

**DEBRIEFING AND
DEFUSING IN
PREHOSPITAL CARE
PERSONNEL: CARE
PROTOCOL**

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Abstract: Objective: Design a protocol on Debriefing and Defusing to support pre-hospital care personnel in a post-pandemic situation. Methodology: The type of study of the present investigation was exploratory and had a quantitative approach, in which 41 people out of 54 were surveyed, which are the total population that work as first response personnel of the Bello volunteer fire department. Results: A global percentage of 76% was found with a mean between 25 and 34 years and years of experience between 1 and 5 years. The most difficult situations experienced are: infants involved, multiple victims and abuse of minors; the most experienced feeling after the care of a patient in depression due to the helplessness of not being able to do more for that person; psychological accompaniment is approved and recognized as necessary by 93% of the people surveyed. Conclusions: It is evidenced, based on a survey, the absence and importance of opportune psychological interventions to prevent and reduce the first response personnel on the mental effects to which they are exposed during their work.

Keywords: First responders, burnout syndrome, PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), EE (mental exhaustion), defusing, debriefing.

INTRODUCTION

The following article refers to the study carried out to demonstrate the need for a psychosocial intervention in the personnel of the Bello Volunteer Fire Department, through intervention strategies called debriefing and defusing, in relation to post-pandemic circumstances. To understand the way in which personnel will be intervened, it is necessary to define these techniques, which seek to relieve stress through the expression of feelings, emotions and relationships around events or circumstances of significant

impact during the performance of their work, strengthening intergroup support in search of preventing possible psychopathological sequelae that are highly probable after critical events, (Mallo, 2017) (1).

Psychological Debriefing is a structured discussion about an impact event or one that generates trauma, carried out individually or in groups, with the intention of “immediately relieving stress and reducing long-term difficulties” and Defusing, although its meaning is similar, their way of expressing stress reactions is more immediate, brief and informal, focusing on present situations such as a release or emotional discharge, (Manuel Muñoz, 2007) (2).

This study was carried out with the interest of knowing what the main psychosocial alterations are in Bello Firefighters personnel related to contact with critical situations and patients during the performance of their work. For this, a qualitative survey was carried out focused on investigating the presence of feelings or emotions that negatively affect their life or their work performance, based on the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, burnout syndrome, exhaustion due to emotional empathy, subjected stress, syndrome by compassion, loss of control of the work environment, regarding their age and time worked in the institution. (3)

First responders, due to the nature of their work, are constantly exposed to situations of crisis, pain and death, which little by little influence and therefore affect their mental health (4), added to this is that there are additional variables such as schedules, inadequate nutrition, difficulties in the work environment, among others, that become factors that increase the risk of developing and presenting pathologies or disorders in the mental health of this population; This is why the need was seen to have support processes such as Debriefing and Defusing.

Debriefing is defined by Raphael Beverley, as “Psychological debriefing is a brief intervention that is carried out in the first days after the traumatic event; It is generally a group session lasting more or less three or four hours, in which those affected by exposure to this traumatic situation do a kind of catharsis, recounting their feelings and reactions to the event” (5) and defusing is defined Mitchell in 1983 as: “it is an informal but semi-structured session, which takes place as soon as possible after the critical incident or within the first 24 hours”. (6)

In various investigations they have been interested in working on this topic, given that the increase in risk factors and the increase in mental health pathologies is evident, one of these studies was the one carried out by Cindy Gonzales in 2018, in which he says : “a determining factor in the quality of a care service in emergency or vulnerability situations is the emotional state of the personnel offering the care. In a helping relationship such as the one provided by health professionals, empathy is a fundamental and unavoidable resource that, although it allows the understanding of the suffering of the affected person, can generate an adverse effect to the point of diminishing the capacity for response and emotional well-being called compassion fatigue” (7).

It is then understood that there is a direct relationship between the mental health of the first responders and the quality of care or service to be provided, in which a balanced mental health or that has support and intervention processes, will allow these personnel to carry out management and interventions more appropriate to the population they must attend to, this is where the Db and Df processes play a fundamental role as a support tool; Unfortunately, although these tools already exist, they are not used in all the institutions that provide

a first response, even more so they can become unknown by a high percentage of the population of first responders.

Mental disorders can increase in situations of disasters, emergencies and critical circumstances around unexpected events such as a pandemic, there is evidence of the need for first response providers to prioritize the psychological care of their employees, reducing the incidence of pathologies and disorders to psychosocial level, with the purpose of allowing the normal development of their lives and in turn benefiting patients with adequate, timely and respectful care. (8) At the IX International Congress of Research and Professional Practice in Psychology, the conclusion was reached that through Debriefing and Defusing, stress relief is sought as a way to encourage the expression of feelings, emotions and relationships around the environment. event, strengthening intergroup support from the comfort of the participants, in search of preventing possible psychopathological sequelae that are highly probable after critical events, allowing the staff not to feel strange or unique when expressing themselves and detecting the most affected people, facilitating the contact with health professionals. (9)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Design: This project has an exploratory research design, since the debriefing and defusing processes are phenomena that have not been exhaustively explored and their application has not been carried out in the population in the way that is proposed in the theory. Based on this, it was considered necessary to conduct research on these issues, seeking to clarify this issue and to obtain a better understanding of these processes, their implications and benefits for first responders.

Type of participants: For the present investigation, the first response personnel were taken as the population, among which are the technologists in pre-hospital care, rescuers, lifeguards and the population for the present that were the firefighters, in this project specifically we worked with the body volunteer firefighters from Bello, since they are a population that due to their work characteristics, such as working hours, the stress of this profession, inadequate nutrition, little rest time, constant exposure to crisis situations and pain, and the little time to spend with family and leisure activities, make them more exposed to manifest problems of psychosocial origin and therefore are more vulnerable and need more of the implementation of support processes such as debriefing and defusing.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

After carrying out the survey processes to the participants of the present investigation, an analysis of the results presented by them was carried out, this analysis was carried out through the operationalization of the variables that were raised in the same study, where it was had taking into account both the sample size with which we worked, as well as its sociodemographic characteristics.

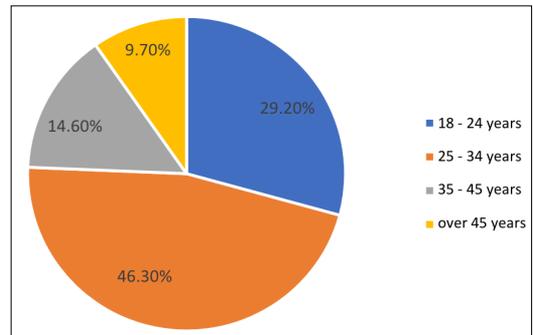
For the selection of the sample of the present project, a statistical system called SPSS version 21 was used, in order to obtain a representative sample, with a confidence margin of 95% and a margin of error of 5%, which yielded a sample of 41 participants, who were permanent staff of the institution.

This research yielded significant results regarding the need to have support processes such as Debriefing and Defusing for first responders, and something very relevant that could be identified and on which it will be expanded later, was the impact it had on the mental health of this population, being

exposed to the COVID 19 pandemic.

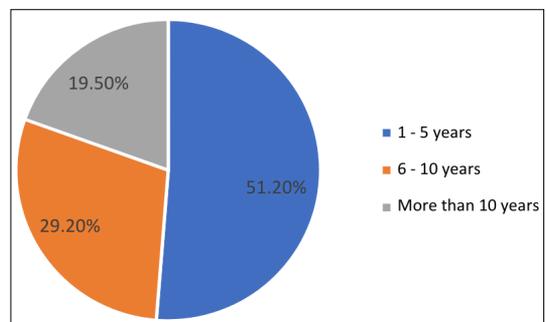
Some of the most relevant results obtained in this research are shown below.

Age range



As can be seen in the previous graph, the highest percentage of the population that was part of this research is in the age range between 25 and 34 years old. When analyzing this generational range, it is important to understand that it is a population that presents greater vulnerability to acquire or develop psychosocial problems, given the psychological characteristics of these ages; Therefore, it can be inferred that this is a factor that can influence the increase in the presence of psychosocial problems in a significant percentage after the experience of the pandemic in this population.

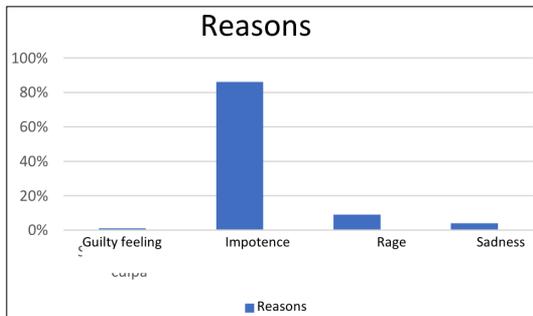
Years of experience



As can be seen in the graph, the highest percentage of the population was in a range between 1 to 5 years, which was 51.20%,

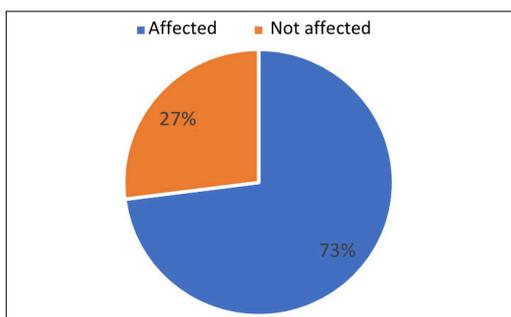
which can be related to understanding that they are a population without much response to situations of crisis and with a lower capacity for resilience in the face of problematic situations that they may face.

Feeling of depression after caring for a critically ill patient



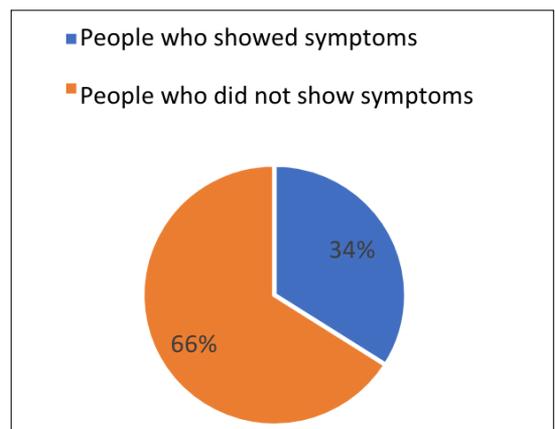
In this question, it can be seen how 76% of the surveyed population expressed feelings of depression after providing care in critical situations, in this case most of the situations to which they were referring were related to Covid 19, and it can be seen that one of the main feelings they expressed was helplessness, followed by anger and sadness; It has been shown that the exposure and experience of these situations without their proper subsequent management can lead to the development of major psychological disorders, such as depression, generalized anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicidal ideation and attempt.

Work performance affected as a result of the pandemic in the last two years.



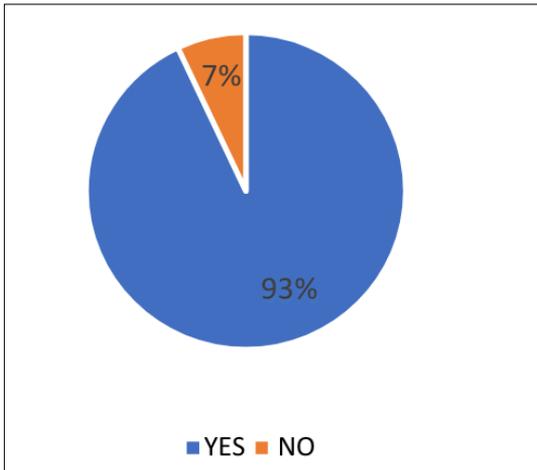
In this graph it can be seen how after the Covid 19 pandemic, the first responders began to present a series of symptoms and problems that began to affect their work performance, this can be evidenced by the 27% who said they felt affected by the experiences lived during this period; There is also a part of the population that was not part of this study, since they withdrew before it was carried out, but in most cases the reason for withdrawal was caused by the situations that were occurring and how they were handled. they were being affected because of the pressure, uncertainty, stress, fear, among others that were experienced during the time of the pandemic for this population.

Difficulty sleeping, lack of appetite, desire to cry and constant irritability associated with work.



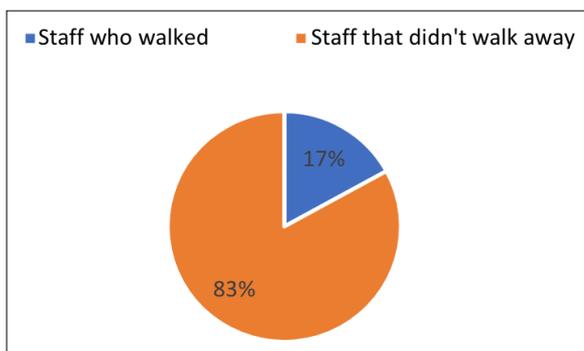
The information that was obtained in this result was very interesting, since it showed that 34% of the population that previously did not present any problems or symptoms, began to present them or increased after being exposed to the situations given by the pandemic; Among what was most evident was irritability both with co-workers and in their places of residence, they also showed a significant increase in difficulty sleeping, leading to the need to resort to different strategies for its management.

Talking to co-workers after experiencing a difficult situation would help.



In this question, the importance of having someone to be able to vent and express the feelings and emotions that have been experienced at certain times or cases that they have had to face can be evidenced, 93% is a very significant percentage, and demonstrates the need. It is evident that this population has a space and trained personnel to carry out these “vent” processes, which confirms the need to implement the procedures proposed in this investigation, such as Debriefing and Defusing.

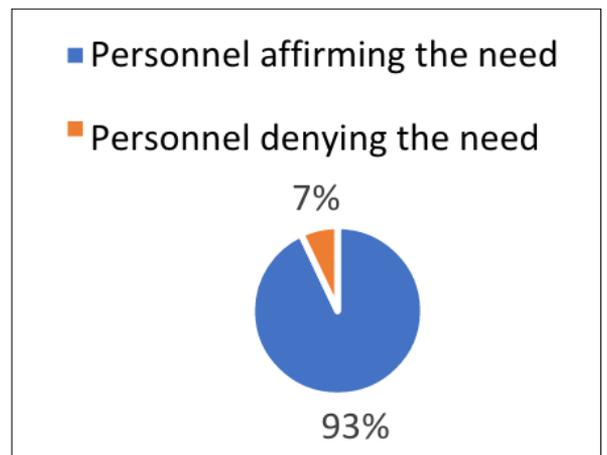
Withdrawal from colleagues and family after difficult care because their mood is affected.



In this question it was possible to show how these crisis situations experienced during

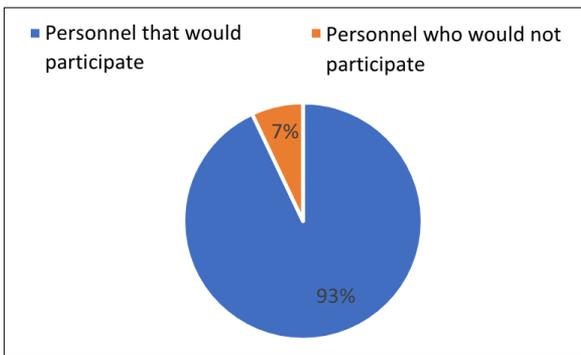
this period began to affect the population under study, since previously they did not tend to move away after exposure to a difficult situation and during and after the pandemic, a 17 % said they did this practice, because they felt they must reflect on what happened, take space, cry, among other things they said. It can be interpreted that the resources and strategies available to the population were not sufficient to manage these new situations to which they were being exposed.

Need for psychological support in the workplace



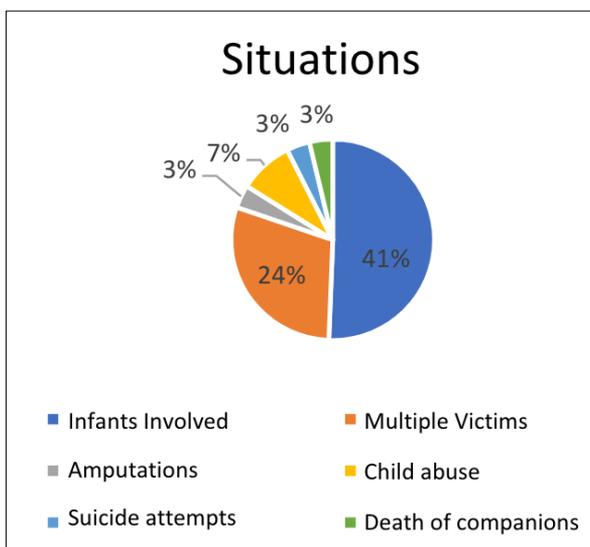
This was one of the most relevant questions of the research, since 93% agreed with the need to have psychological support in the workplace, which demonstrates and evidences the vulnerability experienced by the participants against the crisis situations to which they are exposed daily; but beyond this, the sensitivity that this population manifests after experiencing the Covid 19 pandemic and all the crisis situations that it entailed is observed.

Participation in a support group with their peers to socialize or share feelings after experiencing a difficult case.



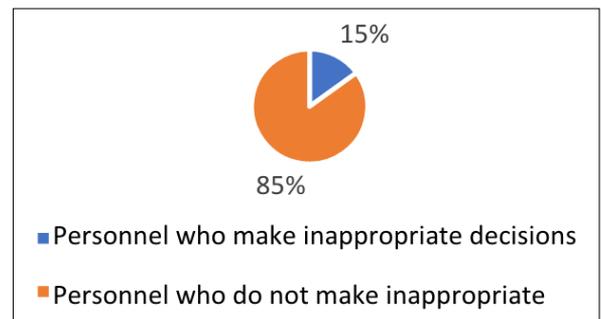
This graph shows the need and interest in having a structured space, such as a support group in which they can count on permanent psychosocial support, in which they can socialize and express all the feelings, emotions, frustrations and others that can manifest after facing or being exposed to various types of crisis situations, as this population must do. This type of need became more evident after what they experienced during the pandemic, since, according to their responses, there were many moments when feelings of helplessness, fear, and pain were present daily in their attention to the different cases that they had to carry out.

Difficult situations that affect the work experience such as: multiple victims, infants involved in care, amputations, death of colleagues and child abuse.



In this graph it can be seen that the population responded that among the most difficult situations that they felt affect their work, is the duty to care for infants involved with 41%, followed by multiple victims with 24%, which demonstrates these situations for the which this population feels more vulnerable or has fewer coping strategies. After the pandemic, the care of multiple victims increased, reaching a point where there were not enough resources to respond to this problem, for which feelings of frustration, fear, pain and anger, among others, appeared more frequently in these types of situations.

Inappropriate decisions due to feeling compassion for the patient's situation



In this graph you can see how it has begun to affect the population surveyed, at the time of decision making, or handling problems, having been exposed to crisis situations, such as the pandemic, since a 15 % who previously did not report presenting these problems, stated that they had begun to feel that they felt that they were being affected by feeling compassion, or other feelings at the time of providing care; These situations increased after experiencing all the losses that were experienced during the pandemic and the feelings of helplessness and frustration that many of the first responders experienced in their work.

DISCUSSION

The present investigation focused on identifying the knowledge and need that the participants (first responders) had to implement in their workplace, intervention strategies such as debriefing and defusing, for the management of crisis situations and psychosocial problems. that they have been able to experience in their work and a particular analysis was made of the incidence of facing a novel factor such as the Covid 19 pandemic. A bibliographic search was carried out to analyze the relevance of the topic with various related investigations, to compare with the results found in the present study, then, the relationship and reference of them is made.

It was observed that the age of the participants, as well as it was observed in the analysis of the results, may be a factor that influenced the presence or increase in psychosocial problems or disorders, which can be confirmed when studies such as the carried out by Andrés Marzana, entitled: "The transition to adulthood in Colombia: a relational reading", where the author explains the perception that the population has regarding the transition from being young to adult in Colombia, throughout which was expressed "it is interesting to note that among the research participants, the conception of being adults is fundamentally linked to psychological characteristics: responsibility, projection, maturity and generativity" (10); When analyzing these results, it can be understood how the highest percentage of the population in this study is at an age that has emotional and psychological characteristics that make them more vulnerable to acquiring or developing psychological pathologies, due to this perception that is found at this stage of its development.

On the other hand, the question feelings of depression after caring for a patient in a

critical situation demonstrates the impact that this type of situation can have on the population. It can be seen that 76% of the population surveyed expressed feelings of depression after caring for a patient. in critical situations, which demonstrates the impact that experiencing or experiencing situations can have How the pandemic experience was, which generated critical situations for first responders, since they did not have the tools, strategies, or training to face them such crisis situations, this can be evidenced in articles such as the one observed in the World Health Organization, which conducted a study warning of high levels of depression and suicidal thoughts in health personnel in Latin America during the pandemic. which makes it possible to demonstrate the impact that experiments may have had. nt this type of situation in the Mental Health of this population; how one of the main emotions or feelings expressed by the people surveyed in the study can be evidenced in the results analyzed were feelings of helplessness followed by anger and sadness; as stated by Anselm Hennis, director of the department of noncommunicable diseases and mental health at PAHO "the pandemic is not over, it is essential to care for those who care for us" (11), this can also be evidenced in what was stated in the aforementioned study when they say "the pandemic showed the wear and tear of health personnel and in the countries where the health system collapsed, the personnel suffered exhausting hours and ethical dilemmas that impacted their mental health."

Another necessary aspect to analyze in the results is about the work performance affected as a result of the pandemic in the last two years, as can be seen in the results, it is stated that 27% of the respondents said they felt affected by the expenses lived during this period, which shows that in the face of a previous

inexistence of this symptomatology, many of these have now begun to present affectations or problems due to this experience lived in this period, these can also be verified with the study carried out at the "Universidade de Antioquia" by Olga Patricia Duque in her research, which is called the perception of individual work performance in times of the covid-19 pandemic, an approach to the health worker in which it can be seen how they reach the following conclusion "taking into account that Health sector personnel act on the first line of response to attend to the pandemic and that they are directly facing the consequences of the immediate changes for the care of the affected people, among them high labor demands, social stigmatization, separation from their family nuclei, limitation in social interaction, advance the use of telemedicine, among others, it is important to ask the worker directly of health on the perception of their work performance in the context of the covid-19 pandemic". (12)

An important conclusion that was reached was when analyzing the question if the study participants had had difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, desire to cry and constant irritability associated with work; In the information that could be obtained from the analysis of the results, it can be observed that 34% of the population that previously did not present any problems or symptoms began to have their presence or there was an increase in them when they had to being exposed to situations that were experienced during the pandemic, this was evidenced in feelings that were manifested more clearly as irritability both with their co-workers and in their place of residence, where it was observed that coexistence and the relationship with their relatives presented difficulties in a more constant way, in addition it was observed that the difficulty in sleeping began to appear in a more constant way and increased, leading to

the need to resort to different strategies for managing it, which were not always the most appropriate strategies; This can be correlated and analyzed with the study carried out by the Pan American Health Organization, which is entitled: "protection of mental health in pandemic situations", which managed to affirm that: "from the perspective of mental health, a An epidemic of great magnitude implies a psychosocial disturbance that may exceed the management capacity of the affected population. It can even be considered that the entire population suffers tensions and anguish to a greater or lesser extent. Thus, an increase in the incidence of psychic disorders is estimated (between a third and a half of the exposed population may suffer some psychopathological manifestation according to the magnitude of the event and the degree of vulnerability). Although it must be noted that not all psychological and social problems that occur can be classified as diseases; Most will be normal reactions to an abnormal situation. The effects on mental health are generally more marked in populations that live in precarious conditions, have few resources, and have limited access to social and health services" (13). can do from this. of the first responders respond to a large part of these conditions of vulnerability by being exposed to constant crisis situations, emergencies and urgencies and having very limited time to sleep, time to rest and to relate, in addition to having to be exposed to rejection and fear on the part of the of the community regarding the issue of contagion that was experienced during the time of the pandemic.

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