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The Impact of Gender on Relationship Satisfaction in Law Enforcement

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Walden University

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Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Carole A. Presson

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Walden University
2023

Abstract

The Impact of Gender on Relationship Satisfaction in Law Enforcement

by

Carole A. Presson

MS, Lindenwood University, 2015

BS, Lindenwood University, 2014

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

August 2023

Abstract

Relationships have been identified as a critical component of mental wellness. Law enforcement has been recognized as a profession with high divorce rates and relationship failure, contributing to reduced mental health in law enforcement. By addressing and identifying relationship concerns, issues of suicide, use of force, productivity, and reduced tenure can be addressed. This quantitative study aimed to identify areas of stress contributing to relationship dissatisfaction. The study's initial focus was to identify if gender impacted satisfaction outcomes. Male and female officers participated equally in completing surveys to identify organizational and operational police stress, romantic partner conflict, and relationship assessment. The results of this study determined that women had increased stress levels both operationally and organizationally, contributing to their reduced relationship satisfaction. The results provided insight into why women often leave law enforcement before retirement or choose not to enter the profession. This study categorizes areas in law enforcement needing addressing. Leadership, mentorship, stress awareness, and mental health were all concerns. By addressing these topics, agencies have the potential for positive social change through reducing stress and, therefore, increasing relationship satisfaction which could, in turn, reduce the negative effect of the law enforcement profession.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Dianna Fowler. Throughout my life, you have been my biggest supporter and stood by me even when I did not deserve it. Thank you for teaching me how to be strong, courageous, and appreciative of all I have. You made me the person I am.

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I want to thank my family and friends for their support. With you, this became a reality. Your support and encouragement allowed me to keep moving forward, no matter how slowly.

For my “husband,” thank you for picking up the slack and never letting me make excuses. You never wavered in your support; I am genuinely grateful and appreciative. To my children, thanks for your support, pride, and understanding during this time. To my friends, thanks for understanding the many times I had to say “no.” This belongs to each of you as much as it does me. Without you, I would not be here.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The Problem and Justification for this Study

Intimate relationship satisfaction and methods to attain it vary by gender (Javadijala et al., 2021; Legkauskas & Pazniokaite, 2018). Considering those differences and adding the impact of law enforcement stress and tenure in the profession combine to create areas of concern. These concerns include officer behavior and productivity. Identifying the impact gender has on relationship satisfaction allows for additional studies to effect change in mental health and relationship strength for law enforcement personnel. These changes have the potential to increase productivity and reduce negative behavior.

Purpose

This quantitative research study aimed to identify the effect of gender on intimate relationship satisfaction with members of the law enforcement community. Researchers have studied many issues regarding the intimate relationships of law enforcement officers, including stress and tenure. Still, they have failed to recognize the differences between male and female officers and the satisfaction rate. Because females in law enforcement are seriously underrepresented, researchers have repeatedly acknowledged the limitations of the lack of female participants in studies.

Studies on relationship satisfaction rates in law enforcement have been limited to data regarding divorce. Research conducted has found a wide range of statistical data regarding divorce. Buscho (2019) has identified a need for more accurate statistical data due to a range of 14% to 80%. There exists a wide range of assessments of whether

professional law enforcement officers have more failed intimate relationships than other professions. The law enforcement culture provides for different stressors among the ranks. These concerns have been addressed on multiple levels; however, the separation of gender has not been identified.

Impact

Prior research has recognized various gender practices and their impact on intimate relationship satisfaction. Identifying gender-specific roles in intimate relationships has shown the potential for longitudinal weakening (Heavy et al., 1993). Adding to this concept is the identification of stressors of law enforcement officers and the impact of tenure.

The basis for this research was to establish clear and concise data to determine relationship satisfaction rates among male and female law enforcement officers. Research is necessary to identify the impact of gender on all types of intimate relationships. This study was intended to identify the satisfaction rate in intimate relationships, including marriage, divorce, dating, and cohabitation. Heterosexual and same-sex relationships were included in the study's findings. Because relationship satisfaction has been linked to wellness, it was critical to identify satisfaction rates by gender to determine methods of creating a more significant potential for satisfaction.

Statement of the Problem

Intimate relationships are a vital contributor to people's lives (Demir, 2008). Research has been conducted to identify the unique difficulties the profession of law enforcement creates. Police officers often carry work-related stress issues into their

homes, which cause difficulties in their intimate relationships (Karaffa et al., 2015).

When considering stress and tenure, a law enforcement career's impact can create levels of strain that other professions do not. This research focused on the impact of the differences in attaining intimate relationship satisfaction while also considering occupational and operational stressors experienced and the tenure of officers.

Law enforcement officers have job requirements contributing to conflict within their intimate relationships. The everyday exposure to situations not experienced by non-law enforcement people has been known to affect interactions between officers and family members. Additionally, career demands such as long hours, shift work, and the environment are associated with poor marital functioning (Tuttle et al., 2018). These demands often make officers' work challenging, causing spillover into their romantic life and increasing conflict. Observations have been made that officers tend to have high rates of divorce and suicide (Bannish & Ruiz, 2003).

The studies reviewed have many limitations, including an equal division of males and females in the participant pool. Studies have also focused on marital relationships, eliminating other intimate romantic partnerships. By acknowledging various relationship types, my research ensured that officers of both genders in all kinds of relationships would be represented, creating a more accurate depiction of law enforcement relationships, and therefore setting the groundwork for the treatment of law enforcement officers experiencing the impact of stress and tenure.

Rationale

Research to determine intimate relationship satisfaction among law enforcement officers is limited. Researchers have focused primarily on male officers and divorce rates. This narrow focus reduced or eliminated female officers and intimate relationships other than marriage. In addition, divorce rates have been documented as varying from 14% to 80% (Buscho, 2019). In this study, I aimed to bring attention to all types of romantic, intimate relationships and differences in male and female officers' ability to deal with stress and its impact. Because relationship satisfaction is critical for mental health, identifying the impact of stress, tenure, and gender can provide information to ensure law enforcement productivity and citizen support are at their highest potential.

Impact and Implication of Study

This quantitative study compared intimate relationship satisfaction between male and female law enforcement officers and determined if stress and tenure were contributing factors. Separation and divorce rates vary, making determination of the need for intimate relationship therapy or law enforcement officers' ongoing mental health treatment complex. Research has shown a strong correlation between adverse mental health and divorce (Sander et al., 2020). Determining effects on law enforcement officers of both genders can increase intimate relationship satisfaction and reduce separation and divorce rates. This reduction may positively impact wellness, increasing relationship satisfaction and productivity and decreasing negative behavior.

Research has found that law enforcement officers' work environment and unique characteristics create "stress spillover" from work to home (McQuerrey et al., 2018).

Stressful situations, including work and family stressors, take a physical and emotional toll (McQuerrey et al., 2018). The effects of stress have been found to contribute to various issues, all of which reduce work productivity. Employee wellness has also been linked to productivity, organizational gains, and employee success (Pawar et al., 2022).

In other studies, the introduction of the effects of tenure has been limited. Officers with higher tenure levels have been documented as suffering from higher organizational stress levels (Ledford et al., 2021; Padilla, 2020). Segovia (2022) stated, “Organizational, operational, and personal factors contribute to occupational stress, and research indicates a positive correlation between improved public safety and officer wellness.”

Determining the factors that underwrite relationship satisfaction in both men and women can reduce the stressors that contribute to issues with productivity and mental health concerns among law enforcement. By ensuring that both genders and the various types of relationships are represented, it is more likely that this study will positively impact law enforcement officers and, therefore, the communities they serve and protect. This study identified the impact of gender, stress, and tenure (independent variables) on relationship satisfaction (dependent variable).

Conceptual Framework

Previous research does not identify the differences in intimate relationship satisfaction based on gender in law enforcement but identifies stress and tenure issues in relationships. Based on research, each of these independent variables has an impact; however, due to limitations in the participation of women, it is not clear whether gender is also a factor in the dependent variable of relationship satisfaction for law enforcement.

This study recognized the relationship satisfaction concept and the impact of gender, stress, and tenure.

Chapter Summary

Relationship satisfaction is a key component to mental health which impacts officers in their personal and professional lives. Limited research in this area as it directly relates to law enforcement personnel has been noted, especially in relation to gender, varying relationship categories, and gender difference. This study provided a basis for the identification of stressors that contribute to a reduction in relationship satisfaction, reduced productivity, and provided insight into the differences of male and female officers.

Because wellness is linked to relationship satisfaction, determining stress components by gender has the potential to create programs to assist in mental health treatment of law enforcement. This increased mental health treatment may also impact relationship satisfaction and reduce relationship failure by identifying specific occupation and organizational issues.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The following literature review will support law enforcement officers' complexity and identify if gender affects their intimate relationship satisfaction. This review is divided into three components. The law enforcement profession emphasizes associated risks, communication, and resilience. This chapter also includes a review of barriers encountered by female law enforcement officers. Research has found that the often-toxic work environment of law enforcement creates stress spillover that affects home life and intimate relationships of officers (Karaffa et al., 2014; Tuttle et al., 2018).

Stressors that impact law enforcement are internal, external, organizational, and occupational. The division between work and family roles causes difficulties within their relationships (Brodie & Eppler, 2012; Karaffa et al., 2014; Tuttle et al., 2018). Stress spillover between work and home has been found to contribute to dissatisfaction in their relationship (McQuerrey et al., 2018), impacting performance and professionalism in law enforcement. Additionally, tenure has been found to contribute to occupational stress.

The final section of this chapter addresses the concept of intimate relationship satisfaction, the impact of gender, and a summary of surveys utilized for assessing relationships, determining relationship satisfaction, and identifying stress in law enforcement. Gender and intimate relationship types were examined to identify overall satisfaction among officers. Research has shown that women and men differ in their strategies to attain intimate relationship satisfaction (Legkauskas & Pazniokaite, 2018).

Law Enforcement Profession

Every day, over 660,000 (Duffin, 2022) law enforcement professionals accept the responsibility of protecting and serving citizens of their communities. Law enforcement has been described as a culture with many benefits and detriments, such as personal, psychological, and physical tolls (Woody, 2005). Communities expect their officers to handle the most violent of situations while also being able to handle cases requiring sensitivity. While seen as a noble profession, law enforcement brings many issues affecting the individual and family. Risks affect communication and test officers' resilience, often causing relationship struggles. Officers are expected to identify with two roles: an officer and a family member (Papazoglou et al., 2018). When their shift ends, officers are expected to transform into partners, parents, and friends (Papazoglou et al., 2018).

Law enforcement officers face risks from different directions. Health risks include the effects of insomnia, anxiety, heart disease, obesity, and excessive alcohol consumption. In addition to the physical risks, occupational stress in police officers and exposure to traumatic events consistently may lead to posttraumatic stress (Ballenger et al., 2010), which may cause an inability to maintain healthy relationships.

Resilience summarizes the idea of adaptation and the ability to overcome stressful situations. "Psychological resilience is considered a capacity to handle severe stressors" (Meulen et al., 2019). Officers are expected to be able to cope with personal stressors experienced in daily life while also being able to guide citizens. Often it is the relationships of officers that are neglected.

Police work has been identified as a stressful career, especially in the United States (Challacombe et al., 2018). Arguments have been made about law enforcement officers developing traits such as cynicism, aloofness, authoritarianism, suspiciousness, psychopathology, and alienation (Bannish & Ruiz, 2003; Evans, 1992; Gerber & Ward, 2008). The development of these traits assists in dealing with job stress. Law enforcement officers have been known for having Type A personalities. The measure of the Type A construct is characterized by the tendency to work hard under pressure and be competitive (Evans et al., 1992). These traits are not necessarily the traits desired by citizens or relationship partners.

Research regarding police personality has been the target of many projects. The results of these studies have had various outcomes. Research has found a difference in the characters of law enforcement personnel. In contrast, others have found that the impact of tenure and prior professions contribute more to an officers ability to handle traumatic situations (Ledford et al., 2021). This study examined whether these personality traits contribute to relationship satisfaction.

Stressors

According to von Dawans and Heinrichs (2019), “Stress is an omnipresent phenomenon in our lives.” Stress is any event that adversely affects physical and psychological health (Murphy & Loria, 2017). The work of a first responder has been included on a short list of professions that expose individuals to repeated high-risk stressful situations and put them at risk for different mental disorders (Velazquez & Hernandez, 2019; Angehrn et al., 2021). Occupational stress is associated with several

adverse organizational outcomes, including stress and job satisfaction (McCreary & Thompson, 2006). These conditions add to “at-work productivity loss, early retirement, alcohol abuse, divorce, and increased rates of suicide” (Haugen et al., 2017, p. 219). Officers are tasked with maintaining professionalism and empathy and providing services to their communities, often negatively affecting their mental health. According to Violanti and Patton (1999), law enforcement officers see more distressing events in their careers than are experienced by civilians. Gender differences affect stressors in the same profession (Angehrn et al., 2021).

Internal Stressors

Internal stress comes from inside of us. It comes from our inability to handle mental stress. Internal stressors include fear and self-doubt. Fear in law enforcement contributes to actions based on fear of failure, reliability of equipment, increase in escalated behavior, and fear of behavior evaluation. Current community practices have created officers who second-guess their tactics. Street-level hesitation rooted in fear becomes an additional factor creating internal stress on officers (Zacarese, 2014).

Self-doubt creates an inability to make decisions and act during critical incidents. The effects of internal stress lead to pessimism, low self-esteem, and unhealthy standards for yourself and your partners. Handling internal stress includes journaling, exercise, and therapy. According to Zhao and Chang (2022), “Chronic self-doubters are consistently unable to feel secure about their competence in important areas.”

External Stressors

External stressors are those things that are out of our control. Occupational stressors such as shift work, lack of resources, policy, and professional inconsistency have been cited as stress caused by police organizations (Tuttle et al., 2018). In addition to organizational stress, personal stress attributed to financial struggles, injury, illness, and busy schedules also contribute. These stressors range in severity from individual to individual and are only as detrimental to your life as your ability to handle them. According to Neff and Karney (2009), stress can interfere with relationship satisfaction due to the depletion of resources necessary to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Effects of Stress

Stress significantly threatens physical, psychological, and behavioral health (Chrousos, 2009). Men tend to suffer from physical impairment, such as increased heart disease, reduced sperm count, accelerated prostate cancer, and electrolyte dysfunction. Psychologically men become depressed, irritable, and prone to anger. Research has also found negative behavior such as alcohol cravings (Clay et al., 2018), loneliness, and isolation (Champagne, 2019). Stress management, associated anxiety, and depression are part of positive emotional management (Pawar, 2022).

Stress affects women in different ways. Research has found that females are associated with a higher stress level (Costa et al., 2021). Physically, women suffer from weight gain, poor digestion, and insomnia. Each physical condition has additional effects, such as altering hormones, which causes irregular periods and reduced libido (Costa et

al., 2021). These effects increase over-eating, angry outbursts, crying spells, and relationship conflict.

Gender

The common idea that men and women are different has been the target of many research studies. Gender differences in personality have been documented within the realm of the “Big Five” (Weisberg et al., 2011). Studies have shown differences in personality between the genders and brain structure (Nostro et al., 2017). Many people have found or perceived that female and male personalities differ. However, to adequately determine the differences, empirical research must be conducted to identify variations in the methods of dealing with relationships. Even though gender roles are becoming less prevalent (Asselmann & Specht, 2020), differences in roles and expectations contribute to personality differences (Neisser et al., 1996). This study aimed to identify how trait variances contribute. Although many research studies have shown that men and women score higher in certain traits, it does not preclude that certain men and women share similar characteristics.

Research has shown that men and women have different stressors. Gender roles are natural. Under most circumstances, roles can be considered old-fashioned and sexist. According to Guleroglu and Yilmaz (2022), “gender is one of the most important variables in working life.” These differences are some of the most impactful issues in both one’s professional and personal life for both genders, especially women (Guleroglu & Yilmaz, 2022). While professional standards have changed as women have entered the workforce, most gender-specific roles have not.

Male Gender

Men are seen as the “breadwinners,” strong and resilient. Women are seen as the caretakers for their families. Movements toward equality are having effects on romantic association. A mismatched opinion on the importance of gender roles can hurt relationships (Pascale & Primavera, 2020). The male personality is more logical in thinking and dealing with relationships (Moir & Jessel, 1991). However, this trait does not mean that men cannot behave emotionally. Society expects male law enforcement to be warm and caring (Wester & Lyubelsky, 2005). Research has found that male personalities are more driven to find a suitable mate (Weisberg et al., 2011). They are known to be more assertive, risk-taking, and aggressive. The idea that men should be challenging, self-reliant, and independent affects law enforcement officers (Papazoglou et al., 2018).

Female Gender

Routine stress for women in law enforcement often intersects with gender-based discrimination because of culture (Brown et al., 2017). Women in law enforcement report more significant bias, harassment, and lack of confidence in their work partners due to their gender (Charles et al., 2011; Hassell et al., 2009). Because law enforcement is perceived as a masculine profession, women struggle to gain acceptance from their peers (He et al., 2005, p. 536). Women use emotive, intuitive, and creative right brains. This has made women more effective communicators, listeners, and multitaskers (Moir & Jessel, 1991). Women view their interactions with others from an emotional perspective.

In the context of the “Big Five,” women are more agreeable, meaning they are tenderer and nurturing (Weisberg et al., 2011).

Intimate Relationship Satisfaction

Work and intimate relationships are two critical aspects of a person’s life. Consideration regarding the balance of the two is necessary to ensure satisfaction. Gottman (1998) stated, “Understanding relationship satisfaction involves the study of what is functional in intimate relationships and what leads to relationship satisfaction in the everyday interaction of couples.”

Gender Differences

A potential impact on relationship satisfaction is gender and the differences in the perception of satisfaction (Cahill et al., 2020). In 2001, Westman stated that the differences between men and women encompass several areas. Reaction, family involvement, and traditional expectation of men and women should be considered a moderator of relationship satisfaction (Westman, 2001). Research has found “moderately sized” differences between men and women and the distribution of their personality traits (Hyde, 2014). This difference includes handling stress and, for women, the need to relate to others during these times (Schultz et al., 2004). Conversely, men tend to withdraw emotionally (Schultz et al., 2004). This study was aimed at identifying the differences in males’ and females’ ability to handle stress and its impact on relationship interaction and satisfaction.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

In this study, I explored intimate relationship satisfaction among law enforcement officers considering gender and its impact. This study used a random sample of participants targeting officers with at least 5 years of experience in a committed intimate relationship or who have been involved in a committed relationship. An anonymous online questionnaire accomplished the collection of data. The central research question was, “Does gender impact intimate relationship satisfaction in law enforcement personnel?”

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a difference in law enforcement officers’ reported intimate relationship satisfaction based on gender?

RQ2: Do police stressors contribute to the intimate relationship satisfaction of law enforcement officers?

RQ3: Does the tenure of a law enforcement officer play a role in intimate relationship satisfaction?

Instrumentation

I used four instruments in this quantitative study: the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale (Appendix D) (Zacchilli et al., 2009), the Relationship Assessment Scale (Appendix C) (Hendrick, 1988), and the Operational (Appendix A) and Organizational (Appendix B) Police Stress Questionnaire (McCreary & Thompson, 2013).

Romantic Partner Conflict Scale

The Romantic Partner Conflict Scale (Zacchilli et al., 2009) contains 43 items and is answered on a Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). The items address relationship satisfaction based on the following constructs: communication, love, sexuality, satisfaction, respect, and sex differences. Gender was assessed by asking participants to identify their gender as male or female. Zacchilli et al. (2009) conducted test-retest reliability analyses for the six subscales by administering the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale; the correlations were compromised ($r = .82$), domination ($r = .85$), avoidance ($r = .70$), submission ($r = .72$), separation ($r = .76$), and interactional reactivity ($r = .85$). Additional studies providing support for the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale were conducted by McCutcheon et al. (2016) and Tibbetts and Scharfe (2015) providing reliability coefficients ranging from .69 to .95. The overall reliability of the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale is excellent.

Relationship Assessment Scale

The Relationship Assessment Scale is a seven-question generic measurement of relationship satisfaction (Hendrick, 1988). The Relationship Assessment Scale utilizes a Likert Scale (1 = *poorly* to 5 = *exceptionally well*). These scales require a mode and median for central tendency and frequencies of variability (Boone & Boone, 2012). Likert scales are analyzed by creating a mean from the items in the interval measurement scale. Research has found that the internal consistency for the Relationship Assessment Scale was high, with Cronbach's alpha of .91. (Anibal Gonzalez-Rivera., 2020). In addition, Anibal Gonzalez-Rivera (2020) analyzed the discrimination of the Relationship

Assessment Scale items utilizing corrected item-total correlations. The discrimination indexes ranged between .62 and .86, greater than the minimum value of .30 (Kline, 2005).

Operational and Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire

The Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire and The Operational Police Stress Questionnaire both contain 20 questions utilizing a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*No stress at all*) to 7 (*A lot of Stress*; McCreary & Thompson, 2013). The Cronbach's alpha for the Operational Police Stress Questionnaire was .90. In contrast, the alpha for the Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire was .89. According to McCreary and Thompson (2013), "Corrected item-total correlations were used to determine whether an item was contributing poorly to its scale's internal consistency. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), these statistics should be greater than or equal to .30. Only one item on the Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (Shift Work) and one item on the Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire (Lack of Resources/Inadequate Equipment) had values that did not meet this threshold."

Chapter Summary

Literature relating to law enforcement personnel, stress, and gender differences identified focus areas for this research. Because the law enforcement profession brings with it its own specific stress related issues, acknowledgement of gender differences and related role expectations provided for the overall platform of this study.

Officers, both male and female, experience and express their stress differently. Physical and emotional symptoms of stress vary by gender. This study aimed to identify

the areas of stress based on gender utilizing instrumentation used to address areas of occupational and organizational stress and its impact on overall relationship satisfaction, physical and emotional wellbeing which also vary by gender.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Chapter Overview

This study utilized data obtained from law enforcement officers with a minimum of 5 years of experience who are married, divorced, remarried, cohabitating, or in a serious intimate relationship. Links for the survey were disseminated via email to a random sample of male and female participants, utilizing Facebook, and a QR Code provided. The study was intended to answer the question, “Does gender impact intimate relationship satisfaction in law enforcement officers?” Ultimately, the desired outcome is to identify whether there is a notable difference in female and male law enforcement intimate relationship satisfaction by addressing gender, stress, and tenure and the effect on relationship satisfaction in law enforcement. Procedures, participants, and methods of collection are discussed in this chapter. In addition, the ethical considerations and limitations of this study are addressed.

Research conducted to analyze the effects of law enforcement work-related stresses concluded, “Findings supported the hypotheses that career demands related to organizational, operational, and external stress of policing were positively associated with negative marital functioning” (Tuttle et al., 2018).

Methodology

This quantitative study documents reported intimate relationship satisfaction among law enforcement officers and identifies whether there is a difference between male and female officers. This first research step in identifying issues relating to intimate relationship satisfaction in law enforcement was the analysis of data collected from a

random sample utilizing the survey method. The results of this study were then used to identify the role gender plays in intimate relationship satisfaction.

The life of a law enforcement officer can be more stressful, causing unrealistic pressure on law enforcement partners (Borum & Philpot, 1993). Due to this stress, officers may experience conflict that impacts their professional life and the conflict that influences their personal and social life (Karrafa et al., 2015). The study of this impact will serve as a compass for directing marital or intimate relationship assistance.

Data Collection

Participation and Recruitment

Participants for this study were recruited from law enforcement agencies throughout the Midwest region of the United States. It was essential to the validity of this study to ensure an equal number of male and female participants. Studies involving law enforcement have been known to represent more males than females. Ensuring equality within the study was critical to the overall completion of the study. The study recruited an equal number of male and female participants with a range of years of employment and various relationship types.

Participants have a minimum of 5 years of law enforcement experience. In addition, identification of their relationship type (marriage, divorce, cohabitating) was collected. A G Power analysis was conducted and determined a sample size of 74 was appropriate. This research had an equal number of each gender which provided for validity in the study (48 males/51 females).

Female Participants

Recruitment of participants was conducted in various ways. I recruited female participants from local agencies; classes taught through the Southern Illinois Law Enforcement Commission and instruction provided through Calibre Press which targets female officers. Their email addresses were gathered to assist in the dissemination process. In addition, the women who agreed to participate were asked to recruit other women from their jurisdiction and agency. Before beginning the study, an email was forwarded to all participants who had expressed a desire to complete the survey. A Facebook post was also created for dissemination to local agencies and a QR Code provided in training venues.

Male Participants

Recruitment of male participants was handled in similar methods utilized to recruit female participants. I obtained email addresses, as well as Facebook contacts. These contacts were made for confirmation of their willingness to participate. Male participants are more accessible than their female counterparts. Male participants were recruited from local agencies and classes taught with the Southern Illinois Law Enforcement Commission.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1: Is there a difference in law enforcement officers' reported intimate relationship satisfaction based on gender?

H_0 1: Gender will significantly affect intimate relationship satisfaction in law enforcement personnel.

RQ2: Do police stressors contribute to the intimate relationship satisfaction of law enforcement officers?

H_02 : Police stressors significantly affect intimate relationship satisfaction in law enforcement personnel.

RQ3: Does the tenure of a law enforcement officer play a role in intimate relationship satisfaction?

H_03 : Tenure will significantly affect intimate relationship satisfaction in law enforcement personnel.

Statistically, the null hypothesis was to be rejected if gender, stress, or tenure did not affect relationship satisfaction.

Data Analysis

For this study, I used various methods of analysis including t-test, Mann-Whitney u-test, Pearsons correlation, Kruskal Wallis, and the multiple regression model. The surveys represent a quantitative research design. The surveys targeted the answers to three research questions that identify the dependent variable of relationship satisfaction and the independent variables of gender, stress, and tenure.

Measurement and Instrumentation

Questionnaires were completed electronically utilizing an online survey data collection tool. Additional demographic information was collected regarding gender, tenure, and type of relationships.

Romantic Partner Conflict Scale

The Romantic Partner Conflict Scale (Zacchilli et al., 2009) was used to measure the dependent variable “relationship satisfaction.” This scale contains 43 items and is answered on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The items address relationship satisfaction based on the following constructs: communication, love, sexuality, satisfaction, respect, and sex differences. Gender was assessed by asking participants to identify their gender as male or female. The type of assignment was assessed by asking participants to identify their positions as follows: patrol, investigations, training, or administrative. Zacchilli et al. (2009) conducted test-retest reliability analyses for the six subscales by administering the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale; the correlations were compromised ($r = .82$), domination ($r = .85$), avoidance ($r = .70$), submission ($r = .72$), separation ($r = .76$), and interactional reactivity ($r = .85$). Additional studies providing support for the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale were conducted by McCutcheon et al. (2016) and Tibbetts and Scharfe (2015) providing reliability coefficients ranging from .69 to .95. The overall reliability of the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale is excellent.

Relationship Assessment Scale

The Relationship Assessment Scale is a seven-question generic measurement of relationship satisfaction. (Hendrick, 1988). The Relationship Assessment Scale utilizes a Likert Scale (1 = *poorly* to 5 = *exceptionally well*). These scales require a mode and median for central tendency and frequencies of variability (Boone & Boone, 2012). Likert scales are analyzed by creating a mean from the items in the interval measurement

scale. Research has found that the internal consistency for the Relationship Assessment Scale was high, with Cronbach's alpha of .91 (Anibal Gonzalez-Rivera., 2020). In addition, Anibal Gonzalez-Rivers (2020) analyzed the discrimination of the Relationship Assessment Scale items utilizing Corrected item-total correlations. The discrimination indexes ranged between .62 and .86, greater than the minimum value of .30 (Kline, 2005).

The Organizational and Operational Police Stress Questionnaires

The Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire and The Operational Police Stress Questionnaire both contain 20 questions utilizing a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*No stress at all*) to 7 (*A lot of stress*; McCreary & Thompson, 2013). Cronbach's alpha for the Operational Police Stress Questionnaire was .90. In contrast, the alpha for the Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire was .89. According to McCreary & Thompson (2013), "Corrected item-total correlations were used to determine whether an item was contributing poorly to its scale's internal consistency. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), these statistics should be greater than or equal to .30. Only one item on the Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (Shift Work) and one item on the Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire (Lack of Resources/Inadequate Equipment) had values that did not meet this threshold."

Ethical Considerations

Ethical behavior in completing this research study helped ensure the completion was positive and steered the outcomes in a beneficial direction. Permission to conduct this study was received by the Internal Review Board (IRB #01-05-23-1057667).

Because this study concerned relationship satisfaction, consideration for the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants was critical to the study's validity. Ensuring participation was voluntary and communicating the purpose of the study eliminated the potential for harm to participants. The three principles of the *Belmont Report* of the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical Research (1979); justice, beneficence, and respect, provided the platform for ethical considerations.

Participants, both male, and female, who fit the criteria for the testing pool were utilized for this study. Informed consent was requested before finalizing the list of participants by providing a consent form that addressed the three components of consent: (a) disclosure, (b) facilitating understanding, and (c) promoting voluntariness. No coercion to secure participants occurred. The participants completed the surveys anonymously to avoid any consequences in their relationships or employment. Responses will remain confidential.

Because this study involved a discussion of stress and relationship satisfaction, there was the potential to cause unintended physical or emotional symptoms and unhealthy behaviors. The concept of beneficence is often understood as covering acts of kindness by ensuring that no harm comes to the participants and that potential benefits are maximized (Kinsinger, 2009).

To ensure harm to participants was minimized by identifying those who may be more prone to extreme stress and therefore vulnerable to harm and ensuring that participants are comfortable discontinuing their completion of surveys, an open communication format was encouraged from the onset of the study. An identifying

questionnaire was requested before the study survey to address any concerns before the study and to identify anyone currently experiencing high-stress levels by asking about their current stress levels.

Limitation of Study

The primary limitation of this study is the accuracy of the data obtained. Self-reporting survey data can be biased due to varying subjective assessments (Masood et al., 2012). In addition, ensuring an equal range of participants and their relationship types took work. Because this study aimed to identify satisfaction rates among many relationship types, some categories of relationships may be more highly represented than others. Other limitations included the size of the questionnaire. This study included four independent questionnaires. Initially, the time suggested for the completion of the instruments was expected to be much longer than needed.

From an epistemological perspective, the relationship between loyalty to their romantic partner and loyalty to their organization may have affected the honesty of the participants. Being open to identifying stress and relationship satisfaction may have been stressful. Each of these concerns had the potential to limit participation.

Implication of Study

The intended implication of this study was to determine whether gender impacts relationship satisfaction in law enforcement. Satisfaction in relationships is not only critical to mental health but also productivity. By recognizing differences by gender, law enforcement officers and their families will benefit by identifying areas of concern which are necessary to develop healthy relationships. By attaining healthy behaviors in

relationships, officers increase their support and reduce the likelihood of mental health issues. This study's purpose was to identify gender as the basis for satisfaction and acknowledge the necessary components to attain it.

By determining the impact of gender on relationship satisfaction in law enforcement, researchers can identify methods utilized to attain it and therefore increase the mental health of law enforcement. This identification may serve as a platform for future research with the ability to guide treatment for officers and their families.

Chapter Summary

The Internal Review Board (IRB) approved the collection of data from four independent surveys, each utilizing a likert scale (IRB #01-05-23-1057667). This study aimed to attain participants of equal numbers of male and female officers; this was accomplished allowing for equal participation. The results of this quantitative study were analyzed using a combination of analysis methods (t-test, u-test, and the multiple regression model).

Although this study had several limitations, recruitment of equal male and female participants was not one of them. The results have the potential to positively impact the mental health of law enforcement officers. The instruments used identified conflict issues, assessment of relationships, and operational and organizational stressors. The results of this data collection can serve by providing the issues most needing to be addressed.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Chapter 4 presents the results of the analysis conducted, which intends to answer the research question: Does gender impact relationship satisfaction in law enforcement? The chapter contains seven sections and a chapter summary. The first section discusses methods of data collection. The second section provides information regarding descriptive statistics and the rate of response. The third section contains reliability analysis results for the surveys utilized in this study. The fourth compares intimate relationship satisfaction between male and female law enforcement officers. The fifth is analyzing the relationship between the intimate satisfaction of law enforcement officers and police stress. The sixth examines the relationship between relationship satisfaction and tenure. The seventh is a comparison between genders regarding operational and organizational police stress.

Method of Data Collection

Data collection was accomplished utilizing an online collection tool. Responses to four independent surveys were then analyzed with a variety of analysis methods (t-test, Mann-Whitney u-test, Pearsons correlation, Kruskal Wallis, and the multiple regression model). Questionnaires were forwarded to email addresses, social media, or QR codes. Participants who fit the criteria of the testing pool were allowed to participate. The surveys utilized included the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale (Zacchilli et al., 2009), the Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, 1988), and the Organizational and Operational

Police Stress Questionnaires (McCreary & Thompson, 2013). Each survey served to contribute to the answers to this study's research questions.

Research Questions

The primary research question was examined quantitatively by utilizing four surveys that address relationship conflict, relationship satisfaction, and operational and organizational police stress. This study aimed to answer the question, "Does gender impact relationship satisfaction in law enforcement?" The purpose was to determine whether officers of different genders had different experiences with their romantic relationships. Considerations were also made for tenure and stress experienced from employment as a law enforcement professional.

RQ1: Is there a difference in law enforcement officers' reported intimate relationship satisfaction based on gender?

RQ2: Do police stressors contribute to the intimate relationship satisfaction of law enforcement officers?

RQ3: Does the tenure of a law enforcement officer play a role in intimate relationship satisfaction?

Findings

The data presented in this current study can be viewed as an overall representation of the differences and similarities between women and men in law enforcement. Ninety-nine individuals completed the survey: 48 male and 51 female officers. The majority of participants (75) were married, 10 were dating, 10 were cohabitating, and four were divorced. The range of tenure for participants ranged from 5 to 25+ years.

The collection of demographic information included tenure. Males with 5 to 10 years of experience accounted for only 2% of the survey participants. Women with 5 to 10 years accounted for 45.10% of those completing the survey. In contrast, men with 25+ years of experience accounted for 34.69% of the participants. Women with 25+ accounted for 11.76% of the participants. This illustrates that while women are entering the law enforcement profession, they tend to leave prior to attaining tenure of 25+ years. Previous research has found that while women leave law enforcement for many of the same reasons men do, they often leave for reasons different from male officers, including starting a family (Angehrn et al., 2021).

The research questions were examined using four quantitative surveys: The Romantic Partner Conflict Scale, the Relationship Assessment Scale, Operational Police Stress Questionnaire, and the Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire. The purpose of utilizing four independent surveys was to identify the areas contributing to the satisfaction level. Analysis was conducted to determine the difference in gender and its causative impact.

Participants were recruited from Midwestern states (North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio) with at least 5 years of law enforcement experience. Recruitment included all forms of relationships, including heterosexual and same-sex relationships. The anonymous surveys included demographic questions relating to gender, years of law enforcement experience, relationship type, and length of the relationship. Including all relationship types, such as cohabitation and same-sex relationships, allows for a more comprehensive depiction of

law enforcement personnel and their relationships. As noted in many studies, the limitations of married male officers provided limited focus in the results.

Descriptive Statistics

There were 99 participants: 48.50% males and 51.50% females; 10.10% of participants were single, 10.10% in a relationship, 75.80% married, and 4.00% divorced (see Table 1). The frequencies for participants' years of law enforcement experience and length of relationship are presented in Table 2.

Table 1

Frequencies for Gender and Relationship Status

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	48	48.50
Female	51	51.50
Relationship status		
Single	10	10.10
In a relationship	10	10.10
Married	75	75.80
Divorced	4	4.00

Table 2*Years of Law Enforcement Experience and Length of Relationship in Years*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Years of law enforcement experience		
5-10 years	24	24.20
11-15 years	15	15.20
16-20 years	21	21.20
21-24 years	17	17.20
25+ years	22	22.20
Length of relationship in years		
1-5 years	22	22.20
6-10 years	21	21.20
11-15 years	19	19.20
16-20 years	12	12.10
21-24 years	9	9.10
25+ years	16	16.20

Reliability Analysis Results

Reliability analysis was done to determine whether the scales Romantic Partner Conflict Scale, Relationship Assessment Scale, Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire, and Operational Police Stress Questionnaire have a good internal validity and reliability. The results showed that the scales have a good internal validity and reliability (Cronbach's alpha > .60). The mean Romantic Partner Conflict Scale score is 2.96 ($SD = .35$). The mean Relationship Assessment Scale score is 3.44 ($SD = .59$). The mean Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire score is 3.51 ($SD = 1.03$). The mean Operational Police Stress Questionnaire score is 3.49 ($SD = 1.15$; see Table 3).

Table 3

Cronbach's Alpha, Means, and Standard Deviations for Romantic Partner Conflict Scale, Relationship Assessment Scale, Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire, and Operational Police Stress Questionnaire

Variable	No. of items	Cronbach's α	M	SD
Romantic Partner Conflict Scale	43	.776	2.96	.35
Relationship Assessment Scale	7	.801	3.44	.59
Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire	20	.890	3.51	1.03
Operational Police Stress Questionnaire	20	.912	3.49	1.15

Comparisons of Intimate Relationship Satisfaction Between Male and Female Law

Enforcement Officers

RQ1: Is there a difference in law enforcement officers reported intimate relationship satisfaction based on gender?

H_{01} : Gender will significantly affect intimate relationship satisfaction in law enforcement personnel.

The Shapiro-Wilk normality tests were conducted to investigate the normal distribution of data for two scales, the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale, and the Relationship Assessment Scale, across gender. The results (see Table 4) indicated that the data for Romantic Partner Conflict Scale were normally distributed across gender ($p > .05$). Hence, the study employed the parametric independent samples t test to compare the scores of males and females on the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale. Conversely, the data for Relationship Assessment Scale were not normally distributed ($p < .05$), and therefore, the study utilized the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test to compare the scores of males and females on the Relationship Assessment Scale.

Table 4*Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality Results*

Variables	Gender	Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Romantic Partner Conflict Scale	male	.994	47	.998
	female	.973	49	.310
Relationship Assessment Scale	male	.852	47	.000
	female	.943	49	.019

Independent samples *t* test was conducted to determine whether there is a difference in Romantic Partner Conflict Scale between males and females. The results (see Table 5) indicate a non-significant difference in Romantic Partner Conflict Scale between males ($M = 2.92$; $SD = .35$) and females ($M = 2.99$; $SD = .36$), $t(94) = -1.09$, $p = .279$. The 95% confidence interval of the difference ranged from $-.22$ to $.06$ and does not indicate a significant difference between sample means.

Table 5*Independent Samples *t*-Test Results*

Variable	Gender				<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Male ($n = 47$)		Female ($n = 49$)			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Romantic Partner Conflict Scale	2.92	.35	2.99	.36	-1.09	.279

Mann-Whitney *U* test was conducted to determine whether there is a difference in Relationship Assessment Scale between males and females. The results (see Table 6) indicate a non-significant difference in Relationship Assessment Scale between males ($Mdn = 3.57$; $MR = 51.94$) and females ($Mdn = 2.00$; $MR = 46.24$), $Z = -1.01$, $p = .314$.

Table 6*Mann-Whitney U Test Results*

Variable	Gender				Z	p
	Male (n = 47)		Female (n = 50)			
	Mdn	MR	Mdn	MR		
Relationship Assessment Scale	3.57	51.94	2.00	46.24	-1.01	.314

Note. MR = mean rank.

Relationship Between the Intimate Relationship Satisfaction of Law Enforcement Officers and Police Stressors

RQ2: Do police stressors contribute to the intimate relationship satisfaction of law enforcement officers?

H_{02} : Police stressors significantly affect intimate relationship satisfaction in law enforcement personnel.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to determine the relationship between Romantic Partner Conflict Scale, Relationship Assessment Scale, Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire, and Operational Police Stress Questionnaire. The results (see Table 7) indicate a non-significant weak negative relationship between Romantic Partner Conflict Scale and Operational Police Stress Questionnaire, $r(96) = -.061, p = .553$. The results indicate a non-significant weak negative relationship between Romantic Partner Conflict Scale and Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire, $r(96) = -.087, p = .402$. The results indicate a significant weak negative relationship between Relationship Assessment Scale and Operational Police Stress Questionnaire, $r(97) = -.207, p = .042$. As Operational Police Stress Questionnaire increases, Relationship Assessment Scale decreases. The results indicate a non-significant weak negative relationship between

Relationship Assessment Scale and Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire, $r(97) = -.071, p = .488$.

Table 7

Correlations Between Romantic Partner Conflict Scale, Relationship Assessment Scale, Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire, and Operational Police Stress Questionnaire

Instrument	Romantic Partner Conflict Scale	Relationship Assessment Scale	Operational Police Stress Questionnaire	Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire
Romantic Partner Conflict Scale	1			
Relationship Assessment Scale	-.014	1		
Operational Police Stress Questionnaire	-.061	-.207**	1	
Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire	-.087	-.071	.601***	1

*** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .10$

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether Operational Police Stress Questionnaire and Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire predict Romantic Partner Conflict Scale. $R^2 = .008$, indicating that .80% of the variance in Romantic Partner Conflict Scale is explained by Operational Police Stress Questionnaire and Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire. The regression coefficients (see Table 8) indicated that both Operational Police Stress Questionnaire ($B = -.004, p = .913$) and Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire ($B = -.027, p = .548$) were non-significant negative predictors of Romantic Partner Conflict Scale. These results suggest that the levels of police stress, as measured by Operational Police Stress Questionnaire and

Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire, do not significantly influence the level of romantic partner conflict, as measured by Romantic Partner Conflict Scale.

Table 8

Regression Analysis Results

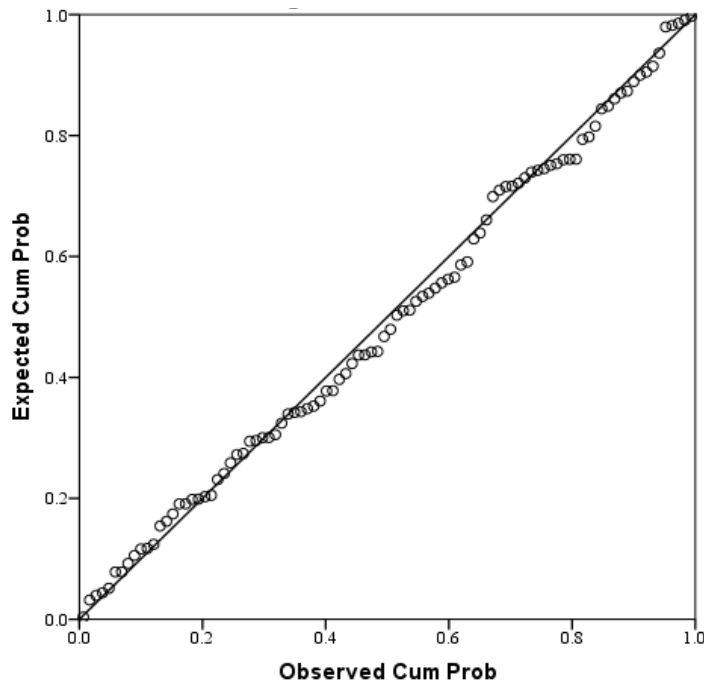
Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	B	<i>SE</i>	Beta		
(Constant)	3.066	.138		22.232	.000
Operational Police Stress Questionnaire	-.004	.040	-.014	-.110	.913
Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire	-.027	.045	-.078	-.602	.548

Note. Dependent variable: Romantic Partner Conflict Scale.

The Durbin-Watson statistic was found to be 1.86, indicating that the assumption of independence of observations has been met. Additionally, the variance inflation factor (VIF) for all independent variables was less than 5, which confirms that the assumption of no multicollinearity has been met. The maximum Cook's distance was .12, further indicating that there are no significant outliers in the data, thus satisfying this assumption as well. Finally, the normal probability-probability plot of the regression standardized residual demonstrates that the residuals are approximately normally distributed. This finding suggests that the assumption of normality of residuals has also been met, supporting the validity of the multiple regression analysis (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual



The multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether Operational Police Stress Questionnaire and Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire predict Relationship Assessment Scale. The model (see Table 9) accounts for 4.70% of the variance in Relationship Assessment Scale, $R^2 = .047$. When examining the individual independent variables, the Operational Police Stress Questionnaire is a significant negative predictor of Relationship Assessment Scale ($B = -.133$, $p = .044$), which means that as scores on Operational Police Stress Questionnaire increase, Relationship Assessment Scale scores decrease. The Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire is not a significant positive predictor of Relationship Assessment Scale ($B = .049$, $p = .510$).

Table 9*Regression Analysis Results*

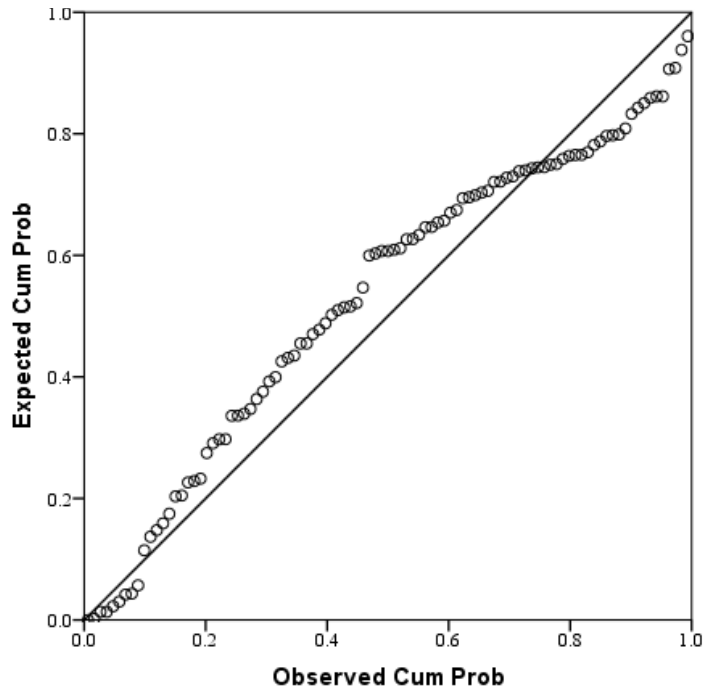
Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	B	<i>SE</i>	Beta		
(Constant)	3.732	.227		16.462	.000
Operational Police Stress Questionnaire	-.133	.065	-.257	-2.040	.044
Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire	.049	.074	.083	.661	.510

Note. Dependent variable: Relationship Assessment Scale.

A Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.14 was obtained, indicating that the assumption of independence of observations has been satisfied. The assumption of no multicollinearity has also been met as evidenced by the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for all independent variables being less than 5. Additionally, the maximum Cook's distance of .14 supports the conclusion that there are no significant outliers in the data. However, the normal probability-probability plot of the regression standardized residual shows that the residuals slightly deviate from normal distribution (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual



The Relationship Between the Tenure of a Law Enforcement Officer and Intimate Relationship Satisfaction

RQ3: Does the tenure of a law enforcement officer play a role in intimate relationship satisfaction?

H_{03} : Tenure will significantly affect intimate relationship satisfaction in law enforcement personnel.

The results of Shapiro-Wilk test of normality shows that data for Romantic Partner Conflict Scale are normally distributed for all years of law enforcement experience groups ($p > .05$) except for group 21-24 years of law enforcement experience ($p < .05$). The results also showed that data for Relationship Assessment Scale are

normally distributed for all years of law enforcement experience groups ($p > .05$) except for group 25+ years of law enforcement experience ($p < .05$). Therefore, we will use non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test to determine whether there is an effect of years of law enforcement experience on Romantic Partner Conflict Scale and Relationship Assessment Scale.

Table 10

Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality Results

	Years of law enforcement experience	Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Romantic Partner Conflict Scale	5-10 years	.958	23	.415
	11-15 years	.973	14	.919
	16-20 years	.936	21	.185
	21-24 years	.881	17	.033
	25+ years	.949	21	.329
Relationship Assessment Scale	5-10 years	.936	23	.146
	11-15 years	.892	14	.085
	16-20 years	.935	21	.169
	21-24 years	.900	17	.067
	25+ years	.842	21	.003

Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to determine the effect of years of law enforcement experience (5-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-24, 25+ years) on Romantic Partner Conflict Scale and Relationship Assessment Scale. The results show a significant effect of years of law enforcement experience on Romantic Partner Conflict Scale, $\chi^2_{(4)} = 11.55$, $p = .021$. The highest median Romantic Partner Conflict Scale is for participants who had 16-20 years of experience ($Mdn = 3.14$, $MR = 60.60$), while the lowest was for those who had 11-15 years of law enforcement experience ($Mdn = 2.74$, $MR = 30.46$). The results

show a non-significant effect of years of law enforcement experience on Relationship

Assessment Scale, $\chi^2_{(4)} = 8.11$, $p = .088$.

Table 11

Kruskal-Wallis Test Results

		Years of law enforcement experience			χ^2	p
		<i>n</i>	<i>MR</i>	<i>Mdn</i>		
Romantic Partner Conflict Scale	5-10 years	23	52.07	2.96	11.55	.021
	11-15 years	14	30.46	2.74		
	16-20 years	21	60.60	3.14		
	21-24 years	17	41.03	2.84		
	25+ years	21	50.57	2.98		
Relationship Assessment Scale	5-10 years	24	48.06	3.43	8.11	.088
	11-15 years	14	44.57	3.43		
	16-20 years	21	46.38	3.57		
	21-24 years	17	65.85	3.86		
	25+ years	21	42.00	3.57		

Comparisons of Operational and Occupational Police Stress Questionnaire Between Males and Females Law enforcement Officers

The Shapiro-Wilk normality tests were conducted to investigate the normal distribution of data for two scales, Operational Police Stress Questionnaire and Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire, across gender. The results indicated that the data for both scales were normally distributed across gender ($p > .05$). Therefore, the study employed the parametric independent samples t-test to compare the scores of males and females on the Operational Police Stress Questionnaire and Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire.

Table 12*Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality Results*

Variables	Gender	Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Operational Police Stress Questionnaire	male	.972	47	.328
	female	.989	50	.909
Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire	male	.969	47	.244
	female	.983	50	.685

Independent samples *t* test was conducted to determine whether there is a difference in Operational Police Stress Questionnaire and Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire between males and females. The results indicate a significant difference in Operational Police Stress Questionnaire between males ($M = 3.06$; $SD = 1.03$) and females ($M = 3.89$; $SD = 1.11$), $t(95) = -3.81$, $p < .001$. The 95% confidence interval of the difference ranged from -1.26 to -.39 and indicates a significant difference between sample means. The mean Operational Police Stress Questionnaire is higher for females than for males. Females have significantly higher Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire ($M = 3.82$; $SD = 1.03$) than males ($M = 3.18$; $SD = .92$), $t(97) = -3.29$, $p = .001$. The 95% confidence interval of the difference ranged from -1.04 to -.26 and indicates a significant difference between sample means.

Table 13*Independent Samples t-Test Results*

Variable	Gender				<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Male		Female			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Op)	3.06	1.03	3.89	1.11	-3.81	< .001
Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Org)	3.18	.92	3.82	1.03	-3.29	.001

Note. M - mean; SD – standard deviations

Chapter Summary

The current research examined the impact of gender, stress, and tenure on relationship satisfaction. Chapter 4 illustrates the influence of each variable. The combination of results from the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale, Relationship Assessment Scale, and The Organizational and Operational Police Stress Questionnaires identify critical aspects of the effect of each variable in conjunction with one another. The findings of this analysis showed the components of organization and operational stressors affected satisfaction more than gender or tenure.

Collection of demographics included tenure. As previously noted, women in law enforcement only represent approximately 13% of officers. The results of this study support provide insight into possible reasons this rate does not increase. Participants in this study with 5-10 years of experience represented over 40% of females. The results provided potential reasons why women leave the profession.

Female participants in this study showed higher impacts of stress than their male counterparts in relation to organizational and operational stress. This finding confirms the

theory that women in law enforcement have a lower rate of tenure than men. The impact of stress related to the law enforcement profession appear to impact the feelings female officers have on their personal lives which in turn influences their romantic relationship satisfaction. In addition, females identify their traditional roles as women add to their professional stress and feelings of discrimination due to their family responsibilities.

Chapter 5: Discussions

Introduction

This quantitative study aimed to identify the impact of gender and the contribution of tenure, operational, and organizational stressors on relationship satisfaction. The romantic relationships of law enforcement officers have often been a research topic. Research has shown that stressors that impact law enforcement personnel often spill over into their personal lives, thus creating conflict and relationship failures (McQuerrey et al., 2018; Roberts et al., 2013; Roberts & Levenson, 2001). Operational stressors such as shift work demands on social life and fatigue (McCreary & Thompson, 2013) and organizational stressors like staff shortages, inconsistent supervision, and unequal sharing of responsibilities (McCreary & Thompson, 2013) contribute to these conflicts and failures.

Men and women of all professions experience stress and relationship conflict for different reasons. Extra responsibilities of family and finances contribute to a separation of genders. As in most families, the male and female roles differ, adding the potential for weakening of the relationship (Heavy et al., 1993). In a study designed to identify the crossover between gender and job satisfaction and family life satisfaction, findings indicated that “job insecurity may be indirectly and negatively related to both members’ family life satisfaction, through the mediation of job satisfaction” (Emanuel et al., 2018).

Researchers often find that families of law enforcement officers have more impactful stress than families of individuals with other professions. Overcoming the idea of the “tough guy” culture contributes to the impact of stress on law enforcement officers

(Dawson, 2019); however, burnout can frequently be associated with stress related to all professional employment (Templeton et. al, 2019). This study has the potential to bring attention to the fact that, regardless of employment, the stress involved may contribute to a reduction in relationship satisfaction, therefore, reducing positive mental health in men and women of all professions. This study focused on law enforcement personnel; however, its findings can contribute to an overall review of stress impacting families regardless of professional status.

Existing studies on law enforcement relationships have focused primarily on married male officers. The failure to represent both men and women as well as relationships that include cohabitants or same-sex partners creates a significant limitation on the results of those studies.

Women in law enforcement represent about 13% of law enforcement officers nationwide (Duffin, 2022). Failure to compile data with equal components of male and female participants is documented in numerous research studies as a limitation. Both male and female officer participation was equally represented in this study, therefore allowing for an analysis containing the input of both genders.

The primary research question was examined quantitatively by applying four surveys that address relationship conflict, relationship satisfaction, and operational and organizational police stress. This study intended to answer the question, “Does gender impact relationship satisfaction in law enforcement?” The purpose was to establish whether officers of different genders had different experiences with their romantic

relationships. In addition to the variable of gender, stress and tenure were also included in the analysis.

The findings of this research, as it related to the impact of gender and stress on relationship satisfaction, were anticipated and supported in the literature. While this research, as well as others, suggest that overall relationship satisfaction is equal (Jackson et al., 2014), contributing factors of relationship satisfaction differ (De Andrade et al., 2015; Legkauskas & Pazniokaite, 2018; Ogolsky & Bowers, 2013). Women have a more significant response to stress than their male counterparts. As stress increased in both men and women, relationship satisfaction reduced.

The anticipated finding was the non-significant difference between gender regarding romantic partner conflict and the assessment of relationships with no additional variables being introduced. The added stress variable on an organizational and operational level contributed more significantly to reduced relationship satisfaction than the variable of gender. Gender, specifically the female gender, was critical to identifying increased stress and its impact on relationship satisfaction. Ultimately, the effect of gender was a significant predictor of stress and, as a result, decreased relationship satisfaction.

Prior to the reported findings, it was believed that because women have greater levels of ongoing life stress (Harrison, 2022), they could handle the additional stress of a law enforcement profession. This belief was grounded in personal experiences and not based on research findings. The results of this study showed this belief was inaccurate.

Interpretation of Findings

The Romantic Partner Conflict Scale measures frequent episodes of relationship conflict and examines the process of handling conflict in relationships. The Relationship Assessment Scale is a short self-report inventory to measure relationship satisfaction. The comparison of intimate relationship satisfaction between males and females was conducted utilizing an independent t -test finding a non-significant difference between males and females. Without the additional findings relative to organizational and operational stress, the results of this study show that men and women are equally satisfied with their relationships.

The Organizational and Operational Police Stress Questionnaires were designed to identify issues of stress that can cause problems with the health and well-being of officers. The Operational Police Stress Questionnaire was designed to identify issues causing additional stress to law enforcement officers related to work demands such as family and social concerns. Although gender roles are not as prevalent as they once were (Asselmann & Spect, 2020), differences in roles and expectations continue to contribute to personality differences (Neisser et al., 1996). The Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire addresses issues of inconsistent leadership, internal management, and personnel-related issues. When added to the analysis of data, the impact of organizational and operational stress reduced the relationship satisfaction for women at a rate much higher than the male officers.

Variable 1: Gender

The main research question in this study is intended to identify the impact of gender on relationship satisfaction. Some researchers have found that gender has the potential to impact the perception of satisfaction (Cahill et al., 2020); others found only a small effect size between genders (Jackson et al., 2014) or no statistical significance between genders (Leghauskas & Paknoikaite, 2018). The results of this study support the research study of Leghauskas and Paknoikaite (2018). The overall p value of .279 in the analysis of the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale and .314 in the Relationship Assessment Scale indicate a value greater than the significance level. This analysis concludes with a failure to reject the null hypothesis, “Gender will significantly affect intimate relationship satisfaction in law enforcement personnel.” The impact of gender did not become apparent until added results of occupational and organizational stress were added.

Romantic Relationship Conflict and Relationship Assessment

The overall results of this study identify that men and women do not vary in their general identification of conflict and are equally satisfied with their relationships. When analyzing individual topics within the surveys, it was found that men and women frequently exhibited behaviors commonly found with their gender. These findings did not affect the results but raised interest levels for specific topics. For example, women responded more negatively to compromise than men. When asked if conflict resolution included reaching a compromise, 20.40% of women either moderately or strongly disagreed, compared to 6.38% of men. When questioned about considering both sides of an argument, women strongly disagreed with 12.24%, while men strongly disagreed 0%.

Each of these components illustrates the differences in perception based on gender.

Further examination found that 34.69% of the time, women surrender to their partner, whereas only 14.89% of men do. In direct conflict, women strongly disagreed 26.53% of the time when asked about trying to satisfy their partners' needs rather than their own; men 6.38%. These findings illustrate that women tend to see relationships as emotional rather than logical (Weisberg et al., 2011).

When asked about their rate of satisfaction in their relationship, 56.52% of men stated they were highly satisfied compared to only 32% of women. Men also perceived their relationship better than most 57.45% of the time compared to 40% of women. Both men and women loved their partners equally and did not question their involvement in the relationship. The analysis of individual questions found that the identified personality differences were apparent in completing the survey.

Variable 2: Stress

Stress constantly contributes to our daily lives (von Dawan's & Henrichs, 2019). As found in prior studies, genders may experience work-related stress differently despite having the same profession (Angehrn et al., 2021). This study and previous research support that position. Research has found that career demands have contributed to relationship failures (Tuttle et al., 2018). In addition, family life has the potential to present unique stressors for female law enforcement officers who are expected to manage traditional roles as caregivers and wives (Kutz, 2012). Existing literature suggests that law enforcement officers, throughout their careers, experience levels of trauma and stress that exceed the public (Papazoglou & Tuttle, 2018). Additional research has found that

“moderately sized” differences between male and female personality traits (Hyde, 2014) contribute to their handling of stress (Schultz et al., 2004). Therefore, this research supports the literature and must reject the null hypothesis that police stressors will not significantly affect intimate relationship satisfaction in law enforcement personnel.

Organizational Stress

Results of this study showed that women had a significantly higher organizational stress rate than men. These stressors have recently been found to be more impactful than previously suggested (Simmons-Beauchamp & Sharpe, 2022). For example, when asked about staff shortages’ impact on the participants, 39.22% of the time, women felt “a lot of stress.” In comparison, men were rated at 21.28%. Perceived pressure to volunteer free time accounted for “a lot of stress” in women 15.69% of the time but 0% for men. This impact further addresses the different types of stress men and women feel. For example, when asked about their feelings of favoritism, women reported “a lot of stress” 21.57% of the time compared to 2.08% of men. Women felt a high-stress level when needing to prove themselves to the organization 27.45% of the time compared to men 6.25%. This study confirms Brown’s (2019) finding that gender-based discrimination contributes to routine stress in women. In addition, women consistently scored higher in stress levels related to inconsistent leadership styles, dealing with supervisors, and unequal work responsibilities.

Operational Stress

As with organizational stress, this study found that women have higher operational stress than men. These results more adequately address the issues surrounding

the personal lives of law enforcement officers. Research has found that unmanaged operational stress can lead to “poor decision-making, service complaints, the risk to police and public safety, and an unhealthy compromised workforce” (Andersen et al., 2015). Work-related factors that contribute to home and social life were particularly concerning for women. When asked about shift work, women felt a high-stress level 26% of the time compared to men’s 4.26%. Overtime demands were a concern to women at a level over moderate stress 37% of the time compared to 17.03% of men. When asked about managing social life outside of work, they would feel stress above a moderate level 38% of the time. Men felt stress above a moderate level 14.89% of the time. Fatigue, healthy eating behaviors, and finding time to stay in good physical condition were significant predictors of operational stress in women.

Variable 3: Tenure

As previously noted, research on the inclusion of tenure in effect on relationship satisfaction of law enforcement officers is limited. Previous research has noted that officers with more experience often suffer from higher organizational stress levels (Padilla, 2020; Ledford et al., 2021). Segovia (2022) stated, “Organizational, operational, and personal factors contribute to occupational stress, and research indicates a positive correlation between improved public safety and officer wellness.” This research supports the literature finding that officers, specifically women, with 16-20 years of experience significantly affect the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale. The results show a non-significant effect of years of law enforcement experience on the Relationship Assessment Scale. Therefore, this research supports the literature and must reject the null hypothesis

that tenure will not significantly affect intimate relationship satisfaction in law enforcement personnel.

Implication: Policy and Practice Recommendations

Relationship satisfaction is a critical component of mental wellness. Prior research has found a strong correlation between mental health and divorce (Sander et al., 2020). Because of the additional stressors officers feel, having positive romantic relationships can increase officers' mental wellness, productivity, use of force issues, decrease suicide, and increase the number of intact families among officers. Gottman (1998) found that understanding relationship satisfaction involved delving into what is functional in intimate relationships. Understanding this component can increase positive interaction with couples. The findings of this study have identified that women have a higher rate of operational and organizational stress and, as a result, dissatisfaction in their relationships. Additional research to further identify stressors and methods for reducing stress can increase relationship satisfaction and, therefore, mental health and retention.

Personality Differences

Weisberg (2011) noted that personality differences have been documented. These differences contribute to their reaction to stress. In addition, stress for women has often collided with gender-based discrimination because of the law enforcement culture (Brown et al., 2017). This research study supports previous findings that women have increased stress if employed as law enforcement officers (Elliott et al., 2015; Hassell et al., 2009).

The implication of policy and practice becomes critical to ensuring law enforcement officers successfully maneuver the stress components in their careers while increasing the positivity in their relationships. Stress reduction on an organizational level can reduce stress on an operational level. The development of programs and leadership development designed to address issues, both organizationally and operationally, may impact stress experienced by law enforcement personnel. The reduction of increased stress and its impact on the mental wellness of officers, especially women, has the potential to increase positive mental wellness in officers. This increase could directly impact relationship satisfaction, increase tenure and productivity, and reduce use-of-force issues, relationship failures, and suicide rates.

Leadership

The impact of ineffective leadership is the key contributing factor to organizational stressors. The experiences of trauma related to the day-to-day work of a law enforcement officer create stress; however, according to Simmons-Beauchamp and Sharpe (2022), operational and organizational stress ignored, exacerbated, and prolonged can be more detrimental to trauma experienced in the time of a career, often 30-35 years (Papazoglou & Tuttle, 2018). As found in this research, increased organizational and operational stress directly contribute to reduced relationship satisfaction. Consideration of this result is necessary for agency heads to reevaluate their leadership styles and address the department's culture.

Leadership is a learned skill. Con" Law enforcement research documented good leaders' positive impact on the agency's personnel and, ultimately, police legitimacy.

Increased legitimacy brings increased mental wellness, which correlates to improved positive relationships with families and communities. Having a leader that focuses on their officers' psychological and physical fitness creates an internal environment of openness and support within the agency. Research has found a relationship between resilience, constructive leadership, and leader satisfaction/well-being (Shelton et al., 2019). This study identified areas of stress for officers that were contributed to by issues with leadership behaviors, which, if addressed, could decrease stress, and increase resiliency in officers. An upbeat leadership style has been found to reduce the impact of stressful life events (Shelton et al., 2019).

Mentorship

Because of the increased stress level in women, developing a mentorship program and female-specific training could provide young female officers with guidance and direction from experienced female officers. Studies have found that women with strong female role models can navigate complex situations better than other women. Programs involving female mentorship are limited due to the lack of gender diversity (Lavender & Todak, 2022). Considering women's challenges in male-dominated professions, mentors who have experienced similar challenges can benefit the development of women new to the profession (Martin & Barnard, 2013). In addition, Lavender and Todak (2022) identified a concern for competition between women that may impact the availability of women mentors.

Gender-specific training to address issues female officers encounter is available nationwide. Organizations have developed training to address stress, organizational

issues, and leadership for women. Although men can also attend these classes, women are the primary attendees. Topics discussed in training include the primary concerns outlined in this study: family, social isolation, physical and mental well-being, and organizational issues relating to professional success. Agencies must include this training in developing female officers to address those specific needs and provide methods of navigating law enforcement.

Counseling

Non-mandatory counseling for both officers and their families regularly allows for third-party involvement and a sense of security for officers. Often, law enforcement officers fail to seek treatment or advice due to the stigma of counseling. By providing quarterly counseling sessions for all agency members and their families, officers may no longer feel the pressure of perceived failure or concern about the impact on their professional life. Consistent mental health evaluation has the potential to reduce stress and increase positivity in daily life. This increase in positivity and stress reduction also can contribute to healthier romantic partner relationships. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, mental health services and treatment reached \$225 billion in 2019 (Leonhardt, 2021). Therefore, involvement with insurance agencies would be critical to a successful program.

Discussions regarding counseling, its benefits, and the importance for law enforcement require consideration. “Men in general, and especially men employed within a career whose environment rewards behaviors consistent with a traditional male gender role socialization, are ripe for such dissonance when it comes to the possibility of seeking

psychological help.” (Wester et al., 2010). Because of the stigma associated with counseling in law enforcement, it becomes the primary responsibility of leaders within the organization to lead by example. Leaders who support mental health and counseling sessions without the negative undertones associated with them create an environment of wellness for their officers. In a recent study, officers reported mental health concerns but also stated they would participate in counseling sessions if confidentiality could be guaranteed (Jatelina et al., 2020).

Stress Relief and Officer Wellness

The Fatal Five: Off-Duty Threats to Law Enforcement identifies issues surrounding interpersonal relationships, substance abuse and addiction, sleep disorders, physical and mental health, and access to firearms as contributing factors for adverse outcomes (Johnson et al., 2023). According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (2019), police officers may be at risk for the distress that leads to substance abuse. Research conducted has suggested that the use of alcohol is a particular concern for law enforcement (Brunault et al., 2019). In addition to alcohol, overeating and tobacco use contribute to an unhealthy lifestyle known to most law enforcement officers.

Ways of handling stress can be independent of the individual. What works for one may not work for the other. It is the identification of the strategy for the individual which will contribute to the development of health methods for decreasing stress and, therefore, self-destructive behavior. By providing programs to assist officers in reducing this behavior, agencies contribute to the overall wellness of the department. According to a

study conducted by the Mayo Clinic (2022), exercise reduces the negative effects of stress and improves your mood.

Agency and Family Research

As with any policy and procedure changes, agency evaluations are necessary to determine the scope of the issue. Every agency is different. Every state is different. To determine the scope of the impact of organizational problems like leadership, schedules, and manpower shortages, agency command must first identify the issues. Internal and external data involving officers and their families must be collected internally and externally. As noted in this study, women do not process the stressors of a law enforcement career like men do.

The variability of gender can also be applied to the romantic partners of the officers. What the officer may not recognize, the partner may. This gives an accurate overview of the law enforcement career's operational impact. With the accessibility of surveys and research programs, agencies can identify internal problems without identifying officers or family members contributing to data collection. After the data collection, leaders have the information necessary to create a law enforcement culture that benefits their officers' health and wellness.

Impact on Social Change

Law enforcement is a cornerstone of our society. Concerns regarding the mental wellness of officers are critical to increasing police legitimacy. Increased legitimacy contributes to more positive relationships within the community and families, reducing the deterioration of law enforcement families, reducing the use of force issues, and

reducing suicide rates in law enforcement. Agency commanders must consider the impact of leadership on organizational and operational stress to create positive change in their departments, officers' families, and communities.

By creating programs and a culture that places their officers' mental and physical health first, they increase the capability of officers to handle both the operational and organizational stressors brought on by the law enforcement career. The culture of law enforcement directly impacts the differences in male and female ability to handle the experiences of law enforcement personnel.

Recruitment and Retention

Law enforcement is currently experiencing recruitment and retention issues. Results of this study identify reasons that law enforcement professionals, especially women have increased levels of stress which could cause them to leave the profession. Concerns regarding family and relationship issues support prior research identifying that women leave their professions to support their families at a much higher rate than their male counterparts (Parker, 2020). Women have said that being a working parent makes it more difficult to achieve a successful career 58% of the time compared to 19% of men (Parker, 2020). Command level personnel in law enforcement will benefit from the identification of these issues and address them with their personnel.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study provides directions to answer the questions regarding divorce rates which have been found to range from 14% to 80% (Buscho, 2019) in law enforcement, increased stress, and identified potential areas effecting recruitment and retention of

women. Results of this present study support prior research that addresses the impact of stress on relationship satisfaction. Several areas have been identified as needing further investigation. This study supports the need for additional research involving women and their experience of higher stress which was found to be related to operational and organizational stress. When stress levels increased, relationship satisfaction decreased. For future research, a qualitative assessment of women in law enforcement would allow researchers to ask questions regarding the circumstances involved in the increased stress as well as reduced relationship satisfaction. Identifying this area may positively impact relationship satisfaction and increase the retention and mental health of women in law enforcement.

Another area of needing to be assessed is the impact on the partners and children of female law enforcement officers. Limited research has been conducted regarding the impact of a law enforcement career on family members, specifically children and partners of women. Because women perceive increased responsibility for their children, research involving the entire family may shed light on the issues that partners and children observe. The contribution of children and partners of female officers may identify the issues that create a better understanding of the impact of variables on gender.

The impact of organizational stressors on tenured officers is an area that needs additional attention. Women of all tenure demographics represented the highest rates of “a lot of stress” responses. For further information regarding reasons for increased stress, a qualitative study would provide in-depth answers regarding the stressors of officers at each tenure level. Consideration for women in higher levels of tenure may specifically

address the methods necessary to navigate the law enforcement profession. Women are underrepresented in the higher levels of tenure. This knowledge has the potential to increase tenure in female officers.

Finally, an additional study regarding the number of significant romantic relationships may also identify the issues of prior relationships and the steps taken to increase satisfaction among male and female officers. Because the primary relationship type in this study was married, the question about divorces or previous failed relationships would contribute to understanding the steps taken to address negative behaviors. This additional study could contribute to the methods utilized in new relationships to correct problems faced in previous relationships. These findings can increase knowledge of ways to correct documented negative behavior.

Limitations of the Study

As previously noted, the primary limitation of this study is the accuracy of the data obtained. Self-reporting survey data can be biased due to varying subjective assessments (Masood et al., 2012). Because this study aimed to identify satisfaction rates of romantic relationships and topics internal to their agency, loyalty may affect the honesty of the participants. These limitations include information that the participant was willing to share and may limit participation and honesty. Because the survey was conducted anonymously, no follow-up for clarity is possible.

This study did not consider the limitations of participation equality between men and women. Both male and female participants were equally distributed. The response to tenure, however, was widely dispersed and could impact the results. Law enforcement

experience by women was much lower than that of the male participants. Female participants with 5–10 years of experience contributed 45.10% of the responses compared to males 2.04%. Males with 25+ years of experience contributed to 34.69% of responses by male participants compared to females at 11.76%. Due to loyalty and inexperience in the 5–10-year demographic, females' new relationships with their agencies and partners may impact their responses.

Another limitation was the identification of relationship types. Most participants were married; however, the study did not address the number of prior marriages. This study limited responses to current or most recent relationships, which may impact the scope of the findings. Questions about the number of relationships experienced during their tenure were also not asked. The absence of additional demographic information regarding this topic may limit responses. A future study would benefit from addressing previous relationships that ended in separation or divorce.

Chapter Summary

The initial purpose of this study was to identify the difference between men and women as it related to stressors that impact relationship satisfaction. Mental health of law enforcement is a concern. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, law enforcement professionals report much higher rates of depression, PTSD, and burnout compared to other professions. This increase of mental health related conditions is a contributing factor of reduced relationship satisfaction, which as previously noted is a key component to positive mental wellness.

The results of this study indicate that gender did not have a notable impact on conflict in relationships until occupational and organizational stress was added to the analysis. Data collected showed that relationship satisfaction decreased as operational and organizational stress increased. This was especially true for women who showed a higher stress rate on the operational stress questionnaire ($M = 3.89$) than males ($M = 3.06$). Increased operational stress indicates that women have more obstacles when navigating everyday life experiences. This study did, however, identify potential reasons why women are leaving the law enforcement profession. The identification of stressors may contribute to future studies for addressing situations that impact both profession and personal lives of women.

Women have been identified as the family and relationship caretakers, while men have been seen as the primary financial supporter. “Women continue to bear the heavier burden when it comes to balancing work and family, despite progress in recent decades to bring about gender equality in the workplace” (Parker, 2020). When adding stressors of law enforcement life to both men and women, this research found that women have more perceived issues with navigating law enforcement as a profession, directly impacting women’s relationship satisfaction.

Understanding the findings of this study can impact methods utilized to maintain relationships, mental wellness, recruitment, and retention of women in law enforcement. The positive impact of future studies that include more in-depth questioning about stress and reduction in relationship satisfaction may create a better understanding. These same

variables do not have the same impact on men; therefore, this study rejects the null hypothesis that gender does not impact relationship satisfaction in law enforcement.

The purpose of this study was to identify if gender played a role in relationship satisfaction among individuals who serve as law enforcement officers. In 2008, Demir identified that relationships are a vital contributor to people's lives. After this study, the findings indicate that women have reduced relationship satisfaction due to the stress felt as an officer. Additional research conducted to determine reasons to leave law enforcement may contribute to accurate data for helping with recruitment and retention. Even though it is considered anecdotal that women leave because of family issues (Cleary, 2020), women have noted high levels of stress when relating to family and social concerns.

While this study was directed at law enforcement personnel and conducted for the purpose of identifying impact on relationships, results have the potential to address issues in other areas. Professionals of all types have levels of stress that have the potential to impact their mental health. Although law enforcement has been found to have increased levels of stressors merely due to the nature of the profession, stress is not specific only to this profession. The identification of stressors will provide direction into methods of correcting or reducing the issues. These corrections have the potential to increase mental wellness, increase productivity, increase recruitment and retention of women, and ensure family cohesiveness.

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Appendix A: Operational Police Stress Questionnaire

Operational Police Stress Questionnaire

Below is a list of items that describe different aspects of being a police officer. After each item, please circle how much stress it has caused you over the past 6 months, using a 7-point scale (see below) that ranges from “No Stress At All” to “A Lot Of Stress”:

No Stress At All			Moderate Stress			A Lot Of Stress
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. Shift work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Working alone at night	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Over-time demands	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Risk of being injured on the job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Work related activities on days off (e.g. court, community events)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Traumatic events (e.g. MVA, domestics, death, injury)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Managing your social life outside of work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Not enough time available to spend with friends and family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Paperwork	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Eating healthy at work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Finding time to stay in good physical condition	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Fatigue (e.g. shift work, over-time)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Occupation-related health issues (e.g. back pain)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Lack of understanding from family and friends about your work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Making friends outside the job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Upholding a "higher image" in public	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Negative comments from the public	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Limitations to your social life (e.g. who your friends are, where you socialize)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. Feeling like you are always on the job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. Friends / family feel the effects of the stigma associated with your job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The Operational Police Stress Questionnaire is provided free for non-commercial, educational, and research purposes.

Appendix B: Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire

Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire

Below is a list of items that describe different aspects of being a police officer. After each item, please circle how much stress it has caused you over the past 6 months, using a 7-point scale (see below) that ranges from “No Stress At All” to “A Lot Of Stress”:

No Stress At All			Moderate Stress			A Lot Of Stress
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. Dealing with co-workers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. The feeling that different rules apply to different people (e.g. favouritism)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Feeling like you always have to prove yourself to the organization	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Excessive administrative duties	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Constant changes in policy / legislation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Staff shortages	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Bureaucratic red tape	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Too much computer work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Lack of training on new equipment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Perceived pressure to volunteer free time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Dealing with supervisors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Inconsistent leadership style	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Lack of resources	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Unequal sharing of work responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. If you are sick or injured your co-workers seem to look down on you	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Leaders over-emphasise the negatives (e.g. supervisor evaluations, public complaints)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Internal investigations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Dealing the court system	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. The need to be accountable for doing your job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. Inadequate equipment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire is provided free for non-commercial, educational, and research purposes.

Appendix C: Relationship Assessment Scale

Scale:

	Low				High
1. How well does your partner meet your needs?	1	2	3	4	5
2. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?	1	2	3	4	5
3. How good is your relationship compared to most?	1	2	3	4	5
4. How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?	1	2	3	4	5
5. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?	1	2	3	4	5
6. How much do you love your partner?	1	2	3	4	5
7. How many problems are there in your relationship?	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring:

Items 4 and 7 are reverse-scored.

Scoring is kept continuous. The higher the score, the more satisfied the respondent is with his/her relationship.

Appendix D: Romantic Partner Conflict Scale

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Appendix J

Romantic Partner Conflict Scale

Think about how you handle conflict with your romantic partner. Specifically, think about a **significant** conflict issue that you and your partner have disagreed about recently. Using the scale below, fill in which response is most like how you handled conflict. If you do not have a romantic partner, respond with your most current partner in mind. If you have never been in a romantic relationship, answer in terms of what you think your responses would most likely be.

For each item, answer as follows:

- A = Strongly agree with statement
- B = Moderately agree with statement
- C = Neutral, neither agree nor disagree
- D = Moderately disagree with statement
- E = Strongly disagree with statement

- 102. We try to find solutions that are acceptable to both of us.
- 103. We often resolve conflict by talking about the problem.
- 104. Our conflicts usually end when we reach a compromise.
- 105. When my partner and I disagree, we consider both sides of the argument.
- 106. In order to resolve conflicts, we try to reach a compromise.
- 107. Compromise is the best way to resolve conflict between my partner and me.
- 108. My partner and I negotiate to resolve our disagreements.
- 109. I try to meet my partner halfway to resolve a disagreement.
- 110. The best way to resolve conflict between me and my partner is to find a middle ground.
- 111. When we disagree, we try to find a solution that satisfies both of us.
- 112. When my partner and I have conflict, we collaborate so that we are both happy with our decision.
- 113. My partner and I collaborate to find a common ground to solve problems between us.

Texas Tech University, Tammy Lowery Zacchilli, May 2007

114. We collaborate to come up with the best solution for both of us when we have a problem.
115. We try to collaborate so that we can reach a joint solution to a conflict.
116. My partner and I try to avoid arguments.
117. I avoid disagreements with partner.
118. I avoid conflict with my partner.
119. When my partner and I disagree, we argue loudly.
120. Our conflicts usually last quite awhile.
121. My partner and I have frequent conflicts.
122. I suffer a lot from conflict with my partner.
123. I become verbally abusive to my partner when we have conflict.
124. My partner and I often argue because I do not trust him/her.
125. When we argue, I am easily frustrated.
126. When we have conflict, I usually feel hurt.
127. Conflict with my partner often causes strong emotions.
128. When we have conflict, we withdraw from each other for awhile for a "cooling off" period.
129. When we disagree, we try to separate for awhile so we can consider both sides of the argument.
130. When we experience conflict, we let each other cool off before discussing it further.
131. When we have conflict, we separate but expect to deal with it later.
132. Separation for a period of time can work well to let our conflicts cool down.
133. When we argue or fight, I try to win.
134. I try to take control when we argue.


Texas Tech University, Tammy Lowery Zacchilli, May 2007

135. I rarely let my partner win an argument.
136. When we disagree, my goal is to convince to my partner that I am right.
137. When we argue, I let my partner know I am in charge.
138. When we have conflict, I try to push my partner into choosing the solution that I think is best.
139. When we have conflict, I usually give in to my partner.
140. I give in to my partner's wishes to settle arguments on my partner's terms.
141. Sometimes I agree with my partner so the conflict will end.
142. When we argue, I usually try to satisfy my partner's needs rather than my own.
143. I surrender to my partner when we disagree on an issue.

144. How similar are you and your partner in the way you handle conflict?

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|------------------|-----------|
| A | B | C | D |
| E | | | |
| Completely
similar
Different | | Somewhat similar | Extremely |

Appendix E: Email to Allow Use of the Relationship Assessment Scale

 Hendrick, S <[REDACTED]>
To: Carole Presson

Carole,

You have my full **permission** to use the Relationship Assessment Scale in your research. I wish you the best in your work.

Susan Hendrick

Susan S. Hendrick, PhD
Paul Whitfield Horn Professor of Psychological Sciences, Emerita
Department of Psychological Sciences
Texas Tech University

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

Appendix F: Email to Allow Use of the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale



Tammy Zacchilli <[redacted]> [in](#)

To: Carole Presson

Hi Carole.

You have permission to use the RPCS in your research.

Best of luck.

Dr. Z

Tammy Lowery Zacchilli, Ph.D., MSID

Professor of Psychology

Saint Leo University

Southeastern Regional Vice President of Psi Chi

Psi Chi Faculty Advisor

Associate Editor- Psi Chi Journal of Psychological Research

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