Determinants of Managerial Competencies of Crisis Management Team Chairpersons in the Context of Building Resilience to Threats at the Local Level

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Abstract:

Purpose: The main aim of the research is to determine the elements that dictate the competencies of chairpersons of crisis management teams at the level of municipalities and districts in Poland.

Approach/Methodology/Design: In order to solve the research problem, a diagnostic poll method was used, carried out by means of a survey technique, with the use of a survey questionnaire tool. In relation to the research conducted, the general population consisted of officials in charge of local government units (municipalities and districts) who also act as chairpersons of crisis management teams in the administered area. The most numerous group of persons in charge of administrative units was the group of heads of municipalities, who constituted 64.04% of the general population. The second most numerous group was a group of mayors (14.33%), then a group of city presidents (11.24%) and the least numerous group – a group of district governors (10.39%).

Findings: The analysis of the research allows to state that the most probable threats which may occur on the research area include violent weather phenomena, floods and fires. Moreover, the activities for efficient and effective execution of crisis management include increasing financial means, proper identification of crisis threats, and raising citizens' awareness through the implementation of training on potential threats and ways to behave in the event of their occurrence. The individual factors that may hinder the respondents from performing emergency management tasks were analyzed, i.e., uncertainty of crisis situation development, lack of means necessary to perform tasks under the Crisis Management Act and the obligation to make decisions that affect life, health of co-workers and citizens.

Practical Implications: The authors have indicated and discussed, threats appearing within the research area and tasks of persons acting as chairmen of crisis management teams. These two elements significantly determine the requirements in the field of knowledge and skills in relation to the chairpersons of crisis management teams.

Originality/Value: The results allow to characterise elements which are fundamental for functioning of crisis management within the research area and, at the same time, influencing the work of people who act as chairpersons of crisis management teams.

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1. Introduction

The basis of a modern organisation, often perceived as a "knowledge-based organisation", is the need to function in changing conditions, and even in a turbulent environment. The efficiency of such an organisation is determined by its human resources. The most important role in the appropriate use of these resources is played by a person holding a managerial position. Having managerial competences, understood as knowledge, skills, attitudes, abilities, ambitions, motivation to act, as well as mental and physical state, allows to perform tasks efficiently and contributes to achieving success by the organisation (Fanelli, Lanza, Enna, and Zangrandi, 2020). It is also necessary to mention managerial experience as an important component of competence, thanks to which it becomes possible to create new knowledge and to control the acquired skills.

When it comes to achieving the success of an organisation, it seems that the more competent the staff who fulfils goals and tasks is, the more effective it becomes. Also in public administration organisations a lot of importance is attached to managerial competence. Employees of public institutions follow the employees of the private sector when implementing modern human resource management. Unfortunately, it is not easy to implement, because human resource management in public administration offices has a different specificity. This specificity is mainly related to situations which are regulated by legal regulations, e.g., rules of promotion, hiring and firing employees. Moreover, in this type of organisations, effective motivating of employees becomes a problem, which results in a low correlation between work performance and the awarded remuneration.

Special attention in the area of public administration should be paid to the competences of persons who act as chairperson of the crisis management teams at the local government level. These people, despite fulfilling other functions on the position, should have competences enabling efficient task performance and decision making in difficult and changeable conditions.

The purpose of this article is to determine the elements that dictate the competencies of crisis management team chairpersons. The research problem was presented in the form of the following question: What elements determine the managerial competencies of crisis management team chairpersons?

In order to solve the research problem presented in the article, a diagnostic poll method was used, carried out by means of a survey technique, with the use of a survey questionnaire tool. In connection with the research conducted, the general population consisted of officials heading local government units (communes and districts) within the area of Mazovian Voivodeship, who also act as chairpersons of crisis management teams in the administered area.

In connection with the application of the formula for the size of the research sample, the authors of the article calculated the size of a representative sample, which in the case of conducted research was 185 people. The most numerous group of persons in charge of administrative units of Mazovian Voivodeship was the group of heads of municipalities, who constituted 64.04% of the general population. The second most numerous group was the group of mayors (14.33%), then the group of city presidents (11.24%) and the least numerous group – the group of district governors (10.39%).

2. Concept of Competences

Defining the concept of competence has become a challenge, because each theorist interested in this issue has tried to describe the term in his or her own way. Therefore, despite a large number of attempts, it has not been possible to establish a universally valid definition of competence. In the Dictionary of Synonyms we can find a definition that competence is skill, knowledge, ability, expertise, knowledge of things, http://synonimy.ux.pl/multimatch.php?word=kompetencja
Whereas "competent" means certain, reliable, authoritative, proficient, experienced, expert, http://synonimy.ux.pl/multimatch.php?word=kompetencja

Filipowicz (2004) believes that competencies are dispositions in the field of knowledge, skills and attitudes, allowing to perform professional tasks at an appropriate level. This author associates competencies with the tasks performed, adding that these tasks can be performed at different levels of efficiency. Therefore, it can be concluded that some activities (more complex) require having several competences at the same time, while others (simple tasks) will be properly performed when a single competence occurs. Similarly, Okoń (1998) believes that competence is the ability to perform tasks in specific areas. Oleksyn (XXXX), points out that competencies are primarily knowledge used at the position, skills, abilities and predispositions for team activities, specific skills required at work and personal culture (Sajkiewicz, 2001).

According to Oleksyn (XXXX), competencies are not only knowledge, skills and abilities, as in the case of previously presented definitions. The author also points out the behavioural aspect, which refers to the behaviour and culture that an individual presents, and also draws attention to working in a group – certainly a skill. The latter requires a person to have at least developed social competences. Szczęsna and Rostkowski (2004) claims that competencies are all employee characteristics, knowledge, skills, experience, abilities, ambitions, professed values, styles of action,

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the possession, development and use of which by employees enables the implementation of the strategy of the company where they are employed. The above definition may be an answer to the question about the given components of competencies. Its author indicated the most important elements that are considered when examining the competencies of employees. An important factor affecting the development of competencies are the already mentioned experiences and ambitions. The former usually enrich a person with new skills or indicate a different way of action or solving problems, while ambitions help in the pursuit of improvement, and thus develop competencies and acquire new ones.

Taking into account the above definitions, the authors of this article assumed that competencies are knowledge, experience and skills, interests of employees, their talents and predispositions, internal motivation, attitudes and behaviours important in professional work, professed professional values and ethical principles.

3.   Threats and Managerial Competencies – Own Research Results

Threat is a situation in which the probability of the emergence of a dangerous condition for the environment appears, taking as a basis the areas in which it may occur (Słownik terminów z zakresu bezpieczeństwa narodowego, 2002). It is a concept that can be considered from the perspective of many scientific disciplines, as well as refer to the individual, group, society, social processes and natural phenomena. Thus, the sources of threats can include the actions of natural forces (natural, random threats) and human activities (technical and social, intentional threats). Threats often contribute to the loss of life, health, freedom or the destruction or loss of property. Knowledge of hazards, ability to identify them and awareness that they may occur allows to better prepare for them and take preventive actions. Such an approach brings the local community closer to resisting unfavourable development of a crisis situation and thus allows to prevent a crisis from occurring. A prudent approach to identifying threats and their symptoms, even the smallest ones, is also important.

It is a mistake to say that a threat in a given area will definitely not appear because it has never happened before and previous experience does not indicate that preparations should be made and that it should be included in the plans. There are known hazards that can be best prepared for and beneficially prevented, but there are also unknown hazards that are particularly dangerous because of poor knowledge of them. These are the ones that can do the most damage to a particular area, which is why it is so important to monitor and interpret the different types of symptoms that could cause a threat.

The questionnaire included a question which asked the respondents to indicate the threats which are most likely to occur in the area of Mazovian Voivodeship (Table 1). 52.12% of the respondents considered violent weather events (i.e., hailstorms,

strong winds, heavy rains, droughts). Besides, the respondents are afraid of fires (38.30%) and floods (38.30%).

Table 1. *The most probable threats in the opinion of the inhabitants of the municipality*

Item	Type of threat	Percentages				
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	floods	70.37	9.97	7.98	0.0	11.68
2.	chemical, ecological	42.17	0	39.89	17.95	0
3.	epidemics	25.93	44.44	17.95	11.68	0
4.	constructional disasters	29.34	30.77	39.89	0	0
5.	violent atmospheric phenomena (hailstorms, strong winds, heavy rains, droughts)	0	0	0	76.92	23.08
6.	road accidents	0	0	21.37	19.09	59.54
7.	railroad accidents	39.89	14.81	31.34	0	13.96
8.	air accidents	3.42	14.81	57.83	11.11	12.82
9.	failures of municipal installations (power, heat, water, gas and telecommunication interruptions)	0	11.40	9.97	49.0	29.63
10.	firefighting	3.42	1.14	24.79	58.97	11.68
11.	terrorism	80.91	19.09	0	0	0
12.	demonstrations, riots	88.31	11.68	0	0	0
13.	social pathologies (e.g. drug addiction, alcoholism)	14.81	63.53	21.65	0	0
14.	unemployment	17.95	42.17	39.89	0	0
15.	thefts, robberies by economic immigrants	4.56	83.76	0	0	11.68
16.	overpopulation	0	43.30	15.95	29.06	11.68
17.	smog	6.87	0	0	39.87	53.28

Note: *1 - unlikely threat, and 5 - highly probable threat.*
Source: *Own study.*

The indications of the respondents may have been influenced by the poor condition of the anti-flood infrastructure located in the Mazovian Voivodeship, the lack of up-to-date spatial development plans which would include flood hazard zones, the ongoing drought during the survey and the associated fires. It can also be read from the survey results that the respondents are least afraid of terrorist threats (87.23%), demonstrations and riots (85.10%) and social pathologies (73.40%). It is worth noting the low percentage of concern about the occurrence of social pathologies. This term should be understood as behaviours of individuals that interfere with the proper functioning of the whole society (Lipka, 1977). Pathology is, in other words, a failure to conform one's behaviour to generally accepted standards and rules. Social pathologies may include alcoholism, crime, drug addiction or unemployment. Therefore in Mazovian Voivodeship the coefficient of pathology development should decrease, what can be concluded from the conducted survey.

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The Mazovian Voivodeship is the largest in the country, both in terms of area (35,558 km2, 11.4%) (Central Statistical Office, 2014) and population (5,324,519, 14%) (Central Statistical Office, 2021). The centre of socio-economic life of the region, as well as of the country, is the capital city of Poland, Warsaw, located in the central part of the province. It concentrates over 30% of Mazovia's total population and, together with the nearby urbanised areas as the Warsaw agglomeration, constitutes the main source of human and financial capital. Besides, the biggest concentrations of economic potential in the region are the four cities with district rights[4] – Radom, Płock, Siedlce and Ostrołęka.

Due to the developed transport, technical and social infrastructure on the territory of the Mazovian Voivodeship one should plan and expect numerous threats. Moreover, a big problem from the point of view of crisis situation development are migrations of population, which are taking place in Warsaw and adjacent towns with great intensification.

Therefore, the respondents were asked to answer the question concerning the occurrence of crisis events in recent years in the area of Mazovian voivodeship and almost 65% of them gave an affirmative answer. Only 31,92% of the respondents stated that on the area they administered there was no crisis event.

However, it should be considered whether the areas where crisis events have occurred, where they should be expected and where it is required prepared for new threats, as well as the areas where none of them has occurred for years, are adequately prepared for the occurrence of a crisis situation, i.e. have sufficient forces and means to act. Forces and means should be understood as resources (human, material, financial, information) which can be used during the crisis situation. It is also very important to determine the time when a given resource will be used, but also to specify the time when it will be possible to realistically harness it for action and assistance. Determining the forces and means in advance is one of the priorities that constitute the possibility of eliminating the threat, because in addition to planning the use of one's own resources, the possibility of utilising resources from neighbouring areas also needs to be taken into account. For instance, the list of forces and means in a specific area may include (Górska-Rożej, 2019):

- forces and means of the National Fire Service;
- forces and means of the Voluntary Fire Brigade;
- forces and means;
- forces and means of the Municipal Police;
- public and non-public health care facilities;

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[4]*Such districts cover the area of larger cities. Such districts do not have the authorities provided for in the law for rural districts. There is no district council or district board. These functions are performed by the municipality authorities (the municipality council and the mayor).*

- civil infrastructure resources, e.g., schools;
- residential premises;
- financial reserves.

The authors of the article considered it reasonable to check whether, in the areas where they conducted a survey, the public administration bodies have sufficient forces and means with which to remove the threats provided for in the crisis management plan. The opinions of the respondents are divided; however, 71.28% of them stated that within the area they administered, the number of such forces is adequate to handle potential threats.

Therefore, it can be concluded that also in the areas where no crisis event has occurred in recent years the foreseen forces and means are adequately planned. However, in the opinion of the authors of the article, it is unsatisfactory that as many as 28.72% of the respondents indicated that in the administered area they do not have sufficient forces and means to act during a crisis situation. This state of affairs, unfortunately, weakens the potential of other administrative areas, because they will not be able to use neighbouring forces and means in need, or they will have to provide assistance in case of a threat by lending their equipment and people to help, thus prolonging the response time in their area.

Having an adequate number of forces and means necessary to act and fight against a threat also influences the level of motivation to carry out tasks. 64.89% of the respondents declare to be motivated to carry out the tasks that result from the Crisis Management Act of 26 April 2007 (consolidated text). In contrast, 10.64% of the respondents are reluctant to carry out the statutory tasks, while almost 25% of them are undecided on this issue.

To sum up, crisis threats result from natural forces or human activities. Appropriate detection and anticipation of threats can often prevent the emergence of a crisis situation or minimise its scale. Thinking about the competencies, which should be possessed by the chairpersons of crisis management teams in relation to potential crisis threats, it is worth pointing out having theoretical knowledge about crisis threats, the ability to identify threats, the ability to assess threats, the ability to analyse the situation, resistance to stress, the ability to make conclusions, the ability to use the knowledge of others, the ability to think conceptually, the ability to use information appropriately, the motivation to act, empathy.

4. Performance of Statutory Tasks and Managerial Competences – Own Research Results

In the Crisis Management Act of 26 April 2007 (consolidated text) one can find articles describing the tasks in the field of crisis management to be performed by public administration entities at the self-government level. The authors of the article asked the respondents what activities were most important for the statutory tasks in

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the field of crisis management to be performed at a high level and of high quality. They had six activities to choose from:

- increasing the number of exercises conducted in order to improve the coordination of the activities of services and entities performing crisis management tasks;
- development of the information/communication system;
- training citizens on potential threats;
- developing action patterns in advance;
- identification of threats;
- increased funding for crisis management.

Analysing the respondents' answers in a general way, it should be stated that, according to them, each of the listed actions enhances the quality of the tasks performed in crisis management (Table 2).

Table 2. *Actions in ensuring high quality of tasks in crisis management at the local government level*

Type of activity		Importance of activity				
		5	4	3	2	1
1		56	48	56	24	4
	%	29.79	25.53	29.79	12.76	2.13
2		54	54	56	22	2
	%	28.72	28.72	29.79	11.70	1.07
3		40	72	50	20	6
	%	21.28	38.30	26.59	10.64	3.19
4		42	70	46	24	6
	%	22.34	37.24	24.47	12.76	3.19
5		62	56	38	22	10
	%	32.98	29.79	20.21	11.70	5.32
6		106	44	26	6	6
	%	56.38	23.41	13.83	3.19	3.19

Note: 5– very important activity, 1– activity of little importance. 1. Increasing the number of conducted exercises in order to improve co-ordination of activities of services and entities carrying out crisis management tasks. 2. Extension of the information / communication system. 3. Training citizens on potential threats. 4. Earlier development of action patterns. 5. Identification of hazards. 6. Increased funding for crisis management.
Source: Own research.

However, in order to interpret the survey in detail, it is worth noting that the respondents considered it most important to increase funding for crisis management (79.79%), to identify threats appropriately (62.77%) and to make citizens aware by providing training on potential threats and how to behave in the event of their occurrence (60.10%).

One of the questions in the survey questionnaire concerned the factors that make it difficult for the chairpersons of crisis management teams to perform their tasks in this field. Respondents considered (61.70%) that the uncertainty of the development of the crisis situation was the worst. In turn, 59.57% stated once again that the problem is the lack of means necessary to carry out the tasks under the Crisis Management Act. Whereas, for 46.81% of the respondents, the obligation to make decisions that affect the life, health of co-workers and citizens is a significant difficulty. Decision-making, which requires awareness of the purpose of action, accurate assessment of the situation and anticipation of consequences, is among the most important tasks of managers in crisis situations. Time pressure, high levels of stress and responsibility for the consequences of actions taken are among the characteristics of such decision-making.

Managers should be well aware of the consequences that may follow wrong decisions involving human and material losses. Unfortunately, only in safe situations is the decision-maker able to make decisions with a high percentage of certainty. It is also important to present the content of the decision. In crisis situations this should be done in a way that does not raise doubts in the recipient. Chaotic and incoherent presentation of decisions may result in errors in task implementation (Kozielecki, 1982). It is also worth noting that correcting a decision is possible in a situation of certainty, lack of danger, unfortunately it is impossible during a crisis situation, where time becomes a very important factor.

Managing people in crisis situations is a task requiring special predispositions, as it is connected in particular with long-term experience of stress, which affects the mental and physical state. This stress is felt by the person in charge as well as by those working in the rescue services and supporting the efforts to remove the threat. The intensification of the crisis situation by any event that triggers negative emotions contributes to the fact that those in charge are also exposed. Working in adverse conditions requires managers to have highly developed skills to operate under stress, under time pressure, to make decisions quickly and to distance themselves from the losses they incur.

The respondents were asked to answer the question to what extent the implementation of tasks resulting from the Crisis Management Act of 26 April 2007 causes them any problems. The answers surprised the authors of the article, as 62.77% of them considered that the execution of the statutory tasks causes problems to an average degree, so it can be concluded that the respondents do not have major difficulties in fulfilling their duties in the field of crisis management. It is noteworthy that in some of the answers to the questions the respondents suggest a lack of funds for a reliable implementation of the tasks and a rational number of crisis management training, while only 8.51% indicate that the implementation of the statutory tasks causes them a problem to a large extent.

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An excessive focus on one's own emotions and the emotions expressed by other people during a crisis situation can lead to difficulties in carrying out statutory tasks, resulting in an inability to respond appropriately to the situation. Moreover, it is very important to have sufficient forces and means necessary to act and fight against a threat. Adequate material and financial resources increase the motivation to look for unconventional solutions to eliminate the threat.

The respondents (64.89%) feel motivated to carry out the tasks resulting from the Crisis Management Act of 26 April 2007. In contrast, 10.64% of the respondents are reluctant to carry out the statutory tasks, while almost 25% of them are undecided on this issue.

The respondents (81.91%) stated that the knowledge and skills acquired at the crisis management training courses are useful in performing the duties of the crisis management manager. Those who strongly agreed that crisis management knowledge is useful in the performance of the duties of the crisis management team chairperson stated (81.25%) that the activities through which they improve their crisis management knowledge and skills include attending courses.

The conditions of crisis management team chairpersons differ significantly from the typical conditions under which managers of other professions work. Taking into account the fact that during a crisis situation many basic values are endangered, it should be stated that decisions and actions taken at such time acquire a different character and importance. In spite of the fact that many entities participate in the execution of tasks related to crisis management, the elementary importance of individuals in this type of activities cannot be undermined. According to Polish legislation, a designated, specific person is responsible for the effects of crisis management work.

The survey shows that 63.84% of the respondents believe that a separate position for the chairperson of the crisis management team should be created at each level of administration. In contrast, a group of 14.89% of respondents could not clearly confirm or deny this problem. Only 9.57% strongly denied the idea of creating such positions.

Due to the fact that in every organisation and at every position there are factors that disorganise work, the authors of the article considered it important to analyse the obtained results of the research in order to determine what factors hinder the realisation of tasks in the field of crisis management for respondents who present different opinions on the creation of separate positions for managers of crisis management teams.

The analysis of the data shows that respondents who strongly agreed that the chairperson of the crisis management team should have a separate position mainly felt that there were difficulties in carrying out the tasks related to lack of means

necessary to carry out the tasks under the Crisis Management Act (78.57%), uncertainty of the development of the crisis situation (57.14%) and short time for decision-making (50%).

Those who rather approve of the creation of such positions mostly pointed to the uncertainty of the development of the crisis situation (68.75%). The respondents who strongly oppose such an idea also mostly considered that the uncertainty of the development of a crisis situation significantly hinders their tasks (66.67%), furthermore they indicated the obligation to make decisions that sometimes affect the life and health of colleagues and citizens (66.67%), the shortage of means necessary to carry out the tasks under the Crisis Management Act (55.56%) and the stress resulting from the fear of the effects of a crisis situation (55.56%).

The respondents who rather oppose such actions mostly indicated two factors that disorganise their work uncertainty of the development of the crisis situation (63.64%) and shortage of means necessary for the implementation of tasks under the Crisis Management Act (63.64%). The respondents who do not have an opinion on separate positions for the chairpersons of crisis management teams, in addition to the factors mentioned above, additionally pointed to the emergence of conflict situations during the execution of tasks (57.14%). Moreover, only in this group of respondents no one signalled problems related to the lack of help from superiors. The research shows that the most frequently indicated factors, which in the presented groups of respondents significantly hinder the execution of tasks in the field of crisis management include the uncertainty of development of a crisis situation and the lack of means necessary for the execution of tasks under the Crisis Management Act.

Although most of the respondents were in favour of the chairperson of the crisis management team having a separate position at each level of self-government administration, it is known that the current crisis management system and the structure and tasks characterising public administration do not allow for such a solution. The function of chairman of the crisis management team is inscribed in the duties of the officials managing particular self-government units, who are at the same time responsible for safety in the administered area.

To sum up, the tasks in the field of crisis management, included in the Act of 26 April 2007 (consolidated text) and stipulated for the persons responsible for the implementation of crisis management at the particular levels of self-governmental administration, have been specified due to crisis threats. The competences of the chairpersons of crisis management teams are derived from the indicated tasks in the field of crisis management. These persons should be able to act under time pressure, appropriately plan forces and means to respond to threats, make decisions quickly and solve problems. It is important that they have creativity, the ability to clarify thoughts, the ability to introduce changes and the ability to use the knowledge of others.

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5. Conclusions

The results of research contained in this article allow to characterise elements which are fundamental for functioning of crisis management within the area of Mazovian Voivodeship and, at the same time, influencing the work of people who act as chairpersons of crisis management teams. The authors of the article have indicated and discussed on the basis of the conducted research the following elements: crisis-triggering threats appearing within the area of Mazovian Voivodeship and tasks of persons acting as chairpersons of crisis management teams.

The analysis of the research results in the scope of elements influencing the shape of crisis management and work of people acting as chairpersons of crisis management teams made it possible to formulate the following conclusions:

1. The most probable threats that may occur on the territory of the Mazovian Voivodeship include: violent atmospheric phenomena (i.e., hailstorms, strong winds, heavy rains, droughts, floods and fires).

2. Having sufficient forces and means in the areas administered by the respondents was also considered The results are not entirely satisfactory as still some areas of the Mazovian Voivodeship are not equipped with adequate numbers of forces and means to cope with emerging threats.

3. During the research it was also considered which activities are the most important for the statutory tasks in the field of crisis management to be carried out at a high level and characterised by high quality. Based on the results of the research, it can be argued that such actions include: increasing funding for crisis management, proper identification of crisis threats and making citizens aware through training on potential threats and how to behave in case of their occurrence.

4. The individual factors that may hinder the respondents in carrying out their crisis management tasks were analysed. Most of them included: the uncertainty of the development of a crisis situation, the lack of means necessary to carry out the tasks under the Crisis Management Act and the obligation to make decisions that affect the life, health of co-workers and citizens.

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