

Posttraumatic stress and posttraumatic growth in members of fire rescue service

(Abstract)

Firefighters often work under circumstances that endanger their lives or physical integrity and witness traumatic experiences of other people while managing effects of devastating emergency situations. As a result of this exposure they can suffer from trauma and stress related disorders. However, traumatic experiences may also offer potential for growth. This thesis is aimed at posttraumatic stress - symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and posttraumatic growth in members of fire rescue service. The main objective is widening of existing posttraumatic research in professional rescuers with findings from multinational sample of firefighters. Sample consisted of firefighters from Czech Republic (N=302) and six other European countries (N=2241). Study was carried out through questionnaire-based data gathering. Symptoms of posttraumatic stress were assessed via self-rating measure Impact of event scale - revised, posttraumatic growth via Posttraumatic growth inventory - short form. Comparison of Czech and European firefighters was made with the premise that among members of this professional group there would be found no differences. Subtle dissimilarities were, however, observed in several measured parameters. Czech firefighters reported lower extent of symptoms intrusion and hyperarousal, and higher posttraumatic growth. In avoidance symptoms and overall extent of posttraumatic stress there was found no significant difference. Findings are discussed with regard to their generalizability and practical implications.

Key words: posttraumatic stress, posttraumatic growth, firefighters, professional rescue workers