

Abstract

Key words: coping, disaster psychology, Integrated Rescue System, mass casualty incident, police, psychology in crisis management, psychosocial support, resiliency, risk and protective factors.

This work focuses on the area of coping in members of intervening Integrated Rescue System (IRS) bodies in rescue and disaster work following a mass traffic accident. The assumption is that a vast mass traffic accident is a type of disaster that places increased demands on coping not only for affected citizens concerned, but also on intervening professionals. It is an unexpected, urgent, and emotionally and physically demanding event that requires flexibility, heightened cooperation between different professions, and a non-standard work performance. It is an event where it is not possible to apply routine operative procedures and management. A specific group, which this work explores in depth, is that of police officers. This professional group can be expected, in the given context, to be subjected to an increased burden in comparison to other IRS bodies – medics and firefighters. The reason for this consideration is the following list of burdensome specifics, which relate to the work of police officers in mass disasters: worse material equipment for intervention and worse availability of basic needs, limited training for mass disasters, minimal experience, longer exposure time, passive role, lesser expectation of work in an established team, lower average age, less experience, generally lower social appreciation, long-term deterioration of the climate within the organization.

The result of this dissertation is the mapping of activities and the identification of stress and support factors in bodies intervening in mass disasters. Another objective was to determine the prevailing coping strategies and their perceived benefits for police officers in connection with extraordinary burdens. A mixed research strategy was chosen, which combines qualitative and quantitative research. It consisted of a three-phase research model of a sequential nature.

The methods used included: case study, questionnaire, and structured in-depth interviews. The research was carried out on the basis of a specific event, which was a railroad accident at Studénka, which occurred in 2008. Research results lead to recommendations for improving the practice of human resources management and the system of psychological support within the Police of the Czech Republic.