

IMPROVEMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND COOPERATION SKILLS: CURRICULUM FOR PEACEKEEPING PERSONNEL

Marzanna Farnicka¹, Juan Carlos Fernández²,
Jesús Martín Ramírez²

¹ Instytut Psychologii, Uniwersytet Zielonogórski
Institute of Psychology, University of Zielona Gora

² Centrum Badań nad Konfliktem, Uniwersytet Nebrija w Madrycie, Hiszpania
Center on Conflict Studies, Nebrija University in Madrid, Spain

Summary. Preparation for work in the field of peacebuilding should always be undertaken from multiple perspectives, as actions and their consequences are bound to bring about changes in many aspects, such as mental health and competences of staff responsible for peacekeeping. The general aim of the presented article is to underline the role of psychological skills necessary for high level functioning of peacemakers and peacekeepers in various countries. The presented program covers two fundamental training areas: keeping good mental health and developing cooperation skills. The main focus was placed on the way to identify barriers and challenges faced by organizers of the process of preparing and building competencies in the scope of conflict prevention, protection of own resources (health protection area) and group resources (social capital area). An important aspect of raising the competencies of staff engaged in building and maintaining peace is the ability to control emotions and to counteract pathological reactions connected with working under prolonged stress caused, for instance, by changing one's place of stay, encounters with strangers and hostile persons, huge pressure and responsibility.

Key words: health protection, professional competences, coping with stress, development of one's own resources

Introduction

In everyday life, safety and peace are used as one and the same thing and considered as taken care of by the state. Safety is often treated as an inalienable right of every human being and as a primary need conditioning further development and realization of other needs (Maslow, 1996). On the other hand, individual safety – also important for people ensuring external safety – is one's individual concern.

Adres do korespondencji: Marzanna Farnicka, e-mail, m.farnicka@wpps.uz.zgora.pl

In a situation when the margins of safety (individual, group, physical, economic, international) are infringed, the existing homeostasis (balance) is shaken, resulting in what we may call a conflict, and an action necessarily follows which may assume the form of confrontation, mediation, negotiation, apparent activity or any other adequate or inadequate response (Hobfoll, 2006). Individuals who work as peace-makers are responsible for organizing effective interventions. In the course of their activity they may encounter situations involving violence (infringing of safety or peace). Such persons become active or passive participants of events (as witnesses, assault victims, hostages or persons confronting an aggressive crowd) or are involved in depressing circumstances beyond their control (for instance, witnessing an accident, rescuing people from catastrophes and accidents, transporting or looking at dead bodies and injured people; see: Barlett, Anderson, 2014). In such situations, despite efforts, a feeling of threatened safety may appear, both in individual and collective perspective. It can be noticed that persons who introduce peace and order are exposed, through the external situation in which they operate, to post-traumatic stress connected with objective features of the situation (death or threat to one's own or others' integrity) and own emotions (anxiety, fear, helplessness or horror; see: Ramírez, 2001; Staal, 2004).

The general aim of the presented project is to raise the competencies and operating efficiency of persons engaged in peace-consolidating and safety-ensuring missions. Its main goal is to prepare new training curricula mainly for school students of police, military and correctional officers. The presented program covers two fundamental training areas indispensable for such persons to perform their tasks aimed at stopping the conflict */reaching agreement/* and ensuring security */bringing peace/*. The program should also be relevant for civilians cooperating directly with the police or military personnel, who carry out the assigned projects in conflict-threatened regions.

Theoretical background of the proposal

Working in the field of peacebuilding, one should always view the undertaken actions from many perspectives and consider their consequences for the further peace process (or keeping law and order), as each action may either stop or propagate further conflicts. The experience of researchers connected with *Coloquios Internacionales sobre Cerebro y Agresión* (CICA), whose research was endorsed by UNESCO General Conference (1989). For more than 30 years CICA has been analyzing the relations between determinants of conflict-generating behavior and violence and – in the most extreme case – terrorism, indicates the necessity of examining those phenomena from the systemic and interdisciplinary perspective (Ramírez, 2007a, b; Ramírez, Walters, 2009).

Conflict generation and conflict solving depend on many factors. It should be stressed that among them there are cultural factors manifesting themselves in a specific 'approval of aggression' (Lagerspetz, Westman, 1980) or gender-related expectations for conflicts to be resolved by force (Cohen, Nisbett, 1997; Zajenkowska et al., 2014). For the purpose of analyzing the current training methods and approach to conflict and the proposed new model of training for people engaged in peace and safety keeping, we – as authors of the GePePeS project developed to preserve the resources of individuals who find themselves in a work situation taking into account the stressful conditions (Hobfoll, 2001) – assume the systemic perspective and the interactive-dynamic paradigm (Bronfenbrener, 2005).

The program of training curricula is based on the same assumptions as the analysis of current training programs and conflict understanding and prevention, i.e. the systemic perspective and the interactive-dynamic paradigm (Meyer, Allen, Smith 1993; Pervin, 1993; Lee et al., 2004). The objectives of the program are the development of competencies and raising the efficiency through the preservation of resources of an individual in a workplace (Hobfoll, 2006). A general assumption of Hobfoll's theory is that an individual has some resources at his/her disposal which he/she greatly appreciates and is inclined to protect and never lose them. Stress is predicted to occur as a result of circumstances that represent: (1) a threat of resource loss, or (2) an actual loss of the resources required to sustain the individual, and (3) the lack of reasonable gain following resource investments (Dudek, Koniarek, Szymczak, 2007). In understanding the stress phenomenon the basic stressors are therefore overloads contained in these requirements (both physical and mental), as well as various dangers.

Being under workplace stress is understood as an effect of some environmental stressors, perceived by an individual as exceeding her/his abilities to face them. The pressure can be perceived as an acceptable dimension of duty (in contrary to any overexposure leading to the state of stress; see: Herberger, Magda, 2015). Other researchers dealing with workplace stress point out to its evolving nature and indicate that resources and struggle for their preservation have a fundamental impact on the functioning of an individual, even once the activity is over (Freund, Riediger, 2001). There are many studies concerning problems of such professional groups as firemen, policemen, rescuers, and soldiers. Literature commonly records dependencies between the working environment and the occurrence of psychological disturbances (Karasek et al., 1988; Gerin et al., 2006; Mc Auliffe et al., 2007; Ray, Wilhelm, Gross, 2008). The research done by Yohe, Suzuki and Luckas (2012), Stephens and Miller (1998) and Brown and Campbell (1994) also indicates that police and military personnel do not admit to the fear they have in connection with certain work-related situations. They use various methods to cope with it, for instance transfer the fear to their wives or other family members.

The significance of protective factors and mechanisms is emphasized by the concept of resilience (cf. Masten, Powell, 2003; Luthar, 2006). Those theories serve as the basis for the development of preventive programs and programs for the pro-

motion of mental health among children and teenagers. One of such programs was developed and evaluated by Slone and Teichman (2009) among Israeli youth during the second intifada (1998-2004) to deal with effects of prolonged exposure to political violence. That research showed the importance of the social factor which, once activated, becomes a specific therapeutic agent in a situation of diagnosed post-traumatic stress (Davis, 1999; Ogińska-Bulik, 2005b).

One of the assumptions of this project is to maintain good functioning despite the occurrence of stressful and frustrating experience connected with professional activity. According to the assumptions of Prochaska, Norcross and DiClemente (2008), who put forward their trans-theoretical model of change, the impact that we call 'the program' shall contain the following elements:

- a) widening the awareness – providing information on conflicts and their dynamics and the systemic approach to factors influencing conflict occurrence, providing information on stress disorders and manners of coping with them, as well as information on group communication and functioning within the group, and
- b) activating the processes of social support, a network of mutually supportive relationships, processes of involvement in one's work and control of own emotions, elements of monitoring and controlling the environment in which the working task is carried out. Also, the second module will include work with emotions and their control and the issue of fixed thinking patterns connected with self-evaluation in the form of feelings and thoughts about oneself in connection with work.

Description of the solutions

Conflicts, aggressive and violent experiences in all their forms are 'triggered' and influenced by a multitude of internal (individual) as well as external (social) factors. Cognitive processes related to human perception, attitudes and socio-cultural norms are involved in this behavior. People involved in peacemaking, such as policemen, soldiers, firemen, rescue specialists or community workers, face potential dangers of extreme types of conflicts and aggression. From our perspective the main step is to identify barriers and challenges faced by organizers of the process of preparing and building competencies of persons engaged in peacemaking activities within the EU in the scope of conflict prevention, protection of own resources (health protection area) and group resources (social capital area). Conflict is an unavoidable phenomenon which is always present whenever social groups or individuals having different values, interests or aims come together. Armed solutions and forming of pressure groups are just some of the many possible ways that can be employed. Persons engaged in peacekeeping through negotiation, confrontation or establishing and keeping order must be able to recognize the stages of conflict and threats connected with its propagation and should be able to activate social activity and en-

gagement of the local community around the actions that they undertake. Thus, through involvement of persons affected by the conflict, they propagate peace (the community policing procedure). Another important aspect of building the competencies of peacekeeping personnel is the ability to control emotions and to counteract pathological reactions connected with working in prolonged stress caused for instance by changing one's place of stay, encounters with alien and hostile persons, huge pressure and responsibility. Moreover, through comparing the effectiveness of hitherto used methods with the effects of the new training curricula proposed in the project and based on building professional skills according to the idea of 'community policing', new methods of coping with stress are developed (e.g. meditation), a special way of conflict understanding (as information) is promoted and shaping the ability to propagate peace by inspiring the social activity of groups engaged in the conflict takes place (developing procedures).

Also, paying attention to the protection and development of resources will increase the ability to cope with consequences of work in difficult conditions, such as peacemaking or peacekeeping; it will also increase the effectiveness of peacemakers' work and lower the costs borne by them in the area of their (mental) health. Presentation of main assumptions of enhancing psychological abilities of peacekeeping personnel is based on the example of the GePePeS¹ project. That project is especially focused on: (1) recognition, (2) understanding and (3) awareness training in building professional skills. It involves:

1. Recognition of the consequences of working in the conflict area. Work in the field of peace and safety establishment is the work with people in stress, but it also creates stress for peacemakers themselves. Therefore, they should be able to recognize stress and cope with it, both individually and as mentors or models for coping in difficult situations [for others].
2. Understanding one's own state, restoring one's psychological balance and also controlling various stress-generating factors. Research shows that the sooner the intervention in that respect is undertaken, the better the prevention or reduction of symptoms of overburdening with stress (Heitzman, 2009). This relates both to 'ordinary' stress and to its pathological forms which in extreme cases may turn into depression or PTSD. As many connections have been proven to exist between exposure to certain situations and the consequences of such situations and individual factors, this module will deal with the ability to cope from the individual and the group perspective.
3. Awareness training focused on:
 - a) widening the awareness concerning stress and its consequences, as well as functioning in it (changes of emotions, cognitive symptoms, disturbed functioning),

¹ The GePePeS Project was submitted tot the European Commission in the H2020 Competition 2015, Coordination and support actions (Security Area) and prepared by Farnicka et al. (2015).

- b) setting up supportive teams aimed at development of procedures concentrated on recovering from stressful events, their reintegration with hitherto pursued values, roles and principles, the manner of fulfilling roles and improvement of communication abilities and activation of support processes,
 - c) learning relaxation methods (meditation, line, anchors, rebirthing) and self-therapy – cognitive-behavioral training.
4. Introducing and checking the procedures of the community policing idea – training the social skills used in the process of mobilization of social support (e.g. consultations, mediations, negotiations, adaptation). The aim of this module is to learn and train social skills, communication skills and team work enabling co-operation based on communication, mutual mobilization and the ability to adapt ideas in order to solve identified problems. By completing various tasks of that module, the participants are supposed to check their skills and competencies, improve them and increase their efficiency.

According to the assumptions of Garito (2008) and Prochaska, Norcross and DiClemente (2008), programs and impacts is analyzed from the point of view of widening the awareness, stimulating the processes of social support, building the sense of competence and practicing skills. It is proposed as the Transtheoretical Model of Change (Learning).

Some practical details about improved mental health in the GePePeS project

The assumed aim of the project is to be achieved through work in three activity modules: recognition, analysis and active training of selected skills and field work (introducing and checking the procedures).

Problem recognition – Analyses of situation recognition containing the module of knowledge about conflicts and their solutions with training skills to control and moderate them. This will take place during seminars that will become specific workshops for participants and will focus on their skills related to recognition and monitoring of conflicts. Those seminars will serve the purpose of providing information, developing and training strategies and procedures of prevention and solution of various types of conflicts.

The analyzed phenomena (conflict and its prevention) are viewed in three perspectives: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and interactive (I vs. the world). A human being functions in those dimensions and every undertaken activity has an influence on the person who performed it and on others in those areas (cf. Farnicka, 2015). Thus, according to the assumed paradigm and in order to avoid the trap connected with the influence of training culture in that sphere in a given country, the framework for the analysis of the hitherto prevailing understanding of conflict and peacebuilding will be the dimensions of understanding it and its influence on an individual, interpersonal relations and the functioning of a social system.

An important element of changing the relations is the outsourcing of certain services or bringing in specialists from other fields (e.g. psychologists, trainers of special skills). Examination of those dimensions will indicate the manner of functioning of an individual in the perspective of preserving individual resources (the 'I vs. I' perspective, i.e. preservation of one's health and resources). That criterion was introduced on the basis of the classical research of Caplan (1990) and the confirming research of Slone and Teichman (2009), which indicates that preventive actions consisting in interventions prior to the occurrence of a difficult situation counteract dysfunctional experience.

In this dimension, actions will be evaluated that influence the [personal] traits and skills, e.g. a certain level of coherence, the ability to control one's own psychological states, self-esteem, sense of efficiency, optimism, self-evaluation, mindfulness, flexibility of cognitive processes, readiness for interpersonal aggression, and attitudes towards violence (Antonovsky, 1987; Ogińska-Bulik, 2005a; Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014). This perspective is important, as in a stressful situation all the deficiencies related to emotional control or rigidity of perception become more pronounced and may form the basis for the problem of inadequate perception of reality and the undertaking of inadequate decisions (Lindhardt, 2016). Research conducted on persons preparing themselves for the role of prison guards indicate their specific profile of readiness for aggression (Farnicka, 2015; Frączek, Konopka, Dominiak-Kochanek, 2016). Also, the research and frequency of occurrence of combat stress (PTSD) indicate the necessity of preventive measures in the 'I vs. I' area and the analysis of training programs in that sphere (Fergus, Zimmerman, 2005). This area will be covered during individual meetings and in small groups connected with therapeutic, corrective and educational work.

Period of training – Introducing and checking the procedures

The interpersonal perspective (which relates to the creation and preservation of social capital of a group) will take into consideration the impacts connected with the ability to function in a group, level of social competencies or ways of assuming certain roles and the ability to activate social support (Ogińska-Bulik, 2005a). The 'I vs. the world' perspective relates to examining the undertaking of procedures for specific actions. The adequacy and efficiency of such procedures, as well as their consequences, will be analyzed. The adequacy will be evaluated through the effects that certain actions have on social networks and from the perspective of the idea of 'community policing' being one of criminal prevention strategies (Farmer, 1994; Maiwald, 2002).

Training allows the participants not only to improve their personal skills but also to plan interventions activating social support. Social support has been long known as the factor that suppresses stress, improves well-being, alleviates disease or makes it possible for someone to adopt the opponent's point of view; it also makes the perception of reality more flexible (Seemann, 2011). Promoting social support is one of the main assumptions of that program as an element of teaching how to

effectively cope with difficulties understood in various ways (both intra- and inter-personal; see: Patterson, Chung, Swang, 2012). The working methods used throughout the duration of the project will consist in the analysis of current patterns and operating procedures and their possible correction. The analysis of field activities and field training will be based on the idea of community policing².

In every module participants receive materials for discussion and a training script in which they can find theoretical issues, description of skills and strategies for their development, as well as tools for their measurement. The project also foresees time for individual meetings with selected specialists and the choice of additional modules: educational activation (information offered during 12-hour workshops and individual meetings), health activation (medical advice and interventions – 10 hours), professional activation. The participants will be obliged to enroll and choose at least three additional activities that will form a supplementary (extra-curricular) module.

Trainers. The trainers should be specially prepared and they will be recruited from professionals working in the area of: (1) conflict studies and understanding the conflict, (2) coping with stress (including meditation), (3) and area of communication (including Art Therapy methods).

It is assumed that the project will be beneficial for all its participants understood as individuals, co-operating groups and a community of people involved in keeping peace and safety. The benefits listed below are those considered especially worth mentioning:

- knowledge how conflict is understood in the organization (benefit for the organization);
- initiated communication procedures and increased coordination capabilities (benefits for the organization and community);
- on the basis of information about how conflict is understood in current training systems data should be gathered and the processes of communication inside organization should be started and improved (benefit for the organization);
- widening the awareness about conflicts – analyses and challenges in the field of conflict understanding and ways of their solving (personal, community, organization benefit);
- increasing the awareness related to the multi-angle understanding of conflicts and the ways of coping with them (personal dimension benefit);
- improvement of negotiation and communication skills (personal and organization benefit);
- introduction of protective skills and procedures related to the preservation of human capital and utilization of potential present in the impact environment (community, organization benefit);

² The idea of 'community policing' consists in using social skills in the process of mobilization – activation – of social support in a situation of conflict, e.g. through consultations, mediations, negotiations, concentration on tasks and solutions, monitoring and supporting processes.

- international co-operation in the scope of improving the operating efficiency of peacekeeping forces and triggering the reflection on the effectiveness of the current understanding of conflicts and setting out the zone for further development connected with the challenges of the current dynamic situation inside of organization/ team (organization and community);
- and ultimately, this should reduce the costs of such missions, and also later costs of care for people in the event of occurrence of disorders (community, organization, personal benefit).

Those benefits increase the safety level in the entire network of persons involved in keeping peace and safety and offer the possibility of better co-ordination of their work.

The Training Curricula Evaluation is meant to identify impacts that bring about the most effective development of skills important for persons working as peacemakers. In every module participants receive materials for discussion and a training script in which they can find theoretical issues, description of skills and strategies for their development, as well as tools for their measurement. The adopted model of analysis of documents and current methods from the perspective of three time planes (before training, immediately after training completion and 6 months after training completion) will enable the comparison of causes and determination of the strategy for conflict solving despite contextual differences (culture, values, social expectations of a given group) and will enable the preparation of a new training path.

Barriers, obstacles, limitations: in the individual dimension: social and cultural standards connected with maintaining the distance in different countries and the image of a ‘tough guy’ who experiences no problems or difficult feelings in the work on peace building and increasing safety.

Instead of conclusions

In our proposal we would like to underline the importance of:

1. The reflection of the current understanding of the strategy of working with conflicts;
2. The operating efficiency of organizations;
3. Co-ordination and integration of work in the scope of increasing the existing resources of organizations and individuals working in the peace-building area and increasing efficiency;
4. Improved use of resources of adequateness of actions suited to a given cultural context.

In our opinion, these are the most important areas to be developed and supported in the training of police and other peacekeeping or peacebuilding personnel. This is important from the perspective of ever-changing conflict environment (increasingly often conflicts no longer relate to military or terrorist actions but are connected with e.g. social environment or paralyzing public spaces) and the expectations related to the possibility of early conflict detection.

Another element that makes the project unique is the introduction of the perspective of three-level analysis of the skills and efficiency of 'peacemakers' and 'peacekeepers'. Thus, the analysis relates to building their personal competencies, but also to competencies of entire groups in recognizing the importance of conflicts and their solving from the perspective of an individual, a social group and the entire society. That perspective refers both to 'hard' elements such as procedures and actions employed and to 'soft' ones such as the manner of their implementation and their consequences for individuals and societies (e.g. the costs of health impairment or mission duration).

The significance of particular modules of most frequently used training will be evaluated, i.e. knowledge broadening, skills training and teaching of procedures, for achieving optimum functioning of an individual in the situation of conflict-related stress, such as conflict prevention, mediation, security system reform (SSR), linking relief and early warning systems.

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POPRAWA ZDROWIA PSYCHICZNEGO I UMIEJĘTNOŚCI WSPÓŁPRACY:
 PROPOZYCJA PROGRAMU SZKOLENIOWEGO
 DLA UCZESTNIKÓW OPERACJI POKOJOWYCH

Streszczenie. Przygotowania do pracy w obszarze budowania oraz utrzymywania pokoju i bezpieczeństwa zawsze powinny być rozpatrywane z wielu perspektyw. Liczyć się powinna nie tylko dana operacja i jej bezpośrednie rezultaty, ale także jej długotrwałe konsekwencje dla osób w nią zaangażowanych (takie jak np. zdrowie i kompetencje). Głównym celem prezentowanego artykułu jest podkreślenie

roli uniwersalnych umiejętności psychicznych niezbędnych do pracy w ramach misji pokojowych w różnych krajach. Prezentowany jako przykład program obejmuje obszary ochrony zdrowia i kapitału społecznego przez utrzymanie zasobów zdrowia psychicznego oraz rozwijanie umiejętności współpracy. Główny nacisk położono na sposób identyfikacji barier i wyzwań stojących przed osobami odpowiedzialnymi za proces przygotowania i budowy kompetencji uczestników misji w zakresie zapobiegania konfliktom, ochrony osobistych zasobów indywidualnych oraz zasobów zespołów i społeczności. Ważnym aspektem podnoszenia kompetencji personelu zatrudnionego w budowaniu i utrzymywaniu pokoju jest kontrola emocji i przeciwdziałanie konsekwencjom długotrwałego obciążenia stresem związanym z wykonywanymi zadaniami.

Słowa kluczowe: ochrona zdrowia, kompetencje zawodowe, radzenie sobie ze stresem, zachowanie zasobów

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