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THE IMPACT OF A TRAGIC ACCIDENT ON MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

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Objective: To investigate the psychological impact of the tragic accident in Tempi which cost of 21 students' life (2003), on mental health professionals (MHP).

Material: BDI and Impact of Event Scale-Revised (IES-R) scores of PHPO MHP (psychiatrists/child-psychiatrist/psychologies/social workers) who offered support to victims/families/teachers/rest of the students.

Method/results: The personnel were deployed to the area exposed to witnessing experiences/impressions of the accident. Participants responded to BDI 10 days and IES-R 9-10 months past-accident. There was an IES-R retest 7 years later. The response rate was 100%. All achieved mild depression scores. As for IES-R, common qualities of conscious experience were found among them, though with different personality styles. Two major response sets, intrusion (unbidden thoughts/troubled dreams/waves of feelings/repetitive behavior) and avoidance (denial of the meanings of the event/behavioral inhibition/counterphobic activity/emotional numbness) were abstracted from evaluation.

No sex differences were mentioned as there was only one male in the group.

A correlation of 0.42 ($p > 0.0002$) between intrusion and avoidance subscale scores indicated that the two subsets were associated, though not measuring identical dimensions.

7 years later the mean score of the personnel on IES-R was 23: Impact Event: may be affected. All achieved a quite high score on the response 'any reminder brought back feelings about it'.

Conclusion: MHP face additional emotional strain often over extended periods of time. There is a need to develop strategies such as insight oriented training. Research is imperative and an ethical requirement to find ways to protect the health of the carers and so their patients.