

A Grounded Theory for the Performance of Temporary Disaster Response Teams

Abstract

Disasters regularly devastate countries and kill thousands of people. In turn, the global community, through its network of international and national organizations, has a wide range of instruments at hand, specialized to respond when a disaster occurs. However, these organizations often struggle to measure their performance and, consequently, to identify performance drivers as a possible angle to improve themselves. Classical team performance literature falls short of offering solutions. The international disaster setting is as complex as it is ambiguous and unique. The teams acting in this context are often temporary organizations tailored for the particular disaster they are reacting to.

Starting from a literature review, this study uses the Grounded Theory approach to identify factors influencing disaster response team performance. Different types of documents describing 13 years of United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) missions are sampled. These contain the deployed teams' own evaluations of their performance and reveal the most prevalent performance drivers in a hierarchical code tree. This code tree serves as a basic model and thus as a starting point for future research.

The results show that the performance drivers can all be grouped into three main categories: 'human resources', 'tools and support' or 'processes and methodologies'.