



Psychological Vulnerability and Earthquake Risk Perception in Bucharest/Romania

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The importance of studying the relationship with the natural hazard events from a psycho-social perspective is fundamental by the experience with past disasters as much as by the research in the field that proved that the people's psychological structures may constitute a starting point for risk reduction.

People's psycho-behavioural patterns contain conscious or unconscious references to the environmental risk, thus creating certain adjustment strategies and mechanisms, with a certain degree of psychological vulnerability. In modern man's case, the high level of awareness in front of natural dangers, doubled by the perception of the environment's unsafety, experienced as a lack of control, brings to attention nowadays the problematic of the analysis of natural risk perception, as a main factor in the adjustment of human communities' capacity of adapting to the natural environment's dynamics.

The major objective of this present work is, based on the development of an efficient evaluation methodology, *to identify specific relational patterns to seismic risk in Bucharest*, function the characteristics of the urban environment, the social, economical and psychological vulnerability, with results that can be applied for disaster management.

For explaining human reactions and the way in which they perceive and evaluate the psychological resources, on a daily basis, but also in risk situations (earthquakes), a multi-modal questionnaire was conceived through qualitative methods (a focus group, along with experts from the Public and Administrative Sciences National School, Risk Communication Center). The questionnaire was structured on a 49 items sequence, in which were included different type of questions (with single or multiple answers, open questions etc), and also questions using different scaling methods.

The items caught *cognitive elements* (expectations, anticipations and negative or positive judgments regarding risk element), *affective* (feelings) and *behavioral* (activities, strategies in case of disaster). The psychological module included 21 encoded items with answers on a five-level Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree). The research hypotheses were centered on testing the connection between psychological control factors and demographic determinants (subject's sex and age), economical status and the building conditions/characteristics which they live in. Another hypothesis to be checked was focused on behavioral changes related with the experience level of investigated subjects.

The final questionnaire was applied by phone to Bucharest representative sample of 1376 people. The sample type was the probabilistic, single-staged, layered one. There had been selected families/households from Bucharest, which had a telephone or a Mobil phone. The households were elected using the RDD (Random Digit Dialing) Method for undifferentiated phone numbers generation. The layer criterion was the district.