

MOOC 1

Interview

Personal Info

- profession: *Psychologist/Trainee in Group Analysis*
- age: *30*
- gender: *M*
- trained in psychological early interventions: yes/**no**. If yes, what course/master?
 - experience in psychological early interventions: *Yes*
- If yes, role in psychological early interventions experience: *Psychologist*

1) How do you describe the condition of emergency or mass crisis?

- a) Describe the situation you know/in which you were involved.

I have been working in the humanitarian field since 2016. The positions I held have always been directly related to the provision of mental health services to a refugee population in crisis or urgent need. I have worked in reception and identification centre (RIC) at the border, where refugees detained had been pulled from the sea by the Greek Coast Guard. I have also worked in more permanent refugee accommodation structures in mainland Greece, like Hot Spots and shelters for Unaccompanied Minors. Finally there is a more unstructured framework, where the target population is homeless.

- b) Describe and the support you provided.

The served population has some very basic characteristics in terms of psychopathology regardless of context. The context they live in simply intensifies or smooths/normalizes their quality. Most beneficiaries suffer from anxiety and depression disorder. Of course, the beneficiaries, when they first arrive at the border structures (RICs) show strong symptoms of PTSD.

Our support is direct and indirect. On the one hand, we undertake the identification of vulnerable cases, the connection with the health services but also with the actors responsible for the provision of food and non-food items. On the other hand, when a secure and stable framework has been established, we can start the support interventions. The living context also defines the goals of the support. Support in transition structures (RICs-Camps) aim at crisis and symptom management. Support in more stable context aims at greater therapeutic depth.



2) How do you define victims of first type (who is directly involved by the impact of the event) involved in an emergency crisis?

A victim of first type has been undergone any act by which is intentionally inflicted severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental. Both legally and psychosocially they are recognized as people in need and in transition under the fear of persecution.

a) Which kind of needs do they have?

Access to health services, accommodation and legal aid. In other words the forementioned prepare the ground for the establishment of the so necessary trust, security and stability.

b) What kind of resilience do they have?

High motivation for survival. The constant transition and the need for self-protection activates defence mechanisms which help people not to collapse.

c) What kind of intervention do they need? Please describe demands matched by phases.

Experience taught me that in the Phase 1 the interventions should aim in awareness and have a more informative character. We should bear in mind that most of the beneficiaries have not psychological way of thinking and they are not familiar with the psychosocial approach of their situation. In Phase 2, we organized group sessions where beneficiaries could learn coping strategies for stress, nightmares, and anger. It seemed to work the feeling of the belonging in a community and meeting people of the same cultural background that face same psychological issues. In Phase 3 there were two ways of support. On the one hand we organized activity groups (art, sports, cleaning, cooking) and on the other hand we were available to provide our support in individual sessions (mostly single headed families).

3) How do you define victims of second type (who are indirectly involved by the event, but who are close relatives of the first type victims) involved in an emergency crisis?

a) Which kind of needs do they have?

Same needs. Maybe things are quite different when we talk about children. Here there is also the feeling on neglect and the constant feeling of violence (physical and emotional) that emerges from the bad psychological situation of the parents.

- b) What kind of resilience do they have?

I wouldn't say that children in this environment have a well evolved resilience or coping mechanisms.

- c) What kind of intervention do they need? Please describe demands matched by phases.

Group sessions and activity group sessions where they can express their negative emotions and learn how to manage them or cope with them. In the RIC of Samos we were organizing parenting sessions in order to increase the impact of our support for the children (Two ways of support for the children. Direct and Indirect through supporting parents.)

4) How do you define a victim of third type (rescues, emergency staff...) involved in an emergency crisis?

- a) Which kind of needs do they have?

People working in the humanitarian field face an almost constant violent emotion. Personally I remember that the constant feeling I get is frustration.

- b) What kind of resilience do they have?

Studies and experience build up resilience along with personal psychotherapy and supervision. The years I work I understood that the constant exposure in these circumstances help you build up a wall of protection for the emotional impact of the stories you hear and the difficulties you face.

I would add that training in a specific psychotherapeutic approach can equip someone with the necessary tools for this job.

- c) What kind of intervention do they need? Please describe demands matched by phases.

Supervision and personal therapy.

5) How do you define a victim of fourth type (community) involved in an emergency crisis?

a) Which kind of needs does it have?

The community, specifically local communities are called in these cases to play a significant role in the management of migration/refugee crisis or of natural disasters. Usually the first reaction in these cases is the support. They behave in solidarity by providing any service mainly through their own resources. But these caregivers of the second line of action seems that they must be taken into account. They face the same emotional challenges as the professionals do. They maybe feel helpless or unexperienced. Most of times a community needs to receive the necessary training and awareness. It became apparent during the refugee crisis in Greece that local communities came late into contact with refugees. Thus, the exchange of cultural elements of both population was delayed, something that worked to the detriment of both.

b) What kind of resilience does it have?

Memories and stories of the past with relevant content (refugee crisis, natural disasters, war conflicts) build a collective consciousness and therefore they largely determine they ways of reaction and the attitude of the societies towards them. People present a resilience that allows them to provide a primary care. But beyond that their resources, emotional and technical, are limited.

c) What kind of intervention does it need? Please describe demands matched by phases.

Information and Awareness workshops on intercultural issues. Providing short-term experiential/therapeutic groups at community level. Mixed groups of two populations where the exchange of experiences and the expression of the different feelings of the two sides, will bring them together.

6) What kind of decisions a psychological rescuer makes in a psychological early intervention?

a) What decisions do psychological early intervention staff make and why?

The first interventions aim in creating an atmosphere of trust and acceptance. Its important for the professionals but mostly for the beneficiaries to feel comfortable. Its our priority to open a communication channel in order the others to start expressing their thoughts, their fears and needs. Most of people in these cases are in shock. They feel helpless and they are overwhelmed by negative thoughts.

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Thus, we try to help them recognize their feeling and their thoughts, to connect them with clear causes. This can help them put some order in their minds. The

existence of a support net (Psychosocial workers, Doctors, Legal Aid) must be highlighted in order to promote the feeling of safety for these people. After the first sessions have been undertaken, staff has to make an action plan (Assessment-Interventions -Referral Pathways)

b) What, if any, conflict occurs and how is this resolved?

It's a simplified question for a so usual and complex phenomenon. Conflicts occur very often, specifically in places where cultural diversities live under bad circumstances. The resolution also depends on many factors. The SOPs (Standards of Operation) instruct the staff to leave immediately the structures when a conflict occurs. Police and the management of the accommodation structure is responsible for the resolution. Its useful for the staff to know exact the emergency exits of a place and wear the distinctives.

When a conflict occurs (lets suppose it's not generalized and violent) and the staff is present, its useful to check the environment (Safety first), reassure that there are not children in danger around and call for support/help. In these cases, my experience showed that a calming voice and a mild approach of the person in crisis maybe help. Also, its good to remind to someone that you are there only to help and ask for trust. When the team is present, it is always useful to isolate the person in crisis or in anger because in this way you decrease the stimuli that maybe trigger the anger, frustration etc. Also its always useful and necessary ,when we talk about intercultural environments, to have with you a person with the same cultural background.

c) What information do psychological early intervention staff need? Do they seek help from any other rescuers?

Group and individual supervision.

Its more functional when the supervisor is more familiar with the specific working environment and context.

7) What kind of skills does a psychological rescuer need in order to cope with a psychological early intervention?

a) What skills should psychological early intervention staff have?



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Adaptability, Assessment skills, perception of intercultural, sex differences, active listening, unconditional acceptance and skill in managing to differentiate his position from the situation of the beneficiary.

- b) What skills should psychological early intervention staff improve?

Technical knowledge, Therapeutic skills and Personal Psychotherapy along with supervision improves the skills of a professional

8) What kind of knowledge does a psychological rescuer need to cope with a psychological early intervention?

- a) What knowledge should psychological early intervention staff have?

Psychological and psychotherapeutic background. Asylum procedures and community support providers.

- b) What knowledge should psychological early intervention staff improve?

Psychological and psychotherapeutic background. Asylum procedures and community support providers.

9) How do you define the quality of a psychological early intervention?

- a) How do you measure the impact of the psychological early intervention?

Usually by the result on the behavior or emotional triggers and their management, their engagement into the local community.

- b) Which kind of indicators do you use to evaluate the impact of a psychological early intervention?

Coping strategies evolved by the beneficiaries. Anger and Stress management.

- c) How do you usually evaluate the impact of a psychological early intervention?

There are not assessment tools. Most of times we don't even witness the changes or the impact of our interventions because we support people in transit.

10) Please describe a good practice in your experience



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a) Please give more details

Good practices have a common denominator the active listening, the acceptance but also the attitude of non-authenticity/authority towards people who are in need and may be lost

11) What are the main results you observed after psychological early interventions?

a) How do you measure the impact of the interventions/experiences?

Usually the impact of the interventions is manifested in the increased mobilization of the beneficiary, in his increased involvement with his role (a parent for example) or in his integration in the community.

12) Is there any subject you consider to be important in order to help the research which has not been mentioned in the interview?

a) Do you have any suggestions?

I think that one unexplored field is the matter of supervision and specifically group supervision. In the supervision sessions emerges the most useful material and unfortunately supervision is not a standard in most of the organizations (Not even in the International organizations).

Maybe case of studies would help someone more to recall moments and practices of management and also explore the emotional impact of these moments

