

The specifics of social work with victims of terrorism

Las particularidades del trabajo social con víctimas del terrorismo

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Summary

The international situation in the modern world is characterized by instability, precariousness, and a high risk to the lives of people who may experience the negative consequences of emergencies arising from a variety of factors. Acts of terrorism belong to the phenomena of social emergencies of a criminal nature and currently represent one of the most widespread problems faced by 67% of modern developed and developing countries. Numerous terrorist acts compel heads of countries from around the world to come together and develop the most effective strategies to counter terrorism in their countries and the international community.

Keywords: Terrorism, terrorism victims, social protection, social work.

Resumen

La situación internacional en el mundo moderno se caracteriza por la inestabilidad, la precariedad y un alto riesgo para la vida de las personas que pueden experimentar las consecuencias negativas de las emergencias derivadas de una variedad de factores. Los actos de terrorismo pertenecen al fenómeno de las emergencias sociales de carácter criminal y representan en la actualidad uno de los problemas más extendidos a los que se enfrenta el 67% de los países desarrollados y en vías de desarrollo modernos. Numerosos actos terroristas obligan a los jefes de países de todo el mundo a unirse y desarrollar las estrategias más eficaces para combatir el terrorismo en sus países y en la comunidad internacional.

Palabras clave: Terrorismo, víctimas del terrorismo, protección social, trabajo social.

Introducción

Individual cases of terrorism were first recorded in the mid-20th century in some states of the USA but modern terrorist attacks to which increasingly more people of post-industrial society become exposed are a newer form of social emergency of a criminal nature and, according to researcher K.G. Gorbunov (2010), all known forms of countering it become obsolete too quickly.

The same applies to the methods of social work with the victims of acts of terrorism who used to be inferior to such categories of citizens as adolescents with deviant behavior, disabled people, women, victims of domestic violence, and pensioners in terms of the frequency of referral for assistance. G.Kh. Musina-Maznova notes that the technology and methodology of modern work with victims of terrorist acts are in dire need of expansion and separation into a separate category with its own conceptual apparatus, developed methods, and work strategies (Musina-Maznova et al., 2014).

Nevertheless, considering direct social work with victims of acts of terrorism, there are still no specific methodologies for social work services. Victims of terrorist attacks as a category in the field of social work still exist as part of the target audience of people who have been exposed to various types of emergencies. Such broad boundaries most certainly entail the lack of specific methods of direct work with terrorism victims.

Literature review

As defined by B.I. Kretov (2007), a social emergency occurs in the face of a clash of several social and public interests and inevitably entails damage, injury, or death of citizens who accidentally happen to be in the place of social conflict taking place.

Conflicts can be provoked by a variety of factors: economic inequality, political discontent, conflicts on racial or nationalist grounds, religious beliefs, etc. The emergence of such conflict escalations is facilitated by additional conditions of the aggravation of the existing causes

such as corruption, unemployment, hunger, nationalism, unjustified infringement of the interests of a social group, etc.

A terrorist act is also defined as a criminal act since the process of its emergence and execution is by no means accidental but strictly programmed and planned and involves a developed system of organized crime pursuing its own interests through inciting ethnic or religious discord.

Social work with victims of emergencies is a practical activity the main purpose of which, according to V.N. Malykh (2000), is to meet the needs of the population in social protection from the effects of emergencies. This may include the following such aspects of social work as granting the right to security of life and property, the organization of psychological and social work during and after the victims' involvement in an act of terrorism, and compensation and benefits for victims of social emergencies.

The traditional approach to providing services in the sphere of social work with citizens affected by emergency situations includes several stages, as indicated by I.A. Lipskii (2012):

1. The organization stage

This stage involved identifying the main social institutions and bodies whose jurisdiction includes the provision of first aid in an emergency situation, as well as the subsequent organization of prevention and supervision for emergency victims and providing certain benefits and economic payments for this category of persons.

In Russia, these issues are addressed by the Unified State System for Prevention and Elimination of Emergency Situations. The main objectives of this system, as defined by L.G. Gusliakova (1997), are the protection of the population from emergencies of different nature in peacetime and during extreme and life-threatening situations, as well as the preservation of material and cultural values of the population, city, region, and the country as a whole.

The System for Prevention and Elimination of Emergency Situations comprises a set of agencies and bodies operating at the local, regional, regional and federal levels, as indicated by G.A. Akhinov (2014). At the federal level, this work is done by the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Russia and at lower levels. It is within the jurisdiction of regional centers for civil defense and emergencies and social protection centers.

The work of these bodies determines the nature and content of social work with victims of various types of emergencies.

2. The functional stage

After the institutions and levels corresponding to the present emergency situation are determined, the bodies, following their functions in this sphere, develop basic measures of various types to provide social protection services. The development of the measures is characterized by planning, that is, determining the main goals and objectives, as well as the means that must be invested to meet the basic requirements for the provision of social work. Moreover, this stage involves selecting the main forms of interventions and work with the emergency situation victims and coordinating the activities of the given institution with other social, psychological, and economic assistance agencies to achieve the institution's goals.

3. The implementation stage

At this stage, the selected forms and methods of social work with the category of persons affected by the negative impact of emergencies of various kinds are implemented. As

characterized by G. Vardaniants (2005), this includes providing benefits and payments for the described category of persons, implementing psychosocial work to prevent the emergence of destructive behavior in the emergency victims, carrying out preventive measures revealing the characteristics of behavior in the event that this type of emergency arises again, as well as implementing the main forms of counteraction to the emergencies of a certain nature among the population in the territory.

To ensure the effectiveness of proper social support and protection of the population in emergencies, the powers are distributed between agencies of different directions and nature, and the main directions of work with the victims of terrorist acts as participants in an emergency situation are developed in advance.

Thus, ensuring the effectiveness of social work with terrorism victims requires describing the main directions of work of the social agencies responsible for performing their functions both at the initial stage (i.e., immediately after receiving the news of a terrorist attack) and during the rehabilitation phase. The most comprehensive definition is provided by I.A. Zimniaia (2003):

- Emergency rescue work at the scene of an emergency;

The main purpose of these operations is to search for possible victims, evacuate the population, eliminate the consequences of the emergency situation, and remove possible obstacles that may delay immediate assistance to the victims of the terrorist attack. The bodies responsible for the implementation of these operations are the police and EMERCOM.

- law enforcement activities;

This includes all possible attempts to prevent looting, robbery, and the destruction of personal property of the victims of an emergency situation during the outbreak of danger and in the first few hours after it, in the time of general confusion.

- medical assistance;

Healthcare and social protection agencies must provide primary medical care at the scene of the emergency, as well as organize preventive, therapeutic, and recovery activities after the terrorist attack by hospitalizing the victims and entitling them to free sanatorium treatment.

- humanitarian aid;

Public organizations connected to social protection agencies and local authorities deliver food, drinking water, and hot lunches to the place of emergency and provide the necessary medical supplies and warm clothes.

- legal assistance;

The Federal Migration Service and social protection agencies process lost documents of victims of acts of terrorism, as well as provide them with free legal advice and advocacy services to protect and enforce their rights.

- psychological assistance;

Psychological assistance is provided not only immediately during a terrorist attack but also in the first days after the attack and the following months until a victim reaches full mental recovery. These functions are also within the duties of the Ministry of Emergency Situations and social protection bodies.

- social protection of emergency victims.

This type of activity involves the payment of a one-time allowance to victims of terrorist attacks, as well as providing them with temporary housing in case they lose their own and providing in-kind assistance in the form of basic necessities.

Thus, we have highlighted that in the traditional aspect, the provision of services to victims of emergencies by social protection agencies includes the following responsibilities:

- providing medical assistance;
- providing legal services;
- providing psychological assistance;
- providing social services in the field of human rights protection;
- participating in humanitarian aid through interaction with public organizations.

Mental trauma is a central formation developing in a person as a consequence of their involvement in a terrorist act. The concept of mental trauma was first defined by Sigmund Freud in the context of reflex psychology. Freud (1991) argued that a person receiving any vivid impression, regardless of its nature, tends to accumulate a sum of arousal. To reduce the amount of arousal, a person needs to discharge excess energy to maintain their mental homeostasis. For example, if a person gets hit, to reduce the increased sum of arousal, they will hit back and thereby feel relief.

However, the specificity of a terrorist act is that the terrorist is either a suicide bomber or they leave the bomb and their identity remains unknown. Thus, as a result of a terrorist attack, the victim does not see the person who caused the increased amount of excitement and the response reflex remains unfulfilled which causes a state of frustration often manifesting in crying, resentment, feelings of shame, humiliation, impotent rage, loss, etc.

Thus, according to M.M. Reshetnikov et al. (1991), in stressful situations, a person shows an individual reaction to the mental trauma itself and the reaction directly depends on the force of the external influences of an extreme situation.

Although modern psychology does not follow Z. Freud in viewing the psyche as reflexive, observations of victims of terrorist acts during the emergency situation and after it testify to the existence of similar mechanisms in the human psyche.

V.V. Pubtsov argues that when the sum of mental arousal increases and does not find an outlet in its natural manifestation (i.e., a physical or verbal response), the human psyche begins to develop a defense mechanism known in psychoanalysis as the “displacement mechanism” (Medvedeva, Shimanovskaya, 2018). In other words, a person tries to forget the traumatic situation which brings them a lot of negative emotional experiences.

Mental energy produced through the passive experience of a negative situation is transformed into a somatic outburst and is passed from the mental level to the physical. In 87% of cases, victims of a terrorist attack produce some kind of physical illness the experience of which makes it easier for them to cope with a psychotraumatic situation.

Aside from the described mechanisms of the psyche, much attention in the psychology of victims of acts of terrorism is given to the phenomenon of fear. According to D. Kalsched, fear is an emotional process, a human response to real or imagined danger characterized by a paralytic

effect on the nervous system (Kalsched, 2001). When experiencing fear, a person perceives certain circumstances as a threat to their life and the safety of their property. Fear as an emotional reaction can be short-lived or prolonged, prone to recurrence and relapse.

In the organization of psychological therapy in social security agencies, the first thing to pay attention to is reducing the level of fear and the general background of anxiety in the victims of terrorist attacks.

Fear not only causes negative feelings but is also reflected in psychosomatic symptoms (aggravation of the existing chronic illnesses, headaches, stomach upsets or ulcers, etc.). Experiencing fear at the immediate moment of a social emergency situation, a person is also prone to rash, unconscious acts since, as indicated by N.A. Vyrubo (2004), this emotional state can cause a state of affect. What can be referred to such actions in the context of a terrorist attack are the following aspirations:

- to avoid the danger, to escape from the scene of the attack;
- to shield oneself from danger with an object;
- attack the threat and destroy it to reduce or eliminate the feeling of fear.

As we can see, all three directions of behavior in crowded conditions (and terrorist attacks usually take place among crowds of unsuspecting citizens) can compromise the safety of the human body since stampede, mass panic, etc. are frequent companions of terrorist attacks.

Victims of terrorist attacks are most susceptible to group behavior. Even after the danger has been eliminated, for quite a long time, victims of terrorist acts demonstrate the features of the so-called “herd instinct” which gives them a sense of security and safety.

Group behavior is characterized by the presence of the same behavioral reactions to an external influencing factor that threatens all participants in a terrorist attack. In this case, the danger is perceived as a threat to bodily and psycho-emotional unity and the safety of people’s material values and leads to a tendency toward uncontrollable behavior and disorganization of public order, as indicated by Iu.V. Bykhovets (2010).

Proceeding from the premise that a group of people in an emergency situation is influenced by a single external factor, a spontaneous, common mindset is the main feature of people’s behavior in a terrorist attack. The population often suffers not so much from the actions of the terrorists but rather from the general panic and desire to avoid danger.

Immediately at the onset of an emergency situation, the behavior of victims of a terrorist attack can be divided into two categories, as defined by V.L. Vasiliev (2011).

1. Rational behavior of a terrorist attack victim.

This category includes the smallest part of the group exposed to the emergency situation. People in this category tend to adapt to the changed conditions quickly, mentally control their activities, and manage their emotional state. The size of this category directly depends on people’s familiarity and experience with the instructions for actions, what should be done in case of a life-threatening situation. Accordingly, the higher is the level of education in the field of life safety received by the population, the larger is this category of people in the event of a social emergency. In addition, when working with victims of terrorist acts, it is also important to provide people with the necessary theoretical and practical information and instructions on how to act if the threat reappears. The instructions and orders given in a public emergency tend to manage the chaotic behavior of people in a state of panic to a greater extent and reduce the number of victims.

2. Panic behavior of a terrorist attack victim.

This category is the largest in emergency situations, a person does not adapt to the changing situation and is prone to irrational behavior and dangerous actions unforeseen by others. People in this category are less manageable and prone to chaotic movement leading to a high number of victims in a crush.

There is also another side to this behavior: terrorist attack victims become weak-willed, lacking initiative, prone to confusion and melancholic moods. After the danger has been eliminated, these victims may show depressive and suicidal tendencies and need intensified psychological support and a variety of training to relieve the tension from emergency situations.

After the liquidation of the threat, terrorist attack victims require constant psychological and social control as the mental trauma caused by the extreme situation will manifest itself for quite a long time, as V.O. Evseev argues (2013).

V.V. Znakov (2010) indicates that in addition to a variety of somatic phenomena triggered by mental trauma, there also forms a focus of excitation (or switching point) directly connected with the psycho-emotional experience through associative links. Unlike somatic reactions that mostly contribute to mental relaxation, the focus of excitement seems to bring the person back to the situation they experienced. An associative series can be triggered by any insignificant detail remembered by a terrorist attack victim during the ongoing emergency situation especially vividly (for example, a stranger's mention of a restaurant will bring the terrorist attack victim into a steady state of mental tension if they were in the immediate vicinity of its signboard during the attack). In this case, the mental state will be characterized either by a recreation of behavior in an extreme situation (behavioral flashback) or by an aggravation of psychosomatic illnesses from which the terrorist attack victim could already have recovered.

Thus, as noted by K.V. Bezzubik (2011), the organization of psychological therapeutic assistance for terrorist attack victims should focus not only on the elimination of somatic consequences (treating a given disease) but also on psychological diagnostics with possibly destroying associative series in the minds of the victims of terrorist acts and restoring their psycho-emotional balance.

Psychosocial work should include both psychological training to eliminate the feelings of fear and subjection to group behavior and release of psychic energy, as well as be accompanied by medication treatment aimed at the general relaxation and reduction of anxiety in victims of terrorism acts.

However, psychosocial follow-up for terrorist attack victims should not be easily disregarded as the developed victimization behavior (or victim behavior) can further provoke similar situations threatening the physical and emotional well-being of terrorist attack victims. A.V. Kozlov (2011) believes that if a terrorist attack victim retains the fear syndrome and victim behavior, the likelihood of repeated participation in dangerous situations increases several times. Thus, preventing the repeated participation in an emergency situation in terrorist attack victims calls for competent and well-planned psychosocial work carried out in the social protection agencies.

Methods

Social work with terrorism victims implies the use of innovative social technologies that provide specific forms and methods of work with the category of persons subjected to a social emergency of a criminal nature.

An innovative social technology refers to the process of influencing a social subject, a person, a category of the population due to the developed demand. It involves revising the existing traditional approaches to providing social assistance to a certain category of the population, collecting the latest information on this social problem, and introducing new technologies accounting for the practical experience of previous years.

The constant in innovative social technologies for working with victims of terrorist acts is the structure of the development and implementation of these technologies in social workers' activity. Same as any other activity, an innovative technology is characterized by goal-setting, the presence of certain means for achieving the given goal, and analysis of the obtained result.

Before implementing innovative social technologies, it is advisable to assume the possible consequences of this act for the social group and social organization. The category of persons affected by terrorist activities is inextricably linked with other social institutions and objects. Innovative social technologies are also divided into the basic and specific ones, that is, they involve the strategic design of a social object and the short-term implementation of social assistance to the population referring to social protection agencies.

According to M. Payne (2007), the main goals derived from the definition of innovative social technologies include:

- the integration of the personal, individual, and social through using social technologies;
- the main emphasis on the humanistic nature of social technologies;
- the implementation of social work based on the activity-based approach, active interaction between the object and subject of social work, the development of an individual's inner potential.

Thus, the use of innovative social technologies allows for easier and quicker integration of terrorist attack victims back into the modern world society through the active social interaction of participants in the process.

The main step-by-step process of creating and developing innovative social technology is the following mechanism, as M.V. Room (1999) defines it:

1. Analysis of the nature and specifics of the social reality (a terrorist act), as well as the target audience of social work (victims of terrorist acts).
2. Development of social work technology, the main purpose of which is to change and modify the social object in the set of their knowledge of the world, social activity in the collective, as well as the main actions in the re-occurrence of an emergency situation.
3. Practical implementation of innovative social technology.
4. Observation of the dynamics of the object of social work.
5. Evaluating the results and drawing conclusions about the completed work.

In addition, according to E.A. Sigida (2010), a social technology is developed in response to the emergence of new social threats or circumstances involving the categories of people who have not previously been targeted by social protection agencies. The modern world is an actively developing social space where old trends can change and transform into new ones or spread to the point of becoming a separate area of social work. For this reason, terrorism victims are separated

from other emergency situation victims due to the particular specificity of a terrorist attack and psychophysiological changes in the victims of terrorist actions.

Results and discussion

The modern innovative technologies of social work with citizens who have suffered from terrorist acts primarily imply psychological rehabilitation of victims both during the emergency situation and after it.

Stressful situations during an emergency situation and after it differ from each other. In the first case, stress has the features of affect but lasts for a short time, until the emergency is localized. In the second case, terrorist attack victims have a deeper emotional experience which can last for years in the absence of necessary treatment and lead to serious illness or a mental disorder, as indicated by A.A. Osipova (2005).

Moral and psychological rehabilitation of victims of terrorist acts is a target area in the context of innovative technologies of social work. Before analyzing the innovative technologies of social work with persons who suffered as a result of terrorist acts, we should consider the classification of terrorism victims. According to V. Orlov (2004), it comprises the following groups of people:

1. The primary victims of terrorist attacks (the group most problematic for psychosocial work since it includes people who were terrorist hostages, their close relatives, and missing persons).

This group of victims requires active and comprehensive social protection after the danger of an emergency situation is localized: financial support, various privileges to use public transportation, receiving discounted goods, as well as daily psychological and medical support to eliminate the consequences of the post-traumatic syndrome and prevent further personality disintegration under the influence of negative impressions and experience.

2. Secondary victims of terrorist attacks (the largest group of people who witnessed a terrorist act but were not personally affected by the attackers).

This group also needs systematic social work in social protection agencies in the form of a one-time financial payment, receiving the necessary on-spot psychological and medical support immediately after the localization of the threat, as well as participation in psychological training and general classes on the basics of safety in emergency situations.

The basic forms of psychological aid to primary victims of terrorist attacks can include psychological counseling where the main goal of sessions is to place a person in an imaginary extreme situation and work on overcoming the negative influences of this situation together. Moreover, placing a terrorist attack victim in a position of significance and value and focusing on fruitful interaction with a psychologist or a social worker is the most critical requirement for the organization of social work with terrorism victims. A terrorist attack implies the diminished significance of the target audience and them experiencing such emotional states as humiliation, being crushed, and a reduction in self-esteem. Thus, complex influence on the material and mental dimensions of a terrorist attack victim provides a chance for their full rehabilitation.

In the context of the current crisis state of Russia, the prevalence of psychological and social counseling in social protection agencies is one of the topical areas of activity as most social institutions cease to function and a person who has experienced terrorist actions finds themselves in a certain vacuum.

According to A.M. Panov (2014), the basic principles of innovative social technologies in working with victims of terrorist acts are:

- the principle of protecting the interests of the victim of a terrorist attack;

Psychological and social support for terrorism victims is mandatory and the nature of this assistance depends on the client's actual needs and psycho-emotional state. Thus, there is no contract for psychological or other support between the psychologist or a social worker and the terrorist attack victim, nor is there any charge for services from social welfare authorities.

- the "do no harm" principle;

This principle implies accounting for the psychological specifics of victims of terrorist attacks and determining the specifics of sessions with a local psychologist or social worker on their basis. Psychological and social aid can be provided momentarily during the first 4 weeks after a social emergency situation or be deeper if the consequences of the post-traumatic syndrome are inclined to aggravation and deformation of the victims' initial mental characteristics.

- the voluntariness principle.

Conclusion

It is important to remember that all possible witnesses to the terrorist attack who were in the vicinity of the ongoing emergency situation are potential clients of social protection work. In contrast to the usual work in the regular mode when specialists work in their offices and only on request, employees of social bodies travel to the place of the terrorist attack to identify the primary victims and unobtrusively provide their services to everyone in need. This allows providing the necessary assistance to the most affected people on the spot, as well as notifying others of the opportunity to receive a certain type of assistance at the social welfare agencies.

Therefore, the main approach to organizing social work with the population affected by terrorist attacks is active psychological assistance aimed at treating acute stressful experiences, relieving post-traumatic syndrome, and familiarizing the victims of terrorist acts with their rights and freedoms, benefits, and financial payments, the primary goal of which is the secondary socialization and well-being of terrorism victims.

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