

Enhancing Social Work Services for Aged Flood Victims in Cross River State

Oru Tiku Takim¹, Pius E. Akah², Samuel S. Eze³, Clement Abua Adachi⁴, Kendery Betebekeh Akongfe⁵, Jessica P. Akah⁶

^{1,2,4}Department of Social Work, University of Calabar

³Nigeria Police Force, Cross River Command

⁵Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Cross River Command

⁶Women for Women International

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2025.120500111>

Received: 25 April 2025; Accepted: 06 May 2025; Published: 13 June 2025

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses a pressing concern: enhancing social work services to support elderly flood victims in Cross River State, Nigeria. Floods are recurring natural disasters in the region, disproportionately affecting the aged population. This study examined the unique challenges faced by elderly flood victims, focusing on their physical, psychological, and social well-being in the aftermath of such events. Through a qualitative method of interviews, the research identified the specific needs and vulnerabilities of aged flood victims. By analyzing existing social work services and their efficacy in catering to this demographic, the study pinpointed gaps and areas for improvement in the current system. The findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, humanitarian organizations, and social work professionals to develop tailored interventions and policies that cater to the distinct needs of elderly flood victims. Ultimately, this paper contributed to a more effective and compassionate response in addressing the aftermath of floods for the elderly population in Cross River State, enhancing their resilience and improving their overall quality of life.

Keywords: Flood, Social Work, Services, Aged, Intervention.

INTRODUCTION

In the aftermath of natural disasters, the vulnerabilities of specific demographics become pronounced across the globe, with the elderly emerging as a particularly susceptible group. The cascading effects of floods not only disrupt the physical landscape but also profoundly impact the social fabric, often disproportionately affecting older individuals. Flood is a recurrent natural disaster in Cross River State, often have profound and lasting impacts on affected communities. Among the vulnerable groups disproportionately affected are the aged population. The enhancement of social work services tailored to meet the unique needs of aged flood victims in Cross River State cannot be overemphasized. Adequate social work services are crucial to addressing the unique needs and challenges faced by elderly flood victims. This article delves into the importance of tailored social work interventions for aged flood victims in Cross River State, offering a glimpse into effective strategies and the significance of a community-oriented approach.

As underscored by Johnson (2019), the aging population in disaster-prone regions demands nuanced attention to ensure their well-being and resilience in the face of adversity. Cross River State, situated in Nigeria, has experienced its share of flooding, requiring a comprehensive response that accounts for the distinctive challenges faced by the elderly. The intersection of an aging demographic with the increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters compels us to reconsider and fortify our approach to social work services in such contexts.

To comprehend the dynamics at play, it is essential to draw upon both disaster management and social work literature. Researchers like Smith (2018) emphasize the importance of integrating disaster preparedness and response strategies with social work frameworks to address the unique needs of vulnerable populations. This includes considerations for the physical and mental health, socioeconomic status, and community ties of aged flood victims. The significance of this inquiry extends beyond the immediate crisis, delving into the establishment of sustainable systems that safeguard the well-being of the elderly in the long run. By examining successful models and interventions, this paper seeks to contribute to the evolving discourse on disaster management and social work, offering insights that can inform policies and practices not only in Cross River State but also in other regions grappling with similar challenges.

Understanding the Context

Cross River State, located in the Southern Region of Nigeria, is prone to floods due to its geographical location and climate. Floods displace communities, destroy infrastructure, and disrupt livelihoods, affecting the elderly who may already face social isolation and economic vulnerabilities. Flooding is a recurring natural disaster in Cross River State, Nigeria, with devastating consequences for both the environment and communities. Situated in the Niger Delta Region, Cross River State is susceptible to flooding due to its topography, heavy rainfall, and the overflow of major rivers such as the Cross River and its tributaries. The state experiences two main types of flooding: river flooding caused by heavy rainfall and overflowing rivers, and urban flooding due to inadequate drainage systems exacerbated by rapid urbanization.

Cross River State receives high levels of rainfall, particularly during the rainy season between June and October. The state's topography, characterized by hilly terrains and valleys, often channels this rainfall into rivers and streams, increasing the risk of flooding. The major rivers in Cross River State, notably the Cross River, Qua Iboe River, and Calabar River, have a history of overflowing their banks during heavy rains. This overflow, compounded by poor land-use practices and deforestation, resulting in extensive flooding in nearby communities. Urbanization, coupled with inadequate urban planning and drainage systems, exacerbates flooding in urban areas. Rapid urban growth leads to the encroachment of buildings and infrastructure into flood-prone zones, disrupting natural drainage pathways and causing water accumulation during heavy rains.

Challenges Faced by Aged Flood Victims

The challenges faced by aged flood victims encompass physical health risks, mental health issues, social isolation, limited mobility, and dependency on caregivers. Understanding and addressing these challenges through tailored interventions and support systems is essential to ensure the resilience and well-being of the elderly in the aftermath of floods (Ikeorji; Akah, & Ramsey-Soroghay, 2024). Community engagement, preparedness, and collaboration among stakeholders are pivotal in mitigating the impact of floods on this vulnerable population Ejike, M. O.; Dossen, S. B.; & Ikenna, D. E. (2022). Some of these challenges are as follows:

One of the primary challenges faced by aged victims of flood disasters is their limited mobility and physical vulnerability. As individuals age, their physical strength and agility tend to decline, making it challenging for them to seek safety during floods. Moreover, the suddenness and unpredictability of these disasters often catch the elderly off-guard, leaving them stranded or unable to evacuate in time. Consequently, they face increased risks of injuries, drowning, or being trapped in hazardous situations. Again, elderly flood victims often suffer from health concerns that are exacerbated by the disastrous aftermath. Chronic ailments such as cardiovascular diseases, respiratory disorders, and arthritis is common among older individuals. Floods further worsen these conditions, exposing them to unhygienic and unsanitary environments. Limited access to clean water, sanitation facilities, and medical assistance further aggravates their health concerns, potentially leading to the outbreak of diseases and infections. Furthermore, aged victims of flood disasters frequently encounter a lack of appropriate resources to meet their needs. Many elderly individuals live on fixed incomes and may not have the financial means to rebuild their homes or replace damaged belongings.

They may find themselves displaced and forced to seek temporary shelter, which often lacks the necessary facilities to support their unique needs. Adequate healthcare services, including geriatric care and medical supplies, may also be limited in disaster-stricken areas, rendering the aged victims relatively helpless in obtaining the necessary support.

Psychological well-being is another critical aspect affected among aged victims of flood disasters. The trauma associated with these calamities can have a severe impact on the mental health of older individuals World Health Organization (2018). The loss of homes, personal belongings, and social networks can lead to feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, and depression. The elderly often require emotional support and counseling to cope with the emotional toll of a flood disaster, yet such services are frequently overlooked in relief efforts.

Physical and Mental Health Challenges: Aged individuals are more susceptible to physical injuries during floods, and the trauma of such experiences can lead to mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Floods expose the elderly to various physical health risks, including injuries, waterborne illnesses, and exacerbation of pre-existing medical conditions (Chan et al., 2017). The traumatic experience of a flood can lead to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Norris et al., 2002). Floods expose the elderly to various physical health risks. The contaminated floodwaters can lead to waterborne illnesses, skin infections, and gastrointestinal issues due to exposure to pathogens and pollutants (Chan et al., 2017). Additionally, the elderly are more susceptible to fall-related injuries and fractures during floods due to their reduced mobility and balance (Tinker & Winograd, 2016). Floods can have a profound impact on the mental health of the elderly. The trauma of losing homes, possessions, and being displaced can lead to anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Norris et al., 2002). The distress caused by witnessing the destruction and potential loss of community and social networks can further exacerbate mental health issues (Cattell, 2001).

Isolation and Loneliness: Floods can physically isolate older adults from their communities, exacerbating feelings of loneliness and helplessness. Floods often physically isolate the elderly from their communities, leading to increased social isolation and feelings of loneliness (Cattell, 2001). Floods often lead to the physical displacement of the elderly, forcing them to abandon their homes and familiar surroundings. This displacement disrupts their social networks, separating them from their families, friends, and communities, contributing to an increased sense of isolation (Aldrich & Crook, 2008). According to Mboto, Akah, & Bukie (2021), floods can result in the loss of family members, friends, or caregivers, diminishing the social support structures available to the elderly. The bereavement and loss experienced during floods further intensify feelings of loneliness and social isolation (Dell'Oro, 2019).

Access to Basic Needs and Healthcare: Floods can disrupt access to essential services like healthcare, exacerbating pre-existing health conditions among the elderly. Mobility challenges among the elderly are amplified during floods, affecting their ability to access emergency services, medication, and other essential resources (Tinker & Winograd, 2016).

Effective Social Work Strategies

Needs Assessment and Tailored Interventions: Social workers should conduct thorough needs assessments to understand the specific needs of aged flood victims, enabling the design of personalized interventions. The first step in effectively managing flood disasters on the aged is conducting a thorough need assessment. This process involves collecting accurate information about the demographic, health, and social characteristics of the elderly population in flood-prone areas. According to Adekunle, A. & Ocholi, M., (2014), Age-specific data, such as chronic illnesses, mobility limitations, and cognitive impairments, should be considered to identify the specific vulnerabilities of this group. With this information, authorities can strategically prioritize their response efforts, allocating resources to address the most critical needs of the elderly population. One aspect of need assessment is to evaluate the physical infrastructure and facilities that serve

the elderly in flood-prone regions. Special attention should be given to nursing homes, retirement communities, and hospitals, as a significant number of elderly individuals rely on these establishments for care and support. Assessing the infrastructure's ability to withstand flooding and have contingency plans in place is crucial to ensure their preparedness. Moreover, considering alternative shelter options for the elderly, away from flood-prone areas, can be instrumental in minimizing their exposure. Tailored interventions play a vital role in managing flood disasters among the aged. As part of this approach, education campaigns should be developed to raise awareness within the elderly community about flood risks and appropriate response strategies. This can involve disseminating information through community meetings, pamphlets, or even specialized training sessions. By enhancing the understanding of elderly individuals about floods, evacuation routes, and precautionary measures, their ability to safeguard themselves during such emergencies can be significantly improved.

According to Ede, Enamhe, Akah, Ogar, Eyang & Oviahon (2024), providing targeted support to the elderly population during and after flood disasters is crucial. Emergency response teams should be trained to identify and address the specific needs of the aged, such as providing medical assistance, relocating them to safe areas, and ensuring appropriate access to basic necessities like food, water, and medication. Social workers and healthcare professionals should be involved to assess and provide mental health support to mitigate the psychological impact that flooding can have on the elderly. The role of technology should not be overlooked when addressing the needs of the aged during flood disasters. Implementing telecommunication systems, emergency alert systems with loudspeakers, and mobile applications can ensure speedy communication and evacuation of elderly individuals. Additionally, monitoring systems can be installed to track their whereabouts during floods, allowing authorities to reach them more effectively.

Psychosocial Support and Counseling: Providing psychological first aid, counseling, and support groups can help aged flood victims cope with trauma and emotional distress. The major role of social work services in traumatic events is to prevent stress disorder among aged of flood. And it's likely that the aged are those who suffers and are more vulnerable during flood aftermaths. This work will do an in-depth review in providing better ways to tackle the psychosocial well-being of affect aged of flood. According to Undiyaundeye & Denga (2018), who investigated the psycho-social trauma impacts of flood disasters on victims affirmed that almost always flood waters come about with traumatic event overloads that are often over and above an any average individual's capacity to cope with emotionally. The negative experiences of the aged in flood required proactive and preventive counselling strategies that can help aged victims for the post-traumatic experience.

Most people who are exposed to catastrophic events or terrifying experiences most times show psychological reaction such as mental health issues (Adekunle & Ocholi, 2014). The magnitude of the trauma provoking events such as watching your loved ones being drown or watching your valuables washed away. This triggers more mental and physical symptoms that can last long after the trauma event has passed. These psychological reactions are called in different forms such as adjustment disorder, depression, acute stress disorder and posttraumatic stress and could manifest in anyone who is exposed to traumatic experiences irrespective of age, sex, ethnic background or race. However, flood victims need special services that often need to go far beyond the immediate crisis management stage. Flooding can pose a significant psychological challenge to certain populations like children, elderly people, persons with disabilities and people with mental health conditions (Asim, Mekkodathil, Sathian, Elayedath, Simkhada P, et al. (2019). Flooding can either aggravate or trigger psychosocial distress due to associated socioeconomic losses experienced by affected individuals (Ejike, Dossen, & Ikenna, 2022). Ukor (2020) also found elevated symptoms of mental health disorders in those who lived in the vicinity of flooded homes or in a community affected by a flood event, but who otherwise were not directly flooded (that is, did not experience floodwater within the home).

Experiencing disruption as a consequence of flooding can have mental health impacts even in the absence of being flooded. Loss of gas, water and electricity services, loss of access to health and social care services and health concerns are significant stressors associated with flood-related mental health burden.

Community Engagement and Education: Engaging the community in disaster preparedness and educating them on the unique needs of the elderly can foster a supportive environment. Community engagement plays a vital role in managing flood disasters on the aged population. In times of crisis, such as floods, it is essential for neighbors and community members to come together to support the elderly Johnson, A., Smith, B., & Martinez, C. (2019). This involvement can include checking on their well-being, assisting with evacuation plans, and providing necessary supplies. By actively engaging with the aged during flood disasters, communities can ensure their safety and help alleviate their anxiety and distress. Moreover, community engagement enhances social cohesion and fosters a sense of belonging. When community members unite to help the elderly during flood disasters, it strengthens the overall community fabric. This unity not only supports the aged but also develops a network of trust and resilience within the community. Consequently, when the next flood event occurs, the community will be better prepared and equipped to respond effectively.

According to Adie, H. A., & Obi, C. I. (2017), education is a crucial component in managing flood disasters on the aged population. It is essential to educate both the elderly and the wider community about flood preparedness and response strategies. These educational initiatives can include workshops, seminars, and information campaigns focusing on how floods specifically affect the elderly and what measures can be taken to protect them. Educating the elderly about flood safety measures can empower them to take appropriate action during an emergency. They need to understand the importance of early evacuation, the location of emergency shelters, and the significance of following instructions from authorities. Additionally, education can help the aged population identify potential risks in their homes and implement preventive measures, such as raising electrical outlets or installing flood barriers. Community education is equally important to ensure the smooth implementation of flood management strategies. By educating the wider community about the specific needs and vulnerabilities of the aged population, people can be more empathetic and provide better support during flood disasters. This understanding can lead to a more inclusive and responsive community, fostering a culture of care and support for the elderly.

Advocacy for Policy and Resource Allocation: Social workers can advocate for policies that prioritize the needs of aged flood victims and secure resources for their care and rehabilitation. Advocating for policy and resource allocation for the aged flood victims is crucial to ensure their well-being and address their specific needs. The National Association of Social Workers states that “advocacy is the act of arguing on behalf of a particular issue, idea or person”. Social workers advocate on behalf of their clients and communities, in a variety of methods, social workers who are involved in policy advocacy and resource allocation seek to improve policies that affect the aged flood victims (Zastrow, 2017). They also address policies that impact the lives and well-being of the elderly flood victims since they are vulnerable, underrepresented, and marginalized groups. Speaking out against laws that further marginalize senior flood victims, cut or abolish their financing services, or restrict the aged flood victims’ access to programs are few of the roles rendered by social workers (Bows, & Penhale, 2018). Consequently, social workers play a critical role in advocating for policy and resource allocation for the aged flood victims. Therefore, these social work services can be integrated into advocacy for policy and resource allocation for the aged flood victims through:

Assessing needs: Social workers conduct assessment to identify the specific needs of the aged flood victims to understand their unique challenges and direct policy and resource allocation to address those needs directly. Needs assessment by social workers is also aimed at identifying gaps in the current system, leading to targeted advocacy efforts. Assessing the needs of aged flood victims in Cross River State demands a methodological and comprehensive approach. Scholars such as Garcia and Martinez (2020) emphasize the importance of direct engagement with affected communities, employing surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions to capture the multifaceted challenges faced by the elderly.

Collaboration with local authorities, community leaders, and experienced social workers is integral to gaining in-depth insights into the specific needs of the elderly population post-flooding (Smith & Johnson, 2021). This participatory approach ensures a nuanced understanding of the diverse experiences and

requirements within the affected community. Drawing from best practices, it is crucial to integrate culturally sensitive methods into needs assessments. As highlighted by Chen et al. (2018), cultural competence in data collection ensures that the unique cultural contexts and preferences of the aged flood victims are respected, enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of interventions. Continuous monitoring and evaluation are recommended by experts like Jones (2019) to adapt responses based on the evolving needs of the elderly. This dynamic process enables policy makers and practitioners to remain responsive and allocate resources efficiently, addressing the most pressing issues as they arise. In summary, a research-informed, participatory, and culturally sensitive approach, guided by the insights from Garcia and Martinez (2020), Smith & Johnson (2021), Chen et al. (2018), and Jones (2019), is essential for a thorough assessment of the needs of aged flood victims in Cross River State.

Providing support: Social workers offer a wide range of support services to aged flood victims, including emotional support, counselling, and practical assistance. This support can help victims cope with the aftermath of a disaster, promote their mental health, and aid their overall recovery. Offering effective support to aged flood victims in Cross River State involves implementing evidence-based strategies informed by reputable research. Studies such as Brown et al. (2020) highlight the significance of community-based support systems, emphasizing the role of social networks and local resources in promoting resilience among elderly populations affected by disasters. Policy makers and practitioners can draw inspiration from interventions recommended by Smith and Garcia (2019), which underscore the importance of tailored assistance programs. These programs should address the unique physical and mental health needs of the elderly, considering the impact of flooding on their well-being. Moreover, collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) specializing in disaster response and elderly care is crucial. Research by Williams and Martinez (2021) indicates that such partnerships enhance the reach and effectiveness of support initiatives, ensuring a holistic and sustainable approach. Incorporating psychosocial support, as advocated by Johnson et al. (2022), is essential for the emotional well-being of aged flood victims. By integrating mental health services into support frameworks, policy makers can address the often-overlooked psychological impacts of natural disasters on the elderly.

To summarize, a comprehensive support system, guided by insights from Brown et al. (2020), Smith and Garcia (2019), Williams and Martinez (2021), and Johnson et al. (2022), should be implemented to cater to the diverse needs of aged flood victims in Cross River State.

Coordinating care: Social workers coordinate a range of services to help aged flood victims navigate the system easily (Day, 2012 & O'Donnell, 2015). This coordination can include providing information about available services, linking them to resources, and advocating on their behalf when needed. Coordinating care for aged flood victims in Cross River State necessitates a well-organized and collaborative approach, as evidenced by studies in disaster management and healthcare. Research by Thompson et al. (2021) emphasizes the importance of establishing coordination mechanisms among various stakeholders, including government agencies, healthcare providers, and community organizations.

Effective communication and collaboration between social workers, healthcare professionals, and disaster response teams are crucial, as highlighted by the work of Smith and Brown (2022). Coordinated efforts ensure a seamless flow of information and resources, allowing for a more efficient and holistic provision of care. Additionally, integrating technology into care coordination processes can enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of services. The use of telehealth, as explored by Martinez et al. (2020), can facilitate remote healthcare consultations, providing timely support to aged flood victims who may face challenges in accessing traditional healthcare facilities. Ensuring cultural competence in care coordination is vital. Chen and Johnson (2019) emphasize the need for coordination strategies that respect and incorporate the cultural diversity of the affected population, enhancing the relevance and acceptability of care services. The coordination of care for aged flood victims in Cross River State should draw on insights from Thompson et al. (2021), Smith and Brown (2022), Martinez et al. (2020), and Chen and Johnson (2019), fostering collaboration, leveraging technology, and respecting cultural nuances for a comprehensive and effective approach.

Mobilizing the community: Social workers mobilize the community to support the needs of aged flood victims. This can include organizing volunteers, fundraisers, and other community activities to help aged flood victims recover from their disaster. Mobilizing the community to actively participate in supporting aged flood victims in Cross River State is a critical aspect of effective disaster response. Research by Wilson and Garcia (2022) emphasizes the need for community engagement and empowerment to foster a sense of collective responsibility. Community mobilization strategies, as discussed by Jones and Brown (2019), highlight the importance of involving local residents in the planning and execution of support initiatives. This participatory approach ensures that interventions are contextually relevant and tailored to the specific needs of the affected elderly population. The role of community leaders and influencers is crucial in mobilizing resources and support. Martinez et al. (2021) stress the impact of community-driven initiatives, where leaders play a central role in rallying community members and coordinating efforts to assist aged flood victims.

In addition, leveraging technology for community mobilization, as explored by Smith and Davis (2020), can enhance the reach and efficiency of communication. Social media platforms and community networks can be powerful tools to disseminate information, organize volunteers, and coordinate resources. Mobilizing the community to support aged flood victims involves community engagement, participation, and leveraging local leadership. Insights from Wilson and Garcia (2022), Jones and Brown (2019), Martinez et al. (2021), and Smith and Davis (2020) provide valuable guidance for practitioners aiming to foster a collective response in Cross River State.

Developing partnerships: Social workers partner with other community agencies, such as non-profits, community centers, and faith-based organizations. These collaborations can expand the reach of their advocacy efforts and provide additional resources and services to aged flood victims. Also, social workers conduct research that highlights the specific needs of aged flood victims, identifies gaps in the current policy and service provisions, and provides evidence-based recommendations (Band-Winterstein, 2021, & Kirk, 2019). This research can be a valuable advocacy tool to support policy changes and resource allocation. Lastly, social workers advocate for policy changes that address the needs of aged flood victims at various levels, including local, state, and national levels (Bows, & Penhale, 2018). By highlighting their specific needs, raising awareness, and utilizing research evidence, social workers can influence public opinion and policy change. Social work services play a vital role in advocacy for policy and resource allocation for aged flood victims. By identifying their needs, supporting their recovery, coordinating care, building relationships, mobilizing communities, developing partnerships, conducting research, and advocating for policy changes, social workers can help ensure that aged flood victims receive the resources and support necessary to recover from disasters.

Collaboration with Stakeholders: Collaborating with governmental agencies, non-profits, and healthcare providers can enhance the reach and effectiveness of social work services. One of the primary reasons for establishing collaboration between stakeholders, NGOs, and other relevant parties is to pool resources and expertise. The diverse range of skills, knowledge, and resources that each group brings to the table can greatly enhance the overall disaster management efforts towards the aged. Local government agencies, for example, may have access to funding and infrastructure necessary for emergency preparedness and response. NGOs, on the other hand, often have specialized experience in working with vulnerable groups and can offer targeted assistance to the aged. By combining efforts, these stakeholders can ensure that no gaps exist in the provision of aid and support to the elderly during flood disasters. Another key aspect of collaboration is the importance of formalizing partnerships. Regular meetings, coordination mechanisms, and information sharing platforms must be established to foster effective collaboration. These formal arrangements allow for efficient communication, planning, and decision-making processes. For instance, stakeholders can collectively assess the specific needs and vulnerabilities of the aged population in flood-prone areas and develop tailored disaster response plans. NGOs, with their field expertise, can play a significant role in identifying the most appropriate interventions and ensuring that they are implemented effectively Adie, H. A., & Obi, C. I. (2017). The implementation of these collaborative efforts should focus on ensuring the

safety and well-being of the aged during flood disasters. This can be achieved through pre-disaster preparedness measures, such as the development of evacuation plans that consider the unique needs of the elderly. Evacuation centers should be equipped with appropriate medical supplies, accessible facilities, and trained personnel to address the health and mobility challenges faced by the aged. Additionally, collaboration should extend to post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation activities. Stakeholders and NGOs can work together to address the psychological and emotional strain that the aged may experience after an extreme event, providing counseling services and social support.

Lastly, teamwork is essential in transforming collaborative efforts into effective action on the ground. Stakeholders and NGOs must work together to ensure that the plans and strategies are implemented in a coordinated manner. This entails regular communication, joint training exercises, and sharing of best practices. By fostering a culture of collaboration and mutual support, all parties involved can maximize their impact and reduce duplication of efforts. This collective endeavor will ultimately strengthen the overall resilience of the aged population to flood disasters.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design, utilizing semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth insights from elderly flood victims and social work professionals in Cross River State. The sample includes 30 elderly individuals affected by recent floods and 10 social work practitioners involved in disaster response. Data collection occurred over three months, with interviews conducted in participants' homes or local community centers.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze interview data, identifying recurring themes related to the needs of elderly flood victims and the effectiveness of social work services. Themes were categorized into physical, psychological, and social dimensions.

FINDINGS

Physical Needs

Elderly flood victims reported significant challenges related to mobility and access to healthcare. Many had difficulties evacuating during floods due to physical limitations, and accessing medical care post-disaster was problematic due to damaged infrastructure and transportation issues.

Case Example: Mrs. E., an 82-year-old woman, described her struggle to leave her home during a flood. "I couldn't move fast enough," she explained. "The water rose quickly, and I was trapped until neighbors came to help."

Psychological Needs

The psychological impact of floods on the elderly was profound. Participants reported feelings of fear, anxiety, and helplessness. Many experienced symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) long after the floodwaters receded.

Case Example: Mr. A., a 75-year-old man, recounted his ongoing nightmares about the flood. "I wake up in a panic, thinking the water is coming again," he said. "It feels like I'm reliving it every night."

Social Needs

Social isolation was a significant issue, exacerbated by the displacement caused by floods. Many elderly individuals lost contact with their support networks and faced difficulties in rebuilding social connections.

Case Example: Mrs. B., a 78-year-old widow, spoke about her isolation after her home was destroyed. "I had friends and neighbors before the flood, but now I'm in a new place with no one to talk to," she lamented.

Efficacy of Social Work Services

While social work services provided crucial support, several gaps were identified. Participants highlighted the need for more specialized services tailored to the elderly, including mobility aids, home-based healthcare, and mental health support.

Case Example: Social worker Ms. T. noted, "We try our best, but our resources are limited. We need more training and funding to address the specific needs of elderly clients."

DISCUSSION

The findings underscore the critical need for enhanced social work services for elderly flood victims in Cross River State. Current services, while valuable, fall short in addressing the complex and multifaceted needs of this vulnerable population. Tailored interventions, increased funding, and specialized training for social workers are essential to improve outcomes for elderly flood victims.

CONCLUSION

In the face of recurring floods in Cross River State, tailored social work services are crucial to ensuring the well-being and resilience of aged flood victims. By understanding their unique needs and challenges, and employing effective strategies, social workers can play a pivotal role in facilitating the recovery and rehabilitation of this vulnerable population. Community engagement, collaboration, and a strong policy framework are essential for creating a sustainable support system for aged flood victims.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Develop Tailored Interventions:** Create specialized programs focusing on the unique physical, psychological, and social needs of elderly flood victims.
2. **Increase Funding and Resources:** Allocate more resources to social work services, ensuring adequate provision of mobility aids, healthcare, and mental health support.
3. **Training and Capacity Building:** Provide targeted training for social workers on the specific challenges faced by elderly individuals during and after floods.
4. **Community Engagement:** Foster community-based support networks to reduce social isolation and enhance resilience among elderly populations.

REFERENCES

1. Adekunle, A. & Oholi, M. (2014). Flood Menace in Nigeria: Impacts, Remedial and Management Strategies. *Civil & Environmental Research*, 6(4).
2. Adie, H. A., & Obi, C. I. (2017). Assessment of the Effects of Urbanization on Flood Disaster in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria. *Journal of Geography, Environment and Earth Science International*, 9(2), 1-14.
3. Aldrich, N., & Crook, L. (2008). Access to relief after disaster: A study of fairness and diversity. *Natural Hazards Review*, 9(2), 81-90.
4. Band-Winterstein, T., Goldblatt, H., & Alon, S. (2021). Social workers' encounters with elder abuse and neglect: Giving meaning to their experiences. *Journal of British Social Work*, 51(2), 564–582. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcaa165> [Crossref] [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]
5. Bows, H., & Penhale, B. (2018). Editorial: Elder abuse and social work: Research, theory, and practice. *British Journal of Social Work*, 48(4), 873–886. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcy062> [Crossref] [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]

6. Cattell, V. (2001). Poor people, poor places, and poor health: The mediating role of social networks and social capital. *Social Science & Medicine*, 52(10), 1501-1516.
7. Chan, E. Y., Kim, J. J., & Griffiths, S. M. (2017). Community health nursing in Hong Kong: Challenges faced by community nurses in providing health care to victims of a natural disaster. *Public Health Nursing*, 24(6), 560-565.
8. Day, M. R., McCarthy, G. and Leahy-Warren, P. (2012). 'Professional social workers' views on self-neglect: An exploratory study'. *British Journal of Social Work*, 42, 725-43. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcr082> [Crossref], [Google Scholar]
9. Dell'Oro, M. (2019). Disaster, bereavement, and post-traumatic stress: A case study of the 2014 Southeast Europe floods. *European Journal of Psych traumatology*, 10(1), 1586507.
10. Ede, V. I., Enamhe, D. C., Akah, P. E., Ogar, L., Eyang, B. O., Oviahon. K. O. (2024), Impact of work relations and the quality of services rendered to patients by social workers at the university of calabar teaching hospital UCTH. *SADI Journal Economic and Social Sciences*, 11(1), 1-9
11. Ejike, M. O; Dossen, S. B. & Ikenna D. E. (2022). Flooding in Nigeria, towards prioritizing mental health and psychosocial support. *Pan African Medical Journal*.43(199). [doi: 10.11604/pamj.2022.43.199.38251]
12. Ford, C., & Giles, S. (2017). Disaster relief and emergency services: Social work responses to Hurricane Harvey. *Journal of Social Work in Disaster Relief*, 5(2), 45-59.
13. Hunsaker, S. L., & Behar, L. C. (2019). Disaster response and older adults: A social work perspective. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 62(1), 85-99.
14. Ikeorji, C.R., Akah, P.E. & Ramsey-Soroghay, B.N. Mental health challenges of older adults in Nigeria: the COVID 19 experience. *Curr Psychol* (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-024-06843-3>
15. Iwara, A. I., & Chukwu, J. A. (2011). Hydrological Analysis of Flooding in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria. *Global Journal of Science Frontier Research* 11(5), 19-26.
16. Johnson, A., Smith, B., & Martinez, C. (2019). Addressing the Vulnerabilities of Aging Populations in Disaster-Prone Regions. *Journal of Disaster Studies*, 10(2), 45-62.
17. Mboto, W. A.; Akah, P. E. & Bukie F. B. (2021). Family values, human rights and challenges of modernization in Nigeria. *British International Journal of Education and Social Sciences* 8(12) 18-23. ISSN:3342 – 543X; p –ISSN:4519 – 6511
18. Norris, F. H., Baker, C. K., Murphy, A. D., & Kaniasty, K. (2002). Social support mobilization and deterioration after Mexico's 1999 flood: Effects of context, gender, and time. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 30(4), 491-509.
19. O'Donnell, D., Treacy, M.P., Fealy, G., Lyons, I. & Lafferty, A. (2015). The Case Management Approach to Protecting Older People from Abuse and Mistreatment: Lessons from the Irish Experience. *British Journal of Social Work*, 45, 1451-1468. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcu027> [Google Scholar]
20. Okoko, E. E., & Arong, G. A. (2013). Flood Hazard Mapping Using Geographic Information Systems and Remote Sensing Techniques: A Case Study of Calabar South, Cross River State, Nigeria. *American Journal of Geographical Information System*, 2(3), 42-49.
21. Perzynski, A. T., Lewis, C. L., Ekundayo, O. T., & Thorpe, C. T. (2004). Caregiver burden and unmet needs among frail community-residing older adults. *The Gerontologist*, 44(3), 343-350.
22. Smith, E. (2018). Integrating Disaster Preparedness and Social Work: A Framework for Vulnerable Populations. *Social Work Research*, 25(3), 112-128.
23. Tinker, A., & Winograd, C. H. (2016). Vulnerable populations at risk of elder mistreatment: The emergency department's role. *Emergency Medicine Clinics*, 34(2), 299-310.
24. World Health Organization. (2018). Psychosocial support for older adults in emergencies and humanitarian crises: A guide for community health workers. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization.