

A BRAZIL KATASZTRÓFAVÉDELEM NÉHÁNY ASPEKTUSA

Absztrakt

A szerző a brazil társadalmi struktúra sérülékenységét vizsgálja az egyik veszélyeztető tényező, az elemi csapások szemszögéből. A cikk bemutatja az ország polgári védelmi rendszerét, valamint a mentális egészségügyi menedzsmentjét. Példaként a 2011. évi Rio de Janeiro hegyvidéki részén bekövetkezett katasztrófa elemzése szerepel, ahol a szerző maga is végzett mentális egészségügyi tevékenységet. A mentális egészség egyes szempontjai, valamint a jó kormányzás praktikai hozzájárultak a jelenlegi stratégiák tökéletesítéséhez. Az ezekhez kapcsolódó tervek tartalmazzák a legfontosabb tevékenységeket, úgy mint a megelőzés, a szakmai háttér, és a diagnosztikai helyzetértékelés feladatait, amelyeknek összhangban kell lennie az adott társadalom kultúrájával, a fejlesztési stratégiákkal és a közösségi hálózatokkal.

Kulcsszavak: mentális egészség, természeti katasztrófák, jó kormányzás, közösségi alapszereplés

SOME ASPECTS OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN BRAZIL

Abstract

This article deals with the aspects of Brazilian social structure to the climatic events that affect the country. It endows itself with a sociological concept of disaster, which is defined by a disruptive event of social structure. In addition, it presents the structure of civil protection and mental health as part of management. The paper presents the natural disaster in the Mountainous region of Rio de Janeiro in 2011 together with the mental health work accomplished. Important aspects of mental health and good governance practices are pointed out in order to contribute to current strategies and assist in building effective plans. These plans should include the adequate preparation of the professionals who will work in-depth diagnostic assessment of the situation and consistent with the culture, as well as the development of strategies for empowerment and creation of networks with the community.

Keywords: mental health, natural disasters, good governance, community-base, vulnerability

1. INTRODUCTION

Brazil is a country with approximately 206 million inhabitants, full of natural resources and endowed with an extensive territorial dimension that leaves its landscape as one of the most diverse of the planet, also has a wide cultural diversity becoming a country of contrasts and antagonisms. According to UNESCO, "Brazilian society is made up of different ethnic-racial groups that characterize it, in cultural terms, as one of the richest in the world. However, its history is marked by inequalities and discriminations, specifically against blacks and indigenous people, thus preventing their full economic, political and social development." [1]

There is a concentration of the low-income population in places that do not always present the necessary conditions for housing, one of the ways in which the characteristics of social inequalities in Brazil are seen. An important process of urban transition and transformation of population redistribution is characterized as incomplete because it was not accompanied by the necessary investment in terms of infrastructure and public services in cities. [2] When related to disasters, these populations, living in inadequate occupations, are the main victims, framed as vulnerable groups facing the climatic events that affect the country. [2]

From the point of view of the concept of disaster, specifically elaborated by authors of contemporary sociology, such as Perry and Quarantelli, define it as "a social phenomenon or, more precisely, an event of disruptive character of the structure or social system." Yet, "disasters do not completely destroy existing social systems, but are capable of maintaining continuous processes of social indifference" [11;749]. In the case of Brazil, Civil Defence in its planning structure does not consider social complexity and only classifies vulnerable groups. [3] Naturally we can find also other examples like Hungary there sociological aspects of managing disaster studied [4].

Understanding these complexities of the Brazilian social structure requires flexibility and commitment from the agencies, according to Valencio et. al. [3;165] "The more vulnerable the social situation of the group, the less expert knowledge is accessed because it seems distant, difficult to apply, clearly insufficient, useless and dispensable." In addition, and in a complementary way, the way groups perceive and signify disaster as well as their own risk situation, will influence the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction; this understanding on the part of the different authors can contribute to a better interaction between the Civil Defence and the community. [3]

2. MENTAL HEALTH AREA AT THE BRAZILIAN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Brazil presents a different reality in relation to disasters when compared to the countries of North America and Asia, which often deal with phenomena such as earthquakes, hurricanes and tornadoes. Due to this reality on these continents, countries are forced to create sound programs for the different stages of disaster response. [5] However, according to the Annual Disaster Statistical Review, a survey published annually by the Catholic University of Louvain (France) "Brazil ranks 8th in the list of countries with the greatest number of natural disasters, the same prominent position in the number of deaths as a result. " [6; 61] In a survey conducted 1991-2010, there were 31,909 natural disasters in Brazil with 3,404 deaths.

Types of Disasters	Total of Events	Affected	Mortality	Morbidity	Directly exposed (displaced / homeless / evicted)
Hydrological	10.444	38.836.257	1.567	309.529	4.176.851
Climatological	18.450	49.868.081	273	167.582	1.554.450
Meteorological	2.290	4.120.439	161	4.917	276.847
Geological	725	3.544.059	1.403	5.530	173.259
Total	31.909	96.368.836	3.404	487.558	6.181.407

Table 1. Natural Disaster Registry in Brazil, 1991-2010. Source: [7]

"Of the total number of events, 57.8% were climatological, with drought and drought predominating. These events were the most affected by the population in Brazil, with almost 50 million people affected and corresponding to more than half of the total. Hydrological events, mainly floods, correspond to 32.7% of the total, with almost 39 million affected. In terms of direct impacts on the population, it is the hydrological events that present the greatest direct exposure, number of mortality and morbidity". [8; 3652]

The National Civil Defense System, the body responsible for dealing with disasters, has the objective of planning, articulating and coordinating civil defense actions in Brazil, defined as a set of preventive, relief, assistance and recovery aimed at avoiding disasters and minimizing their impact on the population and restoring social normality. For the Civil Protection disaster is the result of adverse, natural or man-made adverse events on a

vulnerable ecosystem, causing human, material or environmental damage and consequent economic and social damage. In Brazil, disaster risk management began to be structured as a result of the catastrophe in Rio de Janeiro (2011). For this purpose, a national center for monitoring and warning of natural disasters was created. [9]

Disaster management is done through steps: before, during and after the event. In the pre-disaster phase, risk minimization is achieved through the construction of structural works, as well as the involvement of the community in environmental education. After the onset of disaster in many cases firefighters are the first responders. Many lives of victims can depend on the decisions of fire managers. His decision making process is total different than the traditional methods. [10] [11] During the disaster, the actions are directed to the relief, evaluation of the damages and the assistance to the people affected, in order to remove them from the situation of danger. In the post-disaster phase, the work is focused on the recovery and reconstruction of the scenario reached. At this stage, victim support should be focused on minimizing material and psychological damage. [12] [13] The involvement of mental health with civil protection happens at all stages of action, according to the municipal coordinator of Civil Protection at an event promoted by the Psychology Council of Minas Gerais in February 2012. For Colonel Alexandre Lucas, psychology must act this way

Stages	Psychologist Activity
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community mobilization - Awareness - Risk Mapping
Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific training - Mobilization - Organization, alert and alarm - Joint Surveys - Advisory of scale
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Next to the affected ones: absorption of the impacts of demands, accompaniment of shelters and support to the mourning - Together with managers and agents: intelligence activities (identification of important actors in the local context), monitoring of stress level, support for mourning, volunteer management and general advice.

Table 2. Psychologist's performance in Civil Protection. Source: [14]

Despite the possibilities of psychologists acting in this context to be broad and multidisciplinary, many challenges are still encountered in relation to the lack of knowledge of the potentialities of psychology in the face of civil protection; "The difficulty of professional interaction and practical engagement of professionals in the various phases of civil protection; the personal and institutional vanities and the political and ideological use of the theme." [15]

3. CONCLUSION

Psychic illness in emergencies and disasters is only one of the factors to be considered, however, the effort itself must be given to health promotion. Despite the wide possibility of mental health work in the different stages that make up the management of disasters, it is still incipient in practical and technical terms, in addition to being exclusively focused on the response phase with the affected ones with approaches directed to the trauma. However, the response potentials go further, the strategies created by mental health professionals in coordination with all agents can contribute, to a large extent, to alleviate the suffering of the population as well as favour the return to its functionality.

Coordinated mental health interventions can also provide effective dialogue between the community and civil protection agents. This can be done through capacities, strategies and mediations, with the goal of working in a network aimed at empowering the community. The community-based model for the demands that Brazilian society presents, considering the diversity and specific characteristics, is the most appropriate because it respects cultural diversity and proposes dialogue with the community. In this way, the plans must include the adequate preparation of the professionals who will work as well as a detailed situational diagnostic evaluation that is consistent with the culture.

It is concluded that not only mental health professionals should invest in research and the development of good governance practices, but also organizations should include in their structures the findings and potentialities of mental health, especially elements that value the communities' aspects to deal with disasters and comply with the plan of more resilient societies.

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