher can use his or her personal experiences to understand and relate to what is being expressed during the research process. The emphasis on inquiry or research continues to be on interpreting the phenomenon from the perspective of participants, regardless of the incorporation based on the researcher's experiential knowledge and opinions (Babeng 2024:16). To fully understand and pay attention to what the participants have to say, the researcher must set aside her ideas about the topic at hand. In this study, the researcher utilised a diary to record important dates, including participant interview dates, submission deadlines to the supervisor, and reflections on the research study to remain up to date.

3.8 STUDY SETTING

The research environment plays a crucial role in methodology. Menon (2023:22) described the research setting as the physical, social, or experimental environment in which the research is carried out. Koswara (2022:80) also stated that a research setting can be viewed as the physical, social, and cultural site in which the researcher conducts the study.

In this study, data were collected at the office of the National Association of Child and Youth Care Workers (NACCW) located in the eThekweni Region of KwaZulu-Natal. This organisation has child and youth workers and is a registered non-profit organisation operating independently to promote optimal standards of care for orphaned, vulnerable, and at-risk children and youth. Since the floods in eThekweni affected many children and families, placing them at risk, various departments, organisations, professionals, and the NACCW also sacrificed their time to assist the identified people in affected communities. UNAIDS (2022:04) formed a partnership

with the NACCW to support vulnerable children and their families in rebuilding and recovering from the difficulties they faced during the floods.

3.9 STUDY POPULATION

According to Willie (2024:76), a population refers to a collective of people, study units, records, and events that have explicit characteristics that the researcher requires due to their relevance to the research. Ahmad *et al.* (2023:20) asserted that a study population encompasses the group of individuals or units being studied. Shah (2023: 107) described a sample as a collection of individuals or objects gathered from a diverse range of people. Sampling is a valuable technique for eliciting opinions from a diverse range of people selected from a specific group to gain insights about the entire population. Therefore, for any research study to be effective, it is necessary to select a study population that is truly representative of the population.

In this study, the population consisted of child and youth care workers from the National Association of Child and Youth Care Workers (NACCW), who played a role in assisting the affected children and their families during the floods that occurred in April 2022. There were 55 child and youth workers registered with the NACCW who assisted in the eThekweni district.

3.10 STUDY SAMPLE

According to Ahmad *et al.* (2023:23), a sample population is defined as a targeted data sample chosen using a specific method of selection. Ahmed (2024:15) also describes a sample as a group of people, objects, or items selected from a large population for measurement purposes. The process of selecting a sample is known as a sampling method. Cash *et al.* (2022:12) explain that sampling involves choosing individuals selected from a defined sample group.

It is important to specify the sample strategy in advance, as the chosen sampling method can influence the estimation of sample size. In research, participants are typically selected because they can provide detailed descriptions of their experiences and are willing to articulate these experiences. This allows for rich information that can challenge and enhance the researcher's understanding.

For this study, there was only one sample. An initial sample of 12 National Association for Child and Youth Care Workers (NACCW) was chosen for the study. However, a total of 15 Child and Youth Care Workers were sampled for this research. Initially, a smaller group was chosen, but three additional participants were added to ensure data saturation was achieved. The researcher specifically selected participants who could provide valuable insights relevant to the study's focus and were open to disclosing their experiences working with children and families during and after the floods in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). To maintain confidentiality and protect the privacy of the individuals involved, each practitioner who participated in this study was assigned a fictional name, code, or pseudonym to conceal their real identity in the research findings and publications.

Sample sizes in qualitative research are typically small to allow for an in-depth analysis, which is essential for this type of inquiry. In this study, a smaller sample size was chosen to gather accurate, relevant, and detailed information about the experiences of child and youth care workers who have worked with children and families severely affected by the floods. Additionally, due to time constraints, the researcher found it more manageable to collect sufficient information from a smaller group of workers.

Data was gathered till saturation. Data saturation indicates that no new themes, concepts, or insights are emerging from the data collection process (Taherdoost 2021: 10). This allows the researcher to be confident that they have collected a rich and comprehensive dataset that adequately represents the viewpoints, experiences, and meanings of the participants. Hence, the present study's sample size was fifteen.

3.11 INCLUSION CRITERIA

Inclusion criteria specify the characteristics that participants must possess to be selected for the study, ensuring relevant information is gathered (Majid 2018:18).

Therefore,

1. Child and youth care workers registered with the National Association for Child and Youth Care Workers (NACCW) in KwaZulu-Natal were included.
2. Those involved in counselling flood victims and providing humanitarian relief during the April 2022 floods were included.

3. Males and females were both included.
4. Child and youth care workers from all races, genders, religious and cultural backgrounds were included.
5. Those who provided consent were included.
- 6.

3.12 EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Exclusion criteria are meant to remove participants who do not give genuine and relevant information for the study. Patino (2018:84) defined exclusion criteria as any factors that would exclude a potential participant from participating in the study. Therefore,

1. Child and youth care workers who were not registered with NACCW.
2. Child and youth care workers who were not involved in counselling flood victims and providing humanitarian relief.
3. Child and youth care workers from Provinces other than Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN) were excluded from the study.
4. Those who did not provide consent were excluded.

3.13 SAMPLING PROCESS

Non-probability sampling methods, primarily purposive sampling, were used to select the initial participants. Non-probability sampling is defined as a technique where the researcher selects samples based on their subjective judgment rather than on random selection (Boyd *et al.*, 2023:522). This method relies heavily on the expertise of the researcher. Ahmed (2024: 24) describes purposeful sampling as a technique that uses specific criteria or objectives to select a sample. Furthermore, Campbell et al. (2020: 652) note that purposeful sampling is widely employed in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest.

This highlights that purposeful sampling is entirely dependent on the researcher's judgment. The researcher initially approached potential participants who were registered with the National Association for Child and Youth Care Workers (NACCW) and were actively involved in providing emotional support and assistance to flood victims. Participants were selected based on criteria for inclusion in the study

(Hornberger, 2020:15). The goal was to collect in-depth information from those specifically engaged in flood relief work.

3.14 RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

Participants were recruited through the NACCW. A gatekeeper's letter requesting permission to recruit participants from this organization was drafted (Appendix A). A focused sampling technique was employed to get an appropriate study population size from this organization. Purposeful sampling, as described by Campbell *et al.* (2020: 653), is a strategy utilized in qualitative research to identify participants who are knowledgeable and can provide valuable insights into the phenomenon being studied. This method involves intentionally choosing individuals who are likely to offer in-depth perspectives on the topic. As a result, the final selection of participants features a diverse range of experiences and viewpoints.

A gatekeeper letter was sent to the director of the NACCW, who was then permitted to conduct the study and recruit suitable participants for interviews. Once the initial twelve were recruited and identified by the researcher, Appendix B and Appendix C were sent to those interested participants seeking permission to conduct the study. A further three participants were recruited through the Director till data saturation was achieved. The data collection was initiated after sending the gatekeeper's letter, informational letter, consent letter, and interview schedule to the organization, seeking permission to identify participants for this research.

3.15 DATA COLLECTION TOOL

Busetto *et al.* (2020:66) stated that the data collection phase requires, deciding who will do what, where, when, and how, at the different stages of the research process; acknowledging the role of the researcher as an instrument of data collection; and carefully considering the context studied and the participants and informants involved in the research. Dunwoodie *et al.* (2023:17) argued that interviews are valuable tools for collecting data in qualitative research.

An interview schedule was the tool used to collect data. It consisted of open-ended questions (Appendix D). According to Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2021:20), an

interview guide is a list of topics or questions that the interviewer hopes to cover during an interview. McGrath *et al.* (2019:1002) state that researchers typically develop an interview guide beforehand, which they can reference during the interview. This preparation helps the researcher gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic, which is crucial for formulating relevant and meaningful semi-structured questions. Therefore, in this study, the researcher found this method to be the most appropriate, as it allowed the freedom to probe the interviewee for further elaboration or to explore new lines of inquiry based on the interviewee's responses. It allows the interviewer to demonstrate preparedness and expertise during the interviewing process

In this study, the interview questions were developed to align with the study's objectives and research questions. They were organized to enable participants to provide more detail on their experiences during the floods, including how family life was impacted and the significant role they played in supporting flood victims during their recovery from such adversity. The questions also enabled the study participants the opportunity to share how they offered emotional support and assistance during this challenging time, as they were the primary social service providers for the flood victims. The researcher, moreover, ensured the interview questions were sensitive and appropriate, allowing participants to respond freely and provide valuable information relevant to the study topic.

3.16 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

According to Shoozan (2024:23), qualitative research interviews are attempts to understand the world from the subject's point of view, to uncover the meaning of people's experiences and to discover their lived world. It provides an in-depth and rich picture of why people act in certain ways. The most common type of interview used in qualitative research is semi-structured interviews. According to Naz (2023:16), semi-structured interviews can be conducted in various formats, including face-to-face, telephone, video calls, and email. However, the researcher for this study has specifically chosen to focus on individual, face-to-face, in-depth interviews. Additionally, the researcher piloted the interview guide, which involved testing and refining the interview questions and protocol with a limited number of participants before conducting the actual interviews. According to Shakir and Rahman (2022:43), by piloting the interview guide, researchers can increase the quality and validity of the

data collected and ensure that the interview process is smooth and effective. The research interview guide was finalised as per the recommendations made.

This process of data collection is a crucial aspect of ensuring data quality. According to Cohen and Larrea (2018:23), semi-structured interviews are an effective method for gathering qualitative, open-ended data. to explore participants' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about a topic, and delve deeply into personal and sometimes sensitive issues.

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were the most reliable and appropriate method for data collection. This approach allowed the researcher to explore and understand the specific roles of child and youth care workers in assisting children, families, and communities affected by the floods in April 2022. The interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes to an hour, providing participants the opportunity to speak freely and share valuable information relevant to the research study.

The interview format permitted the researcher to take their time, ensuring a thorough exploration of the topics at hand. This extended time allowed the researcher to ask sufficient questions, which contributed to gathering adequate information for the study. Additionally, the longer duration of the interview fostered a more interactive environment between the interviewer and interviewee. As a result, both participants felt comfortable engaging in conversation and were able to share their views and opinions freely.

3.16.1 The advantages and disadvantages of a semi-structured interview

Naz (2022:13) stated that to conduct a semi-structured interview, the researcher should prepare an interview guide with open-ended questions and topics and select a quiet, comfortable, and private setting. According to Campbell *et al.* (2020:655), researchers should build rapport with participants by explaining the purpose and process of the interview. They should take detailed notes or, with the participant's permission, record the interview. Additionally, they should encourage respondents to be open about their thoughts and firsthand experiences. Campbell *et al.* (2020:656) suggest that semi-structured interviews are the most effective approach for this purpose.

In contrast, Ruslin *et al.* (2022:23) argue that a key advantage of semi-structured interviews is their flexibility; the interviewer does not have to adhere strictly to a formal

list of questions. This allows for a more conversational flow of information, making semi-structured interviews more dynamic than other interview techniques. Pin (2023: 08) noted that semi-structured interviews allow participants to answer questions more creatively. This interview technique encourages more detailed and rich responses because of its open-ended nature. However, George *et al.* (2022:26) pointed out some disadvantages of semi-structured interviews. He mentioned that the open-ended format can lead to the temptation of asking leading questions, which may introduce bias in the responses. Additionally, participants might provide answers they believe the interviewer wants to hear, contributing to social desirability bias.

3.16.2 Face-to-face interviews

According to Elhami (2022:14), a semi-structured interview is a research method that combines the benefits of structured and unstructured interviews. Therefore, semi-structured interviews are often conducted face-to-face. Horsfall *et al.* (2021:27) described face-to-face interviews as a method of data collection where the interviewer directly communicates with a participant using a prepared interview guide. The interview method ensures the quality of the obtained data and increases the response rate. The researcher ensured that the interview location was clean, spacious, and well-lit. In addition, the researcher ensured that refreshments were available for the participants.

The researcher needed to carry a tape recorder with a fully charged battery and the required writing materials, as data collection was done in person. The tape recorder and writing materials were required to ensure that information was recorded accurately. Before the interview began, permission to record was obtained from the participants. They were notified that the tape recorder would be securely stored in a locked cupboard, accessible only to the researcher. Using a tape recorder enabled the researcher to be fully engaged during the interview rather than struggling to take notes on every word spoken by the participant. Additionally, the researcher was able to jot down important notes to clarify responses during the conversation.

3.17 JUSTIFICATION FOR USING INTERVIEWS

Dunwoodie *et al.* (2023:12) argued that interviews are valuable tools for collecting data in qualitative research. A one-on-one interview method allowed the researcher to

interact with the participants and to observe non-verbal cues during the interview process. In this study, a semi-structured interview approach was utilised to facilitate an open and in-depth discussion of the research topic. Ruslin *et al.* (2022:27) stated that semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to understand the complexity of the situation without imposing any prior categorisation.

By selecting interviews as a data collection method, the researcher aimed to achieve a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives through dialogue and the language they use in constructing various discourses. The interview method enabled the researcher to seek clarity and explore a deeper understanding. Additionally, she actively participated in community clean-up efforts after floods. By sharing her own experiences, she positioned herself as a peer, which helped establish a sense of equality. This approach allowed her to build trust and rapport with participants, creating a safe environment for them to share openly (Oleszkiewicz 2024:19).

3.18 PROCEDURE FOR COLLECTING DATA

3.18.1 The process followed for collecting data

During the research process, particularly during the data collection phase, the researcher and participants decided on the venue for their interviews. For the selected participants who consented to an interview, a date, venue, and time were mutually agreed upon between the researcher and the participants. According to McGrath *et al.* (2019:1001), the venue for interviews should be considered, as it could affect the data collection. Therefore, face-to-face interviews were conducted, and the researcher maintained attentive listening and ensured engagement throughout the data collection process, fostering a supportive environment that encouraged participants to share their experiences openly. Moreover, the researcher considered the following in choosing a venue: A setting with minimal distractions and noise ensures the interviewee's comfort. The location should have good airflow, privacy, and easy access so that participants can arrive easily and on time for the interview.

According to McGrath *et al.* (2019:1003), it is essential to contact participants a few days before the interview to confirm the date, time, and location. This reminder allows participants to make arrangements to attend. In the days leading up to the scheduled interview, the researcher contacted the participants to confirm their attendance. The

consent forms were read, signed, and submitted to the researcher before the start of the interviews.

3.19 DATA CAPTURING AND ANALYSIS

3.19.1 The analysis process

Taherdoost (2021:12) described data analysis as the process of breaking down a phenomenon into its parts to achieve a better understanding. Data analysis is the most crucial part of any research because, during this process, the collected data is summarised. Data analysis involves interpreting the information collected through analytical and logical reasoning to identify patterns, relationships, or trends within the data. In this study, the researcher employed thematic analysis to analyse, condense, and summarise the gathered data. Kiger *et al.* (2020:846) describe thematic analysis as a qualitative research method that can be broadly applied across various epistemologies and research questions. It is a method for identifying, analysing, organising, describing, and reporting themes found within the dataset. Klingberg *et al.* (2024:15) described thematic analysis as a translator for those speaking the languages of qualitative and quantitative analysis, enabling researchers who use different research methods to communicate with each other.

According to Braun and Clarke (2022:03), thematic analysis is beneficial in qualitative studies due to its theoretical flexibility. It offers a highly adaptable approach that can be tailored to meet the specific needs of various studies, resulting in a rich, detailed, and nuanced account of data. Dawadi (2020:63) also noted that thematic analysis is effective for summarising the key features of large data sets. This method encourages researchers to adopt a well-structured approach to data handling, ultimately leading to a clear and organised final report.

Moreover, Christou (2022:79) highlighted the disadvantages of thematic analysis, that while thematic analysis is flexible, this flexibility can lead to inconsistency and a lack of coherence when developing themes derived from the research data.

According to Terry *et al.* (2017:17), thematic analysis is the most frequently used method in qualitative research, focusing on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data (themes). Therefore, the thematic analysis will be used to analyze the data in this study. The notes taken during the interview will also be

examined. The researcher read the transcriptions to become more familiar with the data, once all the interview tapes had been transcribed. The participants' responses will be transcribed, scrutinized, and analyzed; therefore, the important points will be summarized and emphasized. The results will then be integrated into an in-depth description of everyone's responses, experiences, and feelings. Caulfield (2019:23) explained the steps of thematic analysis as follows:

Step 1: Familiarization

According to Braun and Clarke (2024:23), this first step requires the researcher to familiarize themselves with the data. However, before evaluating specific things, the researcher must acquire a complete picture of all the data that is gathered. This may involve listening to the audio, transcribing it, reading the text, making preliminary notes, and reviewing the material to become familiar with it. Once the data was recorded, summarized, and organized, the researcher read and listened to the recording many times to thoroughly explore the data and make notes to gain insight into the interview.

Step 2: Coding

Once the researcher has read and become familiar with the data, they can form ideas about what is in the data and what is interesting about it. The data must be coded. Coding involves identifying text passages and assigning labels to indicate their content. Researchers utilize various coding techniques, such as keywords, colored dots, and numbers, to categorize data into themes. Rogers *et al.* (2025:276) suggested that a good code captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon.

Step 3: Generating themes

Step 3 entailed examining the codes, searching for commonalities, and developing themes. Themes are typically more expansive than codes. Braun and Clarke (2024: 23) stated that as a researcher, you will often mix many codes into a single theme.

Step 4: Reviewing themes

This step focused on the process of reviewing the themes. Braun and Clarke (2024: 24) explained that the researcher must ensure that the themes accurately and usefully portray the data. Themes were then developed from the coding process.

Step 5: Defining and naming themes

Defining themes involves precisely articulating the meaning of each theme and understanding how it aids the researcher in analysing the data. Naming themes involves creating a concise and easily comprehensible title for each theme.

Step 6: Writing up

The write-up following the thematic analysis requires an introduction to establish the research question, aims, and approach. According to Christou (2022:81), researchers should include a methodology section that explains how they collected their data, such as through semi-structured interviews. Consequently, the results or findings section typically addresses each theme individually. Afterwards, the researcher analyzed the frequency of each theme's occurrence and its significance, providing examples from the data as evidence.

3.20 RIGOUR AND TRUSTWORTHINESS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of qualitative research is dependent on the researcher demonstrating that data analysis has been conducted in a precise, consistent, and exhaustive manner. Caulfield (2019:38) further stipulated that this is achieved by ensuring accurate, systematized recording and disclosing the methods of analysis by giving adequate detail to ensure the credibility of the process. For this study, the researcher ensured that the information was accurate and worthy of attention. The information was read multiple times to ensure its reliability and clarity.

Credibility

Credibility establishes if the research findings are a valid interpretation of the original opinions of the participants and represent plausible information derived from their original data. Tenny *et al.* (2022:110) further stated that credibility essentially requires

the researcher to link the research study's findings with reality, to demonstrate the truth of the research study's findings. In this study, credibility was ensured through the information collected from the participants was in-depth, rich, and relevant to the research topic.

Transferability

The ability of qualitative research findings to be generalised or applied in different situations is referred to as transferability (Caulfield 2019:29). From a qualitative perspective, the researcher carries the primary responsibility for ensuring transferability. By providing rich contextual detail, the researcher increases the applicability of their findings. Ultimately, the decision to apply the results to a different context lies with the researcher conducting the study, but the study must be well documented. In this study, the researcher provided detailed descriptions and conducted a thorough analysis of the data.

Dependability

In qualitative research, dependability refers to the data's consistency throughout time and under varying circumstances (Ahmed 2024:16). It is comparable to studying reliability in quantitative research. In conducting this study, the researcher ensured that the findings gathered were reliable, recorded accurately, logical, and well-documented. Ensuring that the findings were consistent and reliable also enhanced the study's dependability.

Conformability

Conformability refers to how well other researchers can validate the conclusions of a research study. Haq *et al.* (2023:02) explain that conformability is akin to objectivity; it focuses on ensuring that the data and interpretations of the findings are directly derived from the data itself, rather than being a product of the researcher's imagination. Member checking was done to ensure accuracy. This study ensured conformity by employing a clear research design, documenting all steps, and verifying findings through the data source.

3.21 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Bhandari (2022:32), ethical considerations are a set of principles that govern research integrity. Ethical research practices are essential in maintaining scientific integrity, protecting human rights and fostering collaboration between science and society. These principles guarantee and protect participants from harm, ensure informed consent, and voluntary participation.

The consideration of ethical issues is crucial at all stages of qualitative research to maintain a balance between the potential risks and the probable benefits of the research. Therefore, the study received ethical approval from the Durban University of Technology's Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC), with the reference number IREC 290/22, ensuring adherence to established ethical standards and guidelines. Moreover, the protection of human subjects through the application of appropriate ethical principles is important in every research study. Barrow *et al.* (2017:33) emphasized that participants should never be exposed to risk. In this study, ethical standards were upheld by ensuring participants' confidentiality and securely storing interview recordings. Before the interviews, participants received an information letter (Appendix B) and a consent letter (Appendix C).

To ensure the study was conducted properly, several ethical considerations were taken into account (Hancock *et al.* 2020: 89). All participants provided both written and verbal consent to participate in the interviews and research, through established ethical guidelines. When approached, participants were informed about the research objectives and methodology, and they voluntarily agreed to participate (Laryeafio and Ogbewe 2023:94).

The researcher also ensured that participation was entirely voluntary. According to Bhandari (2022:19), voluntary participation reflects that all research participants are free to choose to participate without any pressure or coercion. Furthermore, in this study, the researcher ensured that all participants could withdraw from or leave the study at any point without feeling an obligation to continue. As a researcher, it was crucial to communicate to all participants that there would be no negative consequences or repercussions for choosing not to participate. Voluntary participation is an ethical principle upheld by international law and many scientific professional standards (Iseselo and Tamiro 2024:29). Consequently, this study adhered strictly to this ethical guideline.

The researcher made sure that the participants were not exposed to any form of deception. The participants' privacy was respected by ensuring anonymity and confidentiality when analysing and using the data collected from them. According to Bhandari (2022:35), anonymity means that you do not know who the participants are, and you cannot link any individual participant to their data. All participants have a right to privacy. Therefore, it was the researcher's responsibility to ensure that the participants' data was safeguarded. Throughout the study, the researcher remained honest, exhibited non-judgmental behaviour, and demonstrated respect for the participants. The researcher ensured there were no possible sources of harm to the participants, including psychological, social, physical, and legal harm.

3.22 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the design used to collect data, supported by the work of other distinguished researchers. The design was detailed and showed how data was collected to achieve the objectives identified in the introductory chapter. The reasoning for using the mentioned qualitative research paradigm was also provided in this chapter. The chapter that follows presents the findings made and a discussion thereof.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings from in-depth interviews conducted with child and youth care workers, exploring their experiences, perspectives, and challenges. The analysis highlights key themes and insights that illuminate the complexities of their work and its implications for practice. The study aimed to explore the role that child and youth care workers had in rebuilding family life during the KZN floods in April. Six objectives guided the study, namely, (1) to understand the impact of the floods in KwaZulu-Natal on children, youth, and their families. (2) to inquire what roles child and youth care workers played to assist these children and their families during the floods, (3) to understand what material and therapeutic support was offered to children and families at shelters, (4) to explore how children and families were supported in their new families in the community, (5) to inquire how prepared child and youth care workers were to deal with the disaster of the April 2022 floods and (6) to make recommendations regarding the professional preparedness of child and youth care workers regarding natural disasters.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in person, and the interview schedule (Appendix D) served as a guide to collect data. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data and develop themes as well as subthemes. In the following sub-sections, the demographic profiles of participants are described, and the analysis process is discussed. Findings are then presented.

The data in this chapter is presented according to the themes and subthemes that emerged from the analysis. The first section following the introduction provides a detailed examination of the participants' demographic characteristics (Section 4.1), the data analysis process (Section 4.3), and the findings, including a table presenting the themes (Section 4.4). The themes are further discussed in Section 4.6. The final section offers a brief conclusion that summarises the key points of the chapter (Section 4.10).

4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES Table 2

Table 2 below presents the demographic details of the participants who are child and youth care workers.

Participant's code	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Area of work
CYCW A	Female	20-30 years	African	Chatsworth
CYCW B	Male	20-30 years	African	Inanda
CYCW C	Female	30-40 years	Africa	Mayville
CYCW D	Female	30-40 years	Indian	Chatsworth
CYCW E	Female	20-30 years	African	Mayville
CYCW F	Male	20-30 years	African	Pinetown
CYCW G	Female	20-30 years	African	Pinetown
CYCW H	Female	20-30 years	African	Umlazi
CYCW I	Female	20-30 years	African	Pinetown
CYCW J	Female	20-30 years	African	Pinetown

CYCW K	Female	20-30 years	African	Chatsworth
CYCW L	Female	20-30 years	African	Mayville
CYCW M	Female	20-30 years	African	Mayville
CYCW N	Female	20-30 years	Indian	Pinetown
CYCW O	Female	20-30 years	African	Mayville

4.1.1 Summary of the demographic profiles of the participants

Fifteen child and youth care workers took part in the research. Data was collected through interviews with child and youth care workers who were registered with the National Association for Child and Youth Care Workers (NACCW) in 2022 during the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) floods. The participants consisted of thirteen females and two males. The participants were aged between 20-40. All these participants lived in eThekweni and worked in diverse settings including suburbs and townships in eThekweni. This profile suggests participants had valuable insights into the impacts of floods on young people and their families from varied socioeconomic backgrounds across eThekweni KwaZulu-Natal. All participants were qualified and had assisted children and families during the floods and offered psychosocial and other relevant assistance to them. The participants in the study represented a diverse group, with the majority identifying as African and one participant identifying as Indian.

4.2 THE PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis was utilised to methodically analyse and interpret the data, facilitating the development of meaningful themes. After each interview, the recordings were transcribed verbatim and checked multiple times. After reviewing the transcripts multiple times, the researcher wrote memos reflecting on the data. The researcher also took coding notes to identify common words, phrases, and themes within the interview transcripts. Initially, the interview questions and research objectives served as the primary themes. However, as the data was analysed further, additional emerging themes and patterns were discovered. As themes were identified and developed, connections and overlaps emerged that needed to be evaluated, analysed, and interpreted according to the research questions. During the analysis, the researcher excluded data that was irrelevant to the topic and objectives.

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of the study and a discussion thereof. The data has been grouped into five themes and twelve sub-themes. These are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Emerging themes and sub-themes

THEME 1	1.1 Damage to homes and property
The impact and effects of floods	1.2 Emotional effects on young people and families
	1. Economic effects on families
	2. Effects on health and well-being
	1.5 Effects on education
THEME 2	

Destruction of child and family life	1. Family displacement
	2. Changes in family dynamics
	3. Loss of community
THEME 3	
Children and family protection	1. Child and youth care intervention
	2. Psychosocial support
THEME 4	
Response and intervention strategies	1. Crisis intervention techniques
THEME 5	
Training and preparedness	1. Recommendations for improved training and preparedness.

Each theme and sub-theme will be discussed in detail below, supported by direct quotes from participant interviews.

4.4 THEME 1: THE IMPACTS AND EFFECTS OF FLOODS

The first theme examines the impacts and effects of floods on youth and their families. This section highlights the challenges they face and how these challenges affect their overall well-being. This theme comprised three distinct sub-themes, namely, (i) exploring the damage to homes and property (ii) the emotional impact of floods on young people and families and (iii) the economic impact of floods on families in communities.

4.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Damage to homes and property

The first sub-theme focused on the physical effects of floods on young people and their families. Toonen *et al.* (2019:197) explained that floods can cause widespread physical destruction, with soil becoming rapidly saturated and unable to absorb additional rainfall. Haraldsen (2022:25) indicated that the rapid saturation of soils and

subsequent runoff can have a profound impact on the landscape, contributing to the severity of the flooding and resulting in damage to homes, infrastructure, and the environment. This was consistent with the participants' experiences. The combination of severe weather and vulnerable soil created a disastrous scenario, resulting in damage to homes and significant losses.

These findings indicated that flooding caused widespread disturbance to communities. Glago (2021:03) stated that floods primarily cause physical damage to buildings and compromise structural integrity. Additionally, Osman and Altinas (2023:636) found that floods are the most persistent and widespread hazard worldwide. Beyond the loss of life, floods can cause significant physical damage to essential items such as furniture, refrigerators, deep freezers, and bedding. Participants in the study also emphasised the severe consequences of flooding, particularly regarding property and housing damage. This destruction disrupted the sense of security and stability for young people and their families. This was reflected in the excerpts below:

C- *“This rain left houses in a terrible state...it was really bad, cause the roofs were ripped off.”*

F- *“The walls fell inside the houses...and the roof tiles were falling inside the houses. I had to get help so the children could be removed because the houses were exposed with no roof.”*

M: *“The floods destroyed...their houses and also their food...especially for those living in shacks...”*

E- *“It was a difficult time for children and families...I counselled some young people, and most of them told me how their houses were filled with mud and water inside...Not to mention water dripping on the ceiling, which will later create mould and a stuffy smell....”*

A- *“It was heartbreaking... lots of water was filled in the houses, the sofas.... the beds, and even stoves were sinking in water and covered in mud...”*

The participants shared that the physical effects of the floods were devastating. Toloo *et al.* (2024:39) also highlighted the physical consequences of flooding on houses, which included damage and destruction. In addition, the impact included structural

damage compromising building integrity, water damage affecting walls and floors, and mould and mildew growth posing a loss of personal property. A study conducted by Shrestha *et al.* (2021:102) aimed to analyse the impact of floods on residential areas and household damage. Likewise, the participants noted that the physical damage from floods rendered homes unsafe and unsuitable for living. They expressed that the houses could not adequately accommodate children and their families

One participant said:

E- *“The environment was not comfortable anymore because their houses were full of mud, with water, and they had no place to sleep in... and not to mention that some houses had no windows... so, because it was cold...the main priority was that the families needed to be safe...”*

The floods had a profound impact on the human environment, making homes unrecognisable. The floods caused extensive damage to homes. A study led by Onyije *et al.* (2023:97) also found that the negative impact of flooding led to a traumatic response among occupants who struggled to recognise their own houses, due to the severity of the destruction. Participants further explained that it was difficult for young people and their families to cope with the sudden changes. This is reflected in the excerpts below

F- *“It was hard to adjust, because now.... they had to accept...that their homes were destroyed right before their eyes...”*

A- *“It was difficult for the community to see their houses destroyed by floods. Some could not even recognise their rooms, kitchen, and their lounges!”*

C- *“One of the children that I counselled said to me that she could not recognise her room or the yard.... She said everything was just turned upside down. It felt like she was in a stranger’s house.”*

These narratives describe the daunting challenges faced by families and traumatic responses to the loss of their homes. Participants reported that the floodwaters not only destroyed their homes but also diminished their sense of security and normalcy, leaving families traumatised and bereft of their cherished personal belongings. A study

by Straten and Ncube (2023:04) revealed that the trauma experienced was significantly exacerbated by damage to property, loss of security, and stability.

4.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Emotional effects on young people and families

While the physical impacts of the floods were devastating, the emotional impacts were equally severe. According to Ajodhia and Makhanya (2024:602), children and families are particularly vulnerable to the emotional trauma and distress caused by floods. This can lead to long-term mental health problems and social challenges. Therefore, this sub-theme deepened an understanding of the emotional impact of the floods on children and families.

Toonen *et al.* (2019:198) stated that floods can trigger a range of emotions in children and families, and these emotional responses are a natural reaction to the disruption and loss caused by the disaster. Naidoo (2022:38) further explained that people affected by flooding experienced a range of emotions, including fear, anger, frustration, and grief. This is evident in the excerpts that follow:

C- *“It affected the families... especially the parents emotionally when they saw their houses damaged, they could not believe ... to see all their hard work crumble down...”*

A- *“Kids were very sad... They were sad because they had lost some of their belongings. Some mentioned losing their favourite pictures...”*

K- *“I can say that children were affected emotionally, that one learner during counselling.... said to me that he was very angry as he saw his bicycle being piled up with mud and broken by the flowing water because it’s the only thing he loved playing with during weekends.”*

Participants shared that the floods caused emotional distress among children, resulting in heightened feelings of worry and sadness. The loss of their safe spaces and their treasured belongings during the floods triggered a profound emotional response, for instance, terror, panic, irritation and sadness amongst children and families, as they struggled to come to terms with the devastating damages and losses. One child lost a bicycle, while another lost their favourite pictures. Bruggemann (2022: 221) agreed that severe weather conditions, such as floods, can trigger stress, sadness, and emotional turmoil over such losses.

A study led by Osman and Altinas (2023:637) observed that individuals who lost properties and homes during the disaster exhibited higher levels of emotional distress. Furthermore, the loss of resources compromised their ability to self-care, leading to increased insecurity and uncertainty. Dhara *et al.* (2020:25) stated that the disruption of life and the loss of familiar surroundings can cause children to feel insecure, confused, and afraid. This is evident in the excerpts that follow:

H- *“I was in the community hall.... to check up and brought a few clothing items for the victims... I saw one child shaking and crying, and then I had to work in the moment and asked what happened..... The child said my mom went out to get food for us. I’m afraid because what if she does not come back?”*

D- *“When children and families were taken to community halls...my fear was with the children and youth to be honest...I feared because it was an open space... worse.... a space they were not used to...”*

L- *“Seeing the worry in the parents' and children's faces... as they felt hopeless and defeated ... was very sad...and also gave me a moment to think and reflect how my family is because I live far from Durban.”*

Nothing (2024:15) added that flooding can test the emotional stability of even the most resilient individuals affected by the disaster. Participants noted that children and families were significantly affected after witnessing the floods and experiencing displacements. They reported that there were feelings of helplessness among parents. A study by Ajodhia and Makhanya (2024:602) focused on the effects caused by the emotional toll felt by parents. In addition, participants revealed that such feelings of inferiority, low self-esteem, guilt, and shame affected their ability to socialise, creating a negative self-image. This was seen in the following excerpts.

B- *“Some parents said... that they felt like failures because they were homeless with their children... they felt worthless because their children did not deserve this life.”*

C- *“Parents felt like their kids blamed them for being in the community hall... they pleaded for help from social workers... You could tell how they felt defeated.”*

Ajodhia and Makhanya (2024:604) explained that parents with low self-esteem may struggle to accurately assess and respond to their children’s emotional and physical

needs during a flood, leading to neglect or ineffective care. One of the participants described how parents felt like failures since they had become homeless. One parent said that their child blamed them for ending up in the community hall. Ward *et al.* (2024:13) argued that experiencing a flood impacted family relationships and interactions. This is evidenced in the excerpts below:

M- *“Yes, even though most families were taken to the temporary community shelters and lived with other families... their privacy was affected in a way that they could not live happily as a family and..... I could say everything was disturbed.”*

F- *“I could say that there was no time to bond...parents were too focused on ensuring their kids and themselves survived, and I think they were not able to fully show love because they were still in shock and worried about how they would bounce back”*

Participants discussed that displacement due to flooding was a highly stressful experience, with a significant emotional impact on individuals and families. Family privacy and normal family relationships were affected. According to Penden (2019: 23), individuals face various challenges, including the struggle to find shelter and food, as well as dealing with the emotional turmoil that comes from losing a home and community. These problems can lead to stress and lead to a range of negative effects, such as depression and anxiety, especially among parents. This was seen in the following excerpts:

A- *“Stress is very common...in this type of situation.... but.... stress also affects a person’s mood; they cannot be able to communicate properly with others. Because ...something is troubling them...”*

E- *“Stress in parents affects them in a way that.... they may find it difficult to maintain their usual parenting style...They end up. showing their kids out of anger and frustration because they simply cannot accept ...this sudden change. In their lives.”*

D- *“Feelings that arise during a hard time like this in parents...It is low self-esteem. They feel worthless and powerless. Since they are not able to provide for their families in the way that they did before displacements...any... The floods. “*

F- “Some parents had feelings of guilt and shame... they were worried that their kids would see them as unworthy...they could not be happy or free around their children. Because they did not like seeing them confused and scared.”

Sadia *et al.* (2020:23) asserted that flooding can have devastating emotional effects on victims, hence causing long-term trauma and emotional distress. Participants shared how the floods impacted families emotionally, and the loss of homes led to unhappiness, disrupting their sense of normalcy. Their normal routine relationships were disrupted. The preceding excerpts revealed that the loss of security, familiarity and social support can be overwhelming, therefore leading to increased tension that affects family interaction. It has been revealed that parents with low self-esteem may struggle to cope with the challenges of floods, impacting their ability to provide adequate care and support to their children.

4.4.3 Sub-theme 3: The economic impact on families

The financial impact of the floods was equally severe. Several participants described how floods resulted in extensive damage to homes, infrastructure, and businesses, which caused economic hardship and instability for families within the communities. Sub-theme three explored the economic effects of the floods on families.

According to Vin and Kawasaki (2024:35), economic effects can be caused by the physical destruction caused by flooding. Families and children are particularly vulnerable to economic hardship due to this sudden destruction. This is seen in the following excerpts:

A- “Losing houses and furniture and everything means they will need money to buy all the things that were badly destroyed.”

The destruction of homes and infrastructure caused a huge financial burden to the families. One participant noted that the physical and economic impacts of flooding are closely connected, as families must shoulder the burden of recovery and reconstruction, which can significantly impact their financial stability. Ashizawa *et al.* (2022:13) stated that families have to rebuild their homes and are pressured to work hard to regain stability. Similarly, Manzoor *et al.* (2022:17) argued that the economic stress caused by floods forces families to struggle, particularly when their workplaces are destroyed by water. This led to them being retrenched and having no financial

support, which contributed to families feeling hopeless, agitated, and depressed. This is seen in the excerpts below:

K- *“One of the children said to me after the floods, his mother is looking for a job... it can be anything, so they can go back home.”*

Floods can lead to job losses and decreased income for affected households, making it challenging for them to afford necessities and recovery efforts (Peden *et al.* 2023:10). Data indicates that these floods have significantly harmed families financially. It becomes extremely challenging when the parent in the house is unemployed and has to rebuild their lives due to unplanned circumstances. This is seen in the excerpt that follows:

E- *“The parents had to work extra hard to build another home... the family structure was destroyed because of that. They had to think that now they can’t buy certain things... they had to eat what was available...they had no choice.”*

This participant shared how families had to do budget planning and limit spending to save money for repairs, and have a list of necessities. This also meant that the parents had to be strategic in planning their lives. Some participants reported losing their jobs due to floods, which forced families to find ways to access emergency funds and generate income for stability.

L- *“One family said, they had to sell their crops, which were sweet corn, cabbage, and carrots... because they needed money for repairs and food.”*

M- *“It was hard...and the families needed money to live... some told me that their crops were damaged by floods, but they had remaining crops and they had to sell it to have little money for themselves...”*

B- *“It was bad for the family that had livestock...because... this family I was working with had chickens and selling the chickens for R110.... but the water drowned their chickens and it ended up closing the business ... so they did not make a profit that month...”*

Participants shared that when a flood hits, its destructive force is not just in the physical devastation, but also in the economic hardship that follows. The emotional distress of parents amongst families is also evident. The financial burdens led to increased

poverty; therefore, children were vulnerable to the effects of stress, as their education and basic needs were affected. This is reflected as follows:

M- *“The uniforms of children were destroyed...even their stationery because their schoolbooks were wet, and some had mud on it...so going back to school meant that the parent had to buy a new uniform...”*

A- *“You see... during a one-on-one session with a child, she told me... she did not have transport money to go to school and...her mom did not have money for transport, so she had the option of walking to come to school, which was a 45-minute distance...”*

4.4.4 Sub-theme 4: Effects on Education

Education and ongoing learning are essential components of a child's growth. Due to the floods, the CYCWs noted a disruption in young people's routines and schooling. Munsaka and Mutasa (2020:14) stated that floods can negatively impact education by reducing learning hours, causing staff shortages, increasing absenteeism, and limiting syllabus coverage, ultimately resulting in poor academic performance among children. Though families had their homes destroyed, schools in communities were also affected, and some had to close for days to be developed and rebuilt. This is reflected in the information provided as follows:

A- *“In the school that I was working at as a child and youth care worker... It was closed for a week after the floods because ...the classrooms were filled with mud and water... the school gate, doors and fence were broken and damaged... the environment was not okay...in my opinion, learning could not take place...”*

E- *“Where I was working, the school was closed for 3 days...it opened, but the classrooms were empty...so the learners did not come to school... because I think the situation at home was worse... or maybe the roads? ...maybe the roads were badly damaged from where they stayed.... so, it was kind of hard...to... to travel and get to the other side....”*

M- *“The leaves fell from trees... leaves and mud were all over the schoolyard and school grounds and.... some places had a small pond of water like a river full of muddy water...so definitely it was not safe for the learners.”*

It is evident from the data that the floods had caused extensive physical damage. The cycle of poverty and instability was perpetuated within communities. Participants explained that the economic impact of floods not only affected the parents but also children, who were vulnerable to increased poverty, food insecurity, and disruption to their education. This can have a long-term impact on their health, learning, and future opportunities. This was supported by Lassa *et al.* (2023:420), who argued that children are disproportionately affected by floods, experiencing significant disruptions to their living situations, social networks, and familiar surroundings.

The devastating floods had a profound impact on communities, placing residents at heightened risk, thereby precipitating a cascade of secondary challenges. One of the most significant consequences was the disruption of schooling, which affected not only the academic trajectory of students but also their social and emotional well-being. This is evident in the following excerpts:

B- *“Children could not go to school...because their classes were destroyed... also the roads were damaged.... So, the teachers could not drive to the school until it was fixed.”*

J- *“When schools closed... it was very stressful on children and parents as well because it meant their children would be behind with work...Also, the children were bored...so in child and youth care, we say when children are bored, they will start to behave and find other things to interest them.”*

Schools have suffered destruction, leaving children without access to educational programmes and learning activities. Munsaka and Mutasa (2020:25) highlight that floods can damage schools and disrupt education, jeopardising children's futures. Huang (2025:17) highlighted the significant loss of learning hours due to school closures, and participants reported experiencing limited curriculum coverage.

Prolonged school closures can lead to increased frustration, depression, and anxiety among students. This was shared by one of the participants, who said that boredom led to poor social behaviour. According to Habiba *et al.* (2021:05), if left unaddressed, these emotions can manifest in harmful behaviours, including involvement in gangsterism and criminal activities, school dropout, teenage pregnancy, and substance abuse. These negative coping mechanisms often arise from a combination

of factors, including boredom and lack of engagement due to school closures, unaddressed trauma and emotional distress, and limited access to support services and resources. Munsaka and Mutasa (2020:29) argued that prolonged school closures due to flooding further expose female learners to risks, such as early marriages. According to Peden *et al.* (2023:02), child marriage is sometimes used as a coping mechanism to mitigate economic hardship and food insecurity faced by families in the aftermath of a disaster. These challenges compromise children's right to access quality education.

A- *"Frustration was also shown by the children...some reported they lost their textbooks.... They felt they were getting behind with the schoolwork."*

Children's well-being was also affected, as floods may lead to severe consequences on children's development and disrupt their schoolwork. Participants revealed that children were still attending school when the floods occurred; therefore, the children who were badly affected by the floods and their families were taken to temporary shelters. In the shelters, the space was not conducive because of a lack of privacy. This is reflected in the excerpts below:

E- *"When children were moved to community halls... one of the children told me that...she needed her own space to do her schoolwork and assignment...but it was hard to concentrate."*

M- *"Overcrowding in spaces led to school uniforms and stationery being lost...therefore some children reported to me during work that they do not have jerseys and... lost their school skirts..."*

K- *"Yes... Students said.... it was kind of hard to share space with other kids so they could not learn or study properly... Some people have different techniques when it comes to studying. So, I'm sure there were clashes also..."*

The ability to obtain education is recognised as a fundamental human right for all young people, yet in a displacement setting such as community shelters, accessing quality education was challenging. Participants stated that the children in temporary shelters during flooding faced significant challenges in maintaining their educational routine, and one participant explained that this led to frustration among students. The lack of privacy and dedicated study spaces hindered their ability to focus on their

studies. Additionally, Jadidzadeh (2022:33) stated that the varying age groups in the shelter created a challenging environment, as young people had to navigate the needs and energies of children, adults, and elderly individuals all in one space. Furthermore, the risk of losing essential educational materials, such as school textbooks and uniforms, was elevated in these settings. The crowded environment increased the likelihood of theft, misplacement, or damage to these critical resources. This can result in substantial educational setbacks, as well as emotional distress, for the affected children.

Sabharwal (2020:170) also argued that education is not just a basic right for children but essential to creating a sense of normalcy, social cohesion, and long-term stability among displaced families. However, most importantly, participants expressed that displacement has wide-ranging effects, and community shelters were not conducive environments for the children and their families.

4.4.5 Subtheme 5: Effects on health and well-being

The damage to infrastructure and housing also exposed flood victims to disease. Kontowicz *et al.* (2022:40) stated that prolonged exposure to a waterlogged home could lead to a debilitating bout of influenza (flu). Lynch (2023:21) explained that floodwaters are often contaminated, leading to a variety of waterborne diseases that young people can contract. Notably, these include cholera, hepatitis A, hepatitis E, intestinal infections, and gastrointestinal diseases, which are exacerbated by the scarcity of clean water. Others become ill because of exposure to the hazards of the floods. These experiences are reflected in the excerpts below:

D- *“Young people would go to school feeling cold... they had flu because their houses were full of water...they were in a cold and open space for...way...too long..... the children also had no jerseys and enough blankets to keep warm.”*

C- *“One young person disclosed that she only has one pair of uniform... she could not find another one, so she used to come to school with a half-wet uniform. That worried me because, I felt she could easily catch a cold, due to wearing something wet.....”*

G- *“Luckily, I did not deal with a case of stomach aches with serious diseases, but children did have rashes and cold and flu....”*

The floods resulted in physical health issues and increased exposure to illnesses among the victims. Young people were forced to attend school while feeling cold and experienced further exposure to low temperatures due to flooding in their homes. According to Sadeghloo and Mikhak (2022:23), children are particularly vulnerable as their immune systems are still developing. Repeated disasters can significantly affect their health. Participants shared how the children and youth were the most vulnerable group, as they were not strong enough to fight against illnesses caused by poor living conditions. Ochani *et al.* (2022:32) also asserted that the immune system of children is still evolving and prone to acquiring various infectious diseases. Ochani *et al.* (2022: 38) revealed that contact with unclean water causes children to develop symptoms such as clogged noses, itchy eyes, hoarse voices, skin complications, and sneezing, particularly in humid areas. One participant described how a young person developed a skin rash due to contact with dirty floodwater.

The fulfilment of children's physical and emotional needs is deeply rooted in the care and support provided by adults. However, they may struggle to cope with the confusion and the uncertainty of a disaster without adult guidance and support. Previous research corroborates that natural disasters have a profound and far-reaching impact on individuals. Walker *et al.* (2010:50) mentioned children as the most vulnerable demographic, followed by women, the elderly, and people with disabilities, respectively. This can be seen in the excerpts that follow:

J- *"When we visited community halls.... children were coughing and sick more than...their parents..."*

E- *"Babies...were crying ...there was noise and some parents said they do not...have water to make and wash properly...the ... babies' milk bottle...they were panicking..."*

Ochani *et al.* (2022:35) highlighted the challenges of maintaining hygiene standards for feeding equipment. They explained that polluted environments in areas affected by flooding increase the risk of contamination, posing a threat to the health and safety of infants who rely on formula feeding. Participants reported that mothers with babies faced significant challenges in feeding their children due to limited resources, which hindered their ability to prepare milk safely. The accounts shared indicated that the floods had a severe impact on infants and children who depend on adults for basic needs such as food, comfort, and safety. Additionally, participants highlighted that

many children were left without a stable environment, which is crucial for their physical and emotional well-being.

It was evident that the displacement had multiple devastating effects on women and children. However, participants shared that there was a significant risk of gender-based violence due to the close quarters shared by both men and women. This compromised the safety and dignity of vulnerable individuals, particularly women and girls. Ashraf *et al.* (2024:121) additionally shared that, women in shelters faced reproductive health risks due to inadequate facilities, sanitation, and privacy. Disrupted access to menstrual hygiene products, condoms, and other essential reproductive health supplies could lead to health complications. Furthermore, overcrowding and poor living conditions increased the risk of sexual violence, exploitation, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

J- *“When both genders are in one space, including children...I can imagine the chaos.... However, my point is...displacement of families.... can increase the risk of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual assault... not to be bias. Bias...truth is... women and girls are particularly vulnerable to this form of violence....”*

C- *“The hygiene should have been maintained because... it is easy to pass down diseases such STI’S ...etc.”*

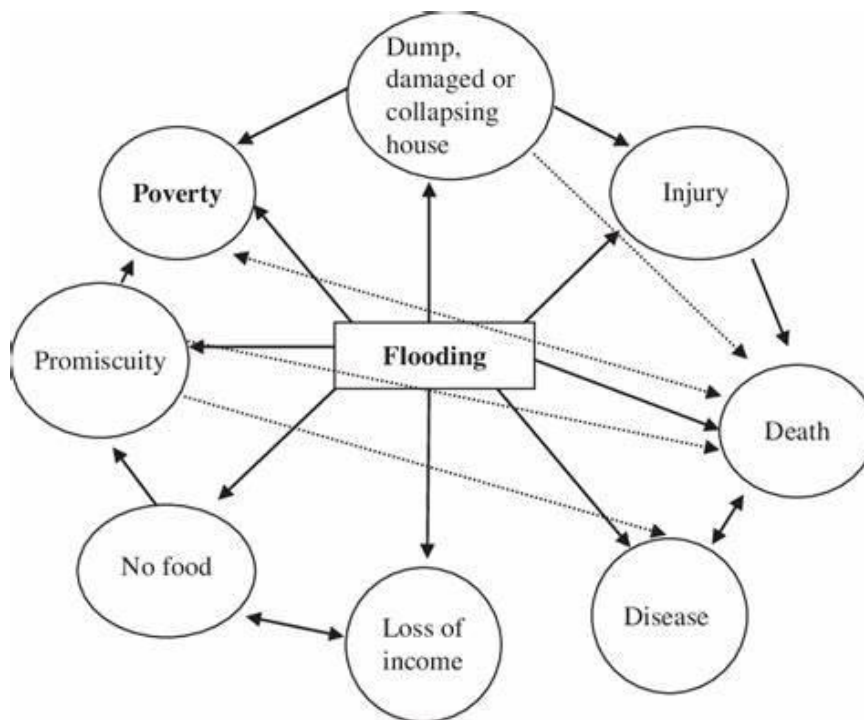


Figure :1: Connection between the physical, emotional, and economic effects of floods

4.5 THEME 2: Destruction of family life due to the floods

The floods' destructive force extended beyond tangible destruction and into the heart of family life. According to Dube (2023:1308), loss of homes and possessions can cause physical displacement and homelessness, which disrupts family dynamics, challenges parental roles, and exacerbates existing inequalities. This second theme explored ways in which the floods destroyed family life, affecting parents and children in profound and lasting ways. There are three sub-themes, namely (i) physical and emotional impact of family displacement on children and families, (ii) the impact of flood-induced stress on family relationships, and (iii) disruption of the community support system due to flood-induced displacement.

4.5.1 Sub-theme 1: The physical and emotional impact of family displacement

When flooding occurs, it forces families out of their homes, communities, and their familiar surroundings, leading to profound physical and emotional effects. There are widespread challenges that are experienced by the families, for instance, from living in crowded evacuation centres to adjusting to new living arrangements. Displacement

is a disruptive and distressing experience for the victims. This subtheme explored the physical and emotional impact of displacement on children and their families.

The loss of security, familiarity, and social support can be overwhelming, leading to increased tension that affects family interaction. The participants noted that families struggled to adjust to the physical changes caused by the floods. Many were forced to relocate to safer areas after their homes were destroyed, leaving them in a state of disrepair and unsafe for occupancy. The move to the shelters caused physical discomfort due to crowding and a lack of familiarity with the place. This is reflected in the excerpts below:

C- *“The people.... they had to share space with other families... from different places, because now you need to learn to be with others. It was like we were one, but we are different.”*

K- *“One learner said to me that.... being away from home and with other people was not okay, because they could not find the privacy or time to pray together as a family like how they used to do in the house...”*

D- *“Moving and changing of environment was hard for families because... it did not feel safe like home. They had to guard their things and be aware of other people because they now lived with strangers...”*

Participants shared how the floods impacted family dynamics, noting that the loss of privacy led to unhappiness and disrupted their sense of normalcy. Their usual routines and relationships were significantly affected. Furthermore, relocating to community halls meant that flood victims had to share space with others, which intensified the lack of privacy. Even basic family practices, such as praying together, were disrupted. Additionally, they had to take measures to protect their belongings from theft in these shared spaces. Castells-Quintana *et al.* (2022:25) elaborated that exposure to disasters can negatively impact social-emotional health, highlighting that the loss of property and the need to move to safer environments during floods created stress, leaving people feeling overwhelmed and powerless in the face of the situation. The following excerpts illustrate these experiences.

C- *“It was hard for people because now it troubled them on how and when they will go back to their usual lives, you know....”*

1. *“People were stressed because now they had to learn to trust other people, but it is not always easy to trust a stranger. How much more to live with one under such stressful, unplanned circumstances?”*

One of the participants shared that the adjustment to the temporary shelter was not easy for the families to accept. Wang *et al.* (2025:21) further explained that displacement due to floods led to various challenges. Hence, for many families, evacuation and displacement following flooding were emotionally traumatic and hurt their health and well-being. However, Munir *et al.* (2020:1142) further explained that a sense of belonging emerged from an individual's perception of quality and extent of membership within a social entity. It involves connection, acceptance, and attachment. Consequently, many participants mentioned that families were not accustomed to sharing their space with unfamiliar people. This led to a lack of a sense of belonging. This is also reflected by the excerpts that follow:

E- *“It was not comfortable at all... people had to share space... and that meant learning to be with people that have different beliefs and have a different way of doing things...”*

J- *“They needed to share with other families, from different places...you know...So family life was very affected... so now they needed to learn to live with other family members in one room... It's like, ‘you are one, but you are different.’”*

M- *“Even though families were put together in temporary community shelters as a family... but there were other families that lived with them in the halls...so I think I can say their privacy was disturbed...”*

A- *“I say that...the families were not happy... they were not able to do the things they like to do as a family... also they are not able to spend time the way they like to.”*

Studies have shown that a sense of belonging is important to all age groups. Hence, during an emergency such as floods, it is important because having a sense of belonging means that you feel safe, loved, and accepted within the environment. When there is a strong sense of belonging, victims are less likely to experience depression, anxiety, and other negative health outcomes. Additionally, Wild *et al.* (2020:23) found that women with a strong sense of belonging reported better mental health and life satisfaction, as well as greater motivation to participate in their new

environment. Therefore, a sense of belonging is important. However, if there is none, it is hard to fit in and adjust. This is reflected in the narratives below:

N- *“Women and children had to sleep in a large hall... with many other women... there was no privacy and no sense of safety...”*

K- *“I’m very sure that being surrounded by strangers was...very scary because. You don’t know who to trust...”*

B- *“Many women had to bath and get dressed after...I am sure it was challenging because... the process of dressing and undressing in front of strangers was not something to adjust to... I can imagine how scary it was.”*

I- *“Displacements had its negatives.... Though it was a safer option but I’m sure it was not a safe place physically to accommodate both genders....in my own opinion, displacement can increase reproductive health risks for women, especially!”*

This information highlights that women and children felt uncomfortable, particularly regarding their sense of belonging. Hence, some participants shared how the environment had people living in the same place, and the challenges of living with males could increase gender health risks for women. This, however, also affected the women and children who needed a sense of security. Floods can disrupt the sense of security and stability for child development and women’s well-being, leading to long-term consequences for their mental health, physical health, and overall quality of life.

4.5.2 Sub-theme 2: The impact of flood-induced stress on family relationships

Flooding can lead to segregation and strain family relationships. This subtheme examines the effects of stress on family dynamics and how floods and displacement can alter family interactions and structures. Understanding the long-term impact of stress on these relationships is essential for creating effective support strategies for displaced families.

Study findings by Pizzorni *et al.* (2024:16) highlighted the profound social impacts of flooding, including displacement, relocation, and subsequent disruptions to routine and lifestyle changes. During flooding and displacement, families had to deal with the immediate effects of being uprooted. Their daily routines, living conditions, and

schedules were altered to adapt to their new circumstances. This is seen in the excerpts hereunder:

M- *“During floods...the family lost their food and...This surely affected them in a way that they had to adjust to the change in eating habits...because in the centre, yes there was food for the victims...but food was limited, and it had to be accessible and be enough for everyone.”*

L- *“Challenges will always be there... I’m sure for a family that was used to a dinner table. They had difficulty to accept eating on chairs and on the floor and it was uncomfortable....”*

According to Aydin *et al.* (2024:12), food support in the post-disaster period is a vital humanitarian service that enables disaster victims to survive and maintain their health. Therefore, the food must have a long shelf life and be nutritious and safe. Participants shared that one of the critical challenges faced by individuals seeking refuge in shelters during floods was their limited access to food. Shelters often struggled to provide sufficient quantities of nutritious food, leading to food insecurity and malnutrition. The participants revealed that limited food options were a difficult adjustment for families. Hence, the lack of autonomy in their food choices and inability to prepare meals according to their cultural, religious, or personal preferences added to the stress and discomfort of their situation.

However, according to Rahman *et al.* (2015:147), the challenges in shelters during the floods extended beyond just accessing food, as there were also changes in diets that needed to be addressed. This included providing appropriate food options for those with dietary restrictions, such as infants, individuals with food allergies, and those with specific cultural or religious requirements. Guleria *et al.* (2022:406) further revealed that the preparation of food aid is complicated by several factors, including the diverse nutritional requirements of various population groups, and individuals with chronic health. Furthermore, participants shared that people had to adapt and modify their eating habits due to the challenging circumstances. The sudden change in eating habits during shelter stays not only led to discomfort and dissatisfaction but also had a profound impact on family life. Additionally, the lack of access to traditional food ingredients made it a challenge; hence, this disruption to routine and familiar comforts

caused tension and altered the family dynamics. This was reported in the following excerpts:

M- *“The family was disturbed...they were not able to live and normally eat as a happy family because now they had to adjust to the living arrangements... Also, they did not have privacy to perform their traditional customs and rituals...some families burn incense when they sleep... But they could not do it and learn... to accommodate others.... this affectedone of the mothers who was a sangoma (African traditional healer) ...because she needs to smell incense...apparently.....to...connect....”*

B- *“Families, could not spend enough time to just laugh and be happy... Some have a routine of going to bed and praying together ...before bed.... So, there was no time and morale to do so...”*

There were significant challenges related to the effects of floods on family relationships. Many participants shared that flooding and being placed in community shelters negatively impacted family dynamics, particularly by disrupting their routines. According to Frijters *et al.* (2024:63), after experiencing major adversity, some individuals turn to their religious faith and support networks for comfort. Participants noted that many families were unable to practice their religion or uphold traditional customs, such as burning incense. These practices are essential for reducing stress. Lee (2021:15) emphasised that the scent of incense can evoke powerful memories and associations with home, community, and identity. Since burning incense is a cherished tradition in many families, participants expressed that maintaining this practice in shelters was not possible. Consequently, the loss of these sensory and cultural connections contributed to feelings of stress and grief. The information presented indicates that families were compelled to abandon some cultural practices and adapt to a new, unfamiliar environment, resulting in a loss of cultural autonomy and freedom. This, in turn, had a profound impact on their cultural identity, mental health, and overall well-being.

G- *“Women had to take on the role of caretaker and ensure that their children and husband had enough to eat... It was less of a bonding time but...more.... of survival time...usually. Husbands, have short tempers and lose interest quickly, so the mother had to step up and be the head...”*

According to Jewkes *et al.* (2023:32), family interaction is a complex and dynamic process that can be profoundly affected by flooding and displacement. The participants have expressed very important points, from changes in parenting style to increased conflict and isolation. The effects of displacement on family interaction can extend beyond the immediate situation and have long-term impacts on children and future generations to come. For instance, children who experience displacement during flooding may develop attachment issues or behavioural problems that affect their ability to form healthy relationships later in life.

4.5.3 Sub-theme 3: Disruption of community support system due to flood-induced displacement

Floods can severely disrupt community support systems, limiting access to essential services, social networks, and economic activities. Many participants have reported that floods caused families to be displaced. This subtheme explores the impact of floods and how they affected the sense of community.

Floods can threaten communities in various ways, with the loss of Ubuntu being one significant effect. According to Michalski *et al.* (2020:10), a sense of community is important because it is a vital element of a healthy community. This creates a feeling that people matter to one another with a shared faith that their needs will be met through commitment and togetherness. However, being taken away from the usual community and having no sense of belonging creates division. This is seen in the following excerpts:

D- *“Being away from the people that you are always around and see every day is scary.... everyone was looking after themselves and their families...it was basically.... Survival of the fittest.”*

A- *“Displacement and floods cause separation among people in communities...so it was hard to reconnect...a family that I worked (with) spoke about.... How each person had to ‘mind their own business’...focus on rebuilding and no time of visiting their homes, yards and so...on....”*

J- *“I remember...some young people also mentioned to me... that they were scared to let their friends visit because the houses were bad... especially the walls... and so,*

they were scared to let others see where they lived... this affected their ability to socialise, bond and have fun with other children..."

The participants have expressed that the occurrence of floods can undermine the resilience and connectedness of communities, creating a cycle of vulnerability and marginalisation. However, floods can also activate Ubuntu. Makhanya (2023:111) defined Ubuntu as a Nguni Bantu term representing a philosophy that values compassion, empathy, kindness, and community. Ubuntu emphasises interdependence and cooperation; hence, some participants shared that people came together to support and care for one another in times of crisis. Therefore, this can create a sense of solidarity and mutual assistance, even in the face of adversity. This is narrated in the following excerpts:

E- *"One of our biggest challenges as child and youth care workers in this difficult time was to ensure that the families had something to eat...so it was also a sense of Ubuntu. I had to figure a way to give unto those who needed and look for sponsors..."*

J- *"I remember, one of the children said that...they lost everything in the floods... But their neighbours came together and gave them a place to sleep...also helped with the rebuilding of the house..."*

D- *"I worked with a child that said she lost her school uniform...but one of her neighbours...her friend's mom gave her a uniform to use for the time being..."*

K- *"There was also a community clean up, where I was working after the floods...they cleaned and removed any sand that was blocking the road...this showed that they loved their environment..."*

People are capable of incredible kindness and generosity during a natural disaster. The participants expressed how, even during difficult times, others dared to help those in need when they were also suffering.

A study conducted in Africa by Peden *et al.* (2023:16) further highlighted that the positives were identified, including willingness to assist in flood emergencies and good cooperation amongst neighbours. However, participants shared that people in neighbourhoods understood the true meaning of unity and realised the temporary nature of worldly possessions. Mathew (2023:19) discovered that most victims from

the Kerala district in India were relocated to relief camps, where they expressed high levels of satisfaction with the facilities provided. They appreciated the warm meals, temporary shelter, the generosity they experienced, the sense of community, and the formation of self-help groups. Prayer was identified as the most commonly used coping strategy. Amid devastating floods, communities came together to pray. This demonstrated a profound sense of generosity and solidarity.

4.6 THEME 3: Roles of child and youth care workers

The third theme explored the intervention and implementation of services provided to children and their families during floods. It highlights the role of child and youth care workers' involvement, as well as other professionals, in how they assisted the victims.

4.6.1 Sub-theme 1: Role of child and youth care workers during floods

Multiple participants have revealed that children and families are at risk and experience various forms of harm when floods occur. Therefore, psychosocial support was crucial in providing emotional and psychological support to children and families affected by floods. This was necessary to help them recover from the trauma and stress of the disaster. Thus, this theme entails a discussion of the importance of psychosocial support and how it can promote emotional healing for the victims.

Children and their families suffer from emotional trauma and stress due to the loss of their sense of security and routine. Child and youth care workers provided psychosocial support as early as possible after the disaster to help prevent long-term emotional and mental health issues. This is seen in the excerpts below:

M- *“Since I worked as a child and youth care worker in a school setting...I would say that...providing life space counselling on children helped...they got a sense of relief...they would cry as they shared about their situation...but I was there to listen and give them a shoulder to cry on.”*

A- *“I remember working with a child...she came in and just wanted help for her and her family...we started talking and she was telling me that her schoolbooks were ruined and...she was scared to tell the teacher... so I advised her about honesty. She told her teacher, and the teacher gave her new schoolbooks...she was so happy and came back to say thank you.”*

J- *“I’m good in English...so after floods, I held support groups that would meet once a week...we would first talk about our experiences of floods as a way of releasing and healing...then I would teach English ...because the school I was working in... the kids had a challenge with English.”*

E- *“I used to go to the shelter, once a week to help the kids with their homework...I think. this helped them because they felt loved and supported...because they could not study well there, so they needed someone to push and guide them.”*

K- *“I remember...I had a group counselling session with the grade 8 and 9 students after floods...it helped my young people because it gave them... a chance to share about their experiences and feelings and to support each other in their recovery.”*

B- *“I worked with a family that...I helped financially so they could get a food hamper since they spoke to me during counselling in a family visit...they got their hamper and were so happy ...the mother even cried because she said ...she did not know when and where their next meal was going to come from...because they were struggling before floods and the situation got even worse after the floods.”*

The participants described how psychosocial support and counselling were important during such a critical time. The support received from child and youth care workers helped individuals process their experiences, express their emotions, and develop coping strategies, which led to greater emotional well-being and resilience. Thus, in child and youth care work, intervention is crucial as care workers can intervene in various ways. Group work is an effective method.

The participants emphasised the significance of group work counselling and how this intervention assisted the young people affected by floods in promoting personal growth and healing. Malhotra and Baker (2022:10) discussed that group therapy is a valuable treatment approach where a single healthcare provider or team of providers works with multiple patients simultaneously. This intervention enabled patients to recognise that their symptoms and experiences are not unique to them, fostering a sense of community and solidarity. Therefore, from the information shared by the participants, it becomes apparent that group work counselling does foster a sense of belonging and connection. Hence, hearing other people’s experiences and insights broadens one’s understanding and offers new coping strategies.

Ntontis *et al.* (2020:22) also mentioned that group work intervention can play a vital role in supporting children's academic continuity during floods. Berry and Wilcox. (2018: 22) discussed that collaborative homework completion in a group setting fosters a supportive learning environment, enabling children to learn from one another and benefit from peer-to-peer knowledge sharing. However, in these group work settings, the presence of an adult is important. According to Malhotra and Baker (2022:15), social workers can create a safe, supportive environment which promotes open discussion and constructive feedback among group members. One of the participants also expressed that the presence of a child and youth care worker catalyses motivation, providing guidance and encouragement.

Child and youth care workers should ensure that the basic needs of children, such as food, shelter, and safety, are met. Therefore, group counselling is also effective in improving the lives of children and their families and assists in identifying further interventions. Straten and Ncube (2023:05) explained that counselling is a dynamic and empathetic process in which a trained practitioner establishes a supportive relationship with an individual, family, or group to explore and address various challenges and concerns. Therefore, participants shared that child and youth care workers played a vital role in counselling and supporting families in need. One crucial aspect of this support is identifying which families require food hampers. The counselling process facilitates direct interaction. Child and youth care workers can, therefore, effectively connect families with necessary resources, including food hampers, to address immediate needs and promote overall well-being. However, if the child's needs are not met, they are unable to reach their full potential. This is seen in the following excerpts:

K- *"I believe that children cannot study well in temporary community shelters because they are not used to the environment, so they do not feel safe. They did not have access to adequate food, and the space in the shelter was limited...so they would not achieve good results in school because the environment is not conducive and child-friendly."*

Chimange and Bond (2020:111) stated that child and youth care is concerned with the totality of a child's functioning and concentrates on ensuring that the children's environment is conducive, therapeutic and growth-promoting. Participants, therefore,

also shared that young people could not reach their full potential because their environment was not friendly and conducive. Young people need to have a sense of belonging to feel safe and develop effectively.

4.7 THEME 4: Intervention strategies utilised by child and youth care workers

Floods pose a significant threat to the welfare and protection of children and adolescents. Therefore, child and youth care workers play a critical role in supporting vulnerable populations during such difficult times. The unique challenges posed by floods require child and youth care workers to adapt and employ specialised strategies to ensure the physical and emotional safety of those in care. Therefore, this theme explored different intervention strategies utilised by child and youth care workers to assist children and their families during the floods. The reasons are categorised into two subthemes: (i) exploring various strategies used by child and youth care workers to assist flood victims; and (ii) the emergency response protocols followed by these workers.

4.7.1 Sub-theme 1: Crisis intervention strategies utilised by child and youth care workers

Participants described the crisis intervention strategies utilised by child and youth care workers as follows:

A- “The children that I have identified that were affected by floods...I spoke to the school office and received some uniforms that were donated previously by the former school learners... So young people gained their self-esteem and were not be shy... They got uniforms, and they did not fear coming to school because they knew they had the full proper school uniform.”

I- “I used to visit the community shelter...once on a Saturday and help children and their families with washing their clothes...I bought washing powder and we would wash them clean... so that children could go with a clean uniform to school and parents would attend work with clean clothes...this made them happy, and they felt loved...”

Child and youth care work adopts a holistic approach to support the comprehensive development of children and youth, addressing their physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and spiritual needs. According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, meeting

children's needs is essential for them to reach their full potential. Participants expressed that they had to ensure that the school uniforms of the children were clean. By fulfilling this basic need of having clean uniforms, children were able to focus on their education and perform well academically. Therefore, clean uniforms could boost their self-esteem, confidence, and well-being, enabling them to attend school without embarrassment and focus on learning whilst also participating fully in class.

Hopper (2024:15) described Maslow's hierarchy of needs and provided a useful framework for understanding how the floods affected individuals and communities. By addressing the basic needs of individuals, such as psychological and safety needs, psychosocial support enabled their recovery and resilience in the aftermath of floods. This was evident in the excerpt below:

M- *"The fact that when NACCW bought food hampers for me to deliver to one of the families I have identified. They were so happy that the children said now they have something to eat, so they will be able to study properly when they are full..."*

If needs are met, then the child can reach their fullest potential. Hence, participants shared that as child and youth care workers, they were key to providing psychosocial support and helping individuals achieve their potential in the wake of disasters like floods. By attending to the physical, emotional, and social needs of children and youth, child and youth care workers could help build stronger communities that were better equipped to weather future storms. As expressed by the participants, their role was to assess the needs of children and their families in the aftermath of floods by identifying any physical, emotional, or social challenges they were facing.

Participants emphasised that child and youth care workers are uniquely positioned to advocate for the needs of flood-affected children and youth, as they work closely with other organisations to ensure comprehensive support services. Therefore, as expressed by one of the participants, they had to work with the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) to provide additional services. It has been established that the South African Social Security Agency, SASSA, provided critical assistance to flood-affected individuals by replacing essential documents lost or destroyed during the disaster. This included birth certificates, crucial for accessing various government services and benefits. One participant expressed that they assisted the families with documentation because they knew that they would only be able to receive government

services if they had the required documents. However, Mashaba and Saurombe (2023:23) further discussed that one of SASSA's roles is to administer social grants to people who are vulnerable to poverty. Hence, by providing a stable source of income, families can begin to rebuild their lives, restore their dignity, and work towards a brighter future. SASSA and child and youth care workers provided support to families, which included economic empowerment and linkages to community resources. Participants shared as follows:

M- *"Some of the children lost important documents like birth certificates, ID documents, school reports...I was able to work with a social worker in the community to refer the family to SASSA (South African Social Security) which provides social assistance and grants to qualifying people, so they were able to get help...I knew how much they needed these documents..."*

H- *"One of the children explained that she lost her birth certificate and her mother lost her, ID, so I had to contact SASSA for application of a new one."*

C- *"I really served and advocated for my children... also helped one family to apply for the SASSA R350 grant... while for other families, I made sure that they had warm blankets since theirs were destroyed by the floods. Each family had a different need..."*

L- *I used my skill of observation...I used to do the school morning gate supervision...I noticed one child not carrying a school bag...When I asked where his bag was, he replied and said 'it got damaged by the heavy rain with his schoolbooks inside....so I advocated for the child to get a new stationery pack at his school since they provided them..."*

Various participants expressed that the floods left families without access to necessities such as warm clothing and blankets. Children and their families needed warm blankets after the floods. Naidoo (2022:37) explained that one essential item that can provide comfort and reassurance after exposure to floods is a warm blanket. While warm blankets are a vital necessity, one participant shared that school stationery packs are also a crucial necessity for young people, particularly in the aftermath of floods that destroyed their school materials.

However, according to Peden *et al.* (2023:33), having access to essential school items such as notebooks, pens, pencils, and backpacks can significantly boost young

people's motivation to learn and succeed academically. The information presented above suggests that in the context of floods, child and youth care workers are crucial to accessing the unique needs of each young person, connecting them with essential services, and advocating for their rights. These dedicated professionals work tirelessly to provide emotional support, stability, and resources to help young individuals navigate the challenges they face. This is evident in the following excerpts:

1. *“One child that I worked with...booked a one-on-one session with me... She was crying and she told me how her mother lives in Malvern as a stay-at-home nanny and ...she had to look after her younger siblings while she was in matric...her younger siblings being a brother and sister...she explained that it was... hard to get food. With the little money her mommy has, she buys food and clothing they need...but due to floods, she could not visit and buy them food...I spoke to my mentor I worked with at NACCW (National Association for Child and Youth Care Workers) ... and they delivered at the school... They even drove the child home because she could not carry the hamper since it was heavy.... She was so happy...”*

Child and youth care workers played a vital role during floods, and participants highlighted their contributions in providing support to families during the floods. Moreover, they could identify children and youth who required assistance and could coordinate with other disaster response agencies, such as the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the Department of Social Development (DSD), to ensure that children and youth received the support and protection they needed. This was evidenced in the following excerpts:

F- *“My mentor... advised us to look for sponsors.... write sponsorship letters to various organisations to help the victims because we should not limit the help....”*

M- *“As a NACCW member, we worked together with DSD to provide food parcels, school uniforms and built RDP houses for the badly damaged houses.”*

Child and youth care workers advocate for the children and their families to receive effective services. According to Mhizha and Nhedzi (2023:176), Child and youth care workers (CYCWs) actively advocate for the needs of the children they serve, ensuring that their unique requirements are met and their well-being is prioritised. Mkhize *et al.*

(2025:20) elaborate that CYCWs also advocate for families and communities. Participants in the study discussed how they collaborate closely with these families, communities, and other stakeholders to help them access essential resources such as food, clothing, education, and healthcare.

Additionally, participants noted that they sought extra assistance by looking for sponsorships from various organisations to improve the lives of flood victims. This advocacy role is crucial for promoting positive outcomes and building resilience. Child and youth care workers (CYCWs) actively advocate for the needs of the children they serve, ensuring that their unique requirements are met and their well-being is prioritised. Mkhize *et al.* (2025:20) elaborate that CYCWs also advocate for families and communities. Participants in the study discussed how they collaborate closely with these families, communities, and other stakeholders to help them access essential resources, such as food, clothing, education, and healthcare.

Additionally, participants noted that they sought extra assistance by looking for sponsorships from various organisations to improve the lives of flood victims. This advocacy role is crucial for promoting positive outcomes and building resilience.

It has already been highlighted that the floods have had a devastating effect on children and youth. However, with the right support and protection, they recover and thrive. Additionally, Child and youth care workers, with the support of organisations like DSD and NACCW, played a vital role in helping children and youth cope with stress and trauma, develop resilience and access the resources they needed.

4.8 Theme 5: The importance of ongoing training and support

Child and youth care workers play a vital role in supporting vulnerable populations during disasters. Their ability to respond effectively relies heavily on proper training and preparation. Child and youth care workers require specialised knowledge and skills to ensure the safety and well-being of children and youth in their care. This theme explored the (i) current state of training and preparedness of child and youth care workers and (ii) areas for improvement and enhancement.

4.8.1 Sub-theme 1: Recommendations for improved training and preparedness.

Parrott *et al.* (2025:118) mentioned during the response phase that community workers, such as social workers located in schools, should educate teachers and other staff on how to understand and support students affected by flooding emotionally, practically, and academically. They should also help students whose homes have been flooded, and remember that while the school may not be flooded, some or all students may be affected. It is important that they provide practical and emotional support for affected students who may be rehoused far away, live in damp or unsuitable housing, and often experience higher-than-normal levels of stress. Moreover, according to Sonmez and Gokmenoglu (2023:20), professionals, such as teachers, must have the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively integrate disaster preparedness. Another important factor is to ensure that classmates, teachers, and all parents understand their situations and how to support them. Therefore, it would be suitable for child and youth care workers to set up groups in schools for children affected by the floods so they can communicate their feelings and receive emotional support. This is discussed in the excerpts that follow:

G- *“Teachers should be sensitive and learn how to be there for their learners. At a school I was working at, 2 weeks after the floods, the management was shouting and scolding learners for wearing inappropriate school uniforms, not understanding that some learners were affected by the floods and lost their homes and had no access to their things. so basically, they were using what they had at that time.”*

O- *“I think that it is important that child and youth care workers have group discussions on survival tactics...because the weather is bad nowadays...and with the number of people dead...it shows that people are not skilled and know how to deal with flooding...”*

M- *“With the number of houses lost, I honestly think that.... people should be educated regarding the place or area where they choose to build their houses because they need to make sure that the foundation of the place will be strong to handle the water pressures...”*

According to Osman *et al.* (2024:124), education on risk and preparedness is essential, particularly for individuals who have recently relocated to flood-prone areas. Many newcomers to these regional locations may not realise that they are living in a flood zone or fully understand the speed at which water can rise and the heights it can reach. Participants noted that people must be more aware of their surroundings and the implications of where they choose to build their homes. Therefore, flood management education is necessary to increase awareness of the associated dangers. This knowledge is vital as it helps individuals prepare a flood plan and understand when and how to evacuate (Echendu 2023:355). Furthermore, such education can teach vulnerable communities essential survival strategies.

Additionally, supporting people and local businesses after a disaster and assisting the local economy in its recovery could help reduce the mental health burden on people and the business community. A study by Hopper (2020:03) found that mental health services must be provided to ensure that people are taught about their emotions, how to express their feelings and how to cope during stressful times in life. Participants also discussed this as follows:

B- *“I suggest that South Africa should invest in building more temporary shelters because the ...shelters were there but...they were not conducive but overcrowded...so that people can be emotionally safe.”*

K- *“There should be more counselling provided to people...yes! The people suffered mentally due to losing their housing.... I think child and youth care workers should continue to...enhance their counselling skills so they can be more helpful...”*

2. *“There should also be psychologists visiting the various shelters instead of people who are coming to deliver food items and clothing...because mental health is also important.”*

D- *“I think that people should be trained on how to take care of their environment...For example, when you eat chips, do not throw the packet on the floor or by the road, rather you throw it in the bin because the drains get blocked, you see... So, I think, it's*

important because these type of things makes water not flow and that's how some floods occur.”

Child and youth care workers have expressed that mental health is as important as receiving physical items such as groceries and clothing. Young people and their families need support in the form of counselling to feel and heal the pain. Psychosocial services will guide individuals on how to structure their homes properly. They will receive advice that helps them make better decisions, which can reduce the likelihood of displacement and the subsequent need for temporary shelters due to housing loss. Moreover, Wang *et al.* (2022:03) mentioned the significance of flood management in mitigating adverse consequences, highlighting the growing emphasis on resilient and sustainable approaches. This finding aligns with the broader importance of environmental awareness, as communities that are informed of risks and effective management strategies are crucial for reducing flood risks and promoting long-term sustainability. Hence, participants discussed that instructing people regarding proper waste disposal and placing proper litter containers can help in a cleaner environment and drainage system. Additionally, raising awareness within communities and fostering understanding will help prevent loss of life and ensure that all community members are protected during emergencies.

4.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the themes and subthemes that emerged from the analysis of data collected from fifteen interviews. These themes and subthemes are summarised in Table 3 and discussed throughout the chapter. The findings highlighted numerous challenges that participants observed during the floods, as well as the impact on children and their families. These challenges included administrative, personal, relational, and systemic issues. The chapter also examined the fears and anxieties associated with exposure to flooding and how child and youth care workers supported victims in building resilience. The next chapter will provide recommendations based on these findings and conclude the study.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to investigate the impact of the April 2022 floods on young people and their families, as well as the role of child and youth care workers in assisting them during the floods in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). To achieve this, six specific objectives were established. The theoretical framework guiding the study was Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Abraham Maslow developed Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which contends that humans are driven by five main types of needs: physiological, safety, love, self-esteem, and self-actualisation (Hopper 2020:3). Therefore, this theory of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is an effective theory for treating individuals experiencing natural disasters and dealing with their aftermath

This chapter then provides a succinct overview of the key findings derived from the data analysis, highlighting the significant role child and youth care workers played in supporting children and families affected by this natural disaster. The conclusions drawn from this study underscore the critical importance of their work and inform evidence-based recommendations aimed at enhancing disaster response and recovery efforts.

5.2 Summary of the chapter

The objectives of this research have been identified, and the findings of the data collected were discussed. The study found that child and youth care workers played a pivotal role in supporting children and youth during floods. Their involvement in the flood response effort was crucial, as they provided counselling and advocacy to help young people navigate the crisis. Hence, with their expertise in communication and collaboration, child and youth care workers facilitated connections between families, emergency services, and other stakeholders, ensuring a coordinated response. Mhizha and Nhedzi (2023:175) also mentioned that child and youth care workers can work in collaboration with school boards, government, organisations, non-profits, or other community agencies such as group homes. This means that they have the opportunity to work with a diverse group of youth from all walks of life. Data revealed that child and youth care workers are essential professionals and by leveraging their skills in adaptability and resilience, they create a sense of stability and normalcy in

chaotic situations, making a profound difference in their lives of children and youth affected by floods.

The objectives of this study were to:

1. To understand how children and youth, and their families, were affected during the floods in KZN.
2. To inquire what roles child and youth care workers played to assist these children and their families during the floods.
3. To understand what material and therapeutic support was offered to children and families at shelters.
4. To explore how children and families are being supported in their new families in the community.
5. To inquire how prepared child and youth care workers were to deal with the disaster of the April 2022 floods.
6. To make recommendations regarding the professional preparedness of child and youth care workers regarding natural disasters.

According to de Carvalho (2024:09), flooding causes a significant disruption to children's lives. This study revealed that children and their families encountered a multitude of challenges in their communities during floods, leading to devastating consequences that significantly impacted their psychological, social, and health outcomes. These results underscore the critical importance of child and youth care workers in communities, highlighting their crucial role in mitigating the adverse effects of disasters on vulnerable populations. Furthermore, the findings emphasised the urgent need for sustained investment in the child and youth care workforce to ensure that these professionals are adequately equipped to provide essential support services, promoting resilience, and fostering the well-being of children and youth.

The data presented in Chapter 4 reflected 5 main themes and the twelve (12) sub-themes. These emerged from the semi-structured and face-to-face interviews.

5.3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The five (5) main themes and the twelve (12) sub-themes that emerged from the data are as follows:

THEME 1 The impact and effects of floods	1. Damage to homes and property
	2. Emotional effects on young people and families
	3. Economic effects on families
	4. Effects on health and well-being
	5. Effects on education
THEME 2 Destruction of child and family life	6. Family displacement
	7. Changes in family dynamics
	8. Loss of community
THEME 3 Children and family protection	9. Child and youth care intervention
	10. Psychosocial support
THEME 4 Response and intervention strategies	11. Crisis intervention techniques
THEME 5 Training and preparedness	12. Recommendations for enhanced training and preparedness.

5.3.1 Objective 1: To understand how children and youth, and their families, were affected during the floods in KZN.

The main goal of the study was to investigate how floods affect young people and their families. It aimed to gain a thorough understanding of how these floods impact the well-being and resilience of both the youth and their families. This study discovered that the floods had a profound impact on young people and families, affecting their

well-being, safety, and overall quality of life. Moreover, the study highlighted the emotional and economic well-being of young people and their families. This highlighted the interconnected nature of these challenges. Hence, the participants discussed the impact of floods on children and their families. The key findings were as follows:

Physical impact: According to Glago (2021:10), there are varied effects of floods. The primary effects of flooding include physical damage to buildings and weakening of structures. In this study, the physical impact of the floods was evident in the displacement of families, damage to homes and infrastructure, and loss of essential resources. The study found that the physical destruction caused by floods left homes unsafe and unsuitable for living, and participants shared that their houses were not conducive to accommodating their children and families. However, participants additionally revealed that the emotional and psychological toll of the disaster was equally significant, with children and families experiencing trauma, anxiety, and stress.

Emotional impact: The emotional impact of floods on young people and families revealed that it can be profound and long-lasting, leading to a complex array of feelings, trauma, anxiety, grief, guilt, shame, anger, sadness, helplessness, fear, and emotional numbing. These were a few of the emotions that may surface. Participants shared that these emotions could manifest in changes in behaviour, strained relationships, and a loss of sense of safety and security. Furthermore, the trauma of experiencing a flood can lead to ongoing stress related to recovery, finances, and daily life, making it difficult for young people and families to cope and rebuild their lives. In addition, Mulchandani *et al.* (2020:1174) explained that displacement from homes can result in stress arising from having to deal with household repairs. The data also revealed that it is essential to acknowledge and address the emotional impact to support the well-being and resilience of those affected by floods, providing a supportive environment for them to process their emotions and navigate the road to recovery.

Economic impact: The economic impact of the floods was also far-reaching, with many families losing their livelihoods, struggling to access necessities, and facing increased poverty and inequality. According to Ashizawa *et al.* (2022:44), floods significantly disrupt economic activity, resulting in loss of productivity, reduced

commerce, and decreased revenue. Participants noted that families had to rebuild their homes and felt pressured to work hard to regain their stability. The study also highlighted the difficult economic recovery process faced by families affected by floods, which required substantial financial resources to rebuild their lives. The costs associated with rebuilding homes, replacing lost belongings, and covering temporary housing expenses were overwhelming, leading to financial strain and debt. Moreover, flood victims often had to contend with the loss of income due to disrupted employment, necessitating a challenging job search in a potentially weakened local economy.

This study found that the emotional toll of these economic stresses was significant, as families struggled to cope with the fear, anxiety, and uncertainty of their situation. The trauma of displacement, loss of personal possessions, and disruption of routine had long-lasting effects on mental health and well-being, and increased vulnerability and insecurity. However, participants shared that, as families navigated the complex and time-consuming process of recovery, they required comprehensive support systems, including financial assistance, counselling services, and social support networks, to mitigate the economic and emotional impacts of the flood and facilitate a resilient recovery. This finding confirmed the interconnectedness of the physical, emotional, and economic impacts of floods; hence, understanding these interconnections is crucial for developing effective flood recovery strategies that address the holistic needs of affected individuals and communities.

5.3.2 Objective 2: To inquire what roles child and youth care workers played in assisting these children and their families during the floods.

The second objective of the study explored the roles that child and youth care workers have played within the affected community. This included:

1. Emotional support and counselling
2. Practical assistance with basic needs
3. Advocacy and connection to resources
4. Community-based programmes and activities
5. Support for family reunification and empowerment

Participants revealed that they provided emotional support and counselling to help young people cope with trauma, anxiety, and stress, and facilitated access to necessities like food, water, shelter, and health care. Additionally, they created safe spaces for young people to play, learn, and socialise, promoting a sense of normalcy and stability. They also supported family reunification and empowerment, helping young people and their families to rebuild their lives.

According to Mahery (2010:22), child and youth care workers are uniquely positioned to advocate for the needs of children and youth, as they work closely with other organisations to ensure comprehensive support services. As trained professionals, they provided empathic support, conducted comprehensive needs assessments, and facilitated connections to vital resources, including food, shelter, healthcare, education, and psychological services. The participants also shared the importance of advocating for the rights and needs of young people and highlighted that child and youth care workers ensured their concerns were acknowledged. They worked closely with emergency management officials, community organisations, and other stakeholders to ensure that these programs and services were integrated into broader disaster response and recovery efforts. The data revealed that, through their work, they made a significant positive impact on the well-being and resilience of young people affected by the floods.

5.3.3 Objective 3: To understand what material and therapeutic support was offered to children and families at the shelter.

1. Essential supplies
2. Temporary housing
3. Educational resources
4. Family therapy
5. Group activities
6. Parent-child support

The third objective focused on examining what development and therapeutic services were offered by child and youth care workers. The participants stated that at the shelter, children and families received essential material support, including food,

water, clothing, and medical care, as well as comfort items like blankets and sleeping bags. Additionally, they had access to therapeutic support, such as emotional support and counselling from mental health professionals, group therapy sessions, art therapy, and stress management techniques.

The study found that counselling played a significant role in the shelter because it provided a supportive and safe environment for children and families to process their emotions, cope with trauma and build resilience (Matlakala *et al.* 2022:23). Through individual and group sessions, child and youth care workers addressed the unique needs of each individual, teaching stress management techniques, fostering emotional support, and promoting family bonding. These services helped individuals to confront and manage their emotions. Additionally, research conducted by Bakic and Ajdukovic *et al.* (2021:40) has shown that disasters can have a profound impact on individuals' mental health and well-being, underscoring the critical need for accessible psychological services to support affected populations. The participants emphasised the significance of group therapy and mentioned the availability of support groups for parents and caregivers. The data also showed that referrals to psychological services were provided, and that children and families received assistance from various departments.

5.3.4 Objective 4: To explore how children and families are being supported in their new families in the community.

Many families faced numerous challenges. The participants stated that the adjustment to the temporary shelter was not easy for the families to accept. Mort *et al.* (2018:149) described that for many families, evacuation and displacement following flooding were emotionally traumatic and hurt their health and well-being. Child and youth care workers play a transformative role in supporting children and families as they navigate their new families and communities.

This study revealed that child and youth care workers supported the flood victims by establishing trust and building strong relationships. According to Thumbadoo (2025:11), child and youth care workers play a crucial role in ensuring young people's safety needs are met amidst disruptions. Therefore, they created a safe, nurturing environment that fostered emotional healing, social growth, and cultural connections. Through individualised support, advocacy, and community engagement, CYCWS

addressed the unique needs and challenges faced by each child and family, promoting resilience and empowerment. The research found that child and youth care workers not only provided essential services such as food, temporary housing, and financial services. Participants indicated that they provided emotional support for displaced children and youth through group work and life space counselling, which fostered a sense of safety, security, and stability. Moreover, participants shared that child and youth care workers also facilitated family bonding activities, promoted reunification efforts, and connected families with community resources.

According to Mahery (2010:05) the primary goal of child and youth care workers is to create a welcoming and supportive environment that fosters young people's sense of safety. Therefore, the study revealed that in the shelter, child and youth care workers fostered an inclusive and welcoming environment, helped children feel valued, and promoted a sense of belonging. The study emphasised the importance of recognising and valuing diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. It discussed how child and youth care workers help dismantle barriers and create inclusive spaces that celebrate identity and foster a sense of belonging. Their work was a testament to the power of human connection and the potential for growth, healing, and transformation that can unfold when children and families feel seen, heard, and supported.

5.3.5 Objective 5: To inquire how prepared child and youth care workers were to deal with the April 2022 floods.

This inquiry into objective number 5 assessed the preparedness of child and youth care workers to deal with the floods. This involved examining their training, confidence, and adaptability in responding to the disaster. The inquiry sought to identify gaps in preparedness, effective response strategies, and support systems for child and youth care workers. By exploring these aspects, it aimed to understand how child and youth care workers coped with the floods and identify areas for improvement to enhance their disaster preparedness and response in the future.

The study found that child and youth care workers are guided by policy and do assessments to deliver quality services. Child and Youth Care Workers adopt a holistic approach to support the comprehensive development of children and youth, addressing their physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and spiritual needs. Therefore, according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, meeting children's needs is essential for

them to reach their full potential. Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a useful framework for understanding how the floods affected individuals and communities (Hopper 2024:15). Data revealed that addressing the basic needs of individuals, such as psychological and safety needs, psychosocial support can promote recovery and resilience in the aftermath of floods

5.3.6 Objective 6: To make recommendations regarding the professional preparedness of child and youth care workers regarding natural disasters.

Child and youth care workers played a vital role in supporting vulnerable populations during disasters. According to Mahery (2010:23), their ability to respond effectively depends on adequate training and preparedness. Therefore, this objective focused on making recommendations to enhance the professional preparedness of child and youth care workers in responding to natural disasters. These recommendations may include:

1. Training programmes
2. Resource development
3. Policy revisions
4. Collaborative partnerships

This study also highlighted the vital importance of educating childcare workers on risk and preparedness to effectively respond to natural disasters. Participants shared that by educating the workers, it is ensured that they are well equipped to identify potential risks, develop emergency plans, and provide emotional support to children. This education also enables them to stay updated on the latest disaster response strategies, facilitating effective communication and decision-making during emergencies.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Further research is essential to comprehend the role of child and youth care workers (CYCWs) in various environments where children and their families reside. Additionally, it is crucial to investigate CYCWs' practices related to emergency preparedness and response.

2. Further studies should also focus on the significance of training CYCWs in trauma-informed care and crisis intervention, as this can improve their ability to address distress related to floods.
3. More investigation is required on the significance of child and youth care workers in providing parenting support and guidance, addressing concerns such as child and parent trauma, behavioural issues, and emotional well-being.
4. Further research is necessary to investigate the significance of ongoing professional development for child and youth care workers in enhancing their skills and knowledge to meet the unique needs of families affected by floods.

Despite child and youth care being a growing profession, there is a notable lack of literature exploring the critical role that child and youth care workers can play in supporting children and youth during natural disasters. Furthermore, there is a scarcity of research and resources specific to the National Association of Child and Youth Care Workers [NACCW] organisation. Additionally, the findings within this study showed that existing literature on natural disasters has highlighted the roles of social workers. The data also revealed that social workers and child and youth care workers share many similarities in their roles, responsibilities, and goals; hence, both professions are dedicated to supporting vulnerable populations, promoting well-being, and addressing social injustices. However, a significant gap exists in recognising the vital contribution of child and youth care workers, specifically those affiliated with the National Association of Child and Youth Care Workers [NACCW]. Therefore, there is a need for more research on the impact of CYCWs' life space work on the emotional well-being and resilience of children and youth, the effectiveness of community-based interventions, and the role of CYCWs in fostering collaborative relationships with other professionals.

Child and youth care workers play a vital role in supporting children and youth in various settings, including communities, schools, and residential care. Further research is essential to explore the multifaceted role of child and youth care workers in community-based settings, such as shelters and community centres. However, their response to emergencies and disasters in the lives of children and youth is an area that requires further research. Moreover, studying CYCWs' response to emergencies

can provide valuable insights into the complex needs of children and youth in crisis, enabling the development of more effective interventions and supports.

Additionally, research should examine the training and support needs of CYCWs and the development of culturally responsive and trauma-informed programmes. Emergency preparedness is crucial in child and youth care work as it enables professionals to provide critical support to children and youth during high-stress situations. Moreover, Gibbs *et al.* (2022:33) explained that emergency preparedness in the CYCW setting promotes a culture of resilience and proactive planning, ultimately contributing to better outcomes for children and youth. By prioritising emergency preparedness, CYCWs can help protect the well-being and safety of their clients while enhancing their practice and confidence in responding to emergencies effectively.

5.5 LIMITATIONS

Despite the study making important findings regarding its objectives, it had several limitations. The research was geographically focused on the eThekweni region of KwaZulu-Natal. Ross and Zaidi (2019: 23) noted that geographical constraints can limit the ability to compare findings with studies conducted in different areas, which hinders the accumulation of knowledge and understanding. As a result, this study's findings cannot be generalised to other regions or provinces. Additionally, previous research on this topic, particularly concerning the roles of child and youth care workers, has been limited. The lack of existing research led to insufficient data availability and reliability, making it challenging to draw comparisons and expand on current knowledge. Nevertheless, due to these limitations, future research should aim to gather insights from all NACCW child and youth care workers in other regions. It should also prioritise exploring the roles and impacts of child and youth care workers in collaborative efforts with various professionals to better support communities.

Expanding research in these areas can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the roles, impact, and effectiveness of child and youth care workers. The study, moreover, highlighted the contributions CYCWs make in supporting vulnerable populations, which informs strategies to enhance their practice, collaboration, and impact.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This study highlighted the crucial role of child and youth care workers in disaster response and recovery efforts. It emphasised the need for ongoing investments in their training, support, and recognition. Furthermore, the study emphasised the well-being and resilience of children and families, exploring ways to create stronger, more compassionate communities capable of facing the challenges.

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Appendix A: Letter of information



LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study: The role of child and youth care workers during the April 2022 floods in eThekweni KwaZulu-Natal.

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: Nonkululeko Princess Ngcobo. Bachelor's degree in child and youth care

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s: Prof. Raisuyah Bhagwan

Greetings and welcome prospective participants

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:

Good day, my Name is Nonkululeko princess Ngcobo, a student at DUT doing research for my Master's in Child and Youth care I would like to invite you to consider participating in my research study on the roles of child and youth care workers in rebuilding family life post the floods in KZN. My study aims to explore what roles child and youth care workers played in rebuilding families after the floods that took place in KZN. The research I wish to conduct for my Master dissertation involves, exploring the role of Child and Youth Care Workers during the April 2022 floods in eThekweni KwaZulu-Natal and specifically how workers under your organisation, the NACCW aided to rebuild, assist families and communities to bounce back from the challenges they encountered because of floods.

What is research?

Research is a process of organized enquiry that involves collection of data, documentation of important information collected from you as a participant and the collected information will be analysed and interpreted. Your participation in my research study will add value to current research. Your participation is voluntary, which means that you are not forced to participate and there will be no incentive.

Outline of the Procedures: The research study will collect data from the National Association for Child and youth Care workers office (NACCW). The permission letter to access you as participants will be requested from the Director of the organisation you are working for, through a gate keeper's letter. Once you have signed the consent form, further arrangements to schedule the interviews will be made by yourself and me as the researcher. A copy of the letter of information and consent will be given to you. On an arranged date interviews will be conducted with you to collect the required information. The interviewer will start by conducting individual interviews with the identified child and youth care workers in the organisation. You are expected to share your experiences and thoughts on the research topic. Questions will also be asked to help you in sharing the desired information. The interview will last no longer than 50 to 60 minutes each worker. The interview will be recorded, and a consent letter will be given to read carefully and signed that you agreed to be interviewed. An interview guide will be available to guide the process of the interviews. No photographs will be taken of you before, during or after the interviews.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant:

There will be no risks involved to you during this study. The data collected will be treated confidentially and only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to it. Interviews questions will be fair and professional therefore there will be no discomfort to you the participant or any harm.

Explain to the participant the reasons he/she may be withdraw from the Study:

Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time during the study if you wish to. Where there is noncompliance or incapacity during the research, you may be advised to withdraw. In both instances above, no adverse consequences will accrue to you. In certain circumstances such as Non-compliance, illness, etc. the research may be terminated.

Benefits:

This research study explores how child and youth care workers interacted and assisted individuals and families affected by the floods in KZN. This will influence you in a positive way since the research will be published in an accredited journal.

Remuneration:

There will be no form of remuneration as your participation is voluntary.

Costs of the Study:

You will not be expected to cover any cost of the study

Confidentiality:

Anonymity is guaranteed; identification details will not be disclosed in the write up of this study. All participation information is confidential and will be used in the research purposes only. Data will be stored in a locked cupboard for a period of five years after which it will be disposed of by shredding. The researcher and her supervisor will be the only ones to have access to the data.

Results:

The results will be published and will be available to you and the public to read.

Research-related Injury:

There are no anticipated research related injuries.

Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings

All participants' information is confidential, and all results received will be used in this study for research purposes only. Information collected from you will be safely locked away and kept for 5 years only, and thereafter shredded. The researcher and her supervisor are the only ones who will have access to the recordings and hardcopy information received from the participants. The data will be stored until after publication of the results occurred.

Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:

Please contact me on my cell number 0849573430 or my supervisor Prof Raisuyah Bhagwan PhD: Community

Supervisor email address: bhagwanr@dut.ac.za or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Postgraduate Support 031 373 2577 or researchdirector@dut.ac.za.

Appendix B: Letter requesting permission from the National Association of Child and Youth Care worker

GATE KEEPER'S LETTER

01 August 2022

National Association for Child and youth Care workers (NACCW)

92 Lilian Ngoyi Road
Windermere
Durban
4001

Request for permission to conduct research

Dear, MS. Merle Allsopp: Director of the National Association for Child and youth Care workers (NACCW).

My name is Nonkululeko Princess Ngcobo, I am currently registered for a Master's in Child and Youth Care at the Durban University of Technology. The research I wish to conduct for my Masters dissertation involves, exploring the role of Child and Youth Care Workers during the April 2022 floods in eThekweni KwaZulu-Natal and specifically how workers under your organisation, the NACCW aided to rebuild, assist families and communities to bounce back from the challenges they encountered as a result of floods.

I am hereby seeking your consent to invite interested Child and Youth Care Workers to participate in the study. I would also like to ask if you can kindly provide me with a venue/setting where I can conduct my interviews with your Child and Youth Care Workers. Please see information below regarding my study. Additionally, please peruse through the letter of information attached.

Aim of the study:

To explore the role Child and Youth Care Workers played in rebuilding family life during the KZN floods in April 2022.

Objectives of the study:

1. To understand how children and youth and their families were affected during the floods in KZN.
2. To inquire what roles child and youth care workers played to assist these children and their families during the floods.
3. To understand what material and therapeutic support was offered to children and families at shelters.
4. To explore how children and families are being supported in their new families in the community.
5. To inquire how prepared child and youth care workers were to deal with the disaster of the April 2022 floods.
6. To make recommendations regarding the professional preparedness of child and youth care workers regarding natural disasters.

I am hereby seeking your consent to interview members interested in participating voluntarily in my study from your organizations hence I have read about the work you have done for families and communities post the floods.

Inclusion criteria: Participants who will be included in the study are only those who are Child and Youth Care Workers. The participants should be registered under the National Association for Child and Youth Care Workers (NACCW) and provided counselling, emotional support and further assistance to the flood victims. Additionally, the study will also include participants who were involved in providing humanitarian relief, English speaking, males and females, child and youth care workers from different race, gender, religious and cultural backgrounds and those who give consent.

Exclusion criteria: Participants who are not registered under the National Association for Child and Youth Care Workers (NACCW) and were not involved in counselling and providing assistance to the flood victims will be excluded from the study. Furthermore, no race, gender or diverse Child and Youth Care Workers will be excluded from the study and those who do not give consent will also be excluded from the study.

Ethics: I have provided you with a copy of my proposal which includes copies of the data collection tools and consent and/ or assent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter which I received from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC). Throughout the study, I will ensure that the participants' identity will be kept anonymous. Pseudonyms will be used. Furthermore, the interview will last a duration of 50-60 minutes.

Enquiries: If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0849573420 and email 21805109@dut4life.ac.za or contact Prof Raisuyah Bhagwan research supervisor on 0313732670.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter

Yours sincerely,

Nonkululeko Princess Ngcobo

Durban University of Technology student

Appendix C : Permission from NACCW

GATE KEEPER'S LETTER

01 August 2022

National Association for Child and youth Care workers (NACCW)

92 Lilian Ngoyi Road
Windermere
Durban
4001

Request for permission to conduct research

Dear, MS. Merle Allsopp: Director of the National Association for Child and youth Care workers (NACCW).

My name is Nonkululeko Princess Ngcobo, I am currently registered for a Master's in Child and Youth Care at the Durban University of Technology. The research I wish to conduct for my Masters dissertation involves, exploring the role of Child and Youth Care Workers during the April 2022 floods in eThekweni KwaZulu-Natal and specifically how workers under your organisation, the NACCW aided to rebuild, assist families and communities to bounce back from the challenges they encountered as a result of floods.

I am hereby seeking your consent to invite interested Child and Youth Care Workers to participate in the study. I would also like to ask if you can kindly provide me with a venue/setting where I can conduct my interviews with your Child and Youth Care Workers. Please see information below regarding my study. Additionally, please peruse through the letter of information attached.

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6. To make recommendations regarding the professional preparedness of child and youth care workers regarding natural disasters.

I am hereby seeking your consent to interview members interested in participating voluntarily in my study from your organizations hence I have read about the work you have done for families and communities post the floods.

Inclusion criteria: Participants who will be included in the study are only those who are Child and Youth Care Workers. The participants should be registered under the National Association for Child

and Youth Care Workers (NACCW) and provided counselling, emotional support and further assistance to the flood victims. Additionally, the study will also include participants who were involved in providing humanitarian relief, English speaking, males and females, child and youth care workers from different race, gender, religious and cultural backgrounds and !

Appendix: D : Letter of consent



LETTER OF CONSENT

Full Title of the Study: The role of child and youth care workers during the April 2022 floods in eThekweni KwaZulu-Natal.

Names of Researcher/s: Nonkululeko Princess Ngcobo

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

1. I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Nonkululeko Princess Ngcobo, about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: _____
2. I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
3. I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
4. In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
5. I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
6. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
7. I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

Full name of participant (Thumbprint)	Date	Time	Signature/Right
--	-------------	-------------	------------------------

I, _____ Nonkululeko Princess Ngcobo here with confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Full Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix E: Interview schedule



INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Title of the research study: The role of child and youth care workers during the April 2022 floods in eThekweni KwaZulu-Natal.

Greetings, my Name is Nonkululeko princess Ngcobo, a student at DUT doing research for Master's in child and youth care. Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research.

Participants name:

Date of interview:

Interview time:

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:

Please indicate your most appropriate response in all questions by ticking in the boxes below.

1.1 Gender

Male

Female

1.2 Ethnicity

African

coloured

white

Other (specify)

1.3 Age

Age

20 to 30

30 to 40

40 to 50

50 +

Questions:

2.1 Can you share with me how the floods affected children and youth in the communities you worked with?

2.2 Can you describe how family life was affected?

2.3 Can you describe your specific role in helping children, families, and communities?

2.5 Please describe the roles you played at shelters.

2.4 Please share what role NACCW played during the floods.

2.5 Describe the nature of relief grant offered to families

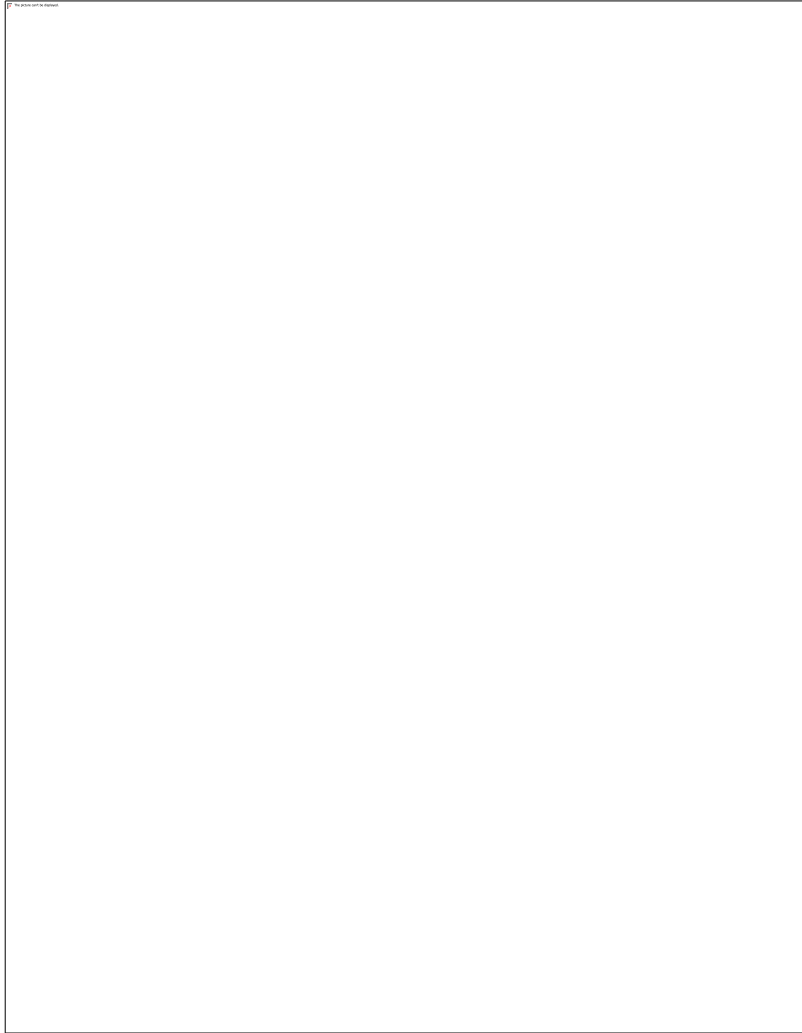
2.6 How will the NACCW assist further in reconstructing family life and communities?

2.7 How can families and communities be prepared for a disaster?

2.8 What should be done differently to ensure that families in communities are safe if the floods were to happen again?

The interview is finished, thank you for your input and time

Appendix F: Turnitin report



Appendix G : Ethical clearance letter



Institutional Research Ethics Committee
Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate
2nd Floor, Berwyn Court
Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus
Durban University of Technology

P O Box 1334, Durban, South Africa, 4001

Tel: 031 373 2375

Email: lavishad@dut.ac.za

http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics

www.dut.ac.za

9 March 2023

Ms N P Ngcobo
27 Sweetpea Road
Welbedacht West
Chatsworth
4092

Dear Ms Ngcobo

The role of child and youth care workers during the April 2022 floods in eThekweni KwaZulu-Natal

Ethical Clearance number IREC 290/22

The DUT-Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letters.

Please note that FULL APPROVAL is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the DUT-IREC according to the DUT-IREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's).

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the DUT-IREC as outlined in the DUT-IREC SOP's.

It is compulsory for a student or researcher to apply for recertification on an annual basis. The failure to do so will result in withdrawal of ethics clearance. It is the responsibility of the researcher and the supervisor to apply for recertification.

Please note that you are required to submit a Notification of Completion of Study form together with an abstract to the DUT-IREC office on completion of your study.

Yours Sincerely

Prof J K Adam
Chairperson: DUT-IREC

ENVISION2030

transparency • honesty • integrity • respect • accountability
fairness • professionalism • commitment • compassion • excellence



Appendix H : Editors letter

MS PREM COOPOO



+27 83 645 7466
pcoopoo@gmail.com

EDITING AND PROOFREADING SERVICES

BA Social Work, BA Honours (Psychology), M.MedSc Social Work (UKZN, South Africa);
Certificate in Strategic Quality Planning (Kangan Batman TAFE, Australia).

29 May 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This confirms that I edited the chapters of the Master's Degree Dissertation of Ms Princess Ngcobo. She is a registered student at the Durban University of Technology, KwaZulu-Natal.

I provided her with two edited versions – one with tracked changes and a clean copy of her dissertation. The corrections were intense.

Sincerely,

Prem Coopoo