Strengthening Psychological Resilience in Crisis Management: Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives

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Abstract: *Security as a scientific category represents one of the pillars of the theoretical foundations of modern society, with its significance manifested not only in the protection of the state and its institutions but also in the preservation of the stability and integrity of human communities. Contemporary concepts of security reflect both its absolute and relative dimensions, highlighting the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach that encompasses political science, sociology, psychology, and technical sciences. Within this framework, the issue of psychological resilience of crisis managers emerges as a critical factor, as they face extraordinary events and ensure the functioning of key security systems. The aim of this paper is to present the strengthening of psychological resilience among crisis managers as a significant determinant for enhancing the effectiveness of crisis management and the functioning of security structures. The theoretical background is grounded in a problem-solving approach to security and in a social systems perspective, both of which emphasize the capacity of individuals and organizations to respond to dynamic threats. Methodologically, the contribution draws on the concept of resilience, which in the field of security studies connects individual competencies with the institutional framework of crisis management. Psychological resilience is perceived not only as a fundamental individual need but also as a prerequisite for sustaining the democratic functioning of the state and its institutions. Strengthening resilience through systematic education, training, and the implementation of innovative methodologies supports the prevention of burnout, improves the quality of decision-making processes, and enables the effective management of crises. The paper concludes by formulating the basic principles of building resilience systems as an integral component of the theory of security, with particular emphasis on the links to national interest, the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, and the preservation of state sovereignty.*

Keywords*: SECURITY, CRISIS MANAGEMENT, PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE, RESILIENCE, THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SECURITY, EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS*

1. Introduction

Security is widely recognised as a multidimensional and dynamic concept, reflecting the interaction between individuals, institutions and society as a whole. Contemporary security studies emphasise that the resilience of key actors – including crisis managers – constitutes a core component of national and organisational preparedness in complex threat environments [1]. Modern crises, ranging from natural disasters to hybrid threats, impose extensive psychological demands on crisis managers whose decision-making under uncertainty directly influences operational outcomes and societal safety.

Psychological resilience, defined as the ability to adapt successfully to adversity, stress or significant sources of threat, has emerged as a critical determinant of effective crisis management [2]. Research in psychology and social systems theory suggests that resilient individuals not only maintain cognitive functionality under pressure but also support organisational continuity and stability [3]. When embedded within institutional frameworks, resilience strengthens the state's capacity to protect fundamental rights and safeguard democratic institutions.

The purpose of this paper is to conceptualise the strengthening of psychological resilience in crisis managers as a theoretical and methodological challenge within the broader field of security studies. The paper offers a systematic discussion of resilience-building strategies, outlines methodological approaches suitable for its assessment and development, and formulates recommendations for security systems at national and organisational levels.

2. Material and Methods

The methodological foundation of this paper draws on an integrative literature review approach. This method synthesises theoretical, empirical and applied research across multiple domains relevant to psychological resilience, including crisis management, behavioural science, organisational psychology and security studies [4].

Three analytical steps were employed:

1. Theoretical mapping: Key concepts of security, resilience and crisis decision-making were identified through established scholarly works (e.g., Holling's adaptive systems theory, Ulrich Beck's risk society, and contemporary resilience frameworks by Masten and Southwick) [2][5].

2. Comparative analysis: Empirical findings on stress, cognitive load, burnout and coping strategies among crisis managers and first responders were compared, relying on validated studies from emergency management and psychology [6][7].

3. Synthesis for recommendations: Insights from theory and empirical evidence were integrated to form a coherent set of principles for strengthening psychological resilience within crisis management institutions.

This methodological approach allows for the formulation of evidence-informed recommendations without relying on speculative or unverifiable claims.

3. Results and Recommendations

The analysis of theoretical concepts of security, resilience, and psychological hardiness demonstrated that the psychological resilience of crisis managers must be understood as a multidimensional construct that integrates individual personality factors, the level of professional competencies, the quality of institutional support systems, and the availability of social support networks [5], [9], [11]. The findings further confirmed that risk factors (e.g., chronic stress, cumulative workload, organisational uncertainty) as well as protective factors (e.g., training, team culture, supervision) are largely similar for crisis managers and other emergency services; however, they differ in intensity and structural composition [13], [14], [15].

A comparative analysis of available empirical studies focusing on stress, cognitive load, burnout, and coping strategies in crisis

managers and emergency responders revealed four key thematic areas:

a. a high level of occupational stress in both groups, albeit with a different profile of stressors [13], [14];

b. specific cognitive load associated with decision-making under time pressure and uncertainty [10], [14];

c. a pronounced risk of burnout in the context of long-term exposure without adequate preventive measures [13], [15];

d. a critical role of social support, organisational culture, and targeted interventions in strengthening resilience [16], [17], [18].

A synthetic overview of selected empirical findings is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Comparative Analysis

Category	Crisis Managers	Emergency Responders	Sources
Stress	Predominantly chronic, long-term occupational stress.	Acute stress from direct exposure to critical incidents.	[13–15]
Cognitive Load	Complex decision-making with incomplete data.	Rapid field decisions under intense pressure.	[9,10,14]
Burnout Risk	Risk linked to prolonged operations and cumulative strain.	Risk driven by traumatic exposure and shift work.	[13–15]
Coping Strategies	Mainly cognitive strategies (planning, analysis).	Mixed strategies; some maladaptive forms may occur.	[14,15,18]
Social Support	Leadership and team support are essential.	Strong predictor of reduced psychological distress.	[16,19]
Interventions	Training in crisis management; limited psychological preparation.	Resilience programmes, peer support, mindfulness.	[17,18]

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the sources listed.

Based on these results, several practical recommendations can be formulated for strengthening psychological resilience in crisis management:

a. developing systematic resilience training and education programmes for crisis managers and emergency responders, including emotional regulation, self-management, and decision-making under uncertainty [11], [15], [17], [18];

b. strengthening a supportive organisational culture that reduces the stigma associated with mental health difficulties and encourages early help-seeking (supervision, peer-support programmes, accessible professional care) [14], [15], [16];

c. integrating indicators of psychological resilience and burnout risk into personnel management processes (recruitment, onboarding, long-term workload monitoring) and into safety management systems [13], [15], [19];

d. implementing and regularly evaluating resilience-oriented interventions that combine individual, team, and organisational components, with emphasis on long-term impact and sustainability [17], [18].

These recommendations create a framework for translating theoretical foundations of resilience into practical crisis management and may serve as a basis for the development of methodologies, training programmes, and standards of mental health support for crisis managers and members of emergency services.

4. Discussion

The central challenge in strengthening psychological resilience among crisis managers lies in balancing individual psychological capacities with the structural and cultural conditions of the organisations in which they operate. The findings of the comparative analysis clearly demonstrate that resilience cannot be viewed solely as an individual attribute; rather, it emerges from the interaction between personal competencies, organisational support mechanisms, and the broader institutional environment. Although targeted training can improve coping skills, emotional regulation, and decision-making under uncertainty, its long-term impact is contingent on organisational culture, leadership practices, and the availability of psychosocial resources. This perspective aligns with contemporary security and resilience theories that conceptualise resilience as a systemic capability embedded within social and organisational structures, rather than merely a personal trait [1],[3].

Several methodological limitations should be acknowledged. First, resilience research continues to grapple with conceptual heterogeneity. Definitions of resilience vary across disciplines, and measurement tools differ in their theoretical bases, which complicates cross-study comparability and limits the ability to synthesise empirical findings meaningfully [4]. Second, while substantial research exists on firefighters, paramedics, police officers, and military personnel, empirical data specifically focused on crisis managers remain relatively scarce. Crisis managers represent a unique professional population exposed to prolonged cognitive load, bureaucratic pressures, and strategic-level stressors, which are not always captured in studies focused on frontline responders. Third, resilience-building interventions differ significantly in content, duration, and methodological rigour. This variability makes it challenging to identify universally applicable best practices and to evaluate long-term effectiveness.

Despite these limitations, the evidence base strongly supports embedding resilience-enhancing strategies within crisis management systems. Comparative findings indicate that both crisis managers and emergency responders benefit from structured training, supportive leadership, and organisational cultures that normalise help-seeking and prioritise psychological well-being. Furthermore, resilience is strengthened when individual training is complemented by systemic interventions, such as peer-support programmes, institutionalised supervision, and mechanisms for monitoring psychological load and burnout risk.

Future research should prioritise longitudinal designs to better understand how resilience evolves over time, especially during prolonged or repeated crisis deployments. There is also a need to account for cultural context, organisational differences, and emerging forms of stress linked to technological and hybrid threats. Expanding empirical research on crisis managers as a distinct group will be essential for refining methodological tools, tailoring interventions, and enhancing national and organisational preparedness.

5. Conclusion

Psychological resilience represents a critical component of national and organisational crisis preparedness. The findings of this study affirm that resilience among crisis managers is shaped not only by individual psychological competencies but also by organisational culture, institutional support structures, and broader systemic conditions. Strengthening resilience therefore requires an integrated approach that combines individual-level training with

strategic organisational interventions and leadership practices that foster a supportive, transparent, and adaptive environment.

The comparative analysis revealed that crisis managers and emergency responders share several risk and protective factors, yet the intensity and manifestation of these factors differ across professional groups. This underscores the need for tailored resilience-building strategies that reflect the specific cognitive demands, stress profiles, and operational realities faced by crisis managers. Systematic training in emotional regulation, decision-making under uncertainty, and self-management should be complemented by institutional mechanisms such as supervision, peer-support networks, and structured monitoring of psychological load and burnout risk.

The discussion also highlighted persistent gaps in empirical research and methodological inconsistencies, particularly regarding the limited evidence base focused specifically on crisis managers. Addressing these gaps will require longitudinal studies, cross-national comparisons, and rigorous evaluations of intervention effectiveness. As crisis management increasingly takes place in complex environments influenced by hybrid threats, cyber risks, and high levels of societal uncertainty, enhancing psychological resilience becomes not only a matter of professional competence but a strategic prerequisite for effective security governance.

Overall, the paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of psychological resilience as a multidimensional, systemic construct that underpins effective crisis management. The recommendations proposed here provide a foundation for developing training frameworks, institutional policies, and support systems that can strengthen both individual and organisational readiness for current and future crises.

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