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Experiences of Police Officer-Reported Stress Factors in an Urban Department

Reamon Bailey
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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Reamon Shawana Bailey

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Experiences of Police Officer-Reported Stress Factors in an Urban Department

by

Reamon Shawana Bailey

MSCJ, Tiffin University, 2010

BS, Alabama State University, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

February 2021

Abstract

The United States currently employs over 1 million police officers. In the current climate, police officers face dangerous situations every day and must learn to deal with the stressors that are associated with these dangers. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to address how law enforcement officers who work in urban police departments and who commonly experience a number of work-related challenges and dangers deal with stress and what methods were used for stress relief in such police departments. The research study was conducted under the theoretical lens of the general strain theory, which emphasizes the importance of geographical differences in occupational stress. The theory deepens the understanding of the organization's stress, which is manifested through negative emotions in various settings such as police jurisdictions and departments. The research design was qualitative, and the data were collected via telephone interviews. Seven major themes were identified using NVivo version 12 software, which provided the foundation for the analysis of the data. The findings of the study revealed that work-related characteristics are significant in inducing stress among police officers. Additional results further showed that police officers experience stress due to a variety of factors. Among these factors, organizational stressors were recognized as the primary factor causing stress in law enforcement. Organizational factors that caused stress were found mainly in negative relationships with superiors, from immediate supervisors to command staff. For positive social change, it is crucial to improve this relationship and enhance the level of perceived organizational support as well as job satisfaction.

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Dedication

First, I would like to give honor to God, who is the head of my life. I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my mother, Elisabeth Rutledge, the one person who I could always count on be there for me. My one and only regret in life is not telling you how much you meant to me, inspired me, and how much I admired you before you passed. Although I did not share the words with you while you were here, but you were truly the best mom and I grateful to have had you for thirty-nine years of my life. Your precious memory shall forever live on in my heart. I love you mother.

To my son Royce Jaxon Bailey, I am honored to be your mother. You are a blessing from our Lord and Savior. Thank you for your understanding and patience while I chased my dream. Thank you for loving me unconditionally and trusting me, I will always be your biggest supporter, the loudest in the crowd, and proudest in all that you do. I love you, son.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Background.....	2
Problem Statement.....	5
Purpose of the Study.....	7
Research Question	9
Theoretical Framework.....	9
Nature of the Study.....	11
Definitions.....	13
Assumptions.....	14
Scope and Delimitations	15
Limitations	15
Significance.....	16
Summary	18
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	19
Introduction.....	19
Literature Search Strategy.....	21
Theoretical Foundation.....	23
Gap in Literature.....	27
Review of the Literature	28

Police Officer Stress	29
Effects of Police Officer Stress.....	30
Factors that Influence Police Officer Stress.....	40
Job Role and Characteristics.....	45
Coping Styles	51
Personal Characteristics and Experiences.....	54
Methods and Programs for Police Stress Management and Prevention	58
Conclusion and Summary of Findings.....	66
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	69
Introduction.....	69
Research Questions.....	70
Research Design and Rationale	70
Role of Researcher	73
Methodology.....	74
Participant Selection Logic.....	75
Population	75
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection.....	77
Recruitment.....	77
Participation	78
Instrumentation	79
Researcher Developed Instruments.....	79
Data Collection	80

Face-To-Face Interviews	80
Data Analysis Plan	83
Trustworthiness	85
Credibility	85
Transferability	86
Dependability	86
Confirmability	86
Ethical Procedures	87
University IRB Approval	87
Permissions	87
Informed Consent	88
Confidentiality Measures	89
Transcriptions	89
Interviews	90
Destruction of Data	90
Summary	90
Chapter 4: Results	92
Introduction	92
Setting	92
Demographics	93
Data Collection	93
Data Analysis	94

Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	96
Credibility	96
Transferability.....	96
Dependability.....	96
Confirmability.....	97
Study Results	97
Methods of Stress Relief.....	99
Success of Stress Relief Methods	109
Summary.....	119
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations.....	121
Introduction.....	121
Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings	121
Understanding the Method of Police Officers’ Stress Relief.....	123
The Ability to Alleviate Police Officers’ Stress	126
Limitations of the Study.....	128
Recommendations.....	130
Implications.....	130
Positive Social Change	130
Methodological, Theoretical, and Empirical Implications	131
Conclusions.....	131
References.....	133
Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer.....	154

Appendix B: Recruitment Email.....	155
Appendix C: Themes and Categories	156
Appendix D: Codes.....	161
Appendix E: Feelings about police work.....	168
Appendix F: Participants demographics	169
Appendix G: Demographics	170

List of Tables

Table 1C. Themes.....99

Table 2. Mental health issues.....111

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Police officers in the United States are one of the most stressed professionals in the world. In El Sayed, Sanford, and Kerley's (2019) view, police professional can be amongst the most stressful careers in America, with the endangered stress reverberating through all facets of an individual's life. An intensive investigation by Malach-Pines and Keinan (2006) revealed that policing job strain is among the significant factors causing premature mortality among police officers. Absence of employee dedication to the organization, unbalanced shift work, possible favoritism by management, limited career opportunities, and lack of recognition for outstanding performance are some of the factors contributing to police officers' stress. Organizational stressors, such as a demanding work routine, are perceived to be the primary underlying factors behind law enforcement officer's stress, particularly those working in urban departments (Kumasey, Delle, & Ofei, 2014). Therefore, establishing the variety of occupational stress that the police officers' experience as well as evaluating the variations between the different geographical categories of police jurisdiction is of significance.

In this chapter, I start with an introduction to the research chapter. Then, I provide the background regarding stress in policing in the United States and its alignment with the research problem along with explanations of the research purpose, research question, and theoretical framework. Next, I provide a brief overview of the nature of the study followed by the assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and the definitions of key terms. I conclude the chapter with a summary, highlighting the key details from the introduction.

Background

In the recent past, many investigators and administrators have revealed negative reports regarding stress in policing (Stinchcomb, 2004). Lambert, Qureshi, Hogan et al. (2015) stated that it is already an established reality that police officers are under pressure and strain, which is unequal to any career. When compared to other professionals, more than 80% of the police officers in the United States working in urban departments reported experiencing work-related stress than other professionals (Patterson, Chung, & Swan, 2014). Due to this pressure, law enforcement officers suffer a 75% divorce rate, 25% alcohol abuse, and at worse have a suicide rate that is six times more than that of the average population (Weltman, Lamon, Freedy, & Chartman, 2014). Whereas the data mentioned above is distressing, documentation of the factors causing stress on police officers in the urban department is sparse. Information on the differences of stressors between the police officers in a different geographical location of a police jurisdiction is also absent. Allisey, Noblet, and LaMontagne (2014) indicated that regulating the level of job satisfaction for police officers is critical. The phenomenon will be essential in addressing the issue of retention for police officers within the urban police departments. Christen, Iyer, and Sonerman (2006) proposed that police job satisfaction play a pivotal role in serving as a predictor for the police plan to abandon their job with higher levels of police fulfillment linked with lower intends to leave their job.

The leading cause of police strain that has been regularly cited is an organizational stressor. Organizational stressors are inherent to the police occupation and may include aspects such as maintaining the specified guidelines of professional conduct,

working with the community, and work conditions such as shift work (McCarty, Zhao, & Garland, 2007). Of these organizational stressors, shift work is one of the frequently reported strains for these officers. Given that policing takes place throughout the day and night, police personnel are always expected to be prepared for their shift. As such, shift work is also impactful in inducing occupational stress among police officers (Chiappetta, 2018; Ma et al., 2015). Ma et al.'s (2015) findings showed that officers who worked the afternoon and night shifts reported higher levels of stress than day shift officers while Chiappetta (2018) further noted that shift work is a significant stress predictor. The authors thus proposed that shift times are vital to consider when addressing stress in police officers (Chiappetta, 2018; Ma et al., 2015). That is, targeted interventions should focus on afternoon and night shifts workers given that they are more exposed to stressful events (Ma et al., 2015). In line with this, some departments within the United States have attempted to alleviate this issue by implementing reduced workweeks and rotating the work shifts (Ma et al., 2015). Although these approaches are well intended, the outcome has been poor management and discriminatory departmental practices, which have become part of the police stressors. Policing in an organizational structure that is hierarchical, with limited capacity to contribute towards the policies and decisions' influencing the daily lives of these officers endangers stress and helplessness.

According to Bishopp, Piquero, Worrall, and Piquero (2019), another primary source of strain for police occupation in America is community relations. Police officers have indicated that whenever the society has a negative perception of them and their work, it becomes more challenging with the result of being an increased strain to the

officers. Stein and Candace (2017) argued that community relations as a causative factor of police strain are another major area with limited research. When considering the increasing deterioration of the police-community association resulting from the regularly publicized shootings of unarmed citizens, this can be a source of police strain. Further investigation is necessary to establish how the officers are presently experiencing and managing the escalating scrutiny and negative responses by the community they serve.

Typically, urban areas are characterized by high crime rates, and in most cases, the police officers are expected to deal with the victims of these crimes (Braga & Brunson, 2015). An investigation by Russell (2014) revealed that encountering criminals can also be a significant cause of distress for police officers. Police officers report a high level of psychological stress when handling victims of crimes. Mazzola, Schonfeld, and Spector (2011) expressed that crimes entailing the vulnerable are predominantly distressing, and continued exposure can cause posttraumatic impacts such as depression, nervousness, and guilt. Police officers also experience work-related strains because they are compelled to confront the elements of human conduct and society that other professions would not ordinarily have to face.

Additionally, police officer encounters with criminal justice are reported to be one of the most significant sources of occupational stress. For example, some police officers believe that the criminal justice system is too lenient and their commitment is wasted when suspects are unconfined because of technicalities (Stein & Candace, 2017). Therefore, to establish how officers cope with this kind of stress would be essential.

Police officers experience the best and worst elements of humanity (Rizwan, Saeed, Sikander, & Waseem, 2014). The stressful work routine that police officers are subjected to has made this profession most demanding. Urban police departments are usually more diverse, necessitating the administrators to establish the differences in the type of occupational stressors experienced by officers in different geographical divisions (Russell, 2014). Therefore, acquiring insight into the stressors affecting officers in urban departments will be critical in allowing police administrators to design stress reduction initiatives that will align with the specific prerequisites of a rapidly changing police workforce.

Even still, with inadequate documentation that police officers in urban departments demonstrate a disproportionate level of work stressors than other professions, a variety of programs and strategies to manage and minimize police stress such as Employee Assistance Program (EPA) have been recommended (Tasi, Nolasco, & Vaughn, 2017). However, the justification and efficiency of EPA calls for a more definitive analysis of the issue of stressors affecting police officers in urban police departments. In the current study, a point is made to establish the work strain factors affecting police in urban departments. The investigation also explored the variations of stressors affecting police officers in a different geographic location of the police jurisdiction.

Problem Statement

The specific problem to be addressed in my study is that law enforcement officers commonly experience a number of work-related challenges, particularly officers who

work in urban police departments, often causing poor performance in their duties protecting the public. Regardless of the developing associations that presently exist between the police and the community they serve, demanding work routines are increasing. For example, there is a constant and increasing shift shortage, causing police officers to experience an intense work pressure (Wang, Zheng, Hu, & Zheng, 2014). This intense work pressure can be averted if the shifts had adequate workforce in urban police departments (Wang et al., 2014). Consequently, the phenomenon has been detrimental to police performance both in the field and office environment, given that stress endangers tension and anxiety that hinder individuals from functioning normally (Papazoglou & Tuttle, 2018). A possible origin of this issue could be a result of police working in extreme conditions that can cause a wide array of physical and psychological distress (Bano & Talib, 2017; Collins & Gibbs, 2003; Lamb, Weinberger, & DeCuir, 2014; For example, police officers work in an intense environment characterized by severe shift shortage, limited functioning tools, and aggressive work settings. Rizwan et al. (2014) also indicated that the primary cause of strain in the profession is the hindrances in attaining personal objectives such as close associations, elimination of positive stimuli, and promotion of negative triggers. While there has been a growing concern for the challenges associated with police stress effecting work strictures, there is limited literature examining the topic. Without the exploration of various stressors experienced in urban departments, officers suffer from heightened mental and physical stress levels (Acquadro Maran, Zedda, & Varetto, 2018; Lambert, Qureshi, Frank, Keena, & Hogan, 2017).

According to Jaramillo, Nixon, and Sams (2005), an inadequate commitment of employees toward the law enforcement organization is one of the detrimental effects of workplace stress by the police. Whereas work-related stress among the police officers has become a complex issue, few published expert examinations related addressing police stressors and the associated issues. As such, it becomes critical to develop insight into how police officers' police in a stress-induced environment characterized by a high shortage of workforce. An investigation integrating pedagogical perception on stress can enable police in urban departments to recognize and start effective work-related stress coping methods like exercise and the use of EAP services.

Understanding the differences of the stressors affecting police officers in different geographic locations of law enforcement areas endangers a formidable challenge for administrators. Studies have revealed that job strain is more present in-service careers when compared to other careers because of the nature of such occupations (Noordegraaf & Bram, 2014). Tasi et al. (2017) argued that work-related stress among police officers had become a significant challenge in the law enforcement department because of the adverse effects. The current study examined the perceptions of police officers to learn what means are currently working in alleviating stress from their jobs. The results from this study will help to fill the existing gap in how police officers are assisted with work-related stressors.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the differences between varied geographic divisions of a police jurisdiction and the types of occupational stress

reported by officers on the job. Although there is significant research examining the issue of police stressors, limited studies examine the types of stressors on police (Bishopp et al., 2019). Recent investigations have not adequately considered whether there are differences in the work-related stressors for police officers working in different geographic locations. Findings from this investigation could, therefore, be useful in offering insight regarding the types of stressors police officers working in urban departments' experience. I analyzed the level of work stress between police officers in the Northern and Southern police departments of the same urban background. The analysis was designed to determine if there are any variations in different geographical locations of the same urban environment.

In the United States, policing has been associated with a plethora of negative impacts for the officers making the issue of law officers strain a critical area of research (Weltman et al., 2014). An existing challenge dealing with police stress literature is that most of the investigations have been exploratory and do not have a theoretical model that can be applied to departments in different geographic areas. Whereas most of the investigations indicate that there are distinctive stressors associated with the police occupation, most of these investigations do not give a considerable association between policing and stress (see Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufel, 2003). Findings from this investigation can endanger uncertainty regarding the distinctiveness of police strains when compared to other professions. Although this debate is presently continuing, the current study could be essential in establishing whether some of these strains are unique to the police occupation.

Police officers who are presently policing in the urban areas designated were interviewed in a face to face setting to examine the comparative degree and probable variations in occupational stress. The findings enabled me to determine any geographic change in professional stress attributable to departments. As such, the analysis required participation from current officers working in the Northern and Southern departments in the same urban location. Therefore, I devised the investigation to account for any variations present between the two geographic locations of interest for this study.

Research Question

In this study, I sought to provide a probable response to the following research questions and fill the current gap in the knowledge regarding police stressors in different departments. The current study was guided by the following questions,

RQ1: What methods of stress relief from the current workload are used in local police departments?

RQ2: How do current stress relief methods implemented in local police department help alleviate stress in police officers?

Theoretical Framework

According to Noordegraaf and Bram (2014), work-related stress has been examined for decades. Stress is discussed in the present study, with the causes, how it influences police officers, and the differences in different locations within the same urban region. For this analysis, the research problem was examined through the lens of general strain theory (GST). The method itself has been incorporated to describe professional stress for police officers and is extensively described in the literature review section. The

adopted model has a pedagogical outlook on occupation stress associated with the criminal conduct effects and the geographical location (Allisey et al., 2014). The primary predictions of the police's stress are noticeable through depression, anger, and burnout. Bishopp et al. (2019) found that an organization's strain is commonly linked with negative emotions in most police departments. Therefore, based on the GST model, I was able to comprehensively discuss a potential parable response to the research questions.

Agnew (2017) created the GST model in 1992, and it has since been effective in providing empirical verification to a number of investigations dealing with the effects of criminal conducts on police officers policing in different work settings. Many studies articulate that in most cases, police occupational strain stems from institutional and environmental sources (see Patterson et al., 2014). Although the two sources of police strains are present in the daily operation of the police officers, their effects are different across the departments. Police officers stress experience endangers harmful psychological reactions, which can have detrimental effects such as the increased risk of misconduct Walter (2012). The framework is described on the social-psychological level, given that it concentrates on the individual's direct social-psychological setting (Bishopp et al., 2019). GST offers a practical framework which illustrates the existing association between police officers stress and the manifested damaging emotions. However, Allisey et al. (2014) suggested that GST should be adequately revised to make it more successful in exemplifying crime and delinquency. Although the oath is the same police officers will encounter and react to stress differently within the same work setting.

Usually, police officers interact with members of the community daily when serving society. The phenomenon is a depiction that the officers are recruited to offer services to the general public (Paxon 2019). In America, police officers have been linked to negative attributes, such as harassment and racial profiling (Kumasey et al., 2014). According to El Sayed et al. (2014), the phenomenon created a significant rift between these officers and the public. For example, the incidences of these officers engaging in shootings and the citizen's view of such practices as unjustifiable have continued to widen the rift (Stinchcomb, 2004). The use of unnecessary force is observed, but it has increasingly become a significant issue damaging the relationship between police officers and the public (Wood et al., 2020). Because of these challenges, most of the police officers in different departments have limited autonomy and suffered a loss of identity towards the public. Therefore, most nonpolice members have constructed a negative perception of the police as individuals with low morals have hindered them from interacting with the officers' freely.

Nature of the Study

In my study, I used a qualitative methodology with a case study research design. This design was used to examine different means to alleviating work-related stressors experienced by police in urban departments. Qualitative research is all-inclusive as the aim is to comprehend the complete picture of a social issue under scrutiny (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). This analysis also evaluated whether there are any variations between police officers from the Northern and Southern jurisdictions. I incorporated a qualitative design whereby data was gathered in the form of semi

structured face to face interviews. Qualitative research techniques are aimed to allow the researcher to examine and understand the main reason why police officers experience difficulties in managing work-related stress (Miles et al., 2014). The investigation best aligns with the qualitative approach, given that it will examine the perceptions of police officers

According to McGregor (2019), qualitative research studies are essential in providing an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Similarly, Denis articulated that while qualitative based studies are fundamental in establishing a holistic experience of the participants, the interpretive aspect of qualitative research offers the investigator with an opportunity of obtaining an inclusive perception of the correspondents. Consequently, incorporating a qualitative design was critical in soliciting the police officers' views regarding the stressors they experience at work.

The research incorporated 20 post-certified police officers who are presently working within the department situated in an urban background of Fulton County, Georgia. Ten officers were selected from the North Fulton County department (Group A) and the remaining officers were chosen Fulton's South region (Group B). I adopted a voluntary contribution through an online survey as the sampling approach. Omair's (2014) viewed that the approach is important in allowing the sample to be hypothetically demonstrative and, at the same time, fulfilling the objectives of the research. Thus, using officers from two different geographical locations in the same urban setting allowed me to compare the aspects causing stress between police officers in the Northern and Southern police jurisdictions. After receiving data, it was analyzed by evaluating

information from the online survey transcripts to facilitate the recognition of common themes.

However, although a qualitative technique is appropriate for this analysis, the investigation is limited by this approach given that the information to be collected only signify the participants' opinion, making it impossible to generalize it outside of the research scope (O'Brien, Harris, Beckman, Reed, & Cook, 2014). The study was limited by the fact that there are limited studies investigating police stress, making it challenging to obtain secondary data for the research. Incorporating the inquiry *professional-related stress for police* as a Google Scholar search only generated five study articles with documentation dates after 2000. As such, the limited research associated with stress in police occupation is an indication that an investigation is necessary to allow administrators to formulate a consistent prediction regarding how police officers can experience stressors while serving the community in the line of duty.

Definitions

Definitions of key terms used throughout the study follow to clarify their context.

Community relation: For the purpose of this study, community relation is used to describe how the police officers relate with the community which they serve as well as the various approaches that police agencies incorporate to sustain a mutually beneficial association with the society (Heredia, 2012, p.9).

Shiftwork: A type of work schedule whereby a group of employees are rotated through specific periods during the day practicing the same type of work. Shift work for

police officers can happen outside the conventional day time, given that it involves early morning, evening, and night shift (Allisey et al., 2014).

Stress: The way the body responds psychologically when trying to adjust to stressful stimuli (Stinchcomb, 2014).

Work-related stress: The transaction between individuals and their work setting with the stress occurring when the conditions are unfavorable or when the supposed resources are not sufficient to fulfill the perceived demand (Ma et al., 2015).

Assumptions

Assumptions can be referred to as statements that a researcher accepts as fact or truth in order to facilitate the study (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). For the current study, my first assumption was that the derived data acquired during data collection would help the analysis of the types of stressors experienced by police in urban departments. A second assumption for my study was that the post certified police officers currently employed within an agency who participated provided complete and honest responses during the in-depth interviews (see Engward & Davis, 2015). I ensured that the interview protocol and data collection process is systematic. However, another assumption during this process is that truthfulness and honesty are essential for both the researcher and the participants, and are duly exercised (see Patton, 2015). I also assumed that post certified police officers had prior experience of various types of stressors because of their job. This assumption of having prior experience will equip participants to answer in-depth interviews with information sufficient to answer the research question.

Scope and Delimitations

The research question and the qualitative research design determined the scope of the research. The delimitations are post certified police officers who are currently employed within an agency located in an urban setting. As all recruitment occurred via an online survey, another delimitation is that potential participants must have access to the Internet and must know about the specific online survey or have a colleague who will share the recruitment information with them. All participation was voluntary.

Limitations

The purpose of this research was to determine the degree, if any, to which two police jurisdictions conform to the findings of the Spielberg model of job-related stress factors for police jurisdictions. The two jurisdictions represent suburban and urban police environments and were used to compare the usefulness of the Spielberg model as a template for understanding or predicting factors which police jurisdictions may encounter.

Using the query *job-relayed stress factors in police work* as a Google Scholar search request, only five research articles were returned with publication dates after 2000; the apparent gap in the literature related to police work stress factors demonstrates a need to conduct this research in order to develop a better understanding of the factors in police stress as well as make reliable predictions of the ways in which police personnel may encounter these factors.

Significance

Most of the above-mentioned occupational stressors are at the center of the police profession. Understanding how shift work programs, lack of police recognition, and the repetitive job routine affect police officers in different jurisdictions of the same urban setting are essential. The present investigation is of significance because it offers insight regarding the aspects considered stressful by the police officers and their variations in different jurisdictions of the same urban background. It is vital to clearly identify stressors in police officers' daily lives with a view to developing specialized programs that would enable these officers to effectively deal with the stress. Currently, an EAP is available for officers; however, this program has not been sufficiently tested for effectiveness and reliability (see Tasi et al., 2014). Furthermore, there is limited evidence and insufficient knowledge on the stress factors experienced by officers in different departments (Ma et al., 2015). This study, thus, provides more insight into the professional stressors for urban officers and create work-related pressure that is attributed to geographical areas. As a result, more effective programs and interventions could be developed, addressing and incorporating the stress factors experienced by officers in urban departments. Addressing the stressors of police officers in urban departments could enable this population to also perform their roles optimally. Empowering these officers to effectively deal with the stress could result to better outcomes in terms of quality of service to communities, leading to better social and security outcomes within the area served by these police officers.

According to McCarty et al. (2007) much of the research has focused on stress variations between genders with limited analysis examining the differences as reported by officers in different locations. Findings from this study will, therefore, help fill this gap by adding to the knowledge based on the phenomenon under investigation. Although wide-ranging classification of work-related stress for police officers have been previously accounted in documented studies, little is known if these aspects are invariable across a single urban background or if they are different between the various locations. Therefore, results from this investigation may be useful in offering more insight into the police stress aspects regarding their causes and differences based on the geographical location of the officers.

The primary objective for this study was understanding the different work-related stressors reported by the police officers policing in various departments within the same urban setting. For this reason, these findings could be essential in allowing the administrators and other crucial stakeholders to comprehend, equip, and train the police officers on effective methods to manage occupational stress. The law enforcement department will effectively generate police officers who are entirely prepared to serve the society when required (Noordegraaf & Bram, 2014). Programs that control work-related stress among police officers are currently in place, and their efficiency is limited by insufficient knowledge on the stress factors experienced by officers in different departments (Ma et al., 2015). Therefore, understanding the different types of stressors which police officers experience would also be essential in enabling law enforcement agencies to devise active initiatives to manage and minimize work-related strains.

Summary

I sought to understand the different types of work-related strains experienced by police officers working in different geographic locations within the same urban setting. The investigation is divided into five chapters. The introduction chapter provides a comprehensive background of the subject under analysis. Additionally, the introduction also described the problem statement, research question, the nature, purpose, and the significance of the study. Chapter 2 provides an extensive analysis of the documented studies investigating about occupation strain among the police officers. Also, the literature review discusses the existing gap in identifying the literature based on the GST. Chapter 3 provides the methodology as to how the data will be collected. In addition, the research findings will be discussed in Chapter 4, where the themes will be presented. Chapter 5 will focus on providing an in-depth summation of the investigation. The final chapter will also offer research limitations as well as providing any recommendations for further study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

There is a problem in the law enforcement community, particularly in urban police departments. Police officers experience significant amounts of stress in their work, as law enforcement is a challenging occupation. Police officers are tasked with a wide variety of duties, which often lead to police officers encountering stressful situations (Qureshi, Lambert, & Frank, 2019). Further, despite developing relationships amongst these law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve, stressful work routines are occurring. Stressful work routines such as shift shortages, burnout, and understaffed operations are negatively impacting the way police officers perform their duties (Collins & Gibbs 2003). Past studies have indicated that job stressors are negatively related to job involvement and performance outcomes (Nelson, 2015; Qureshi et al., 2019). In fact, almost all stressors have a negative effect on job involvement (Qureshi et al., 2019). A potential cause could be the extreme conditions officers experience which create mental and physical stress, which may not be normal to most professional men and women (Acquadro Maran et al., 2018; Lambert, Qureshi, Frank, Keena, & Hogan, 2017).

Police officers are routinely exposed to traumatic critical incidents (Arble, Lumley, Pole, Blessman, & Arnetz, 2017). This, as a result, commonly triggers negative emotions (Arble et al., 2017; Lambert et al., 2017). The sources of strain within the police department may include prevention from achieving goals such as maintenance of close relationships, removal of positively valued stimuli, and presentation of negatively evaluated stimuli (Agnew, 2017). Several researchers have underscored the need for

prevention of mental, behavioral, and social costs of police trauma and stress (Arble, Daugherty, & Arnetz, 2018; Arble et al., 2017). Police officers who continually experience strain or stress generate various negative emotions such as anger, frustration, depression, and despair (Brezina, 2017; Kurtz, Zavala, & Melander, 2015). Although there is significant research examining the impact of stress on police stressors, limited studies have examined the types of stressors on police (Bishopp et al., 2019). As such, few studies have considered the differences in the work-related stressors for police officers working in geographic locations (Brezina, 2017; Kurtz et al., 2015). According to Acquadro Maran et al. (2018), the main stressors of police officers are often associated with organizational and operational factors. For example, extreme conditions could be a result of hostile work environments as well as shortages of functioning equipment.

The problem that this study addressed is the significant amounts of stress that police officers experience in their work (Bishopp et al., 2019). Much of the research has focused on stress variations between genders with limited analysis examining the differences as reported by officers in different locations. More research is needed to determine whether there are differences in the work-related stressors for police officers working in different geographic locations (Tasi et al., 2017). Therefore, this study may help fill this gap by adding to the knowledge base on the phenomenon under investigation. In addition, research has been called for in examining the variations of work-related stressors between the police working in different geographic locations in law enforcement (see Brezina, 2017; Kurtz et al., 2015; Ma et al., 2015; Noordegraaf & Bram, 2014).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the differences between varied geographic divisions of a police jurisdiction and the types of occupational stress reported by officers on the job. Understanding if there are any variations in different geographic divisions of a police jurisdiction can consequently provide more insight into the professional stressors for urban officers on the job and establish work-related pressure that is attributable to geographical areas. I also aimed to contribute to the current police stress literature given that much of the existing research has focused on stress variations between genders with limited analysis examining the differences as reported by officers in different locations (see Agnew, 2017; McCreary et al., 2017). This includes identifying the range of types of occupational stress reported by officers on the job and the differences between varied geographic divisions of a police jurisdiction. This could, in turn, help urban police departments to acknowledge and identify coping mechanisms that officers use to deal with stress (Agnew, 2017). This is to ensure that the needs of police officers that are susceptible to occupational stress are thoroughly considered and considered.

Literature Search Strategy

With the objective of building the literature review, the following online databases and search engines were used: Google Scholar, Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), Global Health, Ingenta Connect, JSTOR: Journal Storage, EBSCOhost Online Research Databases, and Journal Seek. The key search terms and combination of search terms that were included in several online databases were the following: *general strain theory, law enforcers, occupational stress, police agencies,*

police coping stress, police officers, types of police stress, work-related stress, and work-related stress for police officers. These key terms were used in order to suggest studies that were correlated to the problem presented in the previous chapter and the respective research questions.

The majority of the literature included was published in the last 5 years, from 2015 and 2019 (a total of 74 out of 77 sources, which is 96.1% in ratio), specifically in terms of police occupational stress, the types of stress that police officers experience, and constraints to coping with stress. Recent findings were crucial to keep the study as updated as possible. However, it is worth noting that studies on occupational stress that are specific for police officers with respect to different working environments are limited. Therefore, during this study, older studies were included as part of the references, such as the framework that of GST (a total of three out of 75 sources, which is 3.9% in ratio). The research articles that were chosen for inclusion in the study addressed topics of police stress, different working environments of police officers, environmental and organizational sources of police stress, coping mechanisms of stress among police officers, and how police officers can be supported and equipped in order to duly address their stress.

To address the research problem and questions presented in the previous chapter, I expanded on the background presented by starting with the process of identification of literature search and strategy. This portion of the study outlined how the literature review was generally built. Following this is the second section wherein the research will discuss the theoretical framework of the study. Then, the third section outlines the details of the

framework used, which is centered on police officers and their roles, and studies centered on defining police officer stress and current methods and programs for stress management and prevention will follow. A subsection on police officer stress' link/relationship with environmental and organizational sources will follow. The fourth section discusses the synthesis of findings, presenting the conclusion of the literature review section and the key points to consider for this study. Lastly, the fifth section the summary of the literature review that highlights the different types of police stressors amongst different police agencies.

Theoretical Foundation

The GST was used as a theoretical foundation for the study in identifying various police-reported stressors amongst the different agencies (see Agnew, 2017). The GST has a pedagogical view on stress related to a geographical area and criminal behavior impacts (Brezina, 2017; Yun & Lee, 2015). Stress is discussed in the present study, with the causes, how it influences police officers and the differences in different locations within the same urban region. As such, the main predictors of officer's strain are manifested in the form of anger, burnout, and depression (Brezina, 2017).

Those in engaged in organizations have used the GST as an empirical support to understand organization's stress given that it is associated with negative emotions in various settings, which can be used to explore work-related stress among police officers in various jurisdictions and departments (Agnew, 2017; Brezina, 2017). GST was developed by Agnew 1992 (Agnew, 2017). GST offers empirical evidence to a major number of studies, involving criminal behavior impacts upon police officers.

Additionally, the GST has since proven effective in providing empirical verification to several investigations dealing with the effects of criminal conduct on police officers policing in different work settings. GST has been used in other studies with the aim of exploring stress in other settings, focusing on other population groups. Zhang et al. (2017), for example, used GST in analyzing stress, strain, and deviance within school settings, focusing on the youth population. Their findings provided robust analysis regarding the impact of life stress and strain on behavioral problems (Zhang et al., 2016). Cho and Galehan (2019) conducted a similar study using GST as the framework. Focusing on stressful life events and its impact on behaviors among the youth, the authors used GST in assessing adolescent behavior (Cho & Galehan, 2019). Findings revealed that early negative emotions due to bullying victimization, child abuse, and poor friendships are likely to lead to delinquency and increase stress in life (Cho & Galehan, 2019). Add summary to fully conclude the paragraph.

There are very few researchers that have used GST as an empirical framework in examining stress in other work environments, focusing on the adult population. One of the few studies that used GST in assessing stress in work environments was Gibson, Swatt, and Jolicoeur (2001). The authors used GST in examining the relationship among occupational stress experienced by male police officers and domestic forms of violence (Gibson et al., 2001). Results of their study showed that occupational strain has an indirect association with domestic violence (Gibson et al., 2001).

A myriad of the literature suggests that police stress emanates from environmental and organizational sources (Tsai et al., 2017). The two sources exist in the life of officers

but have different functions within the agencies. Police stress experiences may lead to emotional reactions, which have negative impacts such as elevated misconduct risk (Brezina, 2017; Tsai et al., 2017). GST provides a robust framework which explains the relationship between police officer's strain and the manifested negative emotions (Bishopp et al., 2019). GST plays a critical role in explaining crimes and delinquency, but in most cases, GST must be substantially revised as a way of making it effective in this role (Agnew 2001). GST is written on the social-psychological level, which is focused on the individual's immediate social-psychological environment (Agnew 2018) Therefore, GST offers a practical framework which illustrates the existing association between police officers stress and the manifested damaging emotions. As such, the model plays a pivotal role in elucidating crime and delinquency, along with the stressors that police officers face in their jobs.

With these additional factors to consider in considering extensive cognitive and physical demands of police officer roles, GST was a basis point for this study as a normative theory and/or guide to explain the factors relevant to identifying the variations of stressors concerning police officers in the Northern and Southern states. The sources of strain within the police department may include prevention from achieving goals such as maintenance of close relationships, removal of positively valued stimuli, and presentation of negatively evaluated stimuli (Agnew, 2017). A vast majority of past studies cover police workforce and its emphasis on improving coping mechanisms for police officers to improve stress levels; however, little to none put a direct weight on the specific

differences between varied geographic divisions of a police jurisdiction and the types of occupational stress reported by officers on the job (Tsai et al., 2017).

Therefore, in reference to the GST framework, police leaders and administrators can identify police stressors in various departments, noting its impacts on police officers (Bishopp et al., 2019), together with the body of literature available. I also applied the GST framework in the analysis of the variations between the stressors affecting police officers in the Northern and Southern states. This will prove as guidance in the identification of the form of stressors linked to police officers policing in urban departments and high crime areas. This enabled the identification of the range of relevant environmental and organizational factors that influence the stress that police officers experience (see Ma et al., 2015). This is important because police officer's stress experience endangers harmful psychological reactions, which can have detrimental effects such as the increased risk of misconduct (Ma et al., 2015). This framework also acted as a backbone to the literature in developing additional and relevant publications that relate to the occupational stressors of police officers, as well as defined and/or provide guidance on the needs of police officers who experience stressors in various police departments or jurisdictions. This is vital in the objective of managing police stressors and negative emotions in most police departments (Bishopp et al., 2019). Through the various pool of literature that will be discussed in the succeeding pages, this study is an extension of scientific knowledge relative to that of building and retaining a strong and police workforce, and the respective management of stress among police personnel.

Gap in Literature

There is a gap in the literature regarding police officer stress that is specific by division or department (see Ma et al., 2015; Warner, 2019). While wide-ranging classifications of work-related stress for police officers have been previously accounted in documented studies, little is known if stress for police officers varies in relation to the different locations (see Ma et al., 2015). There is a lack of research regarding stressors of police officers with respect to their designated roles. This could be vital information that policy makers and police administrators can refer to in order to support police officers in addressing high risks of stress (see Brunetto et al., 2017; Can et al., 2016). These aspects or variations of stressors concerning police officers in the difference jurisdictions were found to be one of the least explored of the constructs in the literature (Bishopp et al., 2018). This study could provide more insight into the professional stressors for urban officers, as well as their causes and differences based on the geographical region of the officers.

Moreover, there is a limited amount of empirical studies—either quantitative or qualitative—that have examined the need for more targeted interventions for police officers to better understand and prevent the occurrence of stress among this population. This is important since chronic stress could lead to various negative outcomes in terms of health, relationship with the public and communities, and their job satisfaction, which could lead to termination of their roles (see Bishopp et al., 2016; Brunetto et al., 2017). As such, there is a prevalent need to support law enforcers as they face stressors related to their variations in different regions (Bishopp et al., 2016). Some of the past studies have

underscored that if law enforcers continuously feel stressed and burnout, they often result to negative coping styles, form unhealthy habits such as substance use, resulting to ineffective work and lower quality of life (see Acquadro Maran et al., 2015; Agnew, 2017; Aytac, 2015).

Review of the Literature

With a focus on examining the differences between varied geographic divisions of a police jurisdiction and the types of occupational stress reported by officers, this study will review and outline past literature on work stress among police officers and the various factors that impact police stressors in terms of organizational, environmental, and operational stress. This study will also examine the specific stressors that police officers face in police settings, determining whether there are any variations between different geographical locations of the same environment. This body of literature will aim to outline Agnew's (2017) general strain theory (GST) and its relevance as a framework in exploring and understanding the variations of work-related stressors among police officers. An exploration of police officer stress will first be conducted, followed by a review of the effects of police officer stress such as job performance. Factors that influence police officer stress will be discussed to identify which factors to consider in addressing work stress among police officers. These relevant factors include environmental and organizational sources, job role, coping styles, and personal characteristics and experiences. These are vital focus points of the current study in order to grasp and clearly understand how police officers may be supported given the stress-induced nature of their work and environment. This understanding may lead to awareness

of various stressors linked to police officers policing in urban departments and high crime areas.

The literature review will then examine studies that aid in underlining methods and programs for police stress management and prevention, which will also aid in highlighting the importance of having effective measures and intervention programs established to support police officers in managing and preventing stress. The ensuing sections will examine these specific measures and intervention programs by outlining previous research that are validated and peer reviewed. This following body of sections in this literature review will also be compared and contrasted to the findings in previous studies and determine their respective relevance to this study.

Police Officer Stress

Stress among police officers is more prevalent than other professions (Acquadro Maran, et al., 2015). Police officers are more susceptible to distress, which can result in deterioration in psychosocial well-being and physical health (Acquadro Maran et al., 2015; Aytac, 2015; Moreto, 2016). Moreto (2016) explored occupational stress among law enforcement officers, as well as their perceptions of stress. With the use of an ethnographic case study, the Moreto conducted interviews and participant observation, and found that law enforcement officers are exposed to various occupational/task-related, external, internal, and occupation-related personal strains that are detrimental to their wellbeing if not managed properly (Moreto, 2016). Moreto's finding is in line with existing literature stating the need for a deeper understanding, reducing and preventing of occupational stress in law enforcement workers (Acquadro Maran et al., 2015; Aytac,

2015). This body of literature could provide empirical data on the common occupational stress that is faced by law enforcement workers such as police officers and rangers, which calls out the need to address these stress issues (Aytac, 2015; Moreto, 2016). Moreover, this body of findings could provide empirical evidence that police officers are at high risk for psychological symptoms due to the nature of their job (Aytac, 2015).

Effects of Police Officer Stress

There are various negative effects of police officers feeling stressed and fatigued. Chronic stress and fatigue could lead to adverse outcomes both personally and professionally. According to Aytac (2015) and Sandvik et al. (2019), sources of stress and its symptoms are psychosocial risk factors. Aytac (2015) conducted a survey on 5725 randomly selected police officers in Turkey. After analyzing correlations and utilizing stepwise multiple regression analysis, the findings of the study revealed that there are significant associations between symptoms of stress, the sources of stress, and anger (Aytac, 2015). That is, the findings revealed that when police officers yielded higher stress scores (using the Mayerson Stress Sources Scale), these police officers have increased problems such as psychological disorders (Aytac, 2015). Fekedulegn et al. (2017) added that police officers commonly face and experience physical and psychological dangers, as well as occupational stressors. Fekedulegn et al. aimed to discuss the factors of stress, fatigue and on-duty injury among police officers (Fekedulegn et al., 2017). This is vital as such experiences may eventually lead to chronic fatigue. As such, Fekedulegn et al. utilized a validated chronic fatigue questionnaire to assess fatigue and stress among police officers (Fekedulegn et al., 2017). Utilizing

Poisson regression to analyze the data, findings of the study indicated that 40% of police officers reported feeling drained while overall occurrence of on-duty injury was 23.9% (Fekedulegn et al., 2017). Further, findings revealed that there was a significant increasing trend in terms of injury prevalence and total fatigue score (Fekedulegn et al., 2017). This body of findings means that police officers who feel drained and lack of vigor have a significantly higher risk of non-fatal workplace injury compared to their counterparts who feel active (Fekedulegn et al., 2017).

Bergman et al. (2016) presented similar findings as that of Fekedulegn et al. (2017) and Aytac (2015). The authors noted that there is a significant relationship between symptoms of stress and excessive anger. That is, police stress is often experienced within a context of excessive anger; this of which is vital to address given that officer well-being decreases as a result of stress and excessive anger (Bergman et al., 2016). Additionally, both stress and excessive anger negatively impact public well-being (Bergman et al., 2016). This body of findings could therefore provide empirical justification regarding the need to ensure that police officers are dealing with their stress and excessive anger (Bergman et al., 2016) effectively. Therefore, workplace interventions for police officers should be further developed in order to effectively deal stress and anger levels of police officers, as well as maintaining their energy levels in order to enhance their own well-being, and the public well-being (Aytac, 2015; Bergman et al., 2016; Fekedulegn et al., 2017). As such, this body of literature could be used as reference in creating targeted interventions to help police officers in preventing the

adverse consequences of job stress. In this case, factors of physical environment, anger levels, social stress, and self-expression should be taken into consideration to ensure police officers' needs are met and stress levels are duly addressed (Aytac, 2015).

Police officers are at a high risk of developing negative health issues due to the regular occurrence of occupational stress. This is especially true given the fact that police officers are vulnerable to the stress-provoking environment of their jobs; therefore, they are more susceptible in developing chronic police stress and diseases (Retneswari et al., 2018). Retneswari et al. stressed the fact that chronic stress decreases the energy of police officers in their jobs, decreasing overall physical, mental (psychological) and behavioral health (lifestyle) (Retneswari et al., 2018). According to Nelson and Smith (2016), Bergman et al. (2016), and Retneswari et al. (2018), frequent risk and exposure to psychosocial stressors induces the use of maladaptive coping styles and mechanisms, which can result in mental ill-health. This body of knowledge could provide empirical information regarding the need for effective stress management and intervention programs for police officers in order to duly address their work situations and/or characteristics, assess and maintain healthy levels of stress, and reduce maladaptive coping strategies, especially given the stress-provoking nature of their jobs (Nelson & Smith, 2016; Retneswari et al., 2018).

Stress among police officers could also result in other adverse health outcomes. Nelson and Smith (2016) examined the relationship between work situations, coping styles, and mental health among police officers. Nelson and Smith initially tested whether work situations and/or characteristics impact police officers' mental health, mainly

through job stress and job satisfaction (Nelson & Smith, 2016). Analyzing the data from 134 police officers using hierarchical regression, the results of the study showed that negative work situations and/or characteristics, lower levels of positive work factors and work support and emotion-focused coping styles were linked to heightened levels of mental health problems such as depression ($F(8, 125) = 7.465, P < 0.001$) (Nelson & Smith, 2016). Also, findings revealed that negative work characteristics and emotion-focused coping ($F(8, 125) = 7.586, P < 0.001$) result to police officers having and developing anxiety and further stress (Nelson & Smith, 2016). This body of knowledge could provide empirical information regarding the health issues that result from lack of stress management for police officers.

Retneswari et al.' (2018) findings were similarly to Nelson and Smith's (2016) findings, noting that police officers who have severe stress have increased chances of developing mental illness, and vice versa. The authors aimed to identify the impact of stress among police officers in Malaysia, specifically, the health and behavioral outcomes associated with stress (Retneswari et al., 2018). Retneswari et al. conducted a cross-sectional study, employing 579 police officers for the study (Retneswari et al., 2018). Using a 21-item Depression, Anxiety and Stress questionnaire, the results of the study reported that at least 40.3% of police officers (95% CI: 55.0 to 64.3) had some form of stress wherein 6.4% (95% CI: 4.4 to 9.2) of police officers reported severe stress, 15.1% (95% CI: 11.9 to 19.0) of police officers reported moderate stress levels, and 18.8% (95% CI: 15.3 to 22.8) of police officers reported mild levels (Retneswari et al., 2018). Additionally, the findings revealed that police officers who have severe stress have

increased chances of developing mental illness (Retneswari et al., 2018). Also, police officers who have reported mental illness have higher risks of experiencing severe stress (Retneswari et al., 2018). Further, the findings showed that police officers who experienced having a headache had nearly 3 times the odds of experiencing severe stress (aOR 2.91; 95% CI: 1.09 to 7.75) compared to officers who reported no headache (Retneswari et al., 2018). It was also found that police officers who did not exercise had 3.8% greater chance (aOR 3.79, 95% CI: 1.65 to 8.75) of being severely stressed than a police officer who exercised. Additionally, those police officers who did not pray had 5% greater chance (aOR 5.15 (1.58,16.85) of being severely stressed compared to an officer who prayed (Retneswari et al., 2018). Thus, this body of findings could provide empirical evidence that multiple and various health issues such as headache and mental illness are significantly associated with heightened police stress levels (Nelson & Smith, 2016; Retneswari et al., 2018).

Other researchers underscored the prevalence of occupational stress alongside physical, emotional (such as compassion fatigue), and mental health issues (Fekedulegn et al., 2017; Ragesh et al., 2017; Stancel et al., 2019). Stancel et al. (2019) noted that police stress, as well as compassion fatigue can lead to negative health outcomes. Compassion fatigue is the emotional cost of caring associated with police work (Stancel et al., 2019). Various negative health outcomes may range from post-traumatic stress disorder, work dissatisfaction, depression, burnout, and self-criticism to destructive coping strategies (Stancel et al., 2019). Ragesh et al. (2017) found that police officers of various levels, ages, and gender are susceptible to negative health outcomes due to the

high levels of stress. The authors noted in their study that both operational and organizational stress were highly significant among police officers (Ragesh et al., 2017). Specifically, the results indicated that 68% of the police officers reported having moderate organizational stress, while 14% of police officers reported experiencing high levels of organizational stress. Additionally, 67% of the police officers reported having operational stress in moderate levels, while 16.5% of police officers reported experiencing operational stress in high levels (Ragesh et al., 2017). More importantly, the findings also revealed that 23% of the police officers had been diagnosed with physical illnesses, 4% of them with mental illness, and 29% of them with substance abuse (Ragesh et al., 2017). This body of results could provide substantial justification regarding the high levels of stress experienced by police officers (Ragesh et al., 2017). This could callout the need urgent and targeted interventions from the government and policy makers to address both organizational and occupational stress among this population (Fekedulegn et al., 2017; Ragesh et al., 2017).

Physical ailments and diminished physical health have also been linked to stress among police workers. Several researchers have examined this topic and noted the need to diminish the negative effects of stress in terms of physical ailments (Ma et al., 2019; Violanti et al., 2017). Garbarino and Magnavita (2015), explored the association between occupational stress and metabolic syndrome (MetS) among police officers belonging to a rapid response unit. The authors closely monitored work-related stress in a 5-year period among rapid response police officers (Garbarino & Magnavita, 2015). Utilizing the Demand-Control-Support (DCS) and the Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) models,

Garbarino and Magnavita included 234 police officers in their study wherein results showed that majority of them had high stress levels (Garbarino & Magnavita, 2015). More specifically, police officers who reported higher levels of stress had significantly higher mean levels of triglycerides, as well as lower levels of HDL-cholesterol, in comparison to their counterparts who had lower levels of stress (Garbarino & Magnavita, 2015). This is vital to address and take into consideration given that police officers who have reported high stress are at an increased risk of developing MetS (aOR = 2.68; CI95% = 1.08–6.70), and hypertriglyceridemia (aOR = 7.86; CI95 = 1.29–48.04). This body of findings could provide empirical support regarding the negative impact that work-related has on police officers, as it induces MetS, and has negative effects on one's blood lipids.

Magnavita et al. (2018) explored the association between occupational stress and cardiovascular diseases among police officers. The authors conducted a systematic review of evidence related to the topic of work-related stress in police officers and risk of cardiovascular diseases (Magnavita et al., 2018). Drawing data from 16 studies, Magnavita et al. (2018) found that police officers are at increased risk of cardiovascular diseases. The findings of the study indicated that there is a consistently high prevalence of the relationship between stress and cardiovascular disease morbidity among police officers (Magnavita et al., 2018). The limitations of their study, however, included constraints in terms of the definitions and measurement of stress. As a result, there were often conflicting and inconsistent results with respect to stress and cardiovascular risk factors (Magnavita et al., 2018). Thus, more research is needed to define and measure the

construct of stress, which could provide more clarity in showing the association between stress and cardiovascular disease morbidity. Andersen et al. (2015a) concluded similar findings in their study. Anderson et al. found police officers were significantly impacted by their work stress levels in terms of physical health, reporting heart-related issues (Andersen et al., 2015a). Despite the prevalence of the risk of heart-related diseases, police officers in their study reported that had not received formal training related to managing work stress and trauma, and how it induces physical health or personal health risks (Andersen et al., 2015a). Thus, this body of literature could provide empirical knowledge regarding the risk of cardiovascular diseases among police officers (Andersen et al., 2015a). As such, policy makers and administrators should provide worksite health promotion policies and stress management programs for police officers to reduce their stress, as well as their risk of cardiovascular diseases (Andersen et al., 2015a; Magnavita et al., 2018).

Ma et al. (2019) and Violanti et al. (2017), noted that police officers' stress levels, frequency of stressful events (stressors), and work characteristics lead to poor sleep quality in various ways. Ma et al. (2019) explored the impact of stress and police officers' sleep quality. The authors took into account and investigated the relationships between stress severity (measured by stress rating score) and frequency of stressors with sleep quality (Ma et al., 2019). The authors conducted a stress survey among 356 police officers wherein the findings revealed linear relationships of stress levels and frequency of stressors with sleep quality (Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index global score) (Ma et al., 2019). Specifically, the findings revealed that stress levels were positively and

independently correlated to poor sleep quality among police officers ($\beta = 0.17$, $p = 0.002$) (Ma et al., 2019). Additionally, the frequency of stressors was positively and independently correlated to poor sleep quality ($\beta = 0.13$, $p = 0.025$) (Ma et al., 2019). Violanti et al. (2017) indicated similar findings, highlighting the impact of perceived intensity and frequency of police work occupational stressors on the cortisol awakening response (CAR). As such, the authors utilized the Spielberger Police Stress Survey (60-item instrument for assessing specific conditions or events considered to be stressors in police work) in order to examine work stressors among 338 police officers that of which impact their cortisol patterns (Violanti et al., 2017). With the use of a linear regression model, results of the study indicated that chronic exposure to stressors significantly diminish awakening cortisol response patterns (Violanti et al., 2017). Further, it was found that police events perceived to be stressful or as violent conditions significantly disrupt sleeping patterns of police officers, which could diminish their quality of health, as well as their ability to perform functionally during the time of their jobs (Violanti et al., 2017).

As such, this body of findings could provide empirical information and evidence that both police officers' stress and the frequency of stressors are significantly and independently correlated to poor sleep quality (Ma et al., 2019; Violanti et al., 2017). Therefore, this body of findings could provide empirical justification regarding the dangers of chronic exposure among police officers; that is, chronic stressors among police officers should be managed, otherwise it could disrupt quality of sleep and health among this population, diminishing awakening cortisol response pattern (Ma et al., 2019;

Violanti et al., 2017). Additionally, this could prove to be a callout in monitoring of the stress levels among police officers to prevent negative health outcomes such as MetS and poor sleep quality.

Yun and Lee (2015) and Lambert et al. (2018) underscored the need to address stress among police officers, as it could lead to ineffective work and decreased quality. Job stress significantly leads to emotional and reduced accomplishment burnout, which means that stressed police officers tend to be ineffective in their roles (Lambert et al., 2018). This is vital to address given that job burnout can negatively impact police officers, their organization, as well as the communities and citizens that these officers serve (Lambert et al., 2018). When severely stressed, police officers can experience various emotional consequences or burnout such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of accomplishment (Lambert et al., 2018). These findings have been found to be true among Asian and Western police officers (Lambert et al., 2018; Yun & Lee, 2015). Yun and Lee (2015) stated this in their study, applying general strain theory (GST) as a framework to understand police officers' strain and stress. With data collected from a sample of 570 South Korean male police officers, the analysis of the study revealed that when stressed, the participants resorted to negative habitual patterns such as alcohol use (Yun & Lee, 2015). As a result of habitual intoxication, police officers are incapable of being ineffective in their roles (Yun & Lee, 2015). This body of findings could provide more in-depth knowledge and more context of workers' ineffective work and decreased quality that often result from being regularly exposed to high risk and stress levels (Lambert et al., 2018; Yun & Lee, 2015).

Increased stress also impacts the family lives of police officers. Lambert et al. (2017) revealed that when job stress increases, there is an increase in any and either one of the dimensions of work–family conflict (strain-based, behavior-based, time-based, and family-based). This body of findings could provide empirical data regarding the impact of job stress in police officers and their family life, which goes beyond their work life (Lambert et al., 2017). This could also provide initial analysis regarding the dimensions of work–family conflict that have a significant association with job stress: strain-based conflict, behavior-based conflict, and family-based conflict (Lambert et al., 2018). Li et al. (2019) indicated similar findings, noting that work–family conflict, in addition to organizational, and operational factors, has a significant relationship with job stress. With data derived from 514 male and female police officers in Hong Kong, the authors found that when officers are stressed, they tend to be aloof in their homes and with their families, often resulting to work–family conflict (Li et al., 2019). As such, the findings of this study could provide empirical support for the job strain model related to police officers (Lambert et al., 2018; Li et al., 2019; Yun & Lee, 2015). Targeted interventions should, thus, include family-based programs as part of the stress intervention and stress management model for police officers in order to manage stress and family-based conflict (Lambert et al., 2018; Li et al., 2019).

Factors that Influence Police Officer Stress

There are various factors that impact and influence police officer stress. Many researchers have argued that organizational context, individual factors, and work environment are highly significant in influencing police stress and consequently their

behavioral outcomes (Bishopp et al., 2016; Brunetto et al., 2017). According to Bishopp et al. (2016), the organizational context and work environment are highly significant in influencing police misconduct, especially when strain is encountered by the police officer. The authors used data derived from 1,389 police officers in the US wherein the results of the study showed that the factor of anger plays a vital role when examining organizational context and work environment and its influence on strain and stress experienced by the police officer (Bishopp et al., 2016). Brunetto et al. (2017) added to this, examining both organizational and individual factors of police settings and how it relates to police outcomes. The authors aimed, also, to determine whether police have to rely on their individual attributes, specifically psychological capital (PsyCap) (Brunetto et al., 2017). With the use of a cross-sectional design, the authors collected data from 588 police officers from USA wherein findings showed that police stressors also increase turnover intentions (Brunetto et al., 2017). Additionally, Brunetto et al. (2017) reported that management support predicted PsyCap, red tape, and police stressors. That is, when police officers face lack of management support, as well as red tape, police stressors increased. As such, this body of findings could provide justification that police leaders and administrators should make considerable efforts and exert ways to reduce organizational strains for police officers, such that it has been shown to reduce instances of police stress (Brunetto et al., 2017).

Further, this body of findings could provide empirical support that there is a vital relationship between organizational stressors and officer stress and behavior, with reference to the applicability of general strain theory (Bishopp et al., 2016). In order to

mitigate officer stress and negative behavior, it is vital for police officers to be supported by their management. Also, this body of literature could provide empirical information on how organizational context, individual factors, and work environment are highly significant in influencing police stress; that is, how PsyCap affects negative factors (stress and red tape), as well as enhances positive drivers for employees (Brunetto et al., 2017). Thus, these findings could provide the importance of examining the individual attributes – PsyCap – as well as organizational factors as it provides an explanation regarding police officer commitment and turnover intentions (Bishopp et al., 2016; Brunetto et al., 2017).

Job satisfaction is also highly impactful in influencing police stress. Several authors have noted that work-related characteristics such as job satisfaction are significant in inducing stress among police officers (Can et al., 2016; Chen, 2018; Nisar & Rasheed, 2019). Nisar and Rasheed (2019), for example, noted that occupational stress is negatively associated to career satisfaction, in-role performance, and extra-role performance of police employees. Delving further, the authors gathered data from 271 police officers wherein the results of the study indicated that career satisfaction mediates the relationships between occupational stress and in-role and extra-role performance of police employees. This could provide initial evidence that increasing job or career satisfaction could mitigate the negative effects of occupational stress, which in turn could enhance job performance including in-role and extra-role performance of police employees (Nisar & Rasheed, 2019). Kuo (2015) indicated similar findings, noting that job satisfaction partially diminished the major job stressors among police officers. The

author outlined these three major job stressors (officers' relationships with their peers and with their supervisors, and their perceptions about the department's promotion system), highlighting the need for police leaders to focus on job satisfaction as ways of improving stress levels among police officers (Kuo, 2015).

Other researchers such as Can et al. (2016), and Chen (2018) also underscored the role of job satisfaction in mitigating police officers' stress. Chen (2018) conducted a study that aimed to explore the effects of demographic characteristics, work-related variables, and organizational management and social variables and its effects of job satisfaction and stress among police officers. Through the utilization of a self-reported survey, the findings of the study indicated that work-related characteristics are significant in inducing stress among police officers (Chen, 2018). Conversely, when work satisfaction is increased, stress among police officers is decreased. Further, results of the study showed that organizational factors such as professional development and peer cohesion are significant predictors of job satisfaction among police officers (Chen, 2018). Can et al. (2016) added to this, noting that organizational factors highly influence job satisfaction that of which could lead to lesser stress among police officers. The authors outlined that there are three important dimensions for police officers in terms of job satisfaction: supervisor fairness, peer comradery, occupational pride (Can et al., 2016). This body of findings could provide empirical literature regarding the role that job satisfaction plays in mitigating stress among police officers, including factors that affect job satisfaction. Thus, police leaders and administrators should focus on work-related characteristics (stress) and organizational factors (professional development and peer

cohesion) in order to enhance and increase job satisfaction as well as mitigate stress levels (Chen, 2018)

Aside from organizational and environmental factors, there are other various factors that link to police stress. Nisar et al. (2018), for example, conducted a research with the objective of exploring work-related stress in the police industry within the area of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K), Pakistan. The researchers outlined significant factors that impact and lead to job stress among police officers; the authors also explored that nature of and reasons that cause these factors (Nisar et al., 2018). Utilizing an exploratory design research, the authors found that job stress among police officers is contributed by various factors such as political and media pressure, and long working hours, the lack of resources being the most major issue (Nisar et al., 2018). This is a vital finding given that political and media pressure are factors not taken into account by previous studies in understanding job stress in the police industry (Nisar et al., 2018). Li et al. (2019) added that other external factors such as family–work conflicts and operational factors significantly impacted work stress and work engagement among police officers. This body of findings could prove to be a callout for police leaders and policy makers to focus on the factor of occupational stress and its role among the police officers (Nisar & Rasheed, 2019). As such, this body of findings could be used as empirical reference in justifying the need to address occupational stress, which could be referred to by top management, authorities, policy makers, and government officials of police (Li et al., 2019; Nisar & Rasheed, 2019). More specifically, this body of knowledge could provide compelling evidence for police management and top

administrators to consider the role of other factors such as family–work conflicts, political and media pressure in adding job stress within their police departments (Li et al., 2019; Nisar et al., 2018).

Job stressors (role overload, role underload, repetitiveness, role ambiguity, and role conflict) are negatively associated to job involvement, which positively results to beneficial outcomes (Qureshi et al., 2019).

Job Role and Characteristics

Job role, job demands, and work characteristics have a considerable impact on the stress among police officers. Several researchers have delved further into these job and work factors, noting that occupational stress is varying among police officers based on multiple factors such as job level, type of role and designation, and size of their designated department (Habersaat et al., 2015; Warner, 2019). Habersaat et al. (2015), for example, focused on health problems such as PTSD and stress that of which police officers are at risk in developing due to the area they are assigned to and their specific work conditions. The authors, thus, to explore police officers from multiple departments: Emergency, Community, and Criminal divisions, and their respective health levels with regards to stress (Habersaat et al., 2015). The authors employed a cluster analysis in their study wherein findings revealed two main patterns of organizational and individual risk factors that were significantly linked to mental health outcomes such as PTSD and stress (Habersaat et al., 2015). After assessing a group of 84 officers from various functions (criminal, community, and emergency), the authors of the study revealed that, indeed, police officers belonging to Community division are more susceptible to PTSD, while

Criminal officers are more susceptible to stress (Habersaat et al., 2015). Conversely, Emergency officers reported fewer physical symptoms (Habersaat et al., 2015). Singh (2017) conducted a similar study, focusing on work stress in police employees across various levels. The ANOVA results of Singh's (2017) study indicated that the level of work stress varied across different levels (hierarchy) and groups (job tenure) of police officers. More specifically, the results found that work stress was higher amongst police officials who belonged to the level of constables, comparing them to those who belong to levels of sub-inspectors and officers, respectively (Singh, 2017).

Walvekar et al. (2015) concluded similar findings to that of Singh (2017). The authors concluded in their study on serum cortisol and perceived stress scale that police constables tend to experience more stress than other police groups (Walvekar et al., 2015). To further study this, the authors assesses the levels of Serum Cortisol, Lipid profile, Blood Glucose and HbA1, as well as the occupational stress, in both Police constables and the general population. The results showed that biochemical parameters were much higher in police constables compared to the rest of the population (Walvekar et al., 2015). This means that constables have higher stress levels, as the body secretes more cortisol in the event of stressful scenarios. This body of knowledge could provide empirical information regarding the heightened occupational stress that police constables experience. Thus, targeted interventions could be tailor-fit to this group of constables in order to address their heightened work stress as compared to other groups (Singh, 2017; Walvekar et al., 2015).

Aside from police hierarchy or levels, another study conducted by Strahler and Ziegert (2015) underscored the variability of stress between police roles. In the context of a shooting scenario, the authors aimed to prove this and thus explored police officers' stress responses, measuring neuroendocrine, cardiovascular, and psychological stress indicators (Strahler & Ziegert, 2015). Their findings showed that police officers who are stationed on the side positions while advancing to find their targets are the ones who have the highest stress levels. This body of literature could provide further justification that stress levels are highly dependent on the roles and positions of police officers (Strahler & Ziegert, 2015).

Further, this body of findings could provide empirical information that law enforcement officers are not affected by just one specific factor (organizational, personal) or by simply one domain in terms of risks; rather, police officers and their health are influenced by a combination of risk factors that of which are highly dependent on the area of police work (Habersaat et al., 2015; Singh, 2017; Warner, 2019). Thus, this body of findings could be used as reference in developing targeted stress-reduction interventions that take into account job-relevant sources of stress in order to effectively minimize health risks like PTSD and stress related to police work (Habersaat et al., 2015; Singh, 2017).

Another researcher noted similarly (Ma et al., 2015; Warner, 2019). Warner (2019) aimed to examine the relationship between law enforcement agency size and police stress through a quantitative study. Specifically, the author aimed to determine whether the size of the law enforcement agency (small, medium, or large) impacts or

influences on how police officers perceive stress in their profession (Warner, 2019). Utilizing data from 144 law enforcement workers from Utah and New York, the results of the study indicated that the area of administrative/organizational pressure (medium-sized departments) officers reported higher levels of stress as compared to officers belonging to large or small departments (Warner, 2019). Further, law enforcement officers from large police departments reported higher levels of stress as compared to the officers belonging to small and medium-sized agencies (Warner, 2019). This could be due to the fact that the larger the department, the weaker the relationships between police departments and their respective law enforcement officers, due to size. This is vital given that relationships between police officers and their respective departmental leaders impact their police officers' levels of stress (Warner, 2019).

The designation of police officers and their type of roles are indeed worth exploring on a deeper level. Aside from the size of the police department and their type of roles (Habersaat et al., 2015; Warner, 2019), Ma et al. (2015) and Chiappetta (2018) noted that in shift work is also impactful in inducing occupational stress among police officers. With the use of the Spielberger Police Stress Survey and 365 police officers, the analysis of Ma et al.'s (2015) findings showed that officers who worked the afternoon and night shifts reported higher levels of stress than day shift officers. This was found to be true regardless of age, sex, race/ethnicity, and police rank wherein officers who worked the afternoon and night shifts also had higher levels of administrative/professional pressure, and physical/psychological danger (Ma et al., 2015). Chiappetta (2018) concluded the same findings, indicating that shift work is a significant

stress predictor. As such, this body of literature could provide initial information that shift times are vital to take into account when addressing stress in police officers. That is, targeted interventions should focus on afternoon and night shifts workers given that they are more exposed to stressful events (Ma et al., 2015).

Perez-Floriano and Gonzalez (2019) and Qureshi et al. (2019) added to this body of literature relating to work designation and shift times as factors of stressors among police officers. Perez-Floriano and Gonzalez (2019) utilized data drawn from surveys, as well as archival data from Mexican police officers. Considering occupational and national contexts, Perez-Floriano and Gonzalez (2019) noted that police officers who have previously been injured have higher job-related risks and higher levels of work stress. The findings also showed that among police officers who have previously been injured, work stress had a significant impact on work withdrawal intentions; that is, work withdrawal tend to increase as stress is heightened, which diminishes job performance (Perez-Floriano & Gonzalez, 2019). The findings of their study cannot be generalized to other settings, as data was derived from Mexican officers with respect to specific occupational and national contexts. However, Perez-Floriano and Gonzalez's (2019) finding provides initial knowledge regarding the relationship between higher job-related risks, work withdrawal intentions, and work stress. Qureshi et al. (2019) added to this conclusion regarding stress and its relationship with job performance. The authors conducted an exploratory study and noted that when police officers are tasked with a wide variety of duties, officers experience stress (Qureshi et al., 2019). As a result, job performance decreases given that job stressors are negatively associated to job

involvement (Qureshi et al., 2019). With the use of multivariate analysis, the authors outlined specific job stressors, such as role overload, role underload, repetitiveness, role ambiguity, and role conflict, wherein all of them have a negative impact on job involvement and job performance (Qureshi et al., 2019). This body of literature could provide empirical analysis regarding the context of work stress among police officers and its relationship to job involvement and job performance (Perez-Floriano & Gonzalez, 2019; Qureshi et al., 2019).

As such, it is vital that police leaders and managers assess and improve police workers' stress levels and their workplace environment, as it could impact their overall job involvement, and consequently, improve their work performance. Odunayo et al. (2015) underscored similar findings as that of Qureshi et al. (2019) and Perez-Floriano and Gonzalez (2019). Odunayo et al. (2015) explored job performance in the context of several stress and fear of death among police officers. Utilizing multiple hierarchical regressions, the authors indicated that organizational and operational stress, and death anxiety significantly diminish job performance among police officers (Odunayo et al., 2015). The findings also showed that police officers reported experience operational stress more frequently than organizational stress (Odunayo et al., 2015). As such, this body of literature could provide substantial information regarding the need to reduce the effect of operational and organizational stress in order to maximize job performance among this population.

Coping Styles

The role of coping in work stress is another significant factor to consider in managing and mitigating stress among police officers. Several authors have delved into the role of coping in work stress and noted that there are specific coping strategies that should be promoted to decrease police work stress (Arble et al., 2018; Kubiak et al., 2017; Singh, 2017). Singh (2017) noted that maladaptive coping strategies have a positive correlation to work stress while active- and adaptive-related coping responses have an inverse link with work stress. The authors also underscored the need to take into account the levels (hierarchy) and groups (job tenure) of police officers in proposing coping strategies, given that each level and group also varies in terms of their ways/forms of coping to work stress (Singh, 2017). Additionally, assessing the coping styles of officers from three levels of job hierarchy: officers, sub-inspectors, and constables, the findings revealed that officers used more active- and adaptive-related strategies to cope with work stress (Singh, 2017). Conversely, it was found that constables used more maladaptive coping strategies than sub-inspectors and officers (Singh, 2017). This could perhaps be one of the reasons why some groups report more work stress; aside from levels of job hierarchy, stress levels are heightened due to police coping strategies. As such, targeted interventions should include maladaptive coping strategies as this type of coping strategy is effective in reducing work stress.

Policy makers and administrators should take into account the role of coping in work stress among police officers. This is especially because police officers differ from other first responders (police officers, fire fighters, search and rescue personnel,

ambulance personnel, and military personnel) in coping behaviors from stress and trauma (Arble et al., 2018). Several researchers have noted that having ineffective coping strategy of stress leads to worsened health among police officers (Arble et al., 2018; Kubiak et al., 2017). Drawing data from 917 Swedish police officers, Arble et al. (2018) found that avoidant coping as a strategy of stress significantly worsened their overall well-being, heightening their levels of stress even more. Moreover, due to ineffective coping style, some police officers reported to resort to substance use (Arble et al., 2018). Nelson and Smith (2016) conducted a similar study focusing on the role of coping styles in work stress. The authors found that emotion-focused coping styles was linked to heightened levels of mental health problems such as depression and anxiety (Nelson & Smith, 2016). Marchand et al. (2015) conducted a similar study. The authors noted that when police officers who have experienced posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), they tend to resort to using emotional coping strategies, which further agitates and results to depression symptoms (Marchand et al., 2015). This body of findings could provide empirical evidence that the use of maladaptive coping styles and emotion-focused coping styles can result in mental ill-health and other negative health outcomes (Marchand et al., 2015; Nelson & Smith, 2016). Additionally, this body of findings could provide further empirical justification to help police officers cope with stress and trauma due to their nature of work, especially given the unique aspects of police officer coping as compared to other first responder groups (Arble et al., 2018; Marchand et al., 2015).

In line with Marchand et al. (2015) findings, Violanti et al. (2018) similarly noted and underscored the importance of coping in mediating stress. The authors aimed to

explore this topic further and determined the impact of coping strategies (specifically, active and passive coping) on police stress (specifically, administrative and organization pressure, physical and psychological threats, and lack of support); wherein the authors also considered PTSD symptoms among 342 police officers in their study (Violanti et al., 2018). The results of their study showed that police officers who used lower active coping tend to develop more physical and psychological stress and PTSD symptoms (Violanti et al., 2018). Further, police officers who used higher passive coping tend to develop more stress, administrative and organizational pressure, and physical and psychological stressors, along with PTSD symptoms (Violanti et al., 2018). This body of literature could provide substantial knowledge regarding various coping methods such that low active or high passive coping strategies tend to aggravate the impact of work stress among police officers, as well as their PTSD symptoms (Violanti et al., 2018).

Other coping styles have also been found to link to stress symptoms. Li et al. (2019) and Kubiak et al. (2017) explored factors of operational police stress and stress symptoms. Using a cross-sectional survey, the authors surveyed the police officer regarding their operational stress, dispositional vigilance and cognitive avoidance in police operations, and stress symptoms (Kubiak et al., 2017). The findings of the study indicated that vigilant coping was negatively associated with stress symptoms; that is, vigilance could mitigate the negative consequences of stress among police workers (Kubiak et al., 2017). Another study by Li et al. (2019) found that constructive coping is an effective mechanism in reducing and managing work stress. As such, this body of literature could be used as empirical reference by local administrators in reducing stress

among police workers by applying the concepts of constructive coping and vigilant coping, as these are effective coping strategies among police officers (Kubiak et al., 2017; Li et al., 2019).

Personal Characteristics and Experiences

Personal characteristics and experiences are factors that should be taken into account when dealing with police stressors. Several authors have indicated that individual factors such as personal background and/or experiences and gender play a part in police stressors (Andrew et al., 2017; Padyab et al., 2016). Padyab et al. (2016) noted this in their study as they investigated the factors of burnout, coping, stress of conscience and psychosocial work environment among patrolling police officers. The authors underlined the need to focus on police officers as they work under different circumstances and in various environments that involve stressful situations; for this reason, police officers are at increased risk of burnout (Padyab et al., 2016). With the use of multiple regressions, the findings indicated that there are differences in gender in relation to the risks of burnout and stress. The findings showed that the risk of emotional exhaustion was heightened for both women and men police officers (Padyab et al., 2016). However, in terms of the risk of depersonalization, men police officers are more prone to burnout than women police officers when they experience troubled conscience or stress (Padyab et al., 2016).

Conversely, authors such as Andrew et al. (2017), Vivek et al. (2018), and Strahler and Ziegert (2015) indicated that female officers tend to experience more stress and anxiety on-the-job more than men, regardless of position or police role. Vivek et al.

(2018) studied this further and explored occupational stress among female police officers in an urban setting in South Kerala. The authors aimed to determine the prevalence of occupational stress (operational and organizational stress) among female police personals and to identify the causes for these stress (Vivek et al., 2018). The results of their study showed that 80% of female police officers experience organizational stress (40% experienced moderate stress while 40% experienced high stress). Further, findings revealed that 90% of female police officers experience operational stress (20% experienced moderate stress while 70% experienced high stress) (Vivek et al., 2018). The most common stressors were found to be staff shortage (74%) and finding time to stay in good physical condition (76%) for organizational stress and operational stress, respectively (Vivek et al., 2018).

More studies added to Vivek et al.'s (2018) findings, noting specifically that women police officers tend to be more stressed than their men counterparts (Andrew et al., 2017). Andrew et al. (2017) further noted that women police officers are at higher risk of burnout especially when there is a lack of organizational support (Andrew et al., 2017). Violanti et al. (2016) stated similar conclusions, adding that female police officers reported a 37% higher prevalence of lack of support from supervisor (PR = 0.63, 0.48–0.82) in contrast to male police officers, which increased their tendency of stress and burnout risk. This body of findings could provide initial overview regarding the differences between men police officers and women police officers on their respective risk of burnout, induced by stress.

Acquadro Maran et al. (2015) similarly regarding gender differences on vulnerability of stressors. Delving further into the differences between men and women police officers, Acquadro Maran et al. (2015) aimed to evaluate the level of stress experienced by police officers in Italy, and the health consequences in terms of anxiety and the coping strategies. Using the Police Stress Questionnaire and the Distress Thermometer and State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, the authors assessed occupational stress and anxiety, respectively (Acquadro Maran et al., 2015). It was found that female police officers working in all operational service roles were more vulnerable to both organizational and operational stressors than men ($P < 0.001$) (Acquadro Maran et al., 2015). Conversely, female police officers were more vulnerable to organizational stressors than their male counterparts ($P < 0.05$) (Acquadro Maran et al., 2015). This body of findings could provide justification that in the case of police officers, occupational stress should be dealt with in a targeted manner, taking into account the factors of gender, role and type of work (Acquadro Maran et al., 2015; Padyab et al., 2016; Violanti et al., 2016). Thus, occupational stress among police officers should be addressed through effective training courses and support programs, which could help to mitigate and prevent chronic stress and burnout among this population (Acquadro Maran et al., 2015; Andrew et al., 2017; Padyab et al., 2016).

Other factors such as psychological demand, decision latitude, family disputes, and external factors were also found to be associated to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Kurtz et al., 2015; Padyab et al., 2016; Violanti et al., 2016). Violanti et al. (2016) conducted a study regarding this topic, using the Spielberger Police Stress

Survey. The authors employed 365 police officers' frequency of occurrence and mean stress ratings; the findings of the study showed that family disputes (83%) were the most frequent stressor, while other police officers reported that exposure to battered children (27%) was the most highly rated stressor (Violanti et al., 2016). Further, other frequent stressors that affected police officers included court appearances off-duty (PR = 1.26, 1.04–1.52) and working second jobs off-duty (PR = 2.37, 1.57–3.57) (Violanti et al., 2016). This body of findings could provide an outline of other specific stressors that are experienced by police officers, which could also be due to off-duty factors such as family disputes and previous exposure to violence.

Kurtz et al. (2015) indicated similar findings as that of Violanti et al. (2016). The authors examined the influence of personal strain and experiences—specifically, child abuse and interparental violence—on officer stress and/or strain, psychological–physiological stress responses, and officer-on-officer aggression (Kurtz et al., 2015). Applying general strain theory and utilizing data from 1,104 police officers in the US, the findings of the study revealed that prior personal strain and events influence police officer in various ways (Kurtz et al., 2015). The findings showed that more specifically, police officers reported exposure to childhood strain/stress often had higher work-related strain levels at present (Kurtz et al., 2015). Another finding showed that when officers have experienced strain events occurred during childhood days, in addition to work-related critical stress, they are found to have increased stress at present (Kurtz et al., 2015). Further, it was found when officers reported exposure to child abuse, in addition to critical incident strain, they are more prone to officer-on-officer violence, which is line

with previous studies (Kurtz et al., 2015; Violanti et al., 2016). This body of knowledge could provide empirical evidence regarding the factors that impact police officers and their work-induced strain and stress, which calls out the need to explore police officers' personal characteristics and backgrounds given that this impact their propensity for officer stress and/or strain, psychological–physiological stress responses, and officer-on-officer aggression (Kurtz et al., 2015; Violanti et al., 2016).

Methods and Programs for Police Stress Management and Prevention

Stress intervention programs and services for police officers are vital due to the stress-induced nature of their jobs. Several researchers such as Acquadro Maran et al. (2018) and Arble et al. (2018) underscored this in their study, stating the need for police forces to be supported in their work stress, as they continually are exposed to high risks of distress and disaster. Acquadro Maran et al. (2018) delved further into this topic and aimed to investigate operational and organizational stressors, as well as the results/impact in relation to anxiety and the coping strategies adopted. The authors of the study compared Patrol Police Officers working in the Operational Service (Outdoor Patrol Officers) and those in the Interior Department (Indoor Patrol Officers) in the same Municipal Police force. The results of the study showed that both Outdoor Patrol Officers and Interior Patrol Officers experience stressors derived from organizational and occupational factors (Acquadro Maran et al., 2018). It was also found that Outdoor Patrol Officers were more willing to use different coping strategies and change their attitude to work while Indoor Patrol Officers used avoidance strategies (Acquadro Maran et al., 2018). This body of findings could provide empirical information regarding needed

interventions on both organizational and operational stressors, which should be developed in accordance to the type of police officer (Acquadro Maran et al., 2018).

Having targeted interventions and coping strategies for stress could significantly improve the quality of life and work among police officers, and could have positive impact on the service rendered to the general public (Acquadro Maran et al., 2018). Arble et al. (2017) noted that after an uncontrolled demonstration project of coping and prevention strategies for police officers, the officers who underwent the program reported significant increases in the use of positive reframing and humor. Further, stress prevention strategies for police officers also significantly decreased levels of anxiety and alcohol use (Arble et al., 2017). More importantly, after one year of the program, stress and trauma symptoms of police officers did not increase (Arble et al., 2017). This means that targeted interventions and coping strategies are effective ways in increasing and sustaining health levels among police officers (Acquadro Maran et al., 2018; Arble et al., 2017).

Other researchers added to this body of literature and proposed the implementation of specific intervention programs (Ma et al., 2019; Violanti et al., 2017). That is, police leaders and administrators should strive to provide stress coping strategies such as sleep promotion regimens and mindfulness training programs, as they could prove to be beneficial among police officers with high workloads and frequency of stressors (Grupe et al., 2019; Ma et al., 2019; Violanti et al., 2017). Grupe et al. (2019) conducted a study that aimed to justify the feasibility, acceptability, and effectiveness of an 8-week mindfulness training program among 30 police officers in the US. The results

of the study showed that after a 5-month follow-up evaluation, the police officers reported reduced PTSD and stress symptoms (Grupe et al., 2019). Bergman et al. (2016) noted similarly, reporting that mindfulness practices were found to be effective in significantly reducing organizational stress, operational stress, and anger among police officers. As such, this body of findings could be used as reference in justifying the use of mindfulness practices and programs for police officers in mitigating their stress levels and PTSD symptoms, if any (Bergman et al., 2016; Grupe et al., 2019).

Aside from utilizing mindfulness strategies, the use of spirituality could also mitigate occupational stress among police officers. Robinson (2019) delved into this topic and explored police officers' use of spirituality and its impact on occupational stress and job performance. The results of the study showed that police officers who used their spirituality to cope with police stress and improve job performance (Robinson, 2019). Further, the use of spirituality resulted to other positive outcomes such as the development of a healthy work-life balance, improved decision-making, and higher levels of self-awareness (Robinson, 2019). Retneswari et al. (2018) concluded similar findings, reporting that police officers who did not pray had more than five times chances of being severely stressed in comparison to police officers who prayed. This body of knowledge could provide empirical reference to law enforcement leaders, administrators, and police leaders to utilize spirituality as a way to cope with stress; this of which could be incorporated in police training practices, standard policies, and organizational wellness support programs (Retneswari et al., 2018; Robinson, 2019).

The uses of resilience training programs have also been found to decrease stress. Several authors conducted studies that concluded successful results of resilience-enhancing strategies among law enforcement workers (Andersen et al., 2015b; Au et al., 2019; Sollie et al., 2017). Sollie et al. (2017), for example, conducted observational studies among 35 investigators. The respondents of their study reported that administrative accumulation, long and irregular working hours, confrontations with human suffering, decision making, and dirty and physically demanding circumstances on-the-job are highly stressful (Sollie et al., 2017). As such, the findings revealed that resilience-enhancing strategies are effective in reducing the stress among the respondents (Sollie et al., 2017). Andersen et al. (2015b) noted similarly, indicating that resilience building programs should be a regular part of police training. The authors found that fostering police resilience could mitigate the negative effects of occupational stress and trauma exposure experience by officers. Au et al. (2019) also arrived at these findings, noting that emotional and resilience training workshops result to enhanced resilience, positive emotions, cognitive flexibility, and emotional well-being among police officers. The authors added that such workshops and resilience trainings could strengthen police pride and their overall organizational commitment in a long-term view (Au et al., 2019). As such, this body of knowledge could provide justification on the use of resilience building programs and strategies and making it a major component of police training, as it has been shown to effectively mitigate stress and trauma among police officers (Andersen et al., 2015b; Sollie et al., 2017).

Andersen et al. (2015a) explored the effectiveness of resilience programs further. Like Sollie et al.'s (2017) and Au et al.'s (2019) findings, the authors found that specific resilience promotion practices such as controlled breathing and imagery while listening to audio-recorded critical incident scenarios could effectively decrease stress (Andersen et al., 2015a). As such, Andersen et al. (2015a) added that resilience promotion training programs should incorporate psychoeducation targeted on decreasing police stress and resilience. The authors proved the effectiveness of such resilience programs as their findings indicated the significant decrease of average heart rate among the officers. Also, their findings showed the increased capacity of police special forces to practice techniques of controlled respiration (i.e., breathing) during simulated critical incidents throughout the 5-day training (Andersen et al., 2015a). Similarly, Romosiou et al. (2018) underscored the need to focus on emotional intelligence, empathy, resilience and stress management skills among police officers. The authors reported that after programs that focused on emotional intelligence, empathy, resilience and stress management, the positive changes remained significant even after several months from the time of the intervention (Romosiou et al., 2018). This body of findings could provide empirical information regarding the effectiveness of targeted intervention programs focusing on resilience, emotional intelligence, and stress management skills. These types of programs and interventions could prevent the occurrence of stress among police officers (Andersen et al., 2015a; Romosiou et al., 2018).

Another type of training that has shown to be effective in reducing stress among police officers is memory and psychological performance training (Gutshall et al., 2017;

Page et al., 2016). Several authors have proposed this method of performance training as a strategy to mitigate the negative effects of stress (Gutshall et al., 2017; Page et al., 2016). Page et al. (2016), for example, explored the effectiveness of mental skills training in highly stressed police cadets. The authors of the study found that using techniques in breathing, mental performance imagery, and attentional focus could improve the stress levels of police cadets (Page et al., 2016). The effectiveness of psychological performance training did not only show in their ability to cope with stress, but also in their memory skills (Page et al., 2016). The findings showed that those who finished psychological performance training scored significantly higher in memory recall and job performance (Page et al., 2016). This is vital to address among police officers given that in their line of profession, elevated psychophysiological stress result to decreased job performance (Giessing et al., 2019; Gutshall et al., 2017). Giessing et al. (2019) concluded this in their study, noting that police officers with elevated psychophysiological stress are prone to impaired shooting performance. Additionally, as a result, police officers exhibit higher anxiety levels and mental effort (Giessing et al., 2019). This is empirical data that performance efficiency decreased under stress, as indicated by increasing mental effort and elevated anxiety (Giessing et al., 2019; Gutshall et al., 2017). As such, this body of literature could provide additional knowledge regarding the types of training that are effective in reducing stress among police officers, increasing job performance and memory skills as well (Page et al., 2016).

Promoting positive emotions among police officers have also been linked to reducing stress symptoms. Siu et al. (2015) delved into this topic and noted that positive

emotions increase overall work well-being and job satisfaction. At the same time, it decreases overall stress symptoms and turnover intention (Siu et al., 2015). This is vital given that negative emotions could increase police officers' occupational strain and their turnover intention (Shim et al., 2015). Shim et al. (2015) thus proposed putting more efforts in mitigating the negative effects of negative emotions among police organizations. This could be done by enhancing organizational climate and social support (Kula, 2017; Santa Maria et al., 2018; Shim et al., 2015).

As such, enhancing supervisor support and organizational climate could also be an effective strategy in effectively decreasing stress among police officers (Kula, 2017; Santa Maria et al., 2018; Tsai et al., 2018). Santa Maria et al. (2018) delved further into this topic, employing 843 German police officers. Job resources such as social support by colleagues, shared values, and positive leadership climate were found to mediate the effect of job demands and stress levels (Santa Maria et al., 2018). As such, this is vital to address given that job demands such as high workload and assaults by citizens are significantly associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety among police officers (Santa Maria et al., 2018). Additionally, when job resources and supervisor support were high, depression and anxiety levels were found to be lower (Santa Maria et al., 2018). Kula (2017) concluded similarly, adding that both factors of organizational and operational stress can be diminished by increased supervisor support. Heffren and Hausdorf (2016) concluded similarly, noting that police officers tend to share information with their direct supervisors especially when they have a reciprocal relationship between them. This results to police officers feeling supported, less distressed, and less anxious

(Heffren & Hausdorf, 2016). This body of literature could provide pertinent information for targeted interventions in order to help improve overall wellbeing and mental health. This includes increasing supervisor support and social support, as well as improving organizational climate in the context of police settings and officers (Heffren & Hausdorf, 2016; Kula, 2017; Santa Maria et al., 2018).

Leppma et al. (2018) added to this body of knowledge and focused on police officers during the aftermath of a disaster, and how they experience posttraumatic growth (PTG) in the context of substantial trauma. This is vital given that police officers are often faced with threats and stressors in their daily job, which could lead to the experience of PTG. With data derived from 113 police officers who have experienced a devastating disaster, the results of the study indicated that stressful life events are significantly associated to the experience of PTG among police officers (Leppma et al., 2018). More importantly, the results also indicated that PTG resulting from heightened trauma and stress could be decreased and managed effectively through gratitude, satisfaction with life, and social support, Leppma et al. (2018) added. This is in line with the findings of previous studies conducted by Kula (2017) and Santa Maria et al. (2018). As such, this body of findings could provide additional data that PTG is a high risk among police workers who have experienced disasters and stressful life events (Leppma et al., 2018). Therefore, this body of findings could provide justification that promoting social/interpersonal support, supervisor support, organizational climate, satisfaction with life, and gratitude are essential for police officers who are regularly at risk of trauma exposure (Kula, 2017; Leppma et al., 2018; Santa Maria et al., 2018).

It is vital for police administrators and leaders to focus on increasing organizational support when implementing targeted interventions for stress management and prevention. Tucker (2015) underscored this in their study wherein the author collected data from 673 Pennsylvania police officers wherein the author examined officers' use of stress intervention services, focusing on perceived organizational support (POS). The findings of the study revealed that officers who perceive gaining support from their organizations, and have perceptions of the organization as supportive, then they are more willing to use stress intervention services (Tucker, 2015). In contrast, the findings showed that police officers who do not trust their departments are not as willing to use stress intervention services (Tucker, 2015). As such, this body of findings could provide empirical information regarding the factor of perceived organizational support in implementing stress intervention services for police officers (Tucker, 2015). That is, organizations should consider enhancing perceived organizational support prior to developing and implementing stress intervention services in order to effectively help police officers from experiencing high levels of stress (Tucker, 2015).

Conclusion and Summary of Findings

This literature review covered relevant factors that impact police stressors, as well as some of the effects of police stress and how to mitigate them (Fekedulegn et al., 2017; Leppma et al., 2018; Santa Maria et al., 2018; Warner, 2019). The General Strain Theory (GST) will be used as a theoretical foundation for the study in identifying the different police-reported stressors amongst the different agencies (Agnew, 2017). Stressors experienced by police officers are vital to explore and understand given that researchers

have shown that more often than other workers, occupational stress is higher amongst police officers (Acquadro Maran et al., 2015; Aytac, 2015; Moreto, 2016). Fekedulegn et al. (2017) added that police officers commonly face and experience physical and psychological dangers as well as occupational stressors. Ragesh et al. (2017) added that high levels of stress are experienced by police officers of various levels, ages, and gender. As a result, Retneswari et al. (2018) noted that police officers who have severe stress have increased chances of developing mental illness, and vice versa.

According to Bishopp et al. (2016) and Brunetto et al. (2017), organizational context, individual factors, as well as work environment are highly significant in influencing police stress and police outcomes. Chen (2018) added that work-related characteristics are significant in inducing stress among police officers. Habersaat et al. (2015) explained that police officers are a population that is at risk in developing health problems such as PTSD and stress, depending on the area they are assigned to and their specific work conditions. For example, Ma et al. (2015) found that shift work and occupational stress in police officers were both associated. Also, officers who have previously been injured have higher job-related risks and higher levels of work stress (Perez-Floriano & Gonzalez, 2019).

Coping styles of stress among police officers are also contributors of work stress among police officers (Kubiak et al., 2017; Wassermann et al., 2019). For example, Nelson and Smith (2016) found that emotion-focused coping styles was linked to heightened levels of mental health problems such as depression while Singh (2017) noted that maladaptive coping strategies have a positive correlation to work stress. Other

factors such as psychological demand, decision latitude, social support, counseling support, and coping strategies were highly linked to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Padyab et al., 2016; Tsai et al., 2018). Thus, there should be more efforts and stress intervention services for police officers due to the stress-induced nature of their jobs (Tucker, 2015). This is especially given the fact that officers who underwent the program reported significant increases in the use of positive reframing and humor, as noted by Arble et al. (2018) after an uncontrolled demonstration project of coping and prevention strategies for police officers. Also, Kula (2017) concluded that both factors of organizational and operational stress can be diminished by increased supervisor support. Some other ways to mitigate stress and even PTG resulting from heightened trauma and stress could be moderated through gratitude, satisfaction with life, and social support, Santa Maria et al. (2018) and Leppma et al. (2018) noted in their studies.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the variations of work-related stressors between the police working in different geographic divisions in law enforcement. Although there is significant research examining the issue of police stressors, limited studies examined the types of stressors on police (see Bishopp et al., 2019). A review of literature revealed that stressors fall in five categories: (a) organizational, related to shifts, staff shortage and favoritism, (b) poor community relations due to negative publicity, (c) dealing with criminals' aggression, (d) managing victims of crime and (e) the criminal justice system that lets a criminal go due to technicalities (Bishopp et al., 2019; Stein & Candace, 2017; Ma et al., 2015; McCarty et al., 2007; Russell, 2014). Having to face the best and worst in people, police officers and especially those in urban areas, are subject to occupational stress to a higher degree than any other professional (Lambert et al., 2015; Patterson et al., 2014; Rizwan et al., 2014).

It is vital to clearly identify stressors in police officers' daily lives with a view to developing specialized programs that would enable these officers to effectively deal with the stress. Currently, the EAP is available, but this program has not been sufficiently tested for effectiveness and reliability (Tasi et al., 2014). Programs that control work-related stress among police officers that are currently in place, have limited efficiency resulting from insufficient knowledge on the stress factors experienced by officers in different departments (Ma et al., 2015). An understanding into the different types of

stressors which police officers experience is essential in enabling law enforcement agencies to devise initiatives to manage and minimize work-related strains.

This chapter contains a discussion of the chosen research design. The role of the researcher and an explanation of the methodology follow. Recruitment and description of participants together with data collection procedures follow with an explanation of data analysis procedures. This is followed by issues of transferability, reliability, and trustworthiness. The ethical considerations and document management precede the summary of the chapter.

Research Questions

The current study was guided by the following questions:

RQ1: What methods of stress relief from the current workload are used in local police departments?

RQ2: How do current stress relief methods implemented in local police department help alleviate stress in police officers?

Research Design and Rationale

The phenomenon of interest in this study was the perceived stressors to police officers. The primary objective for this study was the different work-related stressors reported by the police officers policing in various departments within the same urban setting in north and south Fulton County, Georgia. The unit of analysis was the police officer participants' perceptions of work-related stressors.

I used a qualitative research method that examine the identified topic that requires further exploration. Qualitative research is all-inclusive as the aim is to comprehend the

complete picture of a social issue under scrutiny. In qualitative research the attachments within a group or subgroup (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). A qualitative approach permitted me to explore the perceptions of the participants by means of open-ended questions to elicit authentic discussions from the participants about their perceptions and feelings. Typically, a qualitative design is used to find out how participants experience the topic of interest against the background of their particular lives and work situations, and culture (Davidsen, 2013). In choosing this design, I was able to gain a more in-depth insight into each of the participant's experiences dealing with stress.

In qualitative research the basic premise of the investigator is that individuals' experience and interpretation of situations or actions within their world differ (Walliman, 2011). The task of the researcher is to uncover the different ways in which individuals make sense of their world. Data collection is therefore focused at obtaining first-hand information from participants by using interviews, discussions, observations, and qualitative analysis to find meaningful correlations and the effects of the individuals' interactions (Walliman, 2011). In contrast, quantitative research focuses on collecting numerical data that can be subjected to statistical analysis. In human studies, this kind of data is obtained through the use of surveys and questionnaires where the responses of the participants are quantifiable (Walliman, 2011). However, such instruments are not ideally suited to determine individual's unique perceptions and feelings as is the objective of the current study, a quantitative approach was therefore not suitable for this study.

Quantitative researchers are interested in numbers (i.e. how many), degrees or percentages and the data collected are numerical in nature. Qualitative research on the

other hand, explores the *how* and *why* of the phenomenon being studied (Cleland, 2017).

Qualitative research designs are divided in five categories, namely ethnography, narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory, and case study (Cleland, 2017).

Ethnography focuses on the participants' motivations, challenges as embedded in their culture. The current study does not focus on a particular culture; therefore, ethnography is not suited. A *phenomenological* study aims to describe the essence of the participants' lived experiences of a specific situation or activity. *Grounded theory* on the other hand, focuses on describing the theory underlying the events, or describing a deeper understanding of the event, grounded in structured analysis of data. Neither phenomenology nor grounded theory were ideally suited for the current study that is focused on the perceptions of police officers of the stressors in their work situation. A *narrative* approach aims to gather story-like information from participants, often only one participant is used. The data is collected in a series of interviews to form a cohesive story regarding the topic of interest. The researcher analyses the narrative data aiming to find themes that demonstrate how the participant's story depicts the stimuli that shaped it (Cleland, 2017). Add summary to fully conclude the paragraph.

A *case study* design explores a contemporary event within the life context where it happens (Yin, 2017). A case study is suitable when the research question asks a how or why questions which elicit more explanatory data from the participants. In addition, case studies are used when the boundaries between the research issue and environment are not clearly defined and where different sources of data can be used (Burkholder et al., 2019). Using a case study design, the researcher can study the data closely within a particular

context such as a geographical area. Case studies allow the researcher to gather in-depth and rich data on the phenomenon to gather a deep understanding of the participants' perceptions, views, or feelings about the phenomenon. According to Yin (2017), case studies can be explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive. An explanatory case study design will be used in this study as this design is best suited to explore the phenomenon under study.

The current study was aimed at finding out whether the police officers in the urban northern and southern jurisdictions of Fulton County Georgia are exposed to different work-related stressors. Multiple case study design centers on comparing more than one research site to highlight the characteristics of similarities and/or differences between the research settings associated to the study phenomenon (Thomas, 2016). To satisfy the requirement of the study to compare findings, a multiple case study was conducted with two essentially similar groups of police officers—Group A represented the northern geographical area and Group B represented the southern area.

Role of Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is instrumental in collecting data as the interviews are conducted by the researcher (Walliman, 2011). This poses the possibility of bias as establishing a relationship and rapport with the participant together with a researcher's own perceptions of the phenomenon under scrutiny may influence the researcher. The role of the researcher is that of observer-participant in a qualitative case study approach because the participants have met the researcher, know about the research, and interact with the researcher during data collection (Unluer, 2012).

Obtaining in-depth answers from participants without being truly interested and establishing a trusting relationship would not be possible. Qualitative researchers therefore need to establish rapport with participants (Råheim et al., 2016). Van Manen (1997) suggested that researchers should remain open towards the participant and adopt an attitude of true interest and wonder, which would greatly eliminate prior ideas of the researcher.

I am an administrator at the police department. Although I do not deal directly with police officers, the officers may know me or of me. For this reason, I disclosed my position and assure participants that the role of researcher and that of administrator are two different roles. I ensured that participants knew I exclusively acted as doctoral student during collection of data. In being an administrator at the police department, I have specific knowledge of police officers' job and tasks. Any preconceived ideas that I have of police officers' work and stressors they are exposed to, were acknowledged and reflected on to limit any prejudice or bias that could prevent me from hearing the authentic voice of the participant. My responsibility as researcher was to collect data and to represent the participants' authentic perceptions that they provided during the interviews, without the addition of the researcher's views. This requires maintaining reflexivity and being transparent to maintain an awareness of personal biases and keep it at bay.

Methodology

A qualitative research approach was selected to study the topic of work-related stressors among police officers. My aim was to understand the complete social problem

of work-related stressors among police officers in the chosen geographical area. In this research, in-person semi structured interviews with participants were conducted and used to determine thematic categories and rate the stressors per groups A and B.

Previous researchers have studied the stressors found in urban police officers' work situations. Stressors were found to be both related to organization matters and the practical policing situation (Wolkow, Ferguson, Aisbett, & Main, 2015). Studies of stressors in urban policing areas included ethnic differences, gender and sexual orientation, age and experience (Wareham, Smith, & Lambert, 2015). There is, however, a dearth of information regarding the similarities and/or differences in stressors experienced in urban police stations that differ geographically. To address this gap, this study was conducted in north and south Fulton County Georgia.

Participant Selection Logic

Population

Participants. I incorporated 15 post-certified police officers who are presently working within the department situated in an urban background of Fulton County Georgia. Three officers were selected from the North Fulton County department (Group A) and the other twelve were chosen from the South region of Fulton County (Group B). Using officers from two different geographical locations in the same urban setting will enable the investigator to compare the aspects causing stress between police officers in the Northern and Southern police jurisdictions.

Sampling. The sampling strategy was the nonprobability strategy of purposive sampling (see Alvi, 2016; Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). This kind of sampling

strategy is often used in qualitative studies as it allows the researcher to set inclusion criteria which results in recruiting a fairly homogenous sample. Before recruiting participants, institutional review board (IRB) approval was obtained from the university after which the departmental heads of the four police departments were contacted to obtain permission for recruiting and conducting the research at the departments.

Purposive sampling is often used in qualitative research as it enables the researcher to identify inclusion criteria to obtain information dense data from possible participants (Etikan et al., 2016). The inclusion criteria include (a) post certified police officers, (b) currently employed at one of the four research sites—Group A situated at North Fulton County and Group B situated at South Fulton County, (c) have more than 2 years' experience at the research site. Police officers with less than 2 years' experience at a given site may not have sufficient experience of the policing setting to provide information on stressors (see Oliver & Meier, 2009). In addition, younger police officers tend to be overly optimistic about their job and feel that they are not affected physically or psychologically by their experiences, such officers may not give reliable information (Ivie & Garland, 2011).

Recruitment was done via a researcher-developed recruitment letter posted by the agency department head on the internal online communication network of the four police departments. The letters contained information on the research, inclusion criteria, and my contact detail. Interested parties were requested to contact me using their personal email address to protect their privacy

The sample size in qualitative research is smaller than that of quantitative research as the aim is not to generalize results (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). There are no hard-and-fast rules for sample size in qualitative studies, Yin (2017) stated that a case study may include one participant or several. The purpose of a multiple case study is to collect rich and thick data from participants for analysis and comparison between the two groups (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research uses data saturation as a measure for determining sufficiency of participants and data. Saturation of data refers to that point where including more participants would not yield any new data (Ethikan et al., 2016). In other words, in purposive sampling saturation is used to determine sample size. The sample consisted of 20 post-certified police officers, 10 each from the Northern and Southern urban jurisdictions of Fulton County, Georgia.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment

After receiving IRB approval (07-07-20-00337971) to conduct the study, I approached the heads of the four identified police departments for permission to do recruitment at the departments. After receiving permission from the departments, I provided each department heads a copy of the IRB-approved recruitment letter to be posted on the internal online communication system of the departments.

Recruitment was done via researcher-developed recruitment letter posted by the agency department head, on the internal online communication network of the four police departments. The flyers contained information on the research, inclusion criteria, and my contact details. Interested parties were requested to contact me using their personal email

address to protect their privacy. The contact details of all interested parties were retained until the data collection process was completed. Should a participant decide not to take part in the study, the next interested person on the list would be contacted for participation.

Participation

Upon receiving indications of interest from police officers, I contacted the interested party through the potential participant's choice of initial communication via email or phone. The aim of the initial contact was two-fold: (a) determine whether the individual was eligible to participate and (b) ensure that both the email address and telephone number received were the private contact details to protect the privacy of interested persons. In addition, a short explanation of what the next steps entail was provided.

All eligible interested parties received an informed consent form via email for their perusal and electronic signature. There was a 10-day period in which interested parties could decide whether they wanted to participate in the study, understanding this interview would be audio recorded, and clarify any questions about the study with me. The first 10 participants from each police department whose electronic consent was received were included in the study. Electronic consent has been saved in encrypted format on my personal password protected computer which is locked in my office when not in use. Participants were contacted by me via email to determine a suitable time and date to be interviewed. I scheduled all interviews by the participants availability.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions participants were required to have their interviews via telephone. These interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. Member checking was performed after the interviews recorded were transcribed. I emailed a summary of the interviews to the relevant participants for their scrutiny and verification of correctness in answers. The participants were given 7 days to complete the member checking and email me with their suggestions.

Instrumentation

The main data collection instrument was semi-structured interviews with the participants. Each interview was recorded and transcribed into text copy. For the interview purpose, the researcher developed an interview guide based on the literature study and guided by each research question. The interview guide consisted of 15 questions aimed to determine which stressors the participants perceive to be present in their line of work. I asked follow-up questions for increased clarity. It was foreseen that the interviews were about 30 minutes and yield 15-20 pages, single spaced typed transcriptions.

Researcher Developed Instruments

The semi structured interview guide was developed by the researcher and be based on insights from the literature review. Using an interview ensured that all participants were asked the same questions. The interview questions focused on the stressors identified in the literature and aimed to elicit identification of additional stressors that were present. Semi-structured questions were found to be appropriate when dealing with participants' perceptions or sensitive issues.

To ensure that the interview questions are free from bias, not leading and that the questions are clearly worded (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016), two professors from the university who are experts in qualitative research, will review the interview questions. The feedback from the professors will be done via the Survey/Interview Validation Rubric for Expert Panel [VREP] (Appendix B) and be used to further refine the questions to be used during the interviews. The interview guide will be field tested on two of the researcher's family members who used to be police officers to ensure that the questions were easily understood.

Data Collection

Data from semi structured interviews will be collected for data analysis. Interviews were scheduled first by means of email conversation to determine a suitable off-duty date and time for each participant. Should the same date and time be requested on the same day, the researcher will schedule the interviews 30 minutes apart to prevent participants interviews from overlapping with one another. After securing interview times for each participant, I will email each one individually asking that they confirm the time and date for the interview.

Face-To-Face Interviews

Prior to the interview, I will set up the room by placing refreshments for participants' use on a table and setting up and testing the audio recording device. I will use a USB digital audio recorder which is reliable and has sufficient capacity to record one group's recordings. I will purchase two USB recording devices for exclusive use of

the two groups (A and B). On the outside door of the meeting room, I will put up a notice reading “Meeting in progress, do not disturb” to prevent any interruptions.

Upon starting the interview, some small talk about the participant’s hobbies or sports events will be made to put the participant at ease and establish rapport. This is important as the interviews will deal with personal situations that the officers perceive as being stressful, being at ease with the interviewer will serve to enhance openness in answering the interview questions (Janesick, 2011). I will reiterate the participants consent to be interviewed. The voluntary nature of participation will be emphasized and also that participants may choose not to answer a question or stop participation at any time without any penalty to them. I will explain my position as student in the research process and make it clear that the research had nothing to do with my position as administrator with the police force. Issues of confidentiality and protecting participants’ privacy were discussed at length and participants understood that their identity would be protected.

An interview guide consisting of 15 semi-structured and open-ended questions were used for all participants. The interview guide was developed by me and checked for clarity and possible bias by two experts in qualitative research at the university. After adjusting the interview questions as suggested by the experts, the interview questions were field tested on two retired police officers to ensure that the questions were clear and utilized detailed descriptions.

The interviews dealt with the participants’ views of stressors and it is possible that they would relate situations in which they felt particularly stressed. Highly emotionally

involved discussions might cause added stress to the participant. The researcher should be sensitive to signs of stress from the participant and make a judgement call to either stop participation or only pause the interview to be resumed later (Råheim et al., 2016). I provided contact details of registered counselors whom the participants may contact when feeling stressed after the interview. In this regard, each participant will receive a note with possible symptoms of stress to be on the lookout for, as well as names and telephone numbers of counselors who were informed about the research by the researcher.

I will closely observe participants for signs of stress such as prolonged pauses, voice pitch changes, fidgeting, sighing, unnecessary movements of any body part e.g., feet, speech hesitations or repetitions. Should the frequency of such behaviors increase the researcher will stop the interview by asking the participant if s/he would like to take a break and continue with the interview at a later stage or alternatively stop the participation process. Participants who appeared to be stressed during the interview will be urged to contact one of the counselors whose particulars were provided.

Before concluding the interview, the researcher arranged for *member checking* via email. In cases where the participant was not audio recorded, the researcher could provide the participant an opportunity to read through the notes on the interview to check for correctness. Should the participant indicate willingness to participate, the researcher will email the informed consent form (Appendix A) to the participant to obtain electronic consent and an indication of dates and times that may be suitable.

Data Analysis Plan

This study has two research questions and the data collected focused on answering both research questions. After conducting the interviews, the audio recorded data or handwritten notes were transcribed by the researcher into a Microsoft Word file. The individual semi-structured interviews yielded narrative data that was analyzed by means of inductive analysis. In inductive analysis the researcher does not fit the themes into a preconceived list of possible themes but rather use the data to determine the themes and categories (Percy, Kostere & Kostere, 2015). Each individual set of data is analyzed where after the findings are compared to arrive at larger themes and categories. The steps of inductive analysis as set out by Percy et al. include:

1. Rereading the data to become familiar therewith. By transcribing the data, myself, I will already be more familiar with the data of each participant. However, I will reread each set of data, per participant, prior to commencing with the next steps of the analysis process. I will also highlight specific words, phrases, or paragraphs that seem significant to answer the research question
2. After step 1, I will revisit the highlighted data sections and with the use of the research question, determine whether the data are linked to the research question.
3. I will disregard all highlighted data that I found were not related to the research question by changing the digital highlighting color. I will pre-decide which colors to use in these situations. By keeping the data highlighted, I could easily revisit it in future when deemed necessary.

4. Each data section will be coded by attaching a number to it so that I can keep track thereof.
5. Grouping of related coded data is the next step and by doing this, patterns will begin to emerge. Each pattern will be described and named appropriately to clearly summarize it and a secondary code will be attached to it for further ease of recognition.
6. As patterns begin to form, the data linked to the patterns will be identified and direct quotes from participants' described interviews will be noted to illustrate the pattern more clearly. A more abstract name will be allocated to the pattern as an identifier.
7. After all the patterns were identified a larger grouping of patterns will emerge which form the overarching themes. A more abstract label will be attached to the emerging themes, making this the third level descriptor.
8. The themes will be arranged in a matrix with their supportive patterns and direct quotes from the data. The matrix will consist of the codes and/or descriptions for each data group.
9. A comprehensive analysis will be written for each theme that explains the scope and contents of the theme.
10. The above steps (1-9) will be repeated for each of the 20 participants. The software analysis tool NVivo version 12 will be used to assist in the storing and grouping of the data. All data gathered by means of interviews can be analyzed by this software.

10. The analysis data for each group (A and B) will be combined to find consistent themes across the data of the participants.
11. The themes are synthesized to form a combined blend of the collected data as related to the research question. This will be done separately for Group A and Group B. The findings are then ready for comparison as is the purpose of this study.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers use the terms credibility and transferability to indicate that the results were represented truthfully and that the results were relevant (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Credible qualitative research is considered to be trustworthy as well.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree of confidence in the truth value of the research and its findings (Polit & Beck, 2014). It is important to conduct the study according to the standards set by the particular study design to achieve credibility. According to Connelly (2016), credibility is obtained by using the following techniques such as member checking, continued interaction with participants, and reflective journaling. To further ensure credibility, researchers who form part of the data collection instrument, must uphold reflexive thinking to minimize the possibility of researcher bias. Reflexive thinking includes constantly thinking about the possible bias and purposefully minimizing the impact of bias when interpreting the results (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). In addition, member checking ensures the accuracy of data collected during interviews increases the credibility of the research. In this study the researcher will use prolonged

interaction with participants, member checking, and data saturation to increase credibility.

Transferability

Whereas credibility can be linked to internal validity in quantitative research, transferability is linked with external validity (Connelly, 2016). Transferability refers to how much the findings of a study would be useful to other researchers working in similar settings (Connelly, 2016). By describing the research procedures, population and sampling in detail, other researchers are better able to decide if the findings of the study are useful in their studies (Amankwaa, 2016).

Dependability

Dependability can be equated to reliability in quantitative studies. Studies that are repeatable imply that the new study is likely to arrive at similar findings (Baskerville, Kaul, & Storey, 2017). Studies' dependability refers to the likeliness of obtaining similar findings should the study be repeated in another setting. The strategies that are followed to increase dependability include audit trails and triangulation. Triangulation uses different data sources which are then compared to establish truthfulness and the dependability of data (Baskerville et al., 2017). In this study I used three different sources of data to achieve dependability.

Confirmability

Confirmability or objectivity of a study is achieved by paying attention the truthfulness, consistency and appropriateness of the research. Confirmability is achieved by sustained interaction with participants, linking the findings to the theoretical position

and experiences of the researcher (Noble & Smith, 2015). Researcher reflexivity is important in establishing confirmability and in this study, reflexivity will be used to mitigate researcher bias (Morse, 2015). In addition, triangulation and an audit trail can be used to establish confirmability. In this research, triangulation and researcher reflexivity will be used to increase confirmability.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical sensitivity is an important principle in qualitative research (Laumann, 2018). Norms in human research that is vital to observe is that no harm must come to the participants, they must be treated respectfully, and their data confidentiality must be protected. In addition, participants must be provided to opportunity to provide informed consent. As there is direct contact between the researcher and participant during interview data collection, typical of qualitative research, anonymity is not an option. Instead, participants' confidentiality must be achieved by different measures to protect data.

University IRB Approval

Prior to any arrangements to conduct the research, university IRB approval (Appendix A) will be sought. The regulations pertaining to the application for IRB approval will be followed closely. The researcher will observe all regulations and any restrictions for the research.

Permissions

Permission to recruit at the four police departments chosen for this research will be obtained from the respective departmental heads (Appendix C). Permission will be

obtained to provide an IRB approved recruitment letter (Appendix D) to be placed on the internal online communication system of the departments. The letter will contain the purpose of the research, inclusion criteria and activities of participants with a time frame, the researcher's contact details and a request to use personal email addresses and telephone numbers to protect the participant's privacy.

Informed Consent

Recruitment of participants will be done by having the department head at the agency distribute letters on the internal online communication system of the police departments selected for this study. Interested parties will be requested to indicate their interest by emailing the researcher. After establishing eligibility, the researcher will email an informed consent form (Appendix A) to possible participants (Appendix G). Interested parties will be requested to contact the researcher per email or telephone should they have any questions. Should the interested party consent to participate in the study, an electronic signature in the form of replying by stating "I consent" will be collected.

The informed consent form will include a short description of the purpose of the research as well as the activities and time frames in which the participants will be taking part. Furthermore, the participants will be informed of any risks or discomforts involved with measures to be taken to mitigate risks or discomforts. Participants will be informed that participation is voluntary and that they may choose not to answer a question or to participate or stop participating without any penalty. The position of the researcher as a student only will be explained together with measures to protect the participants' privacy and how the data will be managed to maintain confidentiality.

Confidentiality Measures

Participants will receive a code name that will be used on all data, including audio recordings. A list that links the code names with the real names of participants will be made and kept in encrypted format in a password protected file on the researcher's password protected personal computer. After completing the member checking, this list will be destroyed by permanent deletion.

Interviews will be audio recorded. Audio recordings will be made with a digital USB recorder, specially purchased for the purpose of recording interviews. Two USB recorders will be obtained so that the data of the two groups (A and B) can be kept separate. The participants will only be identified with their chosen code name when the interview recording is made. After the interviews, the USB recorder will be transported in unmarked envelope put in the locked briefcase of the researcher. The USB recorders will be kept in a lock box that is stored in a drawer of a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home office. All consent forms will be emailed to the participants and electronic consent will be obtained. The emails with electronic consent will be saved in encrypted format on the researcher's personal password protected computer.

Transcriptions

After conducting the interviews, the researcher will personally transcribe the audio data or notes. A summary of the transcribed data will be emailed to the participants for member checking. Participants will be requested to email changes to the researcher within seven days. Transcriptions will be kept in password protected files on the

researcher's personal password protected computer which is locked in the researcher's home office when not in use.

Interviews

Interviews will be arranged to be conducted in a private meeting room at a public library either near the participants' place of work or home. The researcher will secure the meeting room prior to the interviews and email directions to the room to the participants. The date and time of interviews will depend on participants' off-duty availability. To ensure that participants will not meet each other on their way to the interviews, times will be scheduled 30 minutes apart. A notice reading "Meeting in progress, do not disturb" will be placed on the outside door of the meeting room to prevent disturbances. Prior to the interview the participant will be afforded an opportunity to decide on continuing with the interview and whether it may be audio recorded.

Destruction of Data

Data will be maintained for five years after the successful completion of the research. After this period the data will be destroyed. All digital data will be destroyed by permanent deletion. Paper data notes of interviews will be destroyed by shredding.

Summary

The researcher will conduct a qualitative study to answer the research question. Two groups from different geographical urban areas will be used in the study. The study will therefore be a multiple case study where the two groups each represent a different case. Twenty participants will be recruited by means of purposive sampling. Recruitment

letters with the inclusion criteria will be posted on the internal online communication system of the four selected urban police departments.

Participants will be asked to take part in one individual semi-structured interview. The researcher will develop an interview guide containing 15 semi-structured interview questions that will be used with all the participants. Participants will perform member checking of the interview transcriptions. All the data will be analyzed and triangulated for final interpretation. Confidentiality of data will be maintained by using code names to identify participants, encrypting data and saving it in password protected files on the researcher's personal password protected computer. Paper data will be stored in separate drawers of a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home office which is locked when not in use. Data will be destroyed five years after successful completion of the research. Ethical issues that will be observed include obtaining IRB approval and permission from the research sites to recruit participants. Participants will provide informed consent prior to being interviewed.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the differences between varied geographic divisions of a police jurisdiction and the types of work-related stressors reported by officers on the job. The current study was guided by the following questions:

RQ1: What methods of stress relief from the current workload are used in local police departments?

RQ2: How do current stress relief methods implemented in local police department help alleviate stress in police officers?

This chapter consists of the description of the demographics, data collection procedure, qualitative data analysis procedure, evidence of trustworthiness, presentation of results, and summary. The section on results is at the center of this chapter and it is organized by research questions. However, it should be noted that due to the COVID 19 pandemic the number of officers for Group A was less than originally stated. At the end of the recruiting process, I was able to get 12 participants for Group B (South). However, only three volunteers to participate for Group A. The data was processed in NVivo software, which helps in coding, creating thematic categories and themes. Seven major themes emerged from the data.

Setting

I had no prior contact or relationship with participants and did not have contact with them outside of this study. Some the officers may be familiar with me from my previous department however we did not have a personal or professional relationship.

The COVID-19 situation influenced this research. I could not conduct face-to-face interviews, therefore I had to switch to phone interviews. The interviews were conducted in a home setting, using mobile phones.

Demographics

Fifteen police officers from the North region of Fulton County (Group A) and the South region of Fulton County (Group B) participated in this study. Sixty percent of them were males and 40% were females (Chart 1 – Gender). Fifty-four percent of them were African Americans, 33% were White-Caucasian, and 13% were Other (Chart 2- Ethnicity). Their experience in law enforcement varies from 4 to 30 years. Thirty-three percent of interviewed police officers obtained a high school degree, 27% Associate's, 20% Bachelor's, and 20% obtained a Master's degree. All interviewed police officers from the North region were between the ages of 26-33 and 41+, while most of the police officers from the South region of Fulton County belong to the 41+ age group.

Data Collection

Qualitative data for semi structured interviews were collected from 15 participants. Yin (2014) noted that saturation for qualitative assessments occurs when themes are repeated from participant interviews. After 15 interviews, I noticed that no new information is generated, and this is when saturation was achieved.

The COVID-19 situation interrupted the plan to conduct face-to-face interviews in public libraries. Interviews were scheduled by email conversation when I exchanged phone numbers with participants. Semi structured interviews were conducted over the phone.

Participants received an informed consent form during email communication. Each participant provided verbal consent at the beginning of the interview. The voluntary nature of participation was emphasized and that participants may choose not to answer a question or stop participation at any time without any penalty to them. I explained to my position as a student in the research process and made it clear that the research has nothing to do with my position as an administrator at the police force. Issues of confidentiality and protecting participants' privacy were addressed. I used an automatic voice recorder.

Data Analysis

After conducting the interviews, the audio recorded data were transcribed by the researcher into Microsoft Word files. The individual semi structured interviews were analyzed through inductive analysis. In the inductive analysis, the researcher does not fit the themes into a preconceived list of possible themes but rather uses the data to determine the themes and categories (Percy et al., 2015). Each individual set of data is analyzed where after the findings are compared to arrive at larger themes and categories.

By transcribing the data, I was already familiar with the data of each participant. After the transcription, I read through the data once again to prepare for the next steps of the analysis process. I also highlighted specific words, phrases, or paragraphs that seemed significant to answer the research question. The second step was to highlight the data sections, to determine whether the data are linked to the research question. Next, I disregarded all highlighted data that I found incompatible to the research question by changing the digital highlighting color. I predecided which colors to use in these

situations. By keeping the data highlighted, I could easily revisit it in the future when deemed necessary.

Next, I started to code in NVivo (version 12) software. During this step, I did not think about any preconceived categories or themes. Rather, I relied solely on the data, to conduct inductive analysis. I gave names to words and sentences in participants' narratives. I created as many codes as I could. These codes are attached in Appendix D. The fifth step was grouping of related coded data, when patterns started to emerge. Each pattern was named appropriately to summarize it and a secondary code was attached to it for further ease of recognition. Some codes were identified in more than one category. For example, "superiors" category may represent at the same time a cause of the stress and an aspect of perceived organizational support.

As patterns began to form, the data linked to the patterns were identified and direct quotes from participants' described interviews were noted to illustrate the pattern more clearly. A more abstract name was allocated to the pattern as an identifier. After all the codes were grouped under categories, a larger grouping of patterns emerged, which formed the overarching themes (Appendix C). A more abstract label was attached to the emerging themes, making this the third level descriptor. The themes were arranged in a matrix with their supportive patterns and direct quotes from the data. The matrix consists of categories and codes. In this chapter, a comprehensive analysis was written for each theme and category. The analysis data for each group (A and B) was combined to find consistent themes across the data of the participants. The themes were synthesized to form a combined blend of the collected data as related to the research question. This was

done separately for Group A and Group B. The comparison between Group A and Group B was done through matrix coding. Finally, themes were grouped by the research questions.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

This study was conducted according to the standards set by the qualitative design to achieve credibility. Credibility was obtained by using the techniques such as member checking, prolonged interaction with participants, data saturation and reflective journaling, during which I was minimizing the impact of researcher bias. I had to distance myself from my role of the administrator to ensure credibility.

Transferability

By describing the research procedures, population, and sampling in detail, I made sure that this study could be useful to other researchers working in similar settings. In this way, the research gained external validity or transferability.

Dependability

Dependability or reliability was ensured through the audit trails and triangulation. I used different sources of data to achieve dependability or reliability. Thorough documentation of the data analysis and a detailed audit trail, I was able to track the qualitative research process, so that future researchers might be able to replicate the study. For example, other researchers may consider codes (Appendix D) and categories and themes (Appendix C) that emerged in data analysis. The triangulation was achieved by comparing participants' narratives with other research data. During the interviews, I

took notes in a notebook, where I wrote my observations and reflections. Also, I used relevant secondary research to triangulate the data.

Confirmability

Confirmability or objectivity of a study was achieved by paying attention to the truthfulness, consistency, and appropriateness of the research. Confirmability was achieved by serious interaction with participants during the interviews, linking the findings to the theoretical position and my research experiences of the researcher. I had a reflexive and objective look on the data to overcome research bias by using NVivo software to code and analyze the data. I was continuously thinking about the potential impact of my practical experience in police administration.

Study Results

Police officers in the United States are among the most stressed professionals in the world (El Sayed et al., 2019). I explored the variety of occupational stressors that the police officers experience and aimed to explore the variations between the different geographical categories. The results of this study are divided by two research questions and seven major themes

The first question explores methods in stress relief, while the second question evaluates the efficiency of stress methods. In the first research question, I explored various causes of their stress, coping mechanisms, and methods, or rather the lack of methods, of organizational support in relieving police officers' stress. In the second research question, I discussed mental health outcomes, being motivated, connecting to community, and restoring work-private life balance as the indicators of successful relief

methods. In Table 1, the structure of the research questions is presented. A more detailed presentation of codes, categories and themes is in the Appendix C and Appendix D. The file column refers to the number of research participants whose interview has been coded and included as part of that specific theme. The references column refers to the number of references within the specific theme, regarding how many times the specific code has been brought up.

Table 1

Themes

Name	Files	References
RQ1-Methods of Stress Relief	15	283
Causes of Stress	15	144
Coping mechanisms	14	72
Organizational support	15	67
RQ2- Success of Stress Relief Methods	15	185
Being Motivated	15	62
Connecting to Community	14	33
Mental health outcomes	14	59
Restoring work-private life balance	11	31

Methods of Stress Relief

The themes within the first research question explains how police officers portray occupational stress, what methods they use to cope with it, how they perceive organizational support in stress relief.

Causes of stress. To discover the methods that police officers use to relieve stress, I first had to identify the causes of their stress. Four out of 15 participants said that the primal cause of their stress is the police department, rather than the work itself. “Probably the biggest stressor, I would say just the department in general. Dealing with the political aspects of the department, the city admin and upper-level leadership and things they do”, said P12. P5 said a very similar thing: “It actually has less to do with the citizens than it has to do with politics within the department, if that makes sense”. Police officers from two areas were equally stressed about the way in which their department functions. P10 explained that the primary cause of his stress is politics in law enforcement:

Politics, the politics of the job, as far as people in positions above me not wanting to be wrong about stuff, so they change the rules as they go along. That's about it. Everybody is not being held accountable to the same standards.

By pointing to the differences in job positions within the police department, the participant demonstrated that there is an issue of responsibility. According to him, the responsibility is being transferred from above to below. This pattern results in more stress to those of whom responsibility has been transferred to, like P10 himself.

Another three participants said that supervisors may be the cause of their occupational stress, while two participants said that stress may be caused by the command staff. For example, P8 said “supervisors, or can I say upper management or upper leadership that be stressing me out”. P4 pointed to the improper training: “as far as improper training, that would be my primary stress, that’s where it comes from, how the command staff treats his employees. And then, the second stress, actually, believe it or not, comes from the street”. The participants interviewed felt the source of their stress was more internal than external. Police officers find themselves dealing with less stress from the community than the department where they work.

One of the conclusions that may be drawn is that one part of interviewed police officers, from both groups equally, connect occupational stress to negative experiences within their professional environment. However, other police officers interviewed in this study connect occupational stress with violence and crimes that they face daily.

The second category of stress causes is crime types that police officers are faced with. The biggest difference between police officers in the Northern and Southern agencies is in terms of crimes they face. In the South region of Fulton County, violent crimes are more frequent, but interviewed officers who work in Roswell said they also deal violent crimes. “What we call the corridor in Roswell is high crime area”, explained P5.

P15 explained how in her area, she must be prepared for high-intensity situations: The primary calls that I received that are related to strength and match up are the calls about people threatening to commit suicide. Or, either calls that are involved

with firearms or knife, because I know the likelihood of me taking someone's life is there, with those particular calls.

P11 from Group A, however, thinks that the definition of high-crime area is relative, but he also thinks that property crimes are more prevalent in other areas:

So, in terms of violent crime, I'm sure there's concentration within our high crime areas in terms of looking at violence, but I mean high crime could be high property crime, which is going to be more prevalent in some other areas. So, experience wise, it's that there's a lot of experience that goes into you. I work in crime scene, so my primary focus is violent crime that I mostly deal with and I definitely see that concentrated to certain areas of the city, but it's not exclusive to those specific areas.

P6 connected high crime rates with low opportunities and poverty:

There's high crime rate that I will assume was contributed to poverty, education, lack of education, and a lack of two parent homes". These differences in types of crime are related both to organizational stressors and community-related stressors.

Each participant interviewed identified with working in a high crime area, although each had a different experience. At the same time, one participant equates high crime with poverty and a lack of education, while another mentioned areas working in areas where suicide is more prevalent. Add

summary/synthesis to fully conclude the paragraph. Avoid ending paragraphs in direct quotes.

Four out of 15 participants said that domestic violence cases are causing stress. They described domestic violence cases as complicated, difficult, and stressful. P7 explained

I guess domestic situations are more stressful than any. Because I've had situations where I can't determine who the primary aggressor is in a domestic situation and have had to arrest both parties. Even though in the back of my mind, I may feel that one party was more of the aggressor, but because I cannot prove it, I have to arrest both.

Participants further contributed their stress to the increased number of domestic calls for service. Add summary.

Also, two participants from both Southern and Northern police departments noted that the COVID-19 situation made domestic violence cases more frequent: "So violent crime, I would say is down. Whereas obviously domestics and civil disputes are up" (P11). "You see a high level of domestic violence taking place", warned P3. Due to city-imposed shelter in place orders, police officers have to deal with more domestic violence calls than the usual calls for service. Add summary.

The overall COVID-19 situation affected all levels of society, so law enforcement is not an exception. All interviewed police officers said that the COVID-19 pandemic influenced their work. Five participants said that workload decreased. P8 said, "It made it

better, not so many people on the street, it's not many calls, it's not that many car break ins, so it's a lot quieter during the pandemic than what it was before the pandemic." Two participants said that the productivity of police officers became lower. On the other hand, P13 said that the COVID-19 increased the level of work: "We basically didn't take the day off. The city did give us an extra day off." COVID-19 forced police officers to police differently. Working on the front line of a Global Pandemic without being able to take a day off, increased workload, possibly contracting the virus, and dealing with a surge in domestic violence calls the participants.

P1 shared that there is an extra incentive during COVID-19 pandemics: "we have duty pay, stuff like that, but it's not enough to deal with your health and your life." All participants shared some example of the measures that they have to respect. These measures involved wearing gloves and masks, using hand sanitizer, reduction of physical contact, and social distancing.

One participant said that co-workers are the primary cause of stress for him, while another participant shared a story how she got into an argument with a co-worker because they were both under a lot of stress.

I had a headache. I'm like this whole week was stressful. We had an incident with a co-work of mine. We had words. We got sent to the office. It was just something stupid, I don't know. She was stressed. I was stressed. We're both stressed. We got sent to the office. It worked out, but it's either with co-workers, its people in the streets.

This story illustrates that the relationship between police officers may get edgy when they feel stressed out. This is why it is important to stay calm, professional, and supportive of co-workers. Another two participants said that they may get into conflict with superiors or co-workers because they are outspoken. P5 said “certain members of the command staff don’t like me because I tell them when they’re wrong”, and P6 said “I will say sometimes I feel limited in certain aspects due to me being very outspoken. I like things to be in order and at times it appears that things are not, and policing from at least where I work, it appears that a lot of things are political and motivated.”

Therefore, being straight forward may also cause trouble for police officers. Two participants said what repeated situations, which are part of the routine, are stressing them out, or as P1 put it “you’re constantly running through the same old thing everywhere you go, in a sense”. Like other stressors, participants listed dangerous situations, facing death, caseloads, cases related to murders or killings, paperwork, co-workers, and night shifts.

Coping mechanisms. Police officers listed many activities which they practice outside of work, to cope with stress. The most dominant anti-stress activity for interviewed police officers is a workout. Eight- out- of- fifteen participants said that they like to work out when they feel stressed. They were talking mostly about running or the gym. P6 said that workout helps him to stay healthy and to relieve stress: “I try to stay healthy and workout and that relieves a lot of stress in my life”. Female police officers are also working out to feel better: “The first thing I do when I leave work, regardless if

I'm working day shift or night shift, I take a long jog. No less than three miles. After I take my jog, I go home, and I shower" (P7). She added:

Running is my main way of coping with stress. I have to go for that jog. That's my mental stimulation. I get that runner's high. It calms me down even when I'm running, I may think about some stuff, but it helps me just, I don't know, it helps me mentally. So, once I'm done running, I have that feeling of, I don't know, superpowers, I guess, in the end. So, and then it tires me out. So, if I'm tired, like I said, I go home, and I take my shower, and then it just relaxes me all together. So, when I'm stressed out, if I can get a run in or a good 30-minute workout, I'm good.

Other positive activities that participants listed were reading, praying, gardening, baking, eating, listening to music, driving, dog walks, watching TV, and playing video games. These activities help them to relax. P12, said, for example, that he likes to do nothing: "I kind of just want to like, come home and just sit there and do nothing. Just want to relax, you know, for a couple of hours. That's pretty much how I handle it".

Spending time with family and spouse support were also highlighted as positive things that help police officers cope with stress. P4 said that it helps her to talk to her husband, especially because he is also in law enforcement and he can understand

My husband is actually in law enforcement, so I'm able to vent to him everything that I've gone through throughout the night. And usually he's able to talk to me and bring me back down. And usually after that I'm okay.

Therefore, it helps to have someone in law enforcement.

Seven out of fifteen participants brought up alcohol consumption. Four of them from Group B said that usually after work they have a drink; one said that she has a drink occasionally; while two officers (one in each group) said that they used to deal with stress by drinking, but that now they have changed this habit. P11 explained the pattern

Back then for me, it was – have a drink, relax, and it turns the switch off. Unfortunately, it became a pattern, not necessarily to the level of alcoholism, but a pattern enough to where it needed to be curbed so that it didn't manifest into anything else.

Nowadays, after I've been healed, I get home and I de-gear and take all my stuff off of me.

Organizational support. Organizational support from police department is supposed to help the police officers in stress relief. However, by analyzing research participants' answers, it may be concluded that they lack organizational support and methods when it comes to managing stress. According to interviewed police officers, their departments and superiors cause more stress than they relieve it. Three participants from Group B complained they work overtime and lately the budget was cut. "Right now, we can't even get overtime. So, you're working these long hours and they've cut the budget. So, now it's no overtime. I'm actually fighting for two hours overtime from back

in February. Why? I have no idea why”, said P7 and later added how this situation is stressful and discouraging for her. P9 confirmed this: And also, kind of made some negative impact as far as, they cut out overtime, and of course, won't give anybody raises once the new budget year increases. They did a lot of budget cuts because of it”.

Low job satisfaction may lead to turnover. P10 talked about turnover:

I've seen people that probably shouldn't be police officers leave this organization and go on to other organizations that would be considered to be the cream of the crop. I've seen this organization run off really good police officers just because I guess they didn't want to offer them stuff that other organizations just consider to be part of a package deal to give them. They felt like it was giving them something extra.

Absolutely, the organization that I started to work for takes the majority of its competent people for granted and rewards the incompetent.

Two participants from both groups explained that the biggest problem for them is the workload/volume of work. P14 said that her free time is limited because of this: “Not having time. Sometimes I'll be trying to get dinner for like three hours. You know what I mean? I just won't be able to do anything because I'm just going call to call to call to call”. All of these categories are related to organizational stressors and job satisfaction. Good relationships with co-workers and teamwork are also crucial for job satisfaction. As P14 said

I like to have my co-workers be able to depend on me, and I feel it's more of teamwork, rather than just, 'we're going to work, we're doing our job and then we're going home'. It's like we have teamwork. We always try to help each other out and stuff like that. I just feel like it's probably a family than just like a job.

Therefore, building positive working environment, team spirit and teamwork is a useful method in stress relief because the employees feel that they have colleagues to lean on.

The category of superiors was considered as a cause of stress among police officers, but it should be also considered as one aspect of the working environment and organizational support. Eight out of fifteen police officers, from both areas equally, said that they feel that their employers take them for granted. The other seven police officers answered negatively to this question. P9 explained why he has the feeling that he is taken for granted

I feel that a lot of times they think that we are expendable, that we could be easily replaced, no matter what your years of service are and whatnot. And I just don't think they understand what it is, policing in today's times.

P4 said that superiors are usually hard on people who stand out: "I think that the employees that go above and beyond are usually the ones that they are hardest on, and then your mediocre employees' kind of fall below, so nobody notices them, so nothing is

said to those employees”. Participants who responded negatively shared some positive experiences with the superiors. For example, P1 described his chief and highlighted the importance of open-door policy:

I've loved her ever since I walked through the door. So, I hope she's here for a long time, but whatever happens, up there happens. But no, for the most of it she's there. She has an open-door policy, and everybody who's beneath her, I think they follow the same suit.

The category of superiors (chief, command staff, upper management, and supervisors) spreads through many categories addressed in qualitative data analysis. Supervisors are an important factor because supporting the police officers is part of their job. Five- out- of- fifteen research participants complained about their supervisors and said that they are causing stress.

Success of Stress Relief Methods

The second research question is about evaluating if stress relief methods were successful or not. Four themes were explored to evaluate the efficiency of methods: mental health outcomes, being motivated, connecting to community and restoring work-private life balance. Those participants who have positive feelings about their work, live without negative mental health outcomes, remain motivated, connect to the community, and maintain balance between work and private life are considered as successful in combating occupational stress.

Mental health outcomes. Police officers’ feelings about work reflect their job satisfaction and the success of implemented stress relief methods. Police officers used

different adjectives to describe their feeling about their job. These objectives or notions were challenging, demanding, depressing, difficult, discouraging, drained, emotional affection, emotionally exhausting, experienced-wised, frustrating, good days, grateful, mellow, mentally rested, mixed emotions, no stress, overwhelming, relaxed, and stress. In the matrix Appendix F, the differences in references between Group A and Group B are shown.

The most important insight from this comparison is that police officers from the Southern region (Group B) brought up the adjective “stressful” more times than police officers from the Northern region (Group A). The participants used a variety of words to describe work-related emotions. Emotions other than stress, both positive and negative, were equal in terms of distribution between the two groups. P15 said how she understands why I want to compare these two geographical areas

I love the thought you’re comparing the stress and stuff like that between the North and South because it’s so true. It’s because we deal with all this stuff, and you go like up there and it’s just like, I don’t have to worry about my car at night.

Four-out- of- fifteen officers said that they are not stressed out. They are handling situations easily: “Well, again, work doesn’t stress me out. Not work itself, doesn’t stress me out”, P8 said. “Normal, no stress. I’m from southwest Atlanta, so I deal with, I grew up around these people all my life”, P2 said. P9 said a similar thing: “I don’t really get too fazed by much”. This means that they manage their stress successfully. Also, emotions may be ambiguous and perplexed, as P3 confirmed: “My emotions at the end of

the day sometimes are mixed. Some days I'm okay, some days I'm frustrated, I go home sad. Some days I go home and I'm, I don't want to say angry but hurt from the things that I see".

For six research participants, stress had certain mental health issues. In the mental health issues matrix (see Table 2.), the differences between the Northern and Southern agencies are shown. One police officer from the Northern department expressed mental health consequences, and that was related to an incident: "I was involved in an officer involved shooting. I killed a man last year, and to see a shrink, and decided that was very good for me. So, I still do occasionally have an appointment with the shrink", said P5.

Table 2

Mental health issues

	Group A	Group B
1: Burnout	0	1
2: Chair effect	1	0
3: Drained	0	2
4: Headache	0	1
5: Insomnia	1	0
6: Psychiatrist	1	0
7: PTSD	4	0
8: Tired	0	1

P11 was diagnosed with PTSD, which was also related to an incident. He thinks that it is important to raise awareness about PTSD

Cumulative PTSD is something I have definitely become more and more aware of as I've gone longer in this career, and I've had my own battles with it. After my shooting I dealt with a lot of different issues on how it physiologically and psychologically affected me and it wasn't just in the short-term, it was in the long-term.

Two police officers from Group B said that sometimes they experience the feeling of being drained. For example, P13 said: "I'm in the office and a lot of the times I'm drained." Other listed consequences include burnout, headache, insomnia, chair effect, and tiredness.

Being motivated. The second indicator of stress relief methods' efficiency is being and remaining motivated. Research participants were eager to speak about what drives them and motivate them in the police profession. Eight of them talked about motivations. Usually, they feel that they are doing something useful for the community and that their role is important. Police officers from both groups used the term "rewarding". P3 explained that people do not choose police profession because of the money, but because they want to contribute: "And to me, it's very rewarding, and I think that anybody who goes into law enforcement needs to do this because it's a career and it's a lifestyle, but if they're just looking for a paycheck or a job, this is not the job for it".

P6 brought up making a difference: "Sometime I'll be drained, sometimes I will be fulfilled. Many times, I've felt that I've made a difference". P5 also emphasized the duality: "A challenge. My experience in a high-crime area is rewarding, yet difficult at

the same time". Participants also spoke about protecting residents or citizens, believing in justice, care about the community, commends, self-awareness, and even weekends as motivations.

Five-out-of- fifteen police officers said that police work is rewarding, even though it may be difficult, challenging, or stressful from time to time. They are passionate about the job that they are doing because they feel that they contribute to the community or society. The rewarding nature of police work is what keeps them motivated to get through the difficulties and remain in law enforcement. P3 explained why she loves her job:

Like I said, it's rewarding because I'm able to help a lot of different people, it's the same folks that's out here at the gas stations panhandling, they know I normally give them money, buy them things from the store, I donate clothes. So, I enjoy working in this community actually, a lot.

Their motivation is also reflected in how they perceive career opportunities. Those participants who are more resilient to occupational stress were more positive about possible career outcomes. Also, better organizational support contributed to their motivation.

Perceived career opportunities are also related to organizational factors and job satisfaction. This category is singled out because the police officers talked about this topic a lot. The overall narrative was that the opportunities within the current department

are limited, but when it comes to a career in law enforcement in general, the opportunities are unlimited. For example, P12 illustrated

Local department, it's pretty, I'd say it's a good mixture of limited and unlimited, you know, as far as going up in admin ranks, that are kind of limited, but there's lots of opportunity to do traffic, you know, crime suppression. There are lots of opportunities there. Overall, in law enforcement, I would say it's pretty much for the most part unlimited.

P9 shared similar insight

“I would say in the career unlimited because there's many different things you can do to branch out. You have local law enforcement; you have state law enforcement, so you have federal law enforcement. So, I believe it's unlimited. You put the ceiling on where you want to go.

However, at one point of career advancement, education plays a role, as P4 said

I feel like I have unlimited career opportunities. Well, limited and unlimited. So, I think I can make it up to Lieutenant very easy. But after that, I think that education plays a big part because now everybody wants a degree. And at my age, I'm probably not going to go back to school.

Also, according to three research participants, another important aspect of professional growth in law enforcement is politics, as it has been indicated before.

Two participants said that they limit themselves, while P11, who recently got promoted, said: “I am the master of my own faith. I'm unlimited”. These police officers

believe that individual aspirations, rather than organizational factors, affect their career advancement. Their individual motivation drives them to improve themselves and to work harder. When it comes to other jobs in law enforcement, two participants said that you can even start your own company and earn more money. P1 shared a story about a conversation that he had with co-workers about this:

But there are ways to make money in law enforcement, and we were pretty much trying to understand that and I was telling them: “You don't just have to be policing on the street. You can own your own company, own your own security company, there are all kinds of things like that to make money, but you'll still be in law enforcement”.

P7 also thinks that there are many job opportunities out there:

I think the sky's the limit because you can go to so many different departments and different agencies and find jobs that relates to law enforcement, even behind closed doors.

Only two police officers stated that career opportunities are limited. Three participants said that they are limited and unlimited at the same time.

Connecting to community. Community and environment have a vital role in police officers’ professional life. As it has already been noted, the differences between residents of Northern and Southern Fulton County are evident. P6 described these environments: “I like it because it's not just one group of people. You have, like on the South end, I guess I would consider kind of less fortunate. And those are actually the

people that I like dealing with the most. And I guess it's because it's an environment that I actually grew up in. So, I can relate". P12 said that "if you're not in the high crime area, you're dealing with a little bit more affluent people, but they can be a little more demanding of you and pushy towards you" and added, "and then, the higher crime area is usually a more of a poverty-stricken area". P11 described how these class differences shape the diverse culture in the North

So, the thing I love about my department is that it is very diverse, in that we're 42 square miles, we're the second-largest city North of Atlanta, sixth in the state. We've got a population that's just over a hundred thousand, and with that comes so much people and so much culture. You can be on one side of the city and be in multimillion-dollar homes and then drive 10 minutes down the road and you're in government housing. And with that, you have two different cultures, but at the root of it all, it's all the same, it's just problems and it's just different types of problems that people are dealing with.

P7 also talked about the differences between two sides of town and said how citizens who reside on the North end of the city can sometimes get stereotypical

The north end of the city, it's a good community, but a lot of times they are scared, and stereotyped. And on the calls that we get sometimes, when they call on just any black male riding or

walking along with a lawnmower or something to cut the grass or just... Not a suspicion at all, but they call the police on them.

Three participants who work in the Southern department said that they love working with the community because they can relate to them. P10 explained in detail his love-have relationship with the community

Love/hate, love the understanding and the law abiding and dedicated citizens that are dedicated to the community because the community that I serve is African American, and I grew up in this community. I try to love what I do is, one of my things, I wanted to come back and serve the area. If I did become a police officer, when I was thinking about doing, I wanted to police in the area that I grew up in, and I accomplished that. I hate when I have to deal with the ignorant counterparts of my community.

Further, police officers are passionate about their work, because they contribute to the community: “You have the opportunity to educate the community, to correct some changes that you see on a daily basis, but yet, still, you have the opportunity to cleanse a community, to rid the crime“ (P3). P6 said that some people in the community may recognize the police efforts, but some people do: “I feel that some are appreciative in what I do and some are not. Neither here or there. I took an oath to do a job, whether someone likes me or not and I just believe in my feeling to do right by every means“. P14 said that hostility towards police makes her job and communication with community

hard: “ It's hard to when you're in an area like East Point to get to know the community because everyone pretty much dislikes police officers for the most part’.

P3 was optimistic about the future of the relationship between police and community: “I just want our community to improve in every way that we can. I'm hoping that something will bring about an awakening for change, in a positive way, that we can correct the things that have gone wrong in our communities“. All interviewed police officers showed, more or less, commitment to the community they serve, which means that stress relief methods focused on the relationship with the community were successful.

Work-private life balance. The ability to maintain and restore work-private life balance is the final indicator of successful stress relief methods. When it comes to balancing professional and private life, six out of fifteen participants said that it is important not to take work to home with you, or in other words, to distance from work. P8 thinks that he is successful in this strategy: “Well, I’m very good at forgetting about work when I get home”. P15 also talked about not bringing work home back with her: “After a day at work, I leave it at work. I don’t bring work home with me. I never do. It’s just something that I try to reel back. When I’m at work, I’m at work and when I’m off’.

P7 said that it takes experience to find the right balance: “It can be stressful. Not only while I'm at work, but also my home life, because I'm still trying to learn how to balance the two”. It may be concluded that some police officers adopted the strategy of distancing themselves from work while they are at home with their families.

Summary

The results of this study were divided by two research questions and seven major themes. In the first research question, causes of their stress, coping mechanisms, and organizational support were explored. One part of interviewed police officers, from both groups equally, connect occupational stress to negative experiences with superiors, or within the working environment. Other police officers connect occupational stress with violence and crimes that they face on a daily basis. Interviewed police officers cope with stress by working out, reading the bible, spending time with their family, having a drink after work, and other activities.

According to interviewed police officers, their departments and superiors cause more stress than they relieve it. I recognized that the lack of organizational support, especially by their supervisors, whose role is to support police officers in challenging situations. Research participants also feel that their superiors are taking them for granted. Building positive working environment, team spirit and teamwork is a useful method in stress relief and leads to job satisfaction.

Within the second research question, I tried to assess the success of stress relief methods. Those participants who have positive feelings about their work, live without negative mental health outcomes, remain motivated, connect to the community, and maintain balance between work and private life are considered as successful in combating occupational stress. By exploring these themes, I concluded that some police officers were more successful in managing stress than others. Police officers from the Southern geographical location of Fulton County talked more about their stress. Violent crimes are

more frequent in the Southern department, which is linked to higher stress levels of police officers. Police officers working in the Southern geographical location of Fulton County had more stress-related, mental health consequences.

The rewarding character of police work keeps the police officers motivated. Most interviewed police officers find motivation in a community they serve. Their motivation is also reflected in how they perceive career opportunities. Those participants who are more resilient to occupational stress were more positive about possible career outcomes. Police officers perceived opportunities within the particular department as limited, but generally unlimited in terms of different career paths within law enforcement. Some police successfully avoid bringing work home with them and feeling less stressed out because of that.

In the next chapter, the results will be discussed concerning the literature and implications for decreasing the level of stress among police officers will be provided.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the differences between varied geographic divisions of a police jurisdiction and the types of occupational stress reported by officers on the job. The study used a qualitative methodology with a case study research design. This design was used to examine different means to alleviating work-related stressors experienced by police in urban departments in two jurisdictions (Northern and Southern). The study incorporated qualitative design, whereby data was gathered in the form of semi-structured face to face interviews. The dominant themes were causes of police officers' stress, coping mechanisms, organizational support in stress relief, mental health outcomes, being motivated, connection to community, and the balance between work and private life. The final chapter consists of discussion, conclusions, and recommendations.

Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings

Police profession is considered to be one of the most stressful careers in America, with the endangered stress reverberating through all aspects of an individual's life (El Sayed et al., 2019). Police officers experience occupational stress, due to a variety of factors. Organizational stressors, such as a challenging work routine, may be the primary factors causing a law enforcement officer's stress, particularly those working in urban departments (Kumasey et al., 2014). As a result of my study, organizational stressors were recognized among primary factors causing stress in law enforcement. By comparing

the different geographical categories of police jurisdiction in Fulton County, Georgia, a variety of occupational stress factors were identified among police officers.

The theoretical foundation of this study was GST, developed by Agnew in 1992 (Agnew, 2017). The theory deepens the understanding of organization's stress, which is manifested through negative emotions in various settings, such as police jurisdictions and departments (Agnew, 2017; Brezina, 2017). Although there is significant research, examining the impact of stress on police officers, limited studies have examined the types of stressors on police (Bishopp et al., 2019), and the differences in the occupational stressors for police officers working in geographic locations (Brezina, 2017; Kurtz et al., 2015). This research attempts to overcome this gap in literature regarding police officer stress that is specific by geographic location (Ma et al., 2015; Warner, 2019). The results of this research show that there is an environment-related difference in types of professional stressors.

Through qualitative research and inductive analysis, several factors that influence police officer stress were explored and presented in the previous chapter. These relevant factors include environmental and organizational sources, coping mechanisms, and personal experiences. Police officers' narratives confirmed that work situations and characteristics impact mental health, mainly through job stress and job satisfaction (Nelson & Smith, 2016). According to Bishopp et al. (2016), the organizational context and work environment are highly significant in influencing police misconduct, especially when strain is encountered by the police officer. The differences within the urban environment of Fulton County are reflected in police officers' experiences (Group A and

Group B). It was estimated that police officers who work in higher crime (Group B) area experience more stress.

Understanding the Method of Police Officers' Stress Relief

The prevalence of stress among police officers demands a detailed understanding and effective prevention (Acquadro Maran et al., 2015; Aytac, 2015). As the main causes of stress interviewed police officers identified organizational stressors and environment-related stressors. Organizational stressors include caseloads, politics within the police department, and potential conflicts with superiors (chief, command staff, upper management, and supervisors), coworkers and members of the community. The participants emphasized the challenging nature of the job and urban environment in which they work in, particularly when they are faced with violent crimes and domestic violence.

Some of the study participants connected occupational stress with violence and crimes that they face daily. Events that are perceived to be stressful or as violent conditions may disrupt the quality of mental health, as Violanti et al. (2017) noted. Violent crimes and domestic violence were emphasized by police officers as primary causes of work-related stress. Police officers working in the Southern departments of Fulton County face with more violent crimes, although violent crimes occur in the Northern geographical location of Fulton County. Also, police officers from South Fulton tend to describe their duties and roles as more stress affected. Northern department police officers confirmed that there are significant differences in terms of types of crimes in these two areas. For example, a police officer working on the Southern side of Fulton

County explained how she faces violence repeatedly: “I feel like I'm around death a lot more. Like I said, I feel like I'm around violent crime a lot more” (P14). Officers who police on the Southern side of Fulton County deal with more stress than those officers who police the Northern jurisdictions of Fulton County. The Southern region of Fulton County have more crime, and officers who work in those areas are more likely to encounter violence daily. Add summary to fully conclude the paragraph.

Study participants from both departments said that domestic violence situations are among the most stressful cases for them. Additionally, they said how during COVID-19 pandemic domestic violence increased. “You see a high level of domestic violence taking place”, said P3 while explaining how COVID-19 made their job more difficult. This is because people are now spending more time at home than on the streets. The authors using GST associated occupational stress experienced by male police officers with domestic violence (Gibson et al., 2001). However, this referred to male police officers as perpetrators of domestic violence. I found no evidence of this. Moreover, one male police officer in this study said that domestic violence that he faces is one of the primary causes of his stress.

According to Bishopp et al. (2019), another primary source of stress for police occupation in America is community relations. Community relations in the Northern and Southern sides of Fulton County may vary. The southern part is a low-income, poverty-stricken area where more violent crimes occur. Police officers in this area are experiencing more stressful situations. Also, some of them said that the community on the Southern side is more hostile toward them. On the other hand, police officers that

declared themselves as African American said that relating to their community may be the positive and motivating aspect of their work.

Police officers in this research have indicated that whenever society has a negative perception of them and their work, it becomes more challenging with the results being an increased strain to the officers. Stein and Candace (2017) argued that community relations as a causative factor of police strain area another major area with limited research. This research offered a deeper insight into the ambiguous relationship between police officers and the community they serve. One participant highlighted this ambiguity that some people in the community may not recognize the police efforts, but some people do. Most of the police officers interviewed in this research are passionate about contributing to the community.

In literature, the difference is made between maladaptive and active- or adaptive-related coping strategies (Singh 2017). Maladaptive coping strategies are negative and have a positive correlation to work stress, while active- and adaptive-related coping responses have an inverse link with work stress. The police officers in this study use both coping strategies. Previous research showed that police officers may develop negative habitual patterns such as alcohol use (Yun & Lee, 2015). Seven out of 15 participants in this research brought up alcohol consumption. Four of them said that usually after work they have a drink; one said that she has a drink occasionally; while two officers said that they used to deal with stress by drinking, but that now they have changed this pattern.

The workout is an active coping strategy practiced by seven police officers interviewed in this research. Existing research showed that police officers who did not

exercise had a greater chance of being severely stressed than a police officer who exercised (Retneswari et al., 2018). “I try to stay healthy and workout and that relieves a lot of stress in my life”; “Running is my main way of coping with stress,” participants said. Other positive coping strategies were also listed by the research participants.

The Ability to Alleviate Police Officers’ Stress

Stancel et al. (2019) noted that police stress can lead to negative mental health outcomes. In this study, PTSD, tiredness, exhaustion (being drained) burnout, dullness, headache, and sleep disorder has been identified among the interviewed police officers. These mental health issues are the consequences of occupational stress (Fekedulegn et al., 2017; Ragesh et al., 2017; Stancel et al., 2019). Habersaat et al. (2015) focused on health problems such as PTSD and stress that of which police officers are at risk in developing due to the area they are assigned to and their specific work conditions. One participant in this study said he has been diagnosed with PTSD after a shooting that he was involved in. “After my shooting, I dealt with a lot of different issues on how it physiologically and psychologically affected me and it wasn’t just in the short term, it was in the long term”, he said. Police officers who have PTSD sometimes have difficulty managing daily activities and working a productive shift schedule such as handling calls for service. Add summary to fully conclude the paragraph.

On the other hand, positive feeling about work and overall job satisfaction could be interpreted as positive mental health outcomes of coping with stress. Job satisfaction is also highly impactful in influencing police stress and has the potential to alleviate stress. Several authors have noted that work-related characteristics such as job satisfaction are

significant in inducing stress among police officers (Can et al., 2016; Chen, 2018; Nisar & Rasheed, 2019).

Results of a previous study showed that organizational factors, such as professional development and peer cohesion, are significant predictors of job satisfaction among police officers (Chen, 2018). In this study, professional development is addressed by the career opportunities thematic category. Police officers perceived opportunities within the particular department as limited, but generally unlimited in terms of different career paths within law enforcement. A variety of career paths has been identified, as starting own law enforcement business, or transferring to state-level departments. One participant also explained the importance of education in career advancement.

In this research, peer cohesion was also identified as an important aspect of job satisfaction. Participants talked about the importance of teamwork and good communication among coworkers. The relationship between police officers may get conflicting when they feel stressed out. Therefore, enhancing organizational climate could also be an effective strategy in effectively decreasing stress among police officers (Kula, 2017; Santa Maria et al., 2018; Tsai et al., 2018).

Positive emotions increase overall work well-being and job satisfaction and decrease overall stress symptoms and turnover intention (Siu et al., 2015). This is vital given that negative emotions could increase police officers' occupational strain and their turnover intention (Shim et al., 2015). One of the police officers witnessed turnover in his agency due to low job satisfaction. Four police officers said that they have bad relationships with their supervisors. Some of them even said that supervisors are the

primary cause of stress for them. This is why it is crucial to increase supervisor fairness (Can et al., 2016). The lack of adequate supervisor support may lead to decreased job satisfaction and, ultimately, turnover.

Negative relationships with superiors (chief, command staff, upper management, and supervisors) belong to the category of organizational stressors. Eight out of fifteen police officers, from both Northern and Southern departments, said that they feel that their employers take them for granted. The other seven police officers answered negatively to this question. Police officers, especially women, are at higher risk of burnout when there is a lack of perceived organizational support (POS) (Andrew et al. 2017). Several researchers have noted that having an ineffective coping strategy of stress leads to worsened health among police officers (Arble et al., 2018; Kubiak et al., 2017). This is why it is crucial to promote healthy and positive coping mechanisms in law enforcement. This could be achieved through the organization by training and raising awareness activities. Research participants did not make references to any particular training programs within their police departments. However, they emphasized particular methods that they practice to relieve from stress, such as exercise or working out. Having targeted invention and coping strategies for stress could significantly improve the quality of life and work among police officers and could have a positive impact on the service rendered to the general public (Acquadro, Maran et al., 2018).

Limitations of the Study

The purpose of this research was to determine the degree to which two police jurisdictions conform to the findings of the Spielberg model of job-related stress factors

for police jurisdictions. The two jurisdictions represent suburban and urban police environments and were used to compare and contrast the usefulness of the Spielberg model as a template for understanding or predicting factors which police jurisdictions may encounter. The research showed that there was a difference between police officers in two areas, regarding the job-related stress factors.

The question whether the findings of my study could be extended across all policing jurisdictions in Georgia remains open and requires further research. Another potential limitation of the study is a sample size. The research sample was not large enough to represent all police officers in Fulton County. However, even in studies conducted on large samples, it is impossible to include the entire target population. In other words, the research is always limited, and generalizations are not absolute. COVID-19 influenced this research in a way that I could not conduct face-to-face interviews, so I had to switch to phone interviews. This was a limitation of the study, because I could not look research participants in the eyes. It was harder for me to read their body language. I tried to overcome this limitation by taking notes in my journal during the interview. Also, it was challenging to do parallel research and work a full time and be a mom. Often, I had to concentrate on writing after a long day at the office.

Through the qualitative research and interpretation of findings, I managed to overcome the apparent gap in the literature related to police work stress and contribute to better understanding of the factors in police stress, in order to make reliable predictions of the ways in which the target group may encounter these factors.

Recommendations

This was a qualitative case study, aiming to identify the differences between varied geographic divisions of police jurisdiction in Fulton County, Georgia, and the types of work-related stressors reported by officers on the job. Future research could cover and compare other geographic areas. Researchers could also employ a quantitative approach to reach a higher sample size and obtain more generalizable results.

Law enforcement officers from large police departments reported higher levels of stress as compared to the officers belonging to small and mid-sized agencies in previous research (Warner, 2019). It would also be valuable to look at and compare these differences by conducting research focused on those specific variables.

Despite the expectations, the police officers in this study did not address the issue of shifts. Only two participants brought up the issue of demanding shifts, but they did not elaborate in detail. Therefore, future research could investigate shift work as impactful in inducing occupational stress among police officers (Chiappetta, 2018; Ma et al., 2015). Also, I believe that further research could offer more insight into individual stressors.

Implications

Positive Social Change

This study's findings can encourage social change by informing on the job-related stressors among police officers in different areas. This study can provide police management and other stakeholders with information about the causes of job-related stress and ways in which police officers manage stress. It could also help police officers themselves to develop more effective and healthy coping mechanisms.

Less stress among police officers would help the society in general. If police officers felt more relaxed, the community would probably have more positive attitude towards police work in general. Better relationships with the community could be established and everybody could benefit. By developing better stress relief programs, police departments, the community and the society could develop better relationships.

Methodological, Theoretical, and Empirical Implications

This study utilized the GST as a theoretical foundation for identifying various police-reported stressors amongst the different agencies. GST demonstrated that stress could be related to a geographical area and criminal behavior impacts (Brezina, 2017; Yun & Lee, 2015). The results of this study indicated that police officers in North Fulton County and South region of Fulton County have different factors and way of dealing with the stress. The geographical and criminal conduct differences in these two areas are reflected in the job-related stress among police officers working in them. The study showed that community relations also depend on the environment. Moreover, the study showed that the police occupational strain stems from both institutional and environmental sources.

Conclusions

This research provided valuable insight into police officers' occupational stress. The main theoretical approach was General Strain Theory, which emphasized the importance of geographic differences in occupational stress. According to the results of this study, police officers working in a high crime area, in which more violent crimes

occur, feel more stressed out. Interviewed police officers cope with stress use both maladaptive and active strategies to cope with stress.

Organizational factors that cause stress are found mainly in negative relationships with superiors, from immediate supervisors to command staff. Police officers lack of organizational support in managing stress, while their departments and superiors cause more stress than they relieve. It is crucial to improve this relationship and enhance the level of perceived organizational support (POS), by implementing targeted interventions and programs for stress relief.

Negative mental health outcomes may appear when police officers' stress is not properly addressed, while adequately address coping mechanisms result in improved mental health and overall job satisfaction.

Those who find motivation and satisfaction in serving the community have the potential to be more resilient to stress. Community, positive working climate, distancing from work, and active coping mechanisms have a vital role in maintaining police officers' mental health and professional life.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

Dear Potential Participant,

I am a doctoral student at Walden University, and I am currently completing a dissertation research project as a prerequisite for my degree. I would like to take this time to invite you to participate in a research study that will examine police officer-reported stress among the Northern and Southern geographical locations. The focus of this study is to understand the experiences and different variations, if any between police officers from the Northern and Southern agencies within the same geographical location.

Inclusion to the study will be actively employed as sworn peace officer for Fulton County, Georgia. Exclusion criteria will include all individuals who are employed with or under the direct supervision of the researcher and non-sworn peace personnel.

Your participation is strictly voluntary if you decide to participate. There will be no form of reimbursement or compensation for participation. You will be asked to participate in a one-on-one face-to-face interview at the location of your choice or a virtual interview via internet technology. The time frame for such interview may vary seeing that each participant interview could vary. The interview will be followed up with a phone call at a later date to verify your information was recorded correctly. Please note that all the identities of the participants will be confidential and will not be shared with any reports coming out of this study.

Sincerely

Reamon S. Bailey

Appendix B: Recruitment Email

Dear Deputy Chief

I am writing to inform you of an opportunity to participate in a research study in relation to police officers and stress within the geographical location. This study is being conducted by Reamon Bailey, a doctoral student at Walden University. This study will examine and describe stress that police officers experience in their daily occupational lives. The intent of the research study is to examine how officers report such stressors regarding their geographic location. This study will only include patrol officers and exclude anyone in a supervisory role.

The researcher is requesting four police officers to volunteer for this study. The research will attempt to identify the stress and understand how it is being reported. This study will help determine and understand the experiences and different variations, if any between police officers from the Northern and Southern agencies within the same geographical location. Selected individuals are free to choose whether to participate and can stop participation at any time. The identities of the participants, as well as the information they provide, are confidential.

I look forward to meeting with you to discuss the nature of this study and to answer any questions concerning the department's role in recruiting potential participants.

Thank you for considering my request, and the department's assistance in the recruitment procedure of the research study.

Sincerely

Reamon S. Bailey
Doctoral Candidate, Walden University

Appendix C: Themes and Categories

Table C1

Themes and Categories

Name	Files	References
RQ1 - Methods of Stress Relief	15	283
Causes of stress	15	144
Caseloads	2	2
COVID-19	13	21
Cautious	1	1
COVID-19 contact	4	4
COVID-19 mask	4	4
Crisis	1	1
Fear of COVID-19	1	2
Frustrating	2	2
Less work during pandemic	5	5
More work during COVID-19	1	1
Social distance	1	1
Co-workers	3	4
Crime types	13	43
Breaking and enterings	1	2
Domestic violence	6	8
High crime	4	6
Killing	4	5
Property crimes	3	4
Shootings	4	6
Smash and grabs	1	1
Smoking marijuana	1	1
Squatters	1	1
Stolen vehicle	2	2
Violent crimes	3	6
White-collar crime	1	1
Dangerous situations	1	1
Department	4	5
Facing death	2	4
Hostility towards police officers	1	1
Night shift	1	2

No stress	4	5
Paperwork	1	1
Politics	4	4
Repeated situations	2	3
Shift	1	1
Superiors	12	37
Bully	1	1
Chief	4	4
Command staff	3	5
Cronyism	1	1
Department	4	5
District Attorney	1	2
Employer	7	8
Incompetency	1	1
Open door policy	1	1
Supervisor	5	9
Suspension	1	1
Up and down	2	3
Upbeat	1	1
Victims	1	5
Coping mechanisms	15	72
Alcohol	8	13
Baking	1	2
Bible	1	2
Dog walks	1	1
Driving	1	1
Eating	1	1
Gardening	2	2
Music	1	1
Praying	2	3
Reading	4	4
Relax	4	4
Rest	1	2
Spending time with family and friends	4	7
Spirituality	1	1
Spouse support	4	6
Vacation	1	1
Video games	2	3

Watching sports	1	1
Watching TV	2	3
Workout	7	14
Organizational support	14	67
Being outspoken	2	2
Co-workers	3	4
Have someone in law enforcement	1	1
Hazard pay	1	1
Loyalty	2	2
Overtime	3	3
Rewarding	5	9
Superiors	12	37
Bully	1	1
Chief	4	4
Command staff	3	5
Cronyism	1	1
Department	4	5
District Attorney	1	2
Employer	7	8
Incompetency	1	1
Open door policy	1	1
Supervisor	5	9
Teamwork	1	1
Turnover	2	3
Volume of work	1	3
Workload	1	1
RQ2 - Success of Stress Relief Methods	15	185
Being motivated	15	62
Believe in justice	1	1
Care about community	1	1
Commends	1	1
Family	2	2
Making a difference	1	1
Perceived career options	15	43
Career	2	2
Changing departments and agencies	1	1
Detective	1	1
Education	3	3

Got promotion	1	1
Limited opportunities	5	7
Loans	1	1
Patrol unit	2	2
Politics	4	4
Replaceable	1	1
Retirement	2	4
Starting own company	2	2
State patrol	1	1
Unlimited opportunities	10	12
Working in jail	1	1
Protecting citizens	2	2
Rewarding	5	9
Self-awareness	1	1
Weekend	1	1
Connecting to community	14	33
Affluent people	1	2
Class differences	1	1
Commends	1	1
Contribute to community	1	1
Ferguson	1	1
Good people	2	2
Hostility towards police officers	1	1
Less fortunate environment	1	2
Love- hate relationship	1	1
Making a difference	1	1
Positive experience	1	1
Poverty	2	2
Protecting citizens	2	2
Relate to community	3	4
Stereotypical	2	2
Teaching people	2	2
Understanding the background	1	1
Mental health outcomes	14	59
Mental health issues	6	12
Burnout	1	1
Chair effect	1	1
Drained	2	2

Headache	1	1
Insomnia	1	1
Psychiatrist	1	1
PTSD	1	4
Tired	1	1
Positive and negative feelings about work	14	47
Challenging	2	2
Demanding	1	1
Depressing	1	1
Difficult	1	2
Discouraging	2	2
Drained	2	2
Emotional affection	1	1
Emotionally exhausting	1	1
Experience-wised	1	2
Frustrating	2	2
Good days	1	1
Grateful	1	1
Mellow	1	1
Mentally rested	1	1
Mixed emotions	1	1
No stress	4	5
Overwhelming	1	1
Relax	4	4
Stressful	8	16
Restoring work-private life balance	11	31
Distancing from work	6	8
Home life	1	1
No stress	4	5
Relax	4	4
Spending time with family and friends	4	7
Spouse support	4	6

Appendix D: Codes

Name	Files	References
Affluent people	1	2
Alcohol	7	12
Baking	1	2
Being African American	1	1
Believe in justice	1	1
Bible	1	2
Breaking and enterings	1	2
Bully	1	1
Burnout	1	1
Care about community	1	1
Career	2	2
Caseloads	2	2
Cautious	1	1
Chair effect	1	1
Challenging	2	2
Changing departments and agencies	1	1
Chief	4	4
Class differences	1	1
Command staff	3	5
Commends	1	1

Community	5	6
Contribute to community	1	1
COVID-19 contact	4	4
COVID-19 mask	4	4
Co-workers	3	4
Crisis	1	1
Cronyism	1	1
Dangerous situations	1	1
Death	1	3
Demanding	1	1
Department	4	5
Depressing	1	1
Detective	1	1
Difficult	1	2
Discouraging	2	2
Distancing from work	6	8
District Attorney	1	2
Dog walks	1	1
Domestic violence	6	8
Drained	2	2
Driving	1	1
Eating	1	1

Education	3	3
Emotional affection	1	1
Emotionally exhausting	1	1
Employer	7	8
Experience-wised	1	2
Facing death	1	1
Family	2	2
Fear of COVID-19	1	2
Ferguson	1	1
Fire department	1	1
Frustrating	2	2
Gardening	2	2
Good days	1	1
Good people	2	2
Got promotion	1	1
Grateful	1	1
Have someone in law enforcement	1	1
Hazard pay	1	1
Headache	1	1
High-crime	4	6
Home life	1	1
Hostility towards police officers	1	1

Immigration letters	1	1
Incompetency	1	1
Insomnia	1	1
Killing	4	5
Less fortunate environment	1	2
Less work during pandemic	5	5
Limited opportunities	5	7
Loans	1	1
Love- hate relationship	1	1
Loyalty	2	2
Making a difference	1	1
Making money	1	1
Mellow	1	1
Mentally rested	1	1
Mixed emotions	1	1
More work during COVID-19	1	1
Music	1	1
Night shift	1	2
No stress	4	5
Open door policy	1	1
Outspoken	2	2
Overtime	3	3

Overwhelming	1	1
Paperwork	1	1
Patrol unit	2	2
Politics	4	4
Positive experience	1	1
Poverty	2	2
Praying	2	3
Property crimes	3	4
Protecting citizens	2	2
Psychiatrist	1	1
PTSD	1	4
Reading	4	4
Relate to community	3	4
Relax	4	4
Relief	1	1
Repeated situations	2	3
Replaceable	1	1
Rest	1	2
Retirement	2	4
Rewarding	5	9
Self-awareness	1	1
Shift	1	1

Shootings	4	6
Smash and grabs	1	1
Smoking marijuana	1	1
Social distance	1	1
Spending time with family and friends	4	7
Spirituality	1	1
Spouse support	4	6
Squatters	1	1
Starting own company	2	2
State patrol	1	1
Stereotypical	2	2
Stolen vehicle	1	1
Stressful	8	16
Supervisor	5	9
Suspension	1	1
Teaching people	2	2
Teamwork	1	1
Tired	1	1
Turnover	2	3
Understanding the background	1	1
Unlimited opportunities	10	12
Up and down	2	3

Upbeat	1	1
Vacation	1	1
Victims	1	5
Video games	2	3
Violent crimes	3	6
Volume of work	1	3
Watching sports	1	1
Watching TV	2	3
Watchmen	1	1
Weapon	1	1
Weekend	1	1
White-collar crime	1	1
Working in jail	1	1
Workload	1	1
Workout	7	14

Appendix E: Feelings about police work

	A: Group A	B: Group B
1. Challenging	0	2
2. Demanding	0	1
3. Depressing	0	1
4. Difficult	0	2
5. Discouraging	0	2
6. Drained	0	2
7. Emotional affection	1	0
8. Emotional exhausting	0	1
9. Experience-wised	2	0
10. Frustrating	0	2
11. Good days	0	1
12. Grateful	1	0
13. Mellow	0	1
14. Mentally rested	0	1
15. Mixed emotions	0	1
16. No stress	0	5
17. Overwhelming	0	1
18. Relax	1	3
19. Stress	2	14

Appendix F: Participants demographics

	Gender	Ethnicity	Years in law enforcement	Degree	Age	Group
Participant 1	Male	African-American	21	Associate's	41+	B
Participant 2	Male	African-American	17	High school	41+	B
Participant 3	Female	African-American	6	Master's	41+	B
Participant 4	Female	Other	9	High school	41+	B
Participant 5	Male	White-Caucasian	30	Master's	41+	A
Participant 6	Male	African-American	16	High school	41+	B
Participant 7	Female	African-American	4	High school	34–40	B
Participant 8	Male	Other	9	Associate's	34 – 40	B
Participant 9	Male	African-American	7	Bachelor's	26 – 33	B
Participant 10	Male	African-American	18	High school	34 – 40	B
Participant 11	Male	White-Caucasian	11	Master's	26 – 33	A
Participant 12	Male	White-Caucasian	4	Bachelor's	26 – 33	A
Participant 13	Female	White-Caucasian	21	Bachelor's	41+	B
Participant 14	Female	White-Caucasian	4	Associate's	18 – 25	B
Participant 15	Female	African-American	5	Associate's	26 – 33	B

Appendix G: Demographics

Chart 1 – Gender

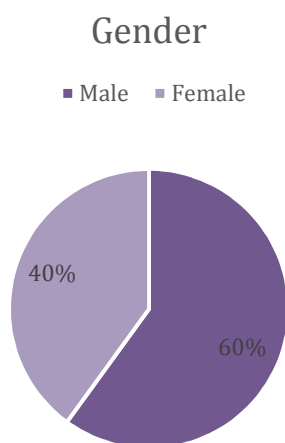


Chart 2 – Ethnicity

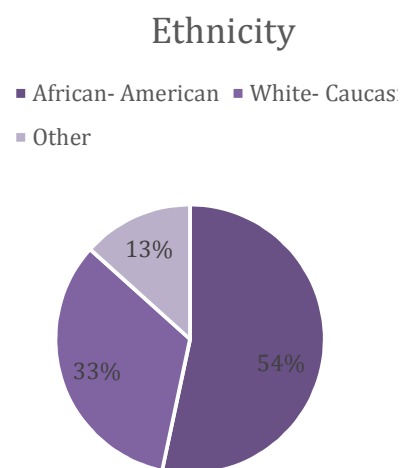


Chart 3 – Age Group

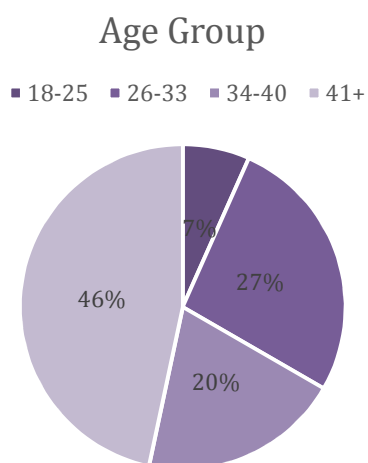


Chart 4 – Education

