



**EMERGENCY PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS OF WAR IN
UKRAINE (ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE POPULATION OF THE CITY OF
BORODYANKA, KYIV REGION)**

**ASISTENCIA PSICOLÓGICA DE EMERGENCIA A LAS VÍCTIMAS DE LA
GUERRA EN UCRANIA (SOBRE EL EJEMPLO DE LA POBLACIÓN DE LA
CIUDAD DE BORODYANKA, REGIÓN DE KIEV)**

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Abstracto

El artículo está dedicado al análisis de las peculiaridades de la prestación de asistencia psicológica de emergencia por parte de psicólogos del Servicio Estatal de Emergencias de Ucrania a la población afectada de Borodyanka, región de Kyiv, durante las operaciones militares en Ucrania en febrero-abril de 2022. Se destaca el propósito y las tareas de la asistencia psicológica de emergencia. Se han revelado las etapas de la prestación de asistencia psicológica de emergencia por parte de psicólogos del Servicio Estatal de Emergencias a la población afectada de Borodyanka, región de Kyiv, durante las operaciones militares en Ucrania. Se analizaron las características de comportamiento de la población y se destacaron las reacciones mentales a las operaciones militares. Se da la práctica de brindar asistencia psicológica de emergencia a las víctimas en las condiciones de las operaciones militares.

Palabras clave: asistencia psicológica de emergencia, operaciones militares, estados mentales negativos, víctimas.

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the analysis of the peculiarities of the provision of emergency psychological assistance by psychologists of the State Emergency

Service of Ukraine to the affected population of Borodyanka, Kyiv region, during military operations in Ukraine in February-April 2022. The purpose and tasks of emergency psychological assistance are highlighted. The stages of providing emergency psychological assistance by psychologists of the State Emergency Service to the affected population of Borodyanka, Kyiv region during military operations in Ukraine have been revealed. Behavioral features of the population were analyzed and mental reactions to military operations were singled out. The practice of providing emergency psychological assistance to victims in the conditions of military operations is given.

Key words: emergency psychological assistance, military operations, negative mental states, victims.

Introduction

In the terrible conditions of modern times, Ukrainians have to adapt to previously unnatural things. Our new reality is characterized by high numbers of injured, raped and dead, destroyed cities and crippled destinies. Losses are observed both among the military and among civilians. According to the United Nations (UN) representatives, in the period from February 24 to November 13, 2022, 16,631 cases of death or injury of civilians were recorded in Ukraine¹.

¹ Ukraine: Civilian casualties as of 13 November 2022. United Nations Ukraine. 2022
Other sources² cite much higher numbers - about 40,000 victims. There is currently no official information about the raped, but every case that becomes known is documented by representatives of Ukrainian and foreign organizations.

In such a difficult time that has befallen our country, employees of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES) carry out extremely difficult activities, they risk their own health, and sometimes their lives, saving others. In our opinion, psychologists of the State Emergency Service deserve special attention among the employees of the specified composition. They, together with the rescuers, are the first to find themselves at the scene of an emergency: whether it is rocket and artillery fire, the evacuation of the population, or the massive destruction of civil infrastructure.

According to Article 38 of the Law of Ukraine "Civil Protection Code", it is psychologists of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine who are entrusted with the psychological protection of the population in the event of an emergency or the threat of an emergency³. Let us emphasize that the psychologists of the State Emergency Service are the only subjects of providing psychological assistance in the center of an emergency situation.

According to the data of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, during the period from February 24 to November 14, 2022, psychologists of the department were involved in providing psychological assistance more than 250 times, stabilization measures covered 184,176 people, including 57,826 staff of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, and 126,359 of the affected population.

Among them are more than 30,000 children and 8,750 people with reduced mobility⁴.

According to the governing documents^{3,5}, in the event of a large-scale emergency situation, the work of the Headquarters for the elimination of an emergency situation is organized in their cell, the staffing structure of which must include emergency psychological assistance points, which involve the combined mobile groups of psychologists of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine . Psychologists are engaged according to the territorial principle and carry out work on providing emergency psychological assistance.

² YE. Pylypenko. "The Pentagon believes that the losses of the Armed Forces and the enemy are "probably" comparable – "more than 100,000 people". LeagueNews. 2022.

³ Law of Ukraine "Code of Civil Protection of Ukraine", num 5403-VI, Kyiv. 2012.

⁴ Information certificate on the activities of the psychological service, Kyiv. 2022.

⁵ Order of the MVS of Ukraine "On the approval of the Procedure for Psychological Support in the State Service of Ukraine for Emergency Situations", num 747. Kyiv. 2017.

Since February 24, 2022, all of Ukraine has become the center of a military emergency, with a large number of occupied territories, which have taken millions of our compatriots hostage. Kyiv region is one of the regions of the state most affected by the invaders. We have all heard about Bucha, Irpin, Gostomel, however, according to the President of Ukraine V. Zelenskyi, the worst situation was in Borodyanka, which is located northwest of Kyiv⁶.

During the 38 days of occupation, the city was completely destroyed, rescuers managed to get about a hundred bodies from under the rubble. Help was provided by rescuers and psychologists of the Kyiv garrison of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine.

Analysis of recent achievements and publications

O. Bondarenko, I. Doronina, O. Kokun, I. Kornienko, M. Klymchuk, T. Tytarenko, O. Kholodova, T. Yatsenko and others were engaged in researching the problem of the essence and content of psychological assistance. The theoretical prerequisites for providing emergency psychological help can be traced in the works of M. Lim, N. Onishchenko, N. Potapchuk, O. Timchenko, V. Khristenko, S. Yakovenko, etc. S. Gremling, B. Dates, A. Baum, J. Kaplan, F. Shapiro and others dealt with the problem of psychotherapeutic measures with victims. At the same time, the scientific intelligence of scientists did not touch on the problem of organization and provision of emergency psychological assistance to victims in the conditions of military operations.

The purpose

Is to analyze the features of providing emergency psychological assistance to the affected population as a result of military operations in Ukraine (on the example of the population of Borodyanka, Kyiv region).

Research methods

To realize the set goal, a set of interrelated research methods was applied, the choice of which is determined by the content of the problem: theoretical (analysis, synthesis, generalization and systematization of theoretical material); empirical (conversation, observation of activities).

⁶ D. Hussain, "Fresh Russian horrors discovered: Scene in village of Borodyanka 'significantly more dreadful' than in Bucha says Zelensky as it's revealed Putin's forces left injured civilians dying in rubble of bombed homes for a WEEK until their cries stopped". Daily Mail. 2022

Results and Discussion

The analysis of scientific literature on the subject of the study shows that emergency psychological assistance is a system of short-term measures provided to victims in the emergency zone or in the near future after a traumatic event⁷.

These measures are aimed at:

- providing assistance to one person, a group of people or a large number of victims due to an emergency situation;
- regulation of the current mental, psychophysiological state and negative emotional experiences associated with an extreme and/or emergency situation, using professional methods that meet the requirements of a specific situation and its effect on a person's psyche;
- alleviation and minimization of the remote consequences of the impact on the victims of stress factors of increased intensity⁸.

According to N. Tkach and the authors, the features of emergency psychological help are that: first, emergency psychological help is not a new form of therapy, but rather a new way of interacting with a person in a state of crisis. It involves a developed sense of collective responsibility, the value of the lives of all members of the group, moral sensitivity to the pain and suffering of another person; secondly, emergency psychological assistance works on the social ideology of public participation and the competence of society's response to victims; thirdly, emergency psychological assistance is provided in accordance with the hierarchy of needs (primary is the satisfaction of basic needs); fourthly, emergency psychological help involves working with both an individual and a

group, as well as the whole community. It is characterized by wide social coverage, the requirement to account for social processes that arise around a traumatic event⁹.

⁷ O.P. Yevsiukov; A.S. Kufliievskiy; D.V. Liebiediev; O.V. Timchenko, and ect “Extreme psychology”. Kharkiv: Avhust Treid. 2007.

⁸ M.V. Fomych; M.A. Kryshthal; H.S. Hrybenyuk; O.M. Dyachkova; L.I. Mokhnar and ect. ‘Psychology of activity in special conditions’. Cherkasy: publisher O.M. Tretyakov. 2021.

⁹ M.I. Tkach; S.YU. Lyebedyeva; N.V. Onishchenko; O.V. Timchenko; D.S. Titarenko; V.YE. Khrystenko, “Peculiarities of providing emergency psychological assistance to victims of accidents at the mines of Donetsk region”. Kharkiv: NUTSZ of Ukraine. 2011.

N. Onishchenko points out that, as a rule, emergency psychological assistance to the affected population is provided in conditions of acute shortage of time, with a lack of corrective and diagnostic possibilities. This requires from the psychologist not only high theoretical and practical training, but also extreme composure, a sense of responsibility, the ability to quickly make independent, non-standard decisions¹⁰.

In general, it can be noted that emergency psychological assistance is aimed at psycho-emotional support of victims in the center of an emergency situation and reducing their mental suffering.

With this goal, which was specified in accordance with the situation of military operations as of February 24, the provision of emergency psychological assistance to the population of Borodyanka was organized. Conditionally, the period of work of psychologists of the State Emergency Service in this settlement can be divided into two stages: the first - pre-occupation (February 2022); the second - de-occupation (April 2022).

At the first stage, measures were taken to evacuate the civilian population from the settlement, stabilize the psycho-emotional state of vulnerable population groups (children, the elderly). Employees of the State Emergency Service, together with police officers, servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and communal services deployed life support points, triage platforms for the injured and organized transport for the transportation of people.

According to the results of the survey of the direct participants of those events among the psychologists of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, the leading mental reactions of the victims were short-term and prolonged emotional disorders: shock, denial, hysteria, panic, fear. According to psychologists, the

most difficult thing was to work with elderly people, who most often showed maladaptive reactions, in particular, verbal aggression.

Lyubov Kyrnos, head of the psychological service of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine in the Kyiv region, recalls: "One woman in Borodyanka who fled the village and lost her entire family. She was so sick that she could not breathe... She closed her eyes and could not answer our questions"¹¹.

Express diagnosis of mental states of the population was carried out visually based on behavioral signs.

¹⁰ N.V. Onishchenko, "Emergency psychological assistance to victims in emergency situations: theoretical and applied aspects". Kharkiv: Pravo. 2014.

¹¹ O. Skotnikova, "People closed their eyes and could not breathe because of grief: a conversation with a psychologist of the State Emergency Service". Evening Kyiv. 2022.

The main content of the emergency psychological assistance provided to the population at this stage was empathic support, relief of the psychosomatic condition and normalization of self-control functions. Along with this, it is worth highlighting a number of measures that were carried out by psychologists for the first time and were not directly related to functional duties, but were determined by the extraordinary situation of military operations. Such activities included: assistance in moving the bodies of the dead, collecting body fragments, assistance in disassembling the rubble of construction structures of residential buildings; collection of lost things (documents, computer equipment) and search for people who lost them during the evacuation process.

Among the features of the activities of psychologists of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine during this period, it is worth highlighting: work in conditions of shortage of time and information about the situation, which changed every minute; the need to use special means of protection (armor protection); threat to life and health as a result of constant artillery shelling; performance of atypical functions and tasks; significant physical exertion; activity in conditions of non-rotational personnel changes.

In general, according to the approximate estimates of psychologists of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, more than 1,500 people were helped at the indicated stage of the organization of emergency psychological assistance.

The second stage began after the de-occupation of the settlement in April 2022. The main form of work of psychologists at this stage was psychological support of the affected population. The work was carried out in close cooperation with medical workers, volunteers, military personnel, and police officers.

In order to ensure the basic needs of the population, the distribution of humanitarian aid (food, hygiene products, etc.) was organized. Individual work

was carried out with residents who were forced to spend a long time in the basements of buildings, hiding from the atrocities of the occupiers. Reactions of mental and physical exhaustion and fear were detected in this category of victims. After the exhumation of bodies from mass graves began, the work of psychologists was focused on the relatives of the dead, who showed explosive mental reactions when the bodies of their relatives were discovered, and especially when they were significantly injured. A separate group of victims consisted of people who returned to their native homes after de-occupation and learned about the destruction of their property. Such victims often fell into a state of stupor or were in a state of emotional shock, manifested in the absence of any emotions, reduced sensitivity to external stimuli, and self-absorption. They tried to avoid those around them and refused contact with them, tried to stay alone.

To regulate the manifestation of negative mental states in the field conditions of post-war deoccupation, the simplest and most effective techniques were: communicative support, self-regulation and breathing exercises. Appropriate methods of crisis psychotherapy of internal problems were focused on the need to be aware of one's further actions, recognition of the irreversibility of the loss.

Thanks to the correct choice of crisis intervention methods and their timely application in practice, the practically non-stop activity regime of the psychologists of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine managed to stabilize the city's population in a few days, and the manifestations of acute mental reactions stopped.

In the period from April 1 to 14, 2022, in the city of Borodyanka, Kyiv region, psychologists of the State Emergency Service provided emergency psychological assistance to approximately 280 people.

Conclusion

Summarizing the results of our scientific investigation, we note that the psychological service of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine is the only state entity providing qualified psychological assistance in the center of an emergency situation, which is the responsibility of the state for the psychological protection of the population in any conditions of life, including military operations.

Carrying out their professional activities under the conditions of immediate threat of fire damage, the psychologists of the State Emergency Service bravely and selflessly fulfilled their duty, in particular, regarding the psychological protection of the population in the city of Borodyanka, Kyiv region. The stages of the work described by us, its features are among the first scientific studies on the problems of the psychologist's work in the focus of military operations in Ukraine.

The obtained scientific results can be used in the educational process of institutions of higher education in the preparation of crisis psychologists and scientific works of the corresponding specialty.

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