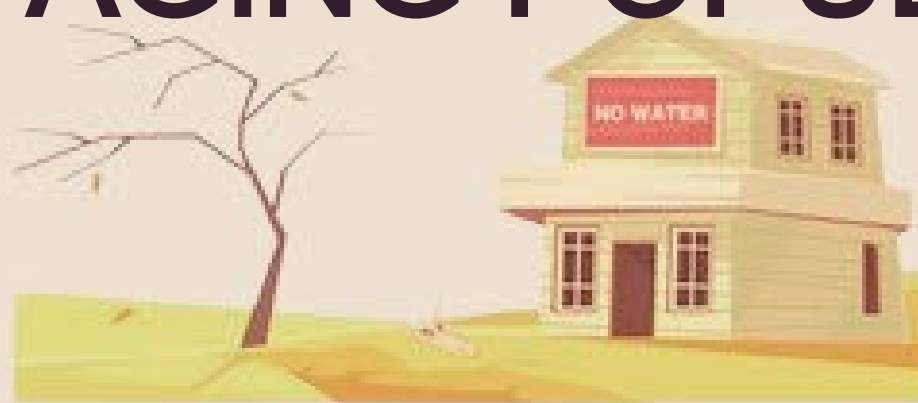


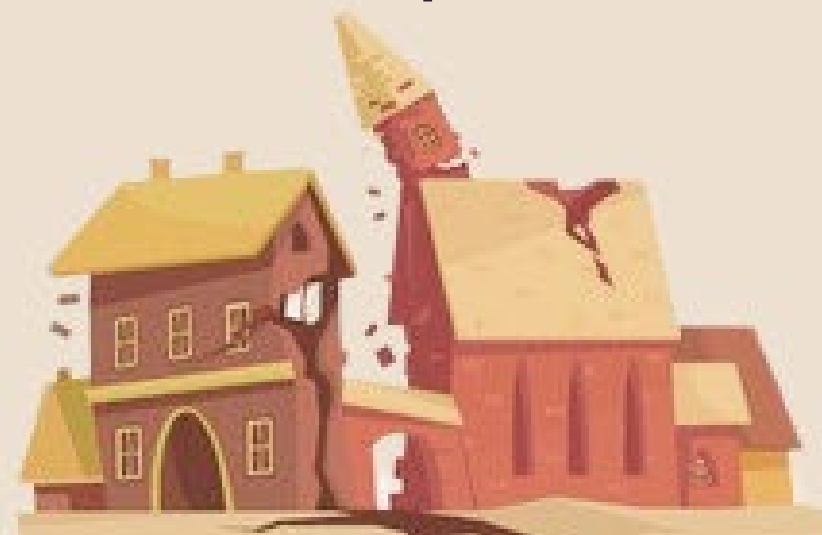


# IMPACTS OF NATURAL DISASTERS ON SOCIAL RELATIONS IN AGING POPULATIONS

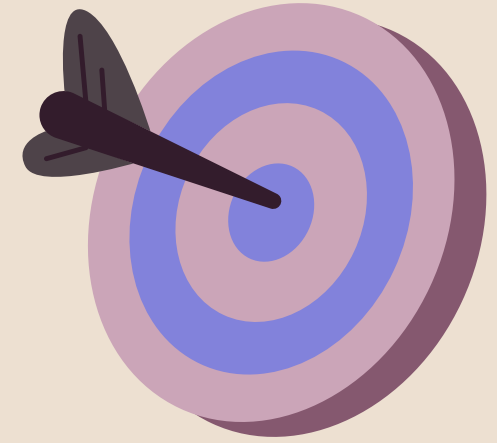


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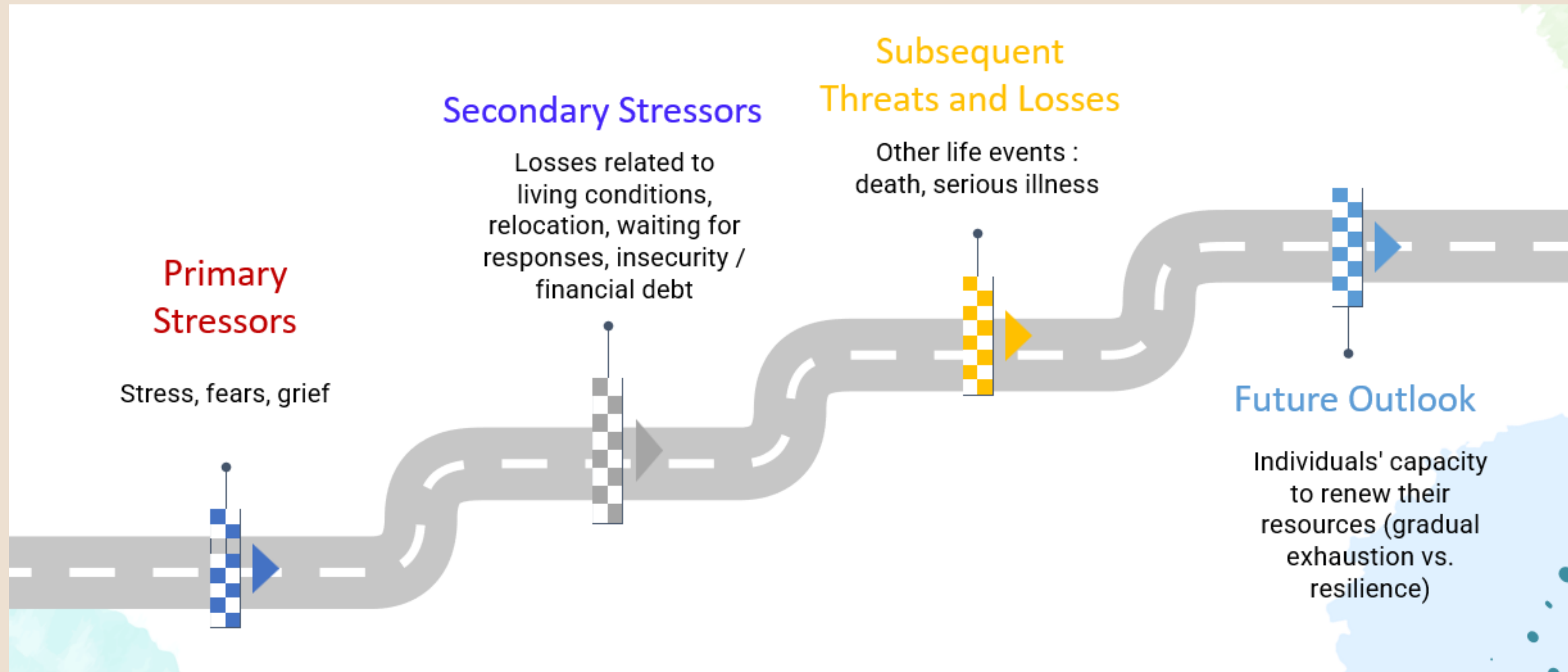
# RESEARCH SCOPE AND BACKGROUND



- Qualitative, mixed -method, and longitudinal studies on the impacts of various disasters (natural and technological)
- Types of disasters studied :
  - Rural and urban flooding
  - Ice storms
  - Landslides
  - Earthquakes
  - Train derailments
- Focus on different categories of seniors :
  - Those who lost their homes,
  - Suffered property damage,
  - Or lost collective services (e.g., water, electricity)

**SIX HIGHLIGHTS  
RELATED TO THE  
social relations of  
seniors**

# 1. DISASTERS: A CONTINUUM OF STRESSFUL EVENTS



# NATURAL DISASTERS : A CUMULATIVE STRESSOR AFFECTING SENIOR'S OVERALL HEALTH AND SOCIAL LIVES.



- Climate Change : Increases disaster frequency, intensity, and duration, affecting both seniors and municipalities economically.
- Social Consequences for elderly :
  - Reduced recreational activities for seniors
  - Loss of social connections
- Increasing mental health risks (e.g., depression)
- Focus: Emphasis on addressing secondary stressors, not just symptoms (e.g., depression).

# 2. CONSEQUENCES OF DISASTERS FOR SENIORS: MULTIPLE LEVELS

## Mental Health

E.g., Depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, suicidal thoughts, negative moods and emotions, fears, and worries.

## Physical Health

E.g., Deterioration of physical health.

## Lifestyle habits

E.g., Sleep disorders, use of psychoactive substances, eating issues.



## Professional Life

E.g., Early or delayed retirement.

## Family Life

E.g., Conflicts, separation, decreased intimacy, increased responsibilities, deterioration or strengthening of family bonds.

## Social Life

E.g., Isolation, loneliness, social adjustment issues, loss of support.

### 3. PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL SUPPORT: AN ESSENTIAL FACTOR IN SENIOR CARE

In my studies, we asked seniors if they felt they had received enough support to handle the stressors caused by the exposures to disasters.

Responses included :

- More help than expected
- As much help as expected
- Less help than expected



## PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL SUPPORT (CONTINUED)

### Key Findings :

- Seniors who felt they received less support than expected showed a significantly higher risk of mental health issues (anxiety, depression, PTSD).
- Negative impacts on perceived health, social life, and feelings of isolation were also more common in this group.
- Seniors who felt they received enough or more support had outcomes similar to non -disaster -affected individuals.

### Implication :

- For seniors, feeling a lack of support increases future health anxieties, with lasting effects on well -being and resilience in the face of vulnerability.

# 4. SENIORS FACING NATURAL DISASTERS: INCREASED FEELINGS OF LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

Psychosocial workers report that public healthcare and social service institutions receive numerous calls from seniors who have returned home after temporary stays in disaster relief centers. Many of these seniors feel :

- Intensified loneliness
- More isolation

## Key Insight :

Natural disasters can worsen seniors' sense of disconnection, even after they return to familiar surroundings.



# 5. IMPACTS ON MARITAL, FAMILY, AND SOCIAL LIVES: NOT JUST NEGATIVE

Natural disasters bring both challenges and potential benefits to seniors' relationships:

- Short -term effects : Often negative impacts on marriage, family bonds, and social connections.
- Long -term effects : Many seniors report relationships and personal growth over time.

## Insight :

While initial years post -disaster may bring strain, positive outcomes can emerge as seniors adapt and build resilience.



# NEGATIVE EFFECTS OBSERVED

## MARITAL AND FAMILY LIFE

- Increased marital and family stress (more conflicts) leading to separation
- Conflicts with extended family members
- Expressions of impatience toward the spouse
- Less available for children
- Loss of interest in relationships with extended family
- Reduced capacity to host relatives

## SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

- Decrease in social and recreational activities
- Reorganization or rearrangement of leisure activities due to obligations (due to cleaning or reconstruction of home, debt)
- Decrease in the number of outings outside the home
- Reduction in contacts with relatives and friends
- Breakdown of friendships
- Less financial resources allocated to leisure
- Changes in life plans such as postponing retirement (due to debt) or declining promotions (due to physical or emotional fatigue)
- Ending volunteer activities: fewer social contacts

# POSITIVE CHANGES OBSERVED

## MARITAL AND FAMILY LIFE

- Closer relationship with spouse
- Greater emphasis on family life
- Increased confidence in personal, marital, and family

## SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

- Formation of new friendships
- Recognition of solidarity and mutual support among neighbors and disaster victims
- Closer relationships with friends and neighbors
- Engaging in new hobbies

## 6. MINIMIZING THEIR OWN SITUATION

a) Seniors often downplay their health issues, believing others may need help more help.

This can lead to :

Hesitation to ask help —fear of taking resources from others.

b) Refuse to leave home —especially if they have pets, due to fears of vandalism

c) Minimizing risks based on past experiences with disasters.

Key Insight :

These situations can increase vulnerability by delaying necessary assistance and support.



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR  
ATTENTION AND  
UNDERSTANDING REGARDING  
MY QUEBEC ACCENT.**

