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Juvenile Probation Officer Stress in Rural Area Corrections Offices

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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John Kelly

MA, University of Phoenix, 2012

BS, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 1992

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

In 2015, approximately 62,400 juveniles in the United States were court-ordered to be on probation. Juvenile probation officers (JPOs), who monitor these juveniles, are responsible for intake assessments, predisposition reports, and working with juvenile delinquents and their families. Aspects of JPOs' job duties, such as excess paperwork and lack of managerial support, can create stress. To address the relative lack of research on JPOs' stress, particularly the limited research in rural settings, this qualitative case study examined JPOs' stress in rural corrections offices in South Dakota. The study examines JPOs' perceptions of causes of their stress and their responses to stressful situations. Drawing on data from semi structured interviews, the transtheoretical theory of stress was used to interpret the data and compile codes, categories, and themes related to appraisals and coping. Three JPOs' were chosen from 3 rural South Dakota probation offices, and they had to be employed with the Department of Corrections for at least six months. In addition, an analysis of workplace documents related to job duties and stress management resources provides information about JPOs' contexts and work environments related to stress. The findings from this study show that JPOs working in rural areas experience stress related to interacting with juveniles' home environments, isolation, employment, and safety, and that they have many ways of coping with stress, but nearly all of their coping strategies are connected to their home and personal lives. The results of this study have the potential to inform scholarship on stress reduction programs or coping strategies in the corrections environment and to make a difference in rural South Dakota juvenile probation departments and more broadly in other rural contexts, by identifying stressors for JPOs as well as the stress-reduction or coping strategies that are currently practiced.

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Dedication

To my children, Ava and Willa, who mean the world to me. I appreciate your patience and understanding but most of all your love.

Acknowledgments

I would never have had the courage to undertake such an endeavor without the support of my wife, Jenny. Her encouragement, patience, and enthusiasm made this journey more enjoyable. My friend, Keith, has always been a source of inspiration for me. Beth Davila was always there to answer my questions and provide support.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

In the U.S. criminal justice system, an estimated 80% of the 4,650,900 adults and 60% of the 97,900 juveniles processed through the courts are ordered to probation (Hafoka et al., 2017). In fact, probation is the most common form of community corrections (Lewis, Lewis, & Garby, 2013; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2017). Between 15,000 to 20,000 juvenile probation officers (JPOs) are tasked with supervising these youth offenders, responsible for intake screening, presentencing investigations, writing case plans, and completing assessments (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2017). The personnel costs for juvenile probation programming in the United States is approximately $2 billion per year (Kelly, 2018).

The JPO role vacillates between being a counselor and a probation officer. This is a highly stressful position that involves working with violent juveniles, excessive paperwork, low staffing levels, and lack of managerial support (Greenwood, 2016; Salyers, Hood, Schwartz, Alexander, & Aalsma, 2015). The high levels of stress result in high turnover rates of approximately 20% for all juvenile correctional agencies (Wells, Minor, Lambert, & Tilley, 2016). Despite the documented high levels of stress and turnover, there is limited research pertaining to JPOs' perceptions of stress in general (Greenwood, 2016) and even less research on stress levels of JPOs in rural areas (Blackmon, 2016). This study aims to fill those gaps by studying JPOs' perceptions of stress in rural South Dakota in order to better understand how JPOs experience stress in their jobs and to identify strategies that could help manage or reduce JPO stress.

This chapter covers the following areas: (a) background of the study, (b) the problem statement, (c) the purpose of the study, (d) the research questions, (e) the theoretical framework, (f) the nature of the study, (g) definitions of key concepts, (h) assumptions within the research design, (i) scope and delimitations of the study, (j) limitations of the study, and (k) the significance of the study.

Background of the Study

Workplace stress within criminal justice organizations stems from workplace environment, high caseloads, excessive paperwork, and unsupportive managers (Greenwood, 2016). Workplace stress and burnout for the general population is estimated between 19% and 30%, but in a correctional setting it estimated at 37% (Finney, Stergiopoulos, Hensel, Bonato, & Dewa, 2013). Gayman and Bradley (2013) found that employees working in a correctional setting—including law enforcement officers, correctional officers, and other staff members—experience a great deal of stress and burnout as it is estimated that two thirds of correctional staff describe their job as stressful. Furthermore, Ekman (2012) found that professionals who are employed in human service fields experience higher levels of stress than those who do not work in those professions.

Overall, there are negative outcomes for individuals involved in corrections dealing with stress. For the employee, there are health concerns as a result of stress which can include heart disease, high blood pressure, and mental health issues (Ekman, 2015). For the employer, having high levels of stress among employees can increase turnover rates, which can put a financial strain on the organization (Minor, Dawson-Edwards, Wells, Griffith, & Angel, 2009; Wells et al., 2016). According to Lewis et al. (2013), stress is often a decisive factor when a correctional professional quits. Even if employees do not cite stress as their

reason for leaving, they mention other factors that are contributors to stress, such as a lack of organizational support and hazardous duty (Lewis et al., 2013). The annual turnover rate in adult and juvenile corrections is estimated between 12% and 25% (Minor et al., 2009; Wells et al., 2016). Moreover, in one state correctional agency, the annual cost of turnover was estimated at $21 million (Wells et al., 2016). Stress can also affect the outcomes of those individual on probation. When an employee becomes stressed, they may become ineffective and have avoidance behaviors that can lead to the correctional employee avoiding the individual on probation (Finney et al., 2013).

JPOs are one subset of the corrections setting and experience stress due to the characteristic tasks of the position, such as the monitoring violent or sexual delinquents, the potential for being physically assaulted, and large caseloads (Salyers et al., 2015). In addition, competing demands—including client rehabilitation, punishment, and public safety—can increase the stress of those who hold this position (Greenwood, 2016; Pitts, 2007). In short, job-related stress is common among JPOs (Salyers et al., 2015; Travis, Lizano, & Barak, 2015).

JPOs' stress can lead to negative outcomes within juvenile justice agencies, including employee turnover and the resultant financial burden of recruiting, hiring, and training new personnel (Matz, Wells, Minor, & Angel, 2013). Moreover, Matz et al. (2013) argued employee turnover can increase JPOs' caseloads, and there is a correlation between increased caseloads and JPO stress (Salyers et al., 2015). When stress causes a JPO to quit, the stress levels of other JPOs in the same office are likely to increase as they have to manage additional caseloads. Greenwood examined the stress of JPOs in the Texas Juvenile

Justice Department and found that as job demands increased, so does JPO stress (Greenwood, 2016).

Juvenile justice organizations in the United States do not provide JPOs with training on how to reduce stress (Ekman, 2015). Although, workplace social support—a stress management program—has been shown to reduce stress and promote healthy changes among employees (Buden et al., 2016), it has not been implemented in juvenile justice organizations. Salyer et al. (2015) called for additional research outlining organizational strategies for working with JPOs to reduce stress.

Problem Statement

Although stress is a prevalent factor in juvenile probation (Blackmon, Robison, & Rhodes, 2016; Bolin, 2014; Ekman, 2014; Greenwood, 2016), I found little research specific to this topic—let alone with a focus on rural juvenile probation offices. Most research that has been conducted on stress in the correctional field has pertained to adult correctional officers, including adult probation and parole and law enforcement officers (Greenwood, 2016) and those working in the adult prison system (Bolin, 2014). Similar components in both adult probation officers' and JPOs' occupations cause stress, but the juvenile and adult probation models differ as JPOs tend to be more treatment- and rehabilitative-oriented whereas the adult probation model is designed to monitor offenders (Bolin, 2014) and includes law enforcement roles (Hafoka et al., 2017). These differences in duties between adult and juvenile probation officers are likely to create differences in job-related stress. When studies have been conducted in juvenile corrections, they have focused on juvenile detention workers and not JPOs (Bolin, 2014).

Another problem is the lack of research regarding job-related stress among JPOs in rural settings. According to Gelb (2016), there is limited research on the perceptions of stress and coping strategies among JPOs working in a rural setting in comparison to in an urban setting. Existing research on JPOs has largely been conducted in urban settings because studies have shown that juveniles commit more delinquent acts in urban settings (Blackmon et al., 2016). However, Blackmon et al. (2016) argued that rural crime is a growing concern and that geographic location was not a predictor of recidivism. Blackmon et al. cited differences between rural and urban crime, such as educational backgrounds and risk factors that influence whether children commit delinquent acts, such as issues with drug use and displays of hostility, which are more common among urban youth, and mental health, poor school grades, and poor relationships with peers, which are more characteristic of rural youth. JPOs in rural settings manage larger geographic areas, which can increase their perceptions of stress (Greenwood, 2014).

This study contributes to filling a gap in knowledge about perceived stress among JPOs in rural South Dakota as well their coping strategies, and it contributes to a small body of work on juvenile corrections in rural environments. The results of this study have the potential to make a difference not only in rural South Dakota juvenile probation departments but also in other similar rural juvenile probation departments by providing juvenile justice managers in rural settings with a better understanding of how JPOs experience stress in their jobs and strategies that could help manage or reduce JPO stress.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine JPOs' perceptions of and possible experiences with job-related stress, including perceived causes of stress and the

strategies used to reduce stress in rural South Dakota juvenile probation departments. The state of South Dakota is predominately rural, and juvenile probation offices are spread out over a vast area; they often lack resources that urban areas may have to assist in treating juvenile delinquency (Gelb, 2016). I used semi structured interviews to understand JPOs' perceptions of stress and, if relevant, the strategies they use to reduce stress in rural South Dakota juvenile probation departments, exploring their understandings of the relationship between the rural context, the job demands, and their experiences of stress. I also collected workplace documents, such as job descriptions or duties and stress management resources, to consider JPOs' professional context in relation to their perceptions of stress.

The case study approach, which allows for a smaller sample and a more holistic approach to a study, is well suited for studying perceptions of stress using qualitative methods and is aligned with the research questions (Yin, 2012) in that it allowed for the participants in this study to define what stress means to them, what they perceive as its cause, and how the rural environment might contribute to their stress. In addition, the case studies allowed for an exploration of the strategies used by JPOs to cope with the stress they experience as a result of their job.

This study aimed to address a gap in knowledge about perceived stress among JPOs as well their coping strategies (Ekman, 2015). Also, the findings from this study can provide insight on how rural JPOs perceive, respond to, and reduce stress. The findings can provide juvenile justice managers in rural settings with a better understanding of how they might help JPOs manage or reduce their stress.

Research Questions

The following questions were used to guide this study:

RQ 1: How do JPOs in rural communities perceive and respond to stress related to their work?

RQ2: What are the perceived causes of stress for JPOs in rural communities and what strategies do they use to reduce the stress?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is the transactional theory of stress (TTS). There are two concepts associated with TTS: appraisal and coping (McCarthy et al., 2016). According to this model, the appraisal stage allows an individual to evaluate the risk for stress, and the coping stage involves problem solving or emotional strategies to manage the stress (Mark & Smith, 2008). As such, the TTS theoretical model allows for an exploration of stress as a difficult interaction with a stimulus and as an individual's understanding of the risks for stress and their response to the situation (Lee, Son, & Kim, 2016; Mark & Smith, 2008). The TTS model considers stress as a progression of appraisal and coping in which an individual will evaluate and respond to the threat to their well-being (Goh, Sawang, & Oei, 2010; Shirley, 2015; Webster, Beehr, & Love, 2011). According to this model, although stress is inevitable, how individuals perceive stress and respond to it could affect how they adapt to stressful situations (O'Bryan, 2008).

This theoretical model also takes into consideration the fact that individuals and their settings coexist (Mark & Smith, 2008). Stress is a transactional process and an individual's stress is a result of a disparity between demands and resources (McCarthy et

al., 2016). Lazarus (2000) found that the TTS model asks researchers to consider the relational meaning connecting the individual and the situation. This relationship is the outcome of appraisals converging between social and physical surroundings (Lazarus, 2000). For example, the social setting could be the JPO's monthly contact with the juvenile delinquent in the physical setting of their house. The appraisal and coping stages are the JPO's evaluation of and response to the stressful situation of a possible hostile environment. Ultimately, the TTS model's focus on an individual's appraisal of stress and coping strategies aligns with this study's research questions, which seek to explore stress as perceived and/or experienced by the study participants, including perceived causes of stress, and to understand participants' strategies for reducing stress. Chapter 2 provides additional information about the TTS model and how it has been used to examine stress.

Nature of the Study

This qualitative case study examined JPOs' perceptions of stress and the strategies they use to reduce or avoid stress in rural South Dakota juvenile probation departments. Data were collected by conducting interviews with JPOs to understand their perceptions of and possible experiences with stress and by collecting workplace documents related to job descriptions or duties and stress management resources.

Qualitative research provides a means to explore and comprehend individuals or groups that encounter stressful social issues (Yin, 2012). The interview questions asked *how* and *why* questions in order to comprehend complex social issues (Yin, 2017). The document analysis provided additional information about each JPO's work environment in relation to stress. A case study allows the researcher to investigate real life events that include organizational and managerial practices (Yin, 2017). I used descriptive coding to

interpret the data and compile codes, categories, and themes related to definitions of stress and responses to stress, including appraisal and coping (in alignment with my theoretical framework). The interviews, document analysis, and coding allowed for a deep exploration of perceptions of and possible experiences with stress, and the categories allowed me to examine stress across the cases in order to contextualize the research within existing literature on stress in the corrections environment and to make recommendations for managers.

Because the TTS model focuses on an individual's appraisal of stress, it also relies on an individual's understanding of stress. As such, using qualitative research in a case study approach combined with TTS allows for an understanding of stress as it is perceived and/or experienced by each study participant.

Definitions

Appraisal: A process in which a person determines a threat in relation to their well-being (Goh et al., 2010).

Burnout: Feelings of emotional exhaustion, skepticism toward others, and feelings of lack of achievement (Salyers et al., 2014).

Coping: When an individual uses behavioral and cognitive process to reduce stressful situations (Newness, 2011).

Delinquency: Any act committed by a youth that would be viewed a criminal act if committed by an adult regardless of gender (Mallett, Stoddard Dare, & Seck, 2011).

Juvenile probation officer: A peace officer whose first responsibility is to the state (Steiner, Roberts, & Hemmens, 2003). In the United States, a JPO's duties include supervision; assessing and maintaining relationships with families, juveniles, and professionals such as district and county attorneys, special populations; and enhancing the profession (Steiner et al., 2003).

Rural: Areas with a population less than 25,000 (Greenwood, 2016).

Stress: A perceived pressure and an individual's inability to cope with circumstances (Pitts, 2007). More specifically, *stress* is a response of the body to any demand (O'Keefe, Brown, & Christian, 2014; Selye, 1956). See Chapter 2 for a more detailed definition of *stress*, particularly *work-related stress* in the corrections environment.

Urban: Areas with a population size greater than 50,000 or more (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

Assumptions

According to the TTS model, stress is inevitable (O'Bryan, 2008). While every work environment has the potential to cause stress, researchers have documented higher levels of stress in the corrections environment than among the general population (Finney et al., 2013). As such, this study assumed that if any of the study participants had never experienced work-related stress, they must have had strategies in place to proactively address potentially stressful situations, which in itself is a form of coping. Therefore, participants' responses to the interview questions—regardless of whether they report having experienced work-related stress—allowed for an exploration of perceptions of and responses to stress among JPOs in rural South Dakota.

The following assumptions were made about the participants in this research study: (a) that they were truthful about their experiences; (b) if they did not want to answer the question, they would let the researcher know; and (c) they responded from memory and through the lens of their own experiences. Because I did not interview supervisors or administrators or conduct observations, I relied on the participants being honest. However, any information obtained during the interviews was relevant to my research questions due to my focus on JPOs' perceptions as opposed to something that is objectively observable. In this study, JPOs' perceptions of stress are critical as these perceptions can lead to burnout and turnover. Furthermore, because I am not the participants' supervisor and do not have a relationship with the JPOs, but I do have experience in their work environment, the JPOs may have been more forthcoming in describing their perceptions of stress, including perceived causes of stress.

Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of this study was not to measure the effectiveness of an organization's stress management programs or how individual juvenile probation offices differ in managing stress. The purpose was to explore JPOs' perceptions of stress in rural areas. This study only included JPOs and did not involve supervisors or administrators. I chose to focus on JPOs' perceptions of and possible experiences with stress as they work in the field; supervisors and administrators work in offices. Future research could involve supervisors and administrators as well as examining stress management at the level of the probation office instead of the individual.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is generalizability. With such a small sample, it would be inappropriate to generalize to a larger population. An additional limitation specific to the interviews was determining if the data collected accurately reflect the interviewees' perceptions. I presume the JPOs were honest and accurate in their responses to the interview questions, but their perceptions are likely to be influenced by how much stress they were experiencing at the time of the interview. As such, another limitation was doing only one interview with each participant. A final limitation was not including all of South Dakota in the study. Despite these limitations, the study design was appropriate for an exploratory study and can later be expanded to include a larger geographic area, additional interviews, and even other data sources such as observations.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this research was to study JPOs' perceptions of stress in rural areas to address a gap in the literature on JPOs' work environments and experiences. In this study, I used interviews and document analysis to capture the experiences of JPOs in relation to workplace stress. The research can assist juvenile correction agencies in understanding how stress affects JPOs and help these organizations to initiate new stress reduction programs if needed.

This study could result in social change by understanding JPOs' perceptions of stress and by exploring possibilities for reducing JPOs' stress and improving outcomes for the juveniles who go through the parole system. Also, the study could positively impact juvenile justice organizations seeking to reduce turnover.

Summary

The intent of this study was to address a gap in knowledge about perceived stress among JPOs as well their coping strategies (Ekman, 2015) and to contribute to a small body of work on juvenile corrections in rural environments. Findings from this study offer juvenile justice managers in rural settings a better understanding on how JPOs perceive and cope with stress, allowing them to implement strategies to assist JPOs in reducing their stress. Because most of the research on JPOs has been conducted in urban settings, this study offers information about stress in the rural JPO environment. In Chapter 2, I examine the prevailing literature related to stress in both adult and juvenile probation and describe existing research using the TTS model to study stress.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

There is general consensus that although stress is a predominant factor for JPOs in juvenile probation, there has been little research on this topic and even less focused on rural juvenile probation offices (Blackmon et al., 2016; Bolin, 2014; Ekman, 2014; Greenwood, 2016). Most research conducted on stress in the correctional field has pertained to adult correctional officers, including adult probation and parole and law enforcement officers (Greenwood, 2016) and those working in the adult prison system (Bolin, 2014). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine JPOs' perceptions of and possible experiences with job-related stress, including perceived causes of stress and the strategies JPOs use to reduce or avoid stress, in rural South Dakota juvenile probation departments. Because there is limited literature on the prevalence and causes of JPO stress as well as on JPOs' perceptions of and responses to stress, this literature review also takes into consideration stress associated with other criminal justice occupations, such as adult and juvenile correctional officers, adult probation and parole officers, and police officers.

This chapter covers the following areas: (a) the literature search strategy (b) the theoretical framework, and (c) a literature review on JPO duties, rural corrections, juvenile probation in South Dakota, stress, occupational stress, and stress in adult and juvenile corrections.

Literature Search Strategy

The research strategy included searching the following literature databases: ProQuest, ProQuest Criminal Justice, SAGE, and Google Scholar. These databases were the primary sources for collecting scholarly peer-reviewed articles. I also gathered information

from the South Dakota Department of Corrections and the State of South Dakota websites. The Walden online library was used to conduct my research, and I focused on locating articles published in the past 5 years. However, I occasionally did use scholarly articles that were over 5 years old as they added historical viewpoints. The following terms were used alone or in pairs using the Boolean operator: *juvenile probation officer*, *rural juvenile probation officer*, *juvenile probation officer and stress, occupational stress, juvenile justice statistics, stress and burnout, stress, occupational stress, urban juvenile crime, rural juvenile probation services*, *transactional theory of stress*, *coping*, *appraisal and stress, transactional theory of stress and corrections*, *rural and urban juvenile delinquents*, *social work, nursing,* and *stress in the corrections environment.*

The goal for the following literature review was to describe the theoretical foundation for this study, provide an overview of workplace stress and stress in criminal justice occupations, and to give an analysis of existing empirical literature. I began my search with a focus on juvenile probation and stress in rural and urban cities but extended the search to adult probation and corrections in order to locate sufficient research on stress. I also included search terms related to the theoretical framework of this study. Again, I first attempted to look for research involving TTS in the corrections environment and then adjusted my search to focus on TTS in social work and nursing as it is commonly used in that field in ways similar to my research interests.

Theoretical Foundation

To examine JPOs' perceptions of stress and their coping strategies, I relied on the TTS model to examine the progression of stress in terms of an appraisal and coping process in which individuals evaluate and respond to threats to their well-being (Goh et al., 2010;

Shirley, 2015; Webster et al., 2011). According to this model, although stress is inevitable, how individuals perceive the stress and cope with it could affect how they address the stressful situation (O'Bryan, 2008). The TTS model highlights the significance of the appraisal process during the progression of stress as it is how individuals evaluate circumstances of the stressful situation (Webster et al., 2011). Moreover, this theoretical model takes into consideration the fact that individuals and their settings coexist. Lazarus (2000) found that the conceptual approach to the TTS model is the relationship individuals have with stressful events in relation to their environments. This relationship is the outcome of appraisals converging between social and physical surroundings, which includes how individuals interpret their surroundings, goals, and resources (Lazarus, 2000).

Background

In 1987, Richard Lazarus, a professor of psychology, and Susan Folkman, a professor of medicine, developed the TTS model, which describes how individuals interpret, experience, and react to their stress (Ellis et al., 2015). Their initial research was designed to assist mental health practitioners (Folkman & Lazarus,1988). There had been a long understanding in the field of mental health that the demands of stressful events could be attributed to how an individual felt emotionally. Despite this understanding, research had not been conducted on how the coping process affects emotional responses. A majority of the research at that time had focused on how anxiety affects coping. To respond to this situation, Folkman and Lazarus developed the TTS model, allowing for an interrogation of both appraisal and coping on outcomes of stressful situations.

The TTS model indicates that when individuals encounter a stressor, they implement the primary appraisal to decide if it is a threat to them. The appraisal will

influence individuals' thoughts and emotions, which affect coping efforts. If the stressor is deemed a threat, they engage in a secondary appraisal, and during this phase, decisions are made about how to cope. This coping effort influences the outcomes of the stressful situation. According to Ellis et al. (2015), there are two tenets to the TTS model: appraisal and coping. The model highlights that when encountering stress, individuals will appraise stress to decide if it is a danger to their objectives or well-being, and this will influence their feelings, which will engage coping efforts (Ellis et al., 2015). The appraisal phase precedes the coping stage.

In the appraisal phase, individuals consider the risk of potential stressors, which will vary from person to person as individuals assess stress differently (Baqutayan & Mai, 2012). The appraisal phase also involves a consideration of the coping mechanisms that could be used and the possibility that the coping response will accomplish is intended (Miller & McCool, 2003). Coping is a process that arises from the appraisal during which an individual determines how much control they have over the stress situation (Ellis et al., 2015) and contemplates what can be done to reduce or resolve the stress (Miller & McCool, 2003). Coping also includes actions that are deliberate attempts to handle a stressor by changing the condition or by directly dealing with the distress (Miller & McCool, 2003). When coping strategies include both problem- and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping strategies are used to change stress environments by problem solving or making immediate decisions. Emotion-focused coping occurs when individuals try to regulate their emotions by managing or changing the stressful event (Baqutayan & Mai, 2012; Mark & Smith, 2008).

One study suggests that individuals' coping strategies might change depending on their age. Chen, Peng, Xu, and O'Brien (2018) conducted a study of stressors adults experience at different ages as well as their coping strategies in response to the stressors and the positive and negative effects of the coping strategies. They defined coping as the thoughts and actions individuals use to manage a stressful situation, and they studied differences between copings strategies used by individuals in different age groups (Chen et al., 2018). They categorized coping strategies according to problem and emotion focused coping skills.

In Chen et al. (2018), the 196 participants were between the ages of 18 and 89. The participants reported on stressful situations that had occurred over the past month and their coping strategies. The data were divided into age group categories (18–39 years, 40–59 years, and 60 plus years), and Chen et al. found that younger adults were more likely to use problem-focused coping skills and older adults were more likely to use emotion-focused coping skills. They found that a potential negative consequence from using emotion-focused coping skills was mental health issues such as depression or anxiety. As such, an additional outcome of Chen et al. study was the finding that emotion-focused coping could be divided into two categories: positive-emotion focused and negative-emotion focused coping. Finally, they found that individuals who used problem-focused coping generally had healthier outcomes (Chen et al., 2018).

Historically, the TTS model has been used to study stress in education, social work, management, and healthcare. According to Raffery and Griffin (2006), the field of management often uses the TTS model to study organizational change in relation to employee coping and well-being. However, studies from the fields of social work and

healthcare are more closely related to my study interests as they focus on stress in service positions.

Lopez (2014) studied healthy and maladaptive behavior among 47 master of social work (MSW) students and how these behaviors affected their stress levels. Lopez used the perceived stress scale (PSS) to measure the perception of self-reported stress of MSW students in relation to an event. Lopez discovered that students who reported a larger number of stressors also reported an increase in perceived stress. In addition, Lopez identified a relationship between stress and students' employment and income levels. Lopez found an indirect relationship between MSW students' employment and income and, ultimately, stress. As MSW students' progress in the program, it is unlikely they have full-time employment and they likely have less income, which can be stressful. Lopez (2014) also used the Brief COPE, a scale from one (*usually do not do this at all*) to four (*usually do this a lot*) alongside 28 coping strategies, to measure the students' coping strategies in response to stressful events (p. 17). Lopez found that MSW students who engage in maladaptive coping strategies, such as avoidance, find it difficult to be a successful student and practitioner (p. 30).

Another example of research using the TTS model is Eschleman, Alarcon, Lyons, Stokes, and Schneider's (2012) research on individuals' reappraisal of stress and the impact of the environment on this process. According to Eschleman et al. (2012), the appraisal process involves both primary and secondary appraisals. The primary appraisal assists the individual in determining if the event is stressful or not, and if the event is stressful, the individual will engage the secondary appraisal. If the individual deems the event as not stressful, the process stops as the event is viewed as irrelevant. The secondary appraisal

highlights the person's perceived ability to cope with the stressful event and identifies possible coping strategies and if they will work effectively. Eschleman et al. argued that the relationship between primary and secondary appraisal accurately reflects the dynamic stress process in that an individual's appraisal of a stressful environment is instrumental regarding their behavior responses and coping strategies. However, their main interest was reappraisals, which they found occur when individuals adjust their primary and secondary appraisals. Eschleman et al. (2012) argued that focusing on reappraisals could lead to a better understanding of the stress appraisal process.

Many studies that use the TTS model to examine appraisal and coping are quantitative and rely on scales to collect data. Researchers in some qualitative studies have used interviews and the TTS model to examine stress. For example, Brown (2007) conducted a hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative study of hospice workers to understand and identify the stressors of hospice workers and the coping strategies they use to handle stressors in their field. The conceptual framework was the TTS model, focusing on coping strategies. In Brown's (2007) study, there were 15 hospice volunteers, four men and 11 women, who completed a demographic questionnaire and participated in semi structured interviews. The interview questions ranged from asking about the stressor's hospice volunteers experience to questions about strategies they use to respond to stress and the efficacy of those strategies.

In Brown's (2007) study, the participants defined stress as loss of control, sadness, anger, frustration, and a lack of ability to handle a stressful situation. Brown discovered that a majority of the participants did not find their volunteer work stressful because they enjoyed the work. In this case, even though the volunteers did not experience work-related

stress, Brown was still able to better understand their perceptions of stress and learn more about the appraisal process in the TTS model. Indeed, this finding correlates with the TTS model as the primary appraisal of the stressor is based on individuals' personal beliefs and goals (Brown, 2007). Brown also found that participants used a variety of coping skills to avoid stress. For example, one of the strategies used was problem-focused coping, involving asking for help, discussing the situation with others, exercising, and maintaining a healthy diet.

Another example of a study using interviews and the TTS model to study work-related stress is Link, Robbins, Mancuso, and Charlson's (2005) research on the coping strategies of cancer patients. The researchers conducted interviews with cancer patients in order to discover their strategies for controlling and dealing with stress related to their cancer. Link et al., (2005) discovered participants engaged in a five-stage process when developing coping strategies; these five stages consist of (a) react to the cancer (b) identify strategies (c) evaluate strategies (e) choose strategies and (d) use strategies (p. 99). During stage two, the cancer patients implemented the secondary appraisal and coping of the TTS model. Link et al. (2005) found this appraisal has three components: identification, evaluation, and choice of strategies, which are also elements of the TTS model.

Although the TTS model is not common in studying stress in the corrections environment, it was suitable to this study because the model allows for an exploration of stress as a difficult interaction with a stimulus and as an individual's response to the situation (Lee, Son, & Kim, 2016; Mark & Smith, 2008). Chang and Taylor (2014) researched coping techniques and the possibility of coping techniques increasing stress among high school teachers, retail employees, factory workers, and civil servants in Taiwan. This

increase in stress can occur when an individual applies multiple coping strategies that have either negative effects or are ineffective because one coping strategy is disregarded based on the negative effects from another (Chang & Taylor, 2014). To collect the data, the researchers used the Occupational Stress Coping Scale (OSCS) questionnaire, which consists of 15 items and addresses five different types of coping strategies: seeking assistance, self-assistance, group intervention, avoidance, and changing beliefs. A total of 880 questionnaires were mailed out and 723 of them were returned of which 632 were useable (Chang & Taylor, 2014). Chang and Taylor (2014) discovered a multifaceted relationship between stress and coping: while some stress reduction techniques may be more efficient than others, combining techniques could be more beneficial to the reduction of stress. For example, the most effective dual strategy was combining seeking-assistance and group intervention together. The least effective dual strategies were self-assistance and avoidance. Chang and Taylor's research can be used to help organizations teach employees coping strategies that could better deter and buffer the negative impact of stress (Chang & Taylor, 2014).

One example of research that focuses predominantly on the appraisal phase is Webster et al. (2011) study of 479 nonteaching employees at a Midwestern university. The study was designed to test the hypotheses of past research: (a) workload and responsibility are appraised as challenges and role conflict is appraised as hinderances, and (b) appraisals mediate the relationship between stressors and outcomes (p. 505). Their study used the challenge hindrance occupational stress model as its frame, which draws heavily from the TTS model; both models primarily focus on appraisal. In the challenge hindrance occupational stress model, individuals appraise a stressful event as either a challenge or a

hindrance (Webster et al., 2011). The authors found workload, role ambiguity, and conflict could be appraised as either challenges or hindrances. A stressor could be viewed as a challenge or hinderance, but it could also be viewed concurrently as a challenge and a hinderance depending on how the individual appraised the stressor (p. 513).

An example of research that primarily examines the coping phase of stress is Baqutayan and Mai's (2012) quantitative study of 120 first year college students. The purpose of the study was to identify possible coping solutions in response to students' stress. The students were divided into a control and experimental group, with the experimental group participating in classes such as emotional- and problem-focused coping. Both groups' stress levels were measured before and after the study. Baqutayan and Mai (2012) concluded there were significant differences in stress levels between the control and experimental group at the conclusion of the study; the experimental group managed their stress better than the control group, suggesting classes can help students cope with their stress (p. 28).

TTS and JPO Stress

The TTS model is particularly well suited to studying stress in the JPO environment because the model positions stress as a transaction between stress and environment (Shirley, 2015; Dewe, O'Driscoll, & Cooper, 2012). Existing research on stress and JPOs has argued that JPOs experience a variety of stressors include workload, time constraints, lack of autonomy, and ineffective leadership (Salyers et al., 2015). This study extends that research by examining JPOs' perceptions of stress, possible experiences with stress, and the ways they respond to stress or potentially stressful situations. This study also expands existing research by its use of the TTS model to study JPO stress, offering insights into both

JPOs' appraisal of stress and their coping strategies. Findings from this study offer juvenile justice managers in rural settings a better understanding of how JPOs experience stress in their jobs and strategies that could help manage or reduce JPO stress.

Juvenile Probation Officers and Stress

The literature on the JPO work environment describes it as stressful and demanding (White, Aalsma, Holloway, Adams, & Salyers, 2015). There are two main stressors for JPOs: the risks associated with working with juvenile offenders and the effect of JPOs on juveniles' adjudication (Skowroński, 2015). Additionally, daily conditions, such as high caseloads, excessive paperwork, high turnover, and lack of social and emotional support also contribute to JPOs' stress (Greenwood, 2016; Wells et al., 2016; White et al., 2015). Another stressor for JPOs is working with and coordinating the needs between multiple entities that include parents, foster parents, and education and medical professionals (White et al., 2015). For example, JPOs face conflicting mandates to both ensure public safety as well as meet the rehabilitation needs of the juvenile delinquent.

Despite the complicated demands of the job, training for JPOs can be as little as eight hours. According to Reddington and Kreisel (2003), the number of hours of training a JPO receives ranges between 8 to 200 hours with an average of 40 hours. Also, the number of yearly training sessions vary between 1 and 26 depending on the state. There is a lack of literature outlining the specific training requirements of JPOs; however, the state of Texas provides information about its 41.5-hour course, which is required for certification as a new Juvenile Probation Officer (George G. Beto Criminal Justice Center-Sam Houston State University, 2006). The mandatory topics in the training include probation officer safety; supervision skills; courtroom presentations; juvenile justice system overview; enhancing

the profession; special problems and appropriate responses; writing the recommendation; appreciating cultural diversity; assessment skills; the probation profession; adolescence and delinquency; interpersonal communication skills; pre-dispositional recommendations; and managing resources and time (Reddington & Kreisel, 2003). According to Reddington and Kreisel (2003), most states' JPO trainings focus on working with juvenile delinquents, but there are a few states that train JPOs to work with abused and neglected children as well.

It is estimated 60% to 70% of juveniles who are involved in the juvenile justice system have substance abuse and mental health needs. When juvenile delinquents have mental health needs, the JPOs act as a "gate keeper" for juveniles and families to access mental health services through the court system (White et al., 2015). Having to work with juveniles with these needs and coordinate these services is a stressor for JPOs (White et al., 2015).

Rural and Urban Settings

There are differences between urban and rural law enforcement agencies; however, there is limited research that examines these differences (Scott, 2004). According to Scott (2004), the difference between rural and urban settings is the contrast in the environments. In a rural setting, law enforcement personnel are more likely to be part of the local culture than law enforcement personnel in urban settings. For example, an off-duty JPO is likely to be recognized at a baseball game or grocery store (Scott, 2004; Oliver & Meier 2004). Oliver and Meier (2004) found there are four unique dimensions of stress in rural police departments: security, social factors, working conditions, and inactivity.

The first dimension, security, highlights a difference between urban and rural police in that rural police confront domestic and criminal situations in isolation. Rural police agencies patrol large geographic area with little support, and the same could be said of JPOs in rural settings; although the JPO's do not patrol, they do manage caseloads that cover an extensive geographic area. This can lead lack of managerial support or police support if confronted with a difficult or dangerous situation. The second dimension, social factors, focuses on the lack of anonymity for rural police officers in their communities. In urban areas, off-duty police personnel can attend community functions without being recognized, but in rural settings, off-duty police personnel cannot do this because of the lack anonymity. According to Oliver and Meier (2004), not having the opportunity to be anonymous creates a "fishbowl effect," which can create high levels of stress for rural police officers. Another factor to consider is rural officers respond to emergencies that could involve family and friends which might heighten their levels of stress. Rural JPOs have these same issues and can be sought after or confronted in social and community settings.

The third dimension is working conditions, and rural police officers state there are salary constraints and economic constraints when compared to urban police officers. Specifically, rural officers' salaries are significantly lower than officers in urban areas. The lack of funding for training resources as well as the lack of training opportunities are also stressors in rural police departments. The fourth dimension, inadequacy, was described by rural police officers as boredom; long periods of inactivity led to job dissatisfaction. The crime rate in rural areas are low which results in long periods of time without a call.

Rural juvenile probation departments share these differences in comparison with urban juvenile probation departments. Current research on stress in rural settings has been

generated from studies using urban areas as the default with the assumption the concerns of rural law enforcement are simply "smaller" versions of urban issues (Scott, 2004). Researchers who have noted this trend consider the abundance of research that has been completed in the urban settings to be an urban bias.

Juvenile Probation in South Dakota

The population in South Dakota is 882,235, and it the third least populated state behind Alaska and Wyoming (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The largest city in western South Dakota is Rapid City with a population of 74,421, and the population in Spearfish, SD is 11,609. There are two departments that offer juvenile probation services in South Dakota: The South Dakota Unified Justice System and the Department of Corrections (The State of South Dakota, 2012). The South Dakota Unified Justice System offers the Juvenile Intensive Probation Supervision Program (JIPP) which falls under the auspice of a circuit court judge with seven circuit courts throughout South Dakota (The State of South Dakota, 2012). The JIPP program is a community-based sentencing option for high-risk juveniles who would have been committed to the Department of Corrections (The State of South Dakota, 2012). The juveniles enrolled in this program can be managed in the community but are deemed to be too high risk for traditional probation services (The State of South Dakota, 2012). The juveniles and their family meet with the Juvenile Intensive Officer, who provides guidance and interventions (The State of South Dakota, 2012).

The JIPP program has four phases. During phase one, the juvenile is under house arrest for approximately 1 month and various assessments are completed to identify the juvenile's needs; phase two lasts at least 4 months, and the Juvenile Intensive Officer conducts four weekly face-to-face meetings, random drug testing, school monitoring, and

home visits; phase three lasts at least 3 months during which time the face-to-face contacts decrease but the number of collateral contacts (such as teachers, employers, and family members) remain the same; phase four last 9 months, and the juvenile is transferred to a court services officer and supervision and services decrease (The State of South of Dakota, 2012).

According to the State of South Dakota Department of Corrections (DOC), when a juvenile is committed for placement in South Dakota and needs residential placement services or the offense warrants a restricted environment, they are placed in the custody of the DOC. When the juvenile is committed, they are assigned a Juvenile Corrections Agent (JPO)—a JPO—who works with the juvenile and family until they are discharged. As a case manager, the JPO remains in contact with the juvenile, the family, and the residential placement to develop and initiate a case plan. The JPO conducts a variety of assessments that identify the risks and needs of the juvenile. The DOC has various in state and out of state placement options for juveniles who have high needs as well as other placement options such foster and independent living programs. The DOC has an aftercare program, Juvenile Community Corrections, and 11 offices located in South Dakota.

Stress

Stress has been defined as a nonspecific response of the body to any demand (Selye, 1956; O'Keefe et al.,2014). The concept of stress was introduced by Hans Selye, and he defined stress "as the organism's response to any stressor or demand and found stress could have negative ("distress") effects or could be positive (eustress)" (O'Keefe et al., 2014 p.432). Selye found eustress allows an individual to perform at a higher standard, but if an

individual is exposed to longer periods of distress, stress has the potential to negatively affect an individual's health.

Stress can be caused by almost anything in nearly all circumstances (Pitts, 2007), which means the definition is necessarily capacious. In fact, it is difficult to define stress more precisely as the term carries many different meanings (Pitts 2007; Qureshi, Iftikhar, Abbas, Hassan, Khan, & Zaman, 2013) and is studied across disciplines, primarily in medicine, sociology, management, and psychology (Pitts, 2007). In the field of adult probation and parole, Pitts (2007) defined stress as a perceived pressure and an individual's inability to cope with the circumstances. Similarly, Strumska-Cylwik (2013) defined stress as mental pressure which can overwhelm an individual's normal performance, focusing on the effect of stress on communication. Once individuals exceed their normal performance, they will experience distress in which excess energy accumulates in the body (Strumska-Cylwik 2013). This excess should be released but if it this does not occur, it can cause exhaustion and, in extreme cases, death.

Liu, Vickers, Reed, and Hadad, (2017) expanded the definition to one of a mental and physical process of response to a stimulus, which may require an individual to adapt to a situation. Because there are positive and negative aspects of stress, re-framing the outcomes of the stressors may assist in facilitating adaptive responses to reduce stress (p.2). McCarthy et al. (2016) also defined stress as a process; however, they viewed stress as a transactional process where the individual's stress is a result of a disparity between demands and resources. McCarthy et al., (2016), found the historical perspective for defining stress for teachers revolved around inputs and outputs; inputs involve class size and administrative duties and outputs consist of job satisfaction and commitment to the

school. Although these are factors can increase a teacher's stress, McCarthy et al., (2016) found the predominant factor for teachers' stress is how they view their classroom environment and their ability to cope. According to McCarthy et al., (2016) "high classroom demand levels become particularly stressful when teachers also appraise these demands as exceeding their resources for coping" (p.578).

The physical effects of stress consist of migraines, heart disease, ulcers, and respiratory issues; whereas, the mental health effects include depression, suicide, and alcoholism (Slate, Vogel, & Johnson, 2001; Liu et al., 2017). Essentially, prolonged exposure to stress exhausts the body's reserves which leaves the individual vulnerable to both physical and mental problems (Liu et al., 2017). A 19-year study conducted by Brunner, Chandola, and Marmot (2007) of 6,895 men and 3,413 women identified a connection between job stress and obesity (O'Keefe et al., 2014 p. 433). The consequences of stress include unhealthy eating, lack of motivation, and weakness, which are factors in chronic health conditions (O'Keefe et al., 2014). In the United States it has been reported workers miss approximately eight days of work per year because of stress, anxiety, or a related disorder (O'Keefe et al., 2014). The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health emphasize job stress can lead to the following health conditions: mental health issues, cardiovascular disease, and mood disorders (O'Keefe et al., 2014, p. 433). When stress has far reaching consequences for individuals, their communities, and their employers.

Occupational stress. According to O'Keefe et al. (2014), 70% of U.S. employees across industries consider their job a substantial cause of stress, and 51% state stress reduces their productivity (p. 433). Researchers who focus on occupational stress note it can stem from organizational and workplace factors, which include work overload, unclear

expectations, employee conflicts, lack of promotions, unrealistic deadlines, and changes in company routines (Finney et a., 2013).

Law enforcement is a field that has high levels of occupational stress. According to El Sayed, Sanford, and Kerley (2019), who researched the different stressors between state and federal law enforcement agencies, being in law enforcement is considered one of the most stressful occupations for primarily two reasons: organizational and environmental stressors. A law enforcement officer's schedule is an example of an organizational stressor. An officer may be assigned the day shift from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for six months and then assigned to the 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. shift (El Sayed et al., 2019). Working these various shifts has an impact on an employee's family as it can interfere with holidays and important family events. An environmental stressor within law enforcement is the danger that accompanies a profession that includes exposure to violent situations.

At times job burnout and stress are used intermittingly, but there is a difference between these terms. Burnout is a stress-related syndrome that stems from an extended exposure to organizational and workplace stressors; burnout consists of three components: exhaustion, lack of situational control, and loss of personal identity (Salyers et al, 2015; Chirico, 2016). Burnout can be caused by continued exposure to stress (Moate, Gnilka, West, & Bruns, 2016; Görgens-Ekermans, & Brand, 2012) and has been described as being emotionally exhausted, increased feelings of skepticism, and lack of personal and professional satisfaction (Salyers et al., 2015). In contrast, stress is a broad category that describes a multitude of psychological and/or physiological effects (Liu et al., 2017) and is not relegated to the work environment. However, because these terms are sometimes used

interchangeably and because burnout is a result of workplace stress, the literature reviewed in the remainder of this chapter includes research on both stress and burnout.

Effects of occupational stress. Occupational stress carries the same risks as other kinds of stress; according to O'Keefe et al. (2014), job stress can lead to significant health risks that include, cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, depression, workplace injuries, and mental health issues. Moreover, stress-related health aliments are financially draining on organizations. The effects of stress for workplaces can include an increase in employee turnover, less productivity, increased healthcare costs, and increased sick leave (Slate et al., 2001; O'Keefe et al., 2014). It is estimated in the United States, industries spend $200 to $300 billion on health-related problems, and this reduces their profits by 10% (Pitts, 2007; O'Keefe et al., 2014).

El Sayed et al. (2019) found that because law enforcement is dangerous, it puts police officers in a constant state of anticipation, which could hinder them in making decisions in dangerous situations. Also, being in a constant state of anticipation creates anxiety and could cause them to act before thinking (p. 3)

Stress in the Corrections Environment

Despite the relative lack of research on stress among JPOs, there have been studies completed on stress among police officers, correctional officers, and adult probation and parole officers. Focusing on the work environment, Gayman and Bradley (2013) conducted a survey of 852 adult probation and parole officers in North Carolina to examine the correlation between depressive symptoms, work stress, and work environment. They used a subscale of Wheaton's chronic stress scale and asked participants to respond to

statements such as “my work is boring and repetitive, and my supervisor is always watching what I do.” The goal of the study was to discover if the organizational climate affected work stress, and results indicated that correctional, probation, and parole officers view their work environment as causing intense role conflict as well as burnout and stress (Gayman & Bradley, 2013).

While Gayman and Bradley (2013) focused on the full work environment, Lewis et al. (2013) designed a study to examine the effects of one consequence of working in the corrections field: traumatic stress. Traumatic stress occurs when an individual experience a life-threatening event and, in response, exhibits social isolation, depression, and lack of trust, and avoids situations (Lewis et al., 2013). The study examined the effect of traumatic stress on burnout among 309 adult probation officers from five departments in three states (Arizona, California, and Texas). The study participants completed several instruments: Impact of Events Scale-Revised, which measures symptoms of PTSD; the Compassion Satisfaction/Fatigue Scale, which assesses compassion satisfaction, fatigue, and burnout; and the Probation Personal Impact Scale (PPI), which examines traumatic stress responses in probation employees. Lewis et al. concluded officers with high caseloads included an offender victimizing a child reported having high dissatisfaction with their job compared to those who did not have these experiences (Lewis et al., 2013). The authors recommended educating adult probation officers on the contributors to stress, which would allow them to anticipate coping and regulation of stress reactions.

In a study on job satisfaction in adult corrections, Lambert, Hogan, Paoline, and Clarke (2005) surveyed 160 adult correctional officers who monitored both adult and juvenile offenders concerning job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

The participants used a five-point Likert scale—strongly disagree; disagree; uncertain; agree; and strongly agree—to answer questions concerning their work environment, such as "I have input on matters that affect me at this job" (Lambert et al., 2005 p. 67). Lambert et al., (2005) discovered with an increase in stressors there was a decrease in job satisfaction and employees want concise job duties that are not interrelated and do not conflict with one another. If this does not occur, employees are not satisfied with their jobs. Also, they found employees do not want a job that requires to them to have too many duties in a short amount of time (Lambert et al., 2005).

Juvenile Probation Officers' Stress

Like the adult CO environment, JPOs' job demands are likely to cause stress. For example, Salyers et al. (2015) found the monitoring of violent or sexual delinquents, the potential for being physically assaulted, and large caseloads all contribute to JPO stress and make stress common among JPOs (Salyers et al., 2015; Travis et al., 2015). Salyer et al., (2015) surveyed 26 JPOs regarding burnout and attempted to identify key contributors of burnout. A majority of the JPOs could identify the negative components which consisted of not getting to know juveniles on their caseloads whom they were responsible for and being less tolerant with the juveniles they monitor in regard to monitoring their conditions of probation. Travis et al. (2015) quantitative study examined job stress and burnout of employees in child welfare organizations. They collected data in three six-month intervals using a self-report questionnaire with 362 employees at a large urban public child welfare agency. The researchers used a six-point Likert scale (from 1 strongly disagree to 6 strongly agree) to have participants score the following areas: work family conflict, role conflict and ambiguity, job burnout, and employee disengagement. Travis et al., (2015) discovered

family conflict, role ambiguity, and role conflict impacted work withdrawal and employees seeking to leave the organization indirectly through burnout.

One of only a few studies that focus on stress among JPOs is Greenwood's (2016) qualitative study on juvenile probations officers in Texas. For this study, Greenwood surveyed 291 JPOs on work stressors, the stress experienced by JPOs, associations between stages of stress, and the effect of age, race, and social support on the experience of stress by JPOs. Using the theory of Job Demand Control, which associates stress with high job demands and low control over decisions, Greenwood found as the JPO's jurisdiction increased, autonomy decreased as did commitment to the agency and job satisfaction. Greenwood (2016) also argued for more research on job stress among juvenile probation officers.

While not specifically about stress, several studies have examined job turnover and burnout among JPOs. Matz et al. (2013) examined job turnover related to organizational commitment and job satisfaction at a juvenile correctional center. They found a correlation between work environment and probation officers' stress and their desire to remain employed with the organization (Matz et al., 2013). Similarly, a study completed by Mikytuck and Cleary (2016) used exit interviews to examine voluntary turnover among juvenile correctional and non-correctional employees. They discovered juvenile correctional staff who left their organization identified safety concerns, which resulted in stress, as the cause of them leaving. In contrast, non-correctional staff cited retirement as a reason to leave (Mikytuck and Cleary, 2016)

Dombek (2014) investigated how the adult probation officer's work environment influences stages of burnout, using the general strain theory that examines individual responses to the pressure of strainful occurrences. He surveyed 107 participants from the New York State Probation Officers Association, using a combination of the Work Environment Scale Form R (WES), which analyzes an individual's work environment and the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS), which is a survey to measure burnout (Dombek, 2014). Findings from this quantitative study suggest when supervisor support is average or below average, there is an increase in probation officer burnout (Dombek, 2014), and a high level of work pressure was also correlated to burnout. To mitigate this type of burnout, Dombek (2014) suggested JPOs should have increased contact and support from management.

Other research has also called for support from management, specifically stress intervention programs. Ekman (2015) conducted a single qualitative case study at an urban juvenile correctional facility with approximately 50 juvenile justice officers. Ekman (2015) found the juvenile justice officers experienced stress for a variety of reasons, including working with violent offenders, excessive paperwork, and lack of organizational support. He also found human service organizations do not offer their employees stress intervention programs. Ekman concluded juvenile justice organizations need to offer more trainings not only to address stress but also to support JPOs' interpersonal needs, which could assist in achieving an emotional balance. Ekman (2015) highlighted the lack of research related to stress concerning juvenile justice professionals.

Although limited in number and scope, juvenile justice organizations have attempted to implement stress intervention programs (Ekman, 2015; Salyers, 2015). For

example, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) funded stress reduction programs for juvenile justice officers that were implemented primarily in adult correction facilities at approximately 11 juvenile facilities (Ekman, 2015). The programs provided in the juvenile correctional facilities consisted of pre-existing NIJ stress reduction programs (Ekman, 2015). The NIJ selected both adult and juvenile correctional facilities and funded the stress reduction programs. The NIJ had an outside agency, Abt Associates, evaluate the stress reduction programs using phone calls and surveys, and it was discovered these programs were unsuccessful. The participants of these programs stated they were dissatisfied with the outside trainer's experience in corrections.

To address the gaps in the research around JPOs' stress and responses to stress, this study examined perceptions of work-related stress among JPOs in South Dakota. It also identified JPOs' coping strategies for managing their stress.

Summary and Conclusions

This qualitative study involved interviewing JPOs from rural juvenile probation departments and collecting available workplace documents regarding job descriptions or duties and stress-management resources. There is limited research on stress and the correctional environment but even less in the JPO environment. Moreover, there is limited research on the perceptions of stress and coping mechanisms for JPOs and this study works to fill the gap in the literature concerning stress for JPOs. Also, a majority of the existing research on JPOs focus on burnout as opposed to stress and almost none of the studies use qualitative methods such as interviews. In addition, there is a lack of research in the rural JPO environment. The remaining chapters of the dissertation contain a description of the methods and methodology, data analysis, findings, and recommendations. I also explain

how research methods—using interviews, document analysis, and TTS with JPOs in a rural environment—fill research gaps and meet specific methodological criteria.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Stress is a predominant factor for juvenile probation employees, but limited research has been devoted to this topic among rural juvenile probation offices (Blackmon et al., 2016; Bolin, 2014; Ekman, 2014; Greenwood, 2016). Most of the research on stress in the correctional field has pertained to adult offender correctional officers, including adult probation and parole and law enforcement officers (Greenwood, 2016) and those working in the adult prison system (Bolin, 2014). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine JPOs' perceptions of job-related stress, including definitions of stress, perceived causes of stress, and the strategies they use to reduce stress in rural South Dakota juvenile probation departments.

This chapter describes the methods of the study. I explain the rationale for my study design, including why a qualitative study was appropriate, why interviews and workplace documents were ideal data sources, and how the case study approach helped me to better understand JPOs' perceptions of stress, what they believe causes their stress or could cause stress, and the strategies they use to reduce their stress.

Research Design and Rationale

The following questions were used to guide this study:

RQ 1: How do JPOs in rural communities perceive and respond to stress related to their work?

RQ2: What are the perceived causes of stress for JPOs in rural communities and what strategies do they use to reduce the stress?

The qualitative case study approach allowed participants in this study to explain what they perceive as the cause of their stress and to describe their coping strategies when faced with job-related stress. Qualitative research was ideal for exploring and comprehending JPOs' stress. According to Yin (2012), qualitative research provides a means to explore and comprehend individuals or groups that encounter stressful social issues. Moreover, the case study methodology allows the researcher to gain a rich and deep understanding of a particular issue through an exploration of emerging themes (Noor, 2008). The philosophical underpinning of the case study is the constructivist paradigm, which states truth is relative and dependent on an individual perception (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545). This approach allows the researcher to gain a holistic view of the phenomenon being studied: stress as it is perceived and/or experienced by each of the study participants (Yin, 2012; Noor, 2008).

Role of the Researcher

I conducted face-to-face interviews with JPOs. As a former JPO, supervisor, and JPO regional manager, I understand the stress JPOs experience. I worked primarily in rural state-funded juvenile probation offices, and I want to assist in reducing stress among the JPO population. Given my personal connection to the topic, I had to be conscious of the stress I felt while in those positions, and I needed to be careful not to let those experiences and assumptions interfere with data collection and analysis. I am no longer employed in juvenile probation, and I followed best practices during the interview process, including objectivity, active listening, and flexibility (Brod, Tesler, & Christensen, 2009).

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

Participants in this study were JPOs in South Dakota. The regions were rural and most accessible to where I currently reside, allowing me to be physically present during the interviews. There are two departments that offer juvenile probation services in South Dakota: the South Dakota Unified Justice System and the Department of Corrections (State of South Dakota, 2012). I contacted senior management at each of the DOCs to obtain approval for this research project. After I received consent to proceed, I provided the management with a recruitment e-mail that directed JPOs to contact me by e-mail or phone with questions about the study or to indicate their interest in participating. Probation department managers did not participate in recruiting JPOs for the study beyond forwarding my e-mail. Once JPOs agreed to participate, I contacted them to set up the interviews, which lasted approximately 30–60 minutes. Only JPOs who had been employed 6 months or longer were included in this study. I included all JPOs who consented to participate and fit these criteria.

Instrumentation

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore JPOs' perceived stress related to their work, including the causes of stress and their responses to stress. Therefore, my interview questions can be divided into categories related to these interests: perceptions of work-related stress, causes of stress, and responses to stress. Appendix A includes a full list of the interview questions. The interviews began with a broad question asking participants to identify and describe a recent and specific stressful event or event that had the potential to be stressful. It was important to let participants begin by using

their own language to describe their stressful experiences as opposed to providing specific questions that might influence their responses. After participants recounted the event, I asked questions about how they coped with the stress of the event and whether their supervisor assisted them in coping with their stress. For each of these questions, I prepared follow-up questions in case the responses lacked specificity. This first set of questions allowed me to explore the causes and strategies used to reduce stress. These questions also explored if there are any leadership styles that assist in reducing stress.

In the questions about coping, I created optional follow-up questions developed using Lazarus and Folkman's (1988) WAYS questionnaire, e.g., "How do you cope with stress?" Folkman and Lazarus (1988) developed the questionnaire based on the TTS model (Padyab, Backteman-erlanson & Brulin, 2016). The questionnaire was designed for participants to answer questions in relation to a specific stressful event that occurred within the last week (Corrales, 2013) and for researchers (Padyab et al., 2016) "to assess coping strategies." The instrument consists of 66 items that describe a "broad range of thoughts and behaviors people use to manage stressful encounters" (p. 231). The WAYS questionnaire uses a four-point Likert scale (0 = does not apply and/or not used,1 = used to some extent, 2 = used quite a bit, 3 = used a great deal) to gauge the utility of the coping strategies for particular populations, such as patrolling police officers in Sweden (Padyab et al., 2016).

Washington and Rakes (2015) conducted a mixed methods study regarding how hospice family care providers cope with stress. There were 248 participants for this study who were asked to complete the WAYS questionnaire (Washington & Rakes, 2015). A conclusion from this study was coping strategies are individualized as hospice practitioners

experience a wide variety of stressful situations. This study and its findings helped me determine the WAYS questionnaire, adapted into interview questions, could be used to understand individualized coping strategies related to job-related stress.

I also collected workplace documents, including job descriptions, employee handbooks, and textual information about stress-management resources to use as contextual artifacts for understanding stress in each workplace. Taken together, the interviews and workplace documents allowed me to explore the ways in which JPOs in rural communities perceive and respond to stress related to their work, perceive causes of stress, and draw on strategies to reduce work-related stress.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

To study stress and coping strategies of JPOs in rural South Dakota, I conducted interviews with a JPO from three rural county probation departments. To recruit the JPOs, I contacted the DOC senior management to get their approval for this research project. After I received consent to proceed, I shared a recruitment e-mail with the management to forward to JPOs who had at least 6 months of experience. The e-mail invited JPOs who were interested in participating to contact me by e-mail or phone. The senior management did not participate in recruitment beyond forwarding my recruitment e-mail. I personally conducted one interview with each JPO; the interviews lasted approximately 30 and 60 minutes, and I asked them when and where it was convenient to meet with them—choosing locations where they felt comfortable discussing work-related stress. During the interview, I audio recorded the conversation and took handwritten notes.

When gaining permission from the DOC, I also asked for permission to access related workplace documents. Upon approval, I accessed these documents from their website.

In anticipation of any distress from the interviews, I provided access to free counseling to the participants. I informed them of this resource in the recruitment e-mail, in the consent form, at beginning of the interview, and at the end of the interview. Participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time and could choose not to answer any of the interview questions.

Data Analysis Plan

The primary data set for this study was the transcribed interviews of JPOs. I used a transcription company, Scribie, to transcribe the audio interviews. Interviews were transcribed verbatim, with the exception of excluding discourse markers such as "um." Because my analysis did not focus on pronunciation or non-verbal communication (gestures, facial expressions), these features were not included in the transcripts.

For each transcript, I used descriptive coding to interpret the data according to participants' perceptions of the causes of stress (appraisals) as well as their responses to stress (coping). According to Onwuegbuzie, Frels, and Hwang (2016), descriptive coding allows the researcher to apply descriptive nouns to the data being analyzed and this is completed once the researcher generates the descriptive codes. By using descriptive coding, I was able to review and identify key words to explore my research topic (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2016). I coded for appraisal and coping of the stressful event. When using descriptive coding with a case study approach, the goal is to capture variations as well as patterns

within the coding, which led to identifying themes within the codes. I wrote memos as I read the transcripts to begin to identify themes. I used Microsoft Word to assist in analyzing the data, using highlighting to track codes and themes.

Initially, I read the transcription multiple times to develop the descriptive codes and themes and used the TTS model to assist with coding. A separate document was created to extract codes and themes from the three interviews which allowed me to organize the codes and themes as well as view them as a conversation with one another. After the coding was complete, I used my research questions as guide to organize my narratives.

Because I followed a case study approach in order to understand each JPO's perception of stress, I also analyze the documents they provided to better understand their work environment, job duties, and responses to stress from management. I wrote analytical memos regarding the relationship between the documents, the interviews, and my research questions. Because this is a small exploratory case study, all cases are included, and none were considered discrepant.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

My primary measure for ensuring credibility was through the process of member checking. I contacted the participants and shared a draft analysis with them in order to check my interpretation of the data in relation to their experiences. This process allowed participants to address any misrepresentations and to provide clarifications.

Transferability

This research project was an exploratory study; therefore, the goal was not to generalize the findings. Instead, I examined the relationship between my findings and findings from urban environments and from the adult CO environment in order to determine what kind of additional research I might suggest to the field. Nonetheless, I also make limited recommendations for stress reduction in the rural JPO environment based on the findings from my research.

Dependability

I compared the findings from my research with other findings on stress in the corrections environment in order to triangulate the data. I used research memos to capture analytical insights as well as to check for bias and assumptions in my analysis.

Confirmability

A strategy used to establish confirmability was reflexivity, which ensured my assumptions and biases did not interfere with my analysis of the data. I also had a colleague check my coding as another means to check for assumptions and biases.

Ethical Procedures

The ethical considerations for this study were informed consent, access to free counseling, and the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any point or to not answer any interview questions. Informed consent is communication between the researcher and the participant (Grady, 2015). The informed consent process involves disclosure, voluntary participation, and understanding (Grady, 2015). I obtained informed consent from the JPOs participating in this study in advance of the interviews. In anticipation of any distress from

the interviews, I provided access to free counseling to the participants. I informed them of this resource in the recruitment email, in the consent form, at beginning of the interview, and at the end of the interview. The JPOs were informed that participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw from the study at any time. The interviews were conducted at a time and location that was convenient for the JPOs. I recommended they choose an area where we could have privacy without being overheard, and they could choose not to answer any questions. This study was approved by Walden's IRB (07-02-19-0339489). The JPOs who participated in this study were treated as professionals with the understanding anonymity is important and would be ensured. The data is anonymous as I removed names and other identifying information from the transcripts and the data is locked up.

Summary

This qualitative case study consists of 30 and 60 minute interviews with JPOs in rural South Dakota on their perceptions of stress as well as document analysis of workplace documents related to job descriptions or duties and stress-management resources. Chapter 3 included a discussion on the methodology used in the qualitative case study. I also discussed data collection and data analysis. In the next chapter, I present the findings of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

This qualitative study was conducted to examine JPOs' perceptions of and possible experiences with job-related stress, including perceived causes of stress and the strategies they use to reduce stress in rural South Dakota juvenile probation offices. In this section, I present the data obtained from several workplace documents (South Dakota State Employee Handbook, DOC policies, and JPO job descriptions) and three face-to-face interviews with JPOs currently working in rural counties in South Dakota. The interviews lasted approximately 30 and 60 minutes and were audio recorded. Each interview was transcribed using verbatim transcription through Scribie services. When analyzing the transcriptions, I focused on reviewing the data to answer the *how* and *why* questions surrounding the perceptions of and possible experiences with job-related stress, including perceived causes of stress and the strategies participants use to reduce stress in rural South Dakota juvenile probation. This allowed me to investigate similarities and differences within and among cases in relation to JPOs' perceptions of stress and their coping strategies. The analysis aimed to answer the following research questions:

RQ 1: How do JPOs in rural communities perceive and respond to stress related to their work?

RQ2: What are the perceived causes of stress for JPOs in rural communities and what strategies do they use to reduce the stress?

The research questions were answered based on the analysis of JPOs' responses during the interviews and analyzing the transcripts and the workplace documents were accessible online at the South Dakota Bureau of Human Resources and the DOC.

Research Setting

This study was conducted in rural probation offices located in South Dakota. Each of the locations has a population of 25,000 or less. The three in-person interviews took place in the JPOs' office buildings; Joan was interviewed in her office; Kevin was interviewed in a multipurpose room; and Bill was interviewed in a conference room. Each of these locations were quiet.

Demographics

The participating JPOs were Caucasian, which matches the demographic of the region. There was one female JPO and two male JPOs who participated in the study. All have been employed with DOC for 20 years or more, all in rural counties. All the JPOs cover a large geographic area in South Dakota and visit juveniles at their residence, including on the reservation. Also, two of the JPOs commute an hour to and from work.

Two of the three JPOs were hybrid agents. Due to the decrease in juvenile caseloads, the DOC has launched a trial hybrid juvenile probation agent position. This hybrid agent not only monitors juveniles but also works with adult probation and parole to supervise adults. The hybrid agent position increases job security for the JPOs. Two of the JPOs are the only JPOs in their offices, and they do all the necessary paperwork, transports, and visitations without additional assistance. Pseudonyms are used to identify the participants in this study.

Data Collection

The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded on a cell phone, and handwritten notes were taken during each of the interviews.

Each JPO was interviewed once, and they all agreed to being contacted with additional questions if needed. The interview questions began with broad questions and then became more specific. The major difference between the interviews was the length of the interviews; the shortest interview was half the length of the longest interview. All the participants answered each interview question, and the duration of the interview depended on how much detail each participant provided when answering the questions.

The participants were interviewed using a semi structured interview with open-ended questions, and they were told they could decline further participation at any point. The interview questions (Appendix A) were used a guideline for the interviews, and each question had sub questions to assist in gathering additional detail, as necessary, for responses. I used some of the follow-up questions, and I did not add any new follow-up questions. For example, for Question 2, I asked all the JPOs the follow-up question, "Were there any activities or thoughts that helped you cope with stress?" Also, for Question 4, I asked the follow-up question, "Is there any office work that might cause you stress?"

There were no difficult moments during the interviews, but when I asked Question 6, "Do you think there are certain types of leadership models that are helpful in reducing employee stress?", I gave various examples of leadership models such as transformational or servant leadership models. The JPOs responded to Question 4 more openly than some of the other questions. This question offered the JPOs the opportunity to discuss stress associated with the DOC downsizing.

At the start of the interview, I informed the participants about my past experience with juvenile probation. While I do not believe this influenced the JPOs' answers, I was able

to relate to some of the issues and concerns they expressed during the interview. For example, the JPOs noted stress from geographic isolation, and when I was a JPO, I experienced this same issue at times.

Gender could have influenced some of the JPOs' answers. Specifically, during the interview with Joan, she noted a feeling of maternal responsibility to one of the juveniles in her caseload. Neither Kevin nor Bill expressed having parental responsibilities for the juveniles in their caseloads, but they perform some of the responsibilities a parent does. For example, Kevin and Bill both stated they ensure the juveniles make appointments. In addition to the interviews, I analyzed three workplace documents for their mention of stress and coping strategies. These documents, all available online, include the South Dakota State Employee Handbook, the DOC policies, and the JPOs' job descriptions.

Data Analysis

I used thematic coding to identify what participants identified as causes of stress (or appraisals) and the strategies they used to respond to stress (or coping). This coding strategy allowed me to connect relevant information from the data set to my research questions. Based on the TTS, the codes were appraisals of stress and coping with stress. For example, when participants answered Question 1 ("Describe a recent stressful event that occurred at work."), Question 4 ("Aside from the event you've just described, what other kinds of stress do experience in your job?"), and Question 7 ("How does stress affect your job as a juvenile probation officer?"), their responses were largely coded as causes of stress. When they answered Question 2 ("How did you cope with the stress?"), Question 5 ("Other than what you've already mentioned, are there any other strategies you use to reduce stress?"), and Question 8 ("Tell me about how you reduce stress levels outside of the work

environment."), their responses were largely coded as coping with stress. Their responses to Question 3 ("Tell me about the strategies your managers and leaders used to reduce stress in the specific event you mentioned in Question 1.") and Question 6 ("Do you think certain types of leadership models are helpful in reducing employee stress?") were also coded as coping with stress.

Once I had linked the questions and the codes, I then identified categories within the codes. While the codes indicate where in the data the research questions and theoretical framework were addressed, the categories provide the details of how the data answer the research questions. Finally, I identified themes within each category. The themes add dimension to each category, showing the range of responses within the categories.

Appraisals of Stress

The first code, appraisals of stress, identifies where in the data participants provided information that can begin answering RQ2, What are the perceived causes of stress for JPOs in rural communities? Table 1 depicts the categories and themes for the code appraisals of stress. There are four categories within this code: (a) juvenile's home situation, (b) isolation, (c) employment, and (d) safety.

Table 1

Categories and Themes for Appraisal of Stress Code

Categories	Themes
Juvenile's home environment	• Parents

	• Responsibility • Cultural issues
Isolation	• Safety • Deadlines
Employment	• Job security • Downsizing • Caseloads
Safety	• Home and family • Employment

Juvenile's home situation. The category of *juvenile's home situation* includes comments about the home environments of the juveniles in their caseloads and includes the themes of parent's responsibility. The theme of parents includes all comments related to the parents of the juveniles on their caseload. For example, the JPOs discussed engaging parents as a stressful event because they are unsure how parents would react to the juvenile's sanction for a probation violation. At other times, JPOs described the home situation in relation to parents' level of responsibility in relation to their child's probation. For example, JPO Joan expressed frustration for a parent's blatant disregard for parental responsibility. She said,

I think its frustration because I am a parent, and I just don't understand why you have a kid and you can't be involved. I never... I rarely ever get stressed about an environment. I've been in some pretty disgusting and frightening situations, and I think just in 25-year career, I've developed some pretty good situational awareness, so things like that don't bother me. It bothers me that they just blatantly disregard any parental responsibility. And sometimes when you are stressed anyway, you have poor coping skills and you wanna go, "What the hell is your problem? Get your shit together."

Another theme is responsibility. The JPOs interviewed expressed they felt it was their responsibility to be available for the juvenile, almost as a parent would be. For example, Bill expressed he was responsible for taking juveniles to their appointments. He stated,

One of the things I try to do is if I have to take kids to chemical dependency places or regular counseling for mental health, I'll drive them. So trying to get that... That schedule thing's a pain in the butt sometimes, you know? 'Cause you've got all these tasks you've gotta get done. You've gotta get your monthly reauthorization calls in, you've gotta get... And that's probably true with everybody else too, but, I mean, out here in the sticks where people don't have money, it's difficult. So I try to step up and help the families, but then again, when people don't care, you can't make them care. That's the other struggle.

Both Kevin and Bill stated cultural issues related to juveniles' home environments were at times stressful. Both JPOs work with Native American juveniles on the reservation, and the cultural issues were not with the juveniles but with their parents. Bill noted it could be stressful "just kind of not knowing cultural situations and what's appropriate or not."

Kevin stated the parents experienced the historical practice of forcibly putting Native American youth into boarding schools and that experience leads to distrust and makes his interaction with them stressful or uncomfortable when it comes to shaking hands and eye contact.

Isolation. The second category, isolation, refers to the size and area of the territory JPOs cover. The JPOs interviewed were stressed at times from covering such a large geographic region because of safety issues and because of the need to meet department timelines for visiting juveniles. As such, the themes for this category are safety and deadlines.

An example of safety is Kevin's concern about monitoring Native American juveniles on the reservation and being unsure how fast emergency services could arrive and offer assistance if needed. During the interview, Kevin described an incident that occurred when he went to visit a juvenile on the reservation. There was only one way in and out from the juvenile's residence, and when he arrived, he was greeted by a household member. This individual told Kevin the juvenile was not home and Kevin should not come back because his safety could not be guaranteed. Again, part of the concern about safety relates to accessibility to emergency services while on the reservation. According to Bill, there are not many landmarks on the reservation to inform emergency services of a JPO's location. Bill also stated covering a large geographic region can be stressful because the rural areas they cover limit the possible assistance from law enforcement. In fact, as a precaution, Kevin notifies the sheriff's office when he is going onto the reservation as a precaution. In this way, the theme of safety is connected to JPOs' personal safety while on the job and their

access to support. Bill also related safety to driving conditions, noting that during the winter, the driving can be stressful because of the large geographic area they cover.

The JPO's discussed how important it is to meet the deadlines the DOC has implemented. An example of a deadline discussed was ensuring reauthorization calls were made to ensure the continuation of services for the juvenile. Kevin stated,

One of the things I try to do is if I have to take kids to chemical dependency places, or regular counseling for mental health, I'll drive them to their appointment. So, trying to get that... That schedule thing's a pain in the butt sometimes, you know? 'Cause you've got all these tasks you've gotta get done. You've gotta get your monthly reauthorization calls in, you've gotta get... And that's probably true with everybody else, too, but, I mean, out here in the sticks where people don't have money, it's difficult. So I try to step up and help the families, but, then again, when people don't care, you can't make them care. That's the other struggle.

Employment. The third category within the code "appraisals of stress" is employment, which relates to concerns about downsizing. Continued employment is a concern for the JPOs. The DOC has been downsizing, and most JPO positions in the state were eliminated through attrition. All the JPOs interviewed discussed this issue and described how stressful it has been to worry about their job security, about the uncertainty around downsizing, and the possible increases to their caseloads—the three themes for this category. In the following description of stress related to employment and downsizing, Bill demonstrates two of the three themes: uncertainty about downsizing and caseloads. He stated,

Yeah, obviously 'cause we don't have any control over that and they don't really ask for our input about different directions that the department should be taking or anything. So that kind of fear of the unknown of what's gonna happen. And now that we've downsized so much, if they go back to the old ways, are we going to have to re-hire staff or will they rehire staff? Will our caseloads increase significantly again? Obviously that would mean job security is probably a little bit better, but your job stress may go up quite a bit because now you're dealing with instead of 10 kids again, you're a single agent office dealing with 30 kids. So there is the potential of that.

In this excerpt, Bill explicitly mentions the lack of control and uncertainty related to downsizing and a concern about caseloads. Kevin was also uncertain about the possible effects of future downsizing. He stated,

Well, they talked about it at our meetings, and they said that with this new bill that was passed, we're gonna see less kids coming, it would be a certain amount of kids, and we don't know how it's gonna affect. And we may have to downsize some areas, but we'll let you know when that time comes.

Joan describes experiencing stress related to job security because she is in a single-agent office and has only three juveniles on her caseload. Even though she covers the largest geographic region, Joan worried only having three juveniles on the caseload will make her office a target for cutbacks.

Safety. Besides being concerned about safety in relation to isolation, the JPOs want to feel secure within all aspects of their life including home and employment. For example, Joan described an incident she had with a juvenile on her caseload. Joan was assisting her

mother with a garage sale at her mother's residence, and a juvenile whom she had previously supervised shown up. At the time, Joan did not think much about it until the juvenile came back onto her caseload. The juvenile stated there were a lot of snakes where she lived. Joan first stated she did not have any snakes at her house but then realized he was talking about her mother's house, where he had been. Joan was not only concerned about her personal safety but the safety of her extended family. In this way, one theme in this category is home and family safety. The JPOs expressed how important their family was not only in reducing stress but how important it was to keep them safe. For example, Bill discussed the importance of having positive relationships with his juveniles which could assist in keeping his family safe. Bill stated,

> Luckily enough, no. Luckily not for me. I hope I've developed a pretty good relationship with them. I've never had any of them come up to me in the community to try to start a problem or anything like that. Obviously, going from the juveniles to the adults, I've seen some kids that I've supervised on the juvenile side that are now in the adult system, and I've never had an issue with them here at the office, luckily. So I've just been... I'd say, just pretty lucky in that situation.

Bill's description highlights the possibility for encountering former juveniles from his caseload in his home and family life—a possibility that may be exacerbated by living in a rural environment.

Another theme within this category was employment. The JPOs who participated in this study were tenured employees who had over 20 years with the state. Since the reform

bill was introduced the number of JPOs in South Dakota has declined from 50 to 19. Having job security is a form of safety the JPOs couldn't fully appreciate in a climate of downsizing.

Coping With Stress

The second code, coping with stress, identified where in the data participants provided information that can begin answering the research questions *how do JPOs respond to stress related to their work? and what strategies do they use to reduce the stress?* Table 2 depicts the categories and themes for the code "Coping with Stress." There were seven categories within this code: disengage, family, planning, religion, avoidance, situation awareness, and supervisor.

Table 2

Categories and Themes for Coping With Stress

Category	Themes
Disengage	Exercise
	Activities
Family	
Planning	
Religion	
Avoidance	

Situational Awareness

Supervisor

Disengage. The category disengage includes comments about how the JPOs separate work from their personal life and includes the themes family and activities. For example, Bill discussed the importance of separating work and his personal life. Bill stated there must be a separation between work and personal life to manage stress, and he links his ability to disengage to being married with children. He also accomplishes this separation by making sure that he has outside activities such as coaching little league baseball, hockey, and softball. Joan also mentioned the need to disengage and noted many of the same methods as Bill: spending time with her family, talking with her spouse, and gardening. Joan stated engaging in those activities has been helpful in sustaining a long career for herself. Similarly, Kevin disengages by watering spruce trees, playing with his dogs, and spending time with his family.

One of the activities in the theme activities was gardening. Both Joan and Kevin stated they garden to reduce stress. Joan stated after a stressful day at work she will go home and garden. Kevin stated at times he will garden to assist in managing his stress after work. Another example of an activity is exercise. All the JPOs engaged in some type of physical activity: Joan and Kevin walk their dogs, and Bill runs. Bill stated exercising allows him to disengage from work.

Family. Although family is a theme within disengage, there are also moments in the interviews when JPOs rely on their families to help them process work events, which

reduces stress. Therefore, family is its own category within the code "responses to stress." For example, Joan described a time when she was upset with her supervisor and went home and spoke to her husband about her feelings. She stated when her husband stated, "I don't understand why you are all upset about this," she realized she didn't know why she was upset either, and it reduced her stressed.

Planning. A third category relates to the steps the JPOs take in advance of aspects of their jobs that cause them stress. Both Kevin and Bill respond to the stress of isolation by informing people of where they will be. Bill alerts the Sherriff's office when he goes onto the reservation, and Kevin reduces stress by making sure his wife knows where he is traveling for the day. If something were to happen to Kevin, she would know where he was.

Religion. Only one of the JPOs discussed religion as a means to cope with stress. Kevin discussed the importance of religion in his life and how it reduces stress in his life. Kevin stated he uses religion to cope with stress about job security. In addition, he told a story about being in his car while waiting to do a transport and being approached by a preacher. Kevin stated,

All of a sudden there was a knock on my window, and when I turned, there's a guy all dressed in white, he looks like he got off the Love Boat. But I looked at his tag and he works at the hospital. So I turned my radio down, I rolled down my window and said, "Can I help you?" He says, "Are you listening to a preacher?" I said, "Yeah." "Are you a Christian?" "Yeah. Why?" "Oh, I'm a Christian too. I was just curious. I'm from Rapid City, I work down at the Pine Ridge Hospital." And he says, "I don't know why I'm supposed to tell you this... ", this was two days after I prayed to God. He said, "I don't know why I supposed to tell you

this, but you're not supposed to worry, God's got your back. If you worry, that's a sin, let God take care of you." I didn't tell him my problems; I didn't tell him about my prayer. And then it was time to go pick that kid up and I had that in my head for a half an hour drive.

Ever since that experience, Kevin has turned to religion as a way to respond to stress.

Avoidance. Avoidance includes instances when JPOs create processes to avoid situations that could cause stress, particularly by avoiding confrontations. Bill stated he avoids confrontation with both the parents and juvenile by calling parents to let them know if their child is going to receive a sanction as opposed to giving that information in person. Joan manages office meetings to avoid confrontation. The DOC shares offices with other state entities who do not have the training to handle a situation if a client lost control. Joan noted how she prepares for these visits ahead of time to avoid any unnecessary confrontation as well as to keep the office safe. Kevin works to avoid confrontation with juveniles and used the analogy of being a thermostat or thermometer as a means to gauge his interactions with juveniles for this purpose. Kevin stated,

You're always set at the same temp. So if these kids are acting like little shitheads, you can lower yourself to their level and be a shithead too, or you can stay on that set dial, or you can be that thermometer and bounce around with all those emotions. You can't take it personal, you've gotta realize that they didn't have the... They weren't brought up the way you were, and there's cultural differences sometimes, and you just have to be understanding and listen probably more than yelling, and then give your response. And like I said, if it works, it works, and if it don't maybe planting some seeds for down the road and show some patience.

Regardless of whether juveniles are being "little shitheads," Kevin works to stay calm and patient to avoid confrontation that could cause stress.

Situational awareness. Another way of coping with stress was to develop situational awareness, and all three JPOs expressed the importance of this skill in managing potentially stressful situations. Joan discussed an incident with a client who was on drugs and how she avoided what could have been a dangerous situation. She said,

I had a client come in who was actively high on opiates and meth, and the situation was stressful because I was trying to get him to not talk. He wanted to keep explaining things and I just wanted to get him safely out of here. We share an office with a lot of non-correctionally trained people, so we have Department of Transportation, economic systems. So, we have to think about all of their safety in addition to ours.

Although Joan describes the situation as stressful, she also describes how she responded to the situation so as not to escalate the stress and danger for herself and others in the office. Kevin describes situational awareness in terms of being aware of his surroundings on the reservation and relying on "your instincts, your gut." Bill discussed the importance of knowing the environment before visiting a juvenile and potentially involving law enforcement or at least informing parents in advance and notes the importance of knowing about the juvenile's situation before he talks to or meets with the parents.

Supervisor. The final category for coping with stress captured JPOs' perceived support in their work environment to reduce stress. All of the JPOs interviewed stated their supervisor assisted them in reducing stress. For example, Kevin highlights the accessibility of his supervisor whom he had worked with for over ten years. He stated,

I can get ahold of Gillespie anytime. I can call him on his phone. I've called him after hours when I have a situation that comes up and need some... To bounce some ideas off to see if it's okay or not.

He then explained the support he felt, stating,

If there is a particularly stressful situation, if there's an event that he knows, like if one of our kids gets arrested for a serious crime that may make the news or something here in the small community, he's definitely calling and saying, "How are you doing with this?" So it's just that one-on-one interaction with my supervisor.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

My primary measure for ensuring credibility has been through the process of member checking. I contacted the participants and shared a draft analysis with them in order to check my interpretation of the data in relation to their experiences. This process allows participants to address any misrepresentations and to provide clarifications.

Transferability

This research project is an exploratory study; therefore, the goal was not to generalize the findings. Instead, I examined the relationship between my findings and findings from urban environments and from the adult CO environment in order to determine what kind of additional research I might suggest to the field. Nonetheless, I make limited recommendations for stress reduction in the rural JPO environment based on the findings from my research.

Dependability

I compared the findings from my research with other findings on stress in the corrections environment in order to triangulate the data. Additionally, I used research memos to capture analytical insights as well as to check for bias and assumptions in my analysis.

Confirmability

A strategy used to establish confirmability was reflexivity, which ensures my assumptions and biases did not overly interfere with my analysis of the data. I also had a colleague check my coding as another means to check for assumptions and biases.

Study Results

As described above, I analyzed the interview data from three JPOs in rural South Dakota according to codes, categories, and themes linked to the research questions and theoretical framework. I also analyzed three workplace documents. The analysis of the data provides insight into my research questions: How do JPOs in rural communities perceive and respond to stress related to their work? What are the perceived causes of stress for JPOs in rural communities and what strategies do they use to reduce the stress? Specifically, the data shows how JPOs engage the two strategies of appraisal and coping in response to potentially stressful situations.

Appraisal

The JPOs interviewed perceived stress in four main areas: juvenile's home environment, isolation, employment, and safety. While all of the JPOs referenced interactions with juvenile's parents as possibly stressful, Joan also feels stress in relation to

a perceived responsibility to be a mother figure. Joan said she "talks with them on the phone two times a week. And [she…] really get[s] to know them." Kevin and Bill stated cultural issues related to working with Native Americans on the reservation caused stress. Kevin referenced the older generation's experience with boarding schools as one of the factors in the cultural differences. Specifically, Kevin stated,

> The older generation, the ones that went through the boarding schools and all that... I don't know. When you shake hands, you don't squeeze. It's very gentle. The older generation, you don't look in the eyes, it's disrespectful. And you listen, that's kind of how you do it. The younger generation, they're kind of getting away from all that.

Bill expressed a similar sentiment when he stated the cultural issues that come up are with the juvenile's parents and are related to distrust. He stated,

> Just kind of not knowing cultural situations and what's appropriate or not. Over the years, I think I've learned quite a bit about their cultural differences. I'm trying to think. With the kids... To me, kids are kids. Kids haven't changed, ever. It's the perception of the parents and how you deal with the parents that are a little bit more difficult 'cause you're breaking generational type of distrust with the police, with the court system, that kind of thing. 'Cause a lot of our kids come from families that already have one or two parents already in the system.

For both Kevin and Bill, the difference in cultural backgrounds and navigating those differences created stress.

All of the JPOs interviewed expressed concern over the geographic area they monitor due to isolation, the second category. Joan's concerns related to isolation were

outliers compared to Kevin and Bill as she focused on the ability to get radio stations in the state vehicle as well as the safety of driving in the winter. Both Bill and Kevin were concerned about personal safety, including their access to law enforcement or emergency services, specifically in relation to being on reservations. For example, Kevin stated,

> You're out here in the boonies. You're going to call for help and half the time there's no road signs to tell you where you're at. Just kind of know the territory a little bit and hope that if you do call for help that the reservation or whoever it is, I guess, the Lake County, they'll know where I'm at.

To explain his concern, Kevin mentioned he had heard stories of the Cartel being on the Pine Ridge reservation and killing people in broad daylight.

Another area of perceived stress was employment, particularly related to the legislative downsizing of DOC. The JPOs all identified this issue as stressful. Joan noted it kept her up at night and she had called the Director of DOC to ask questions concerning the next legislative session. Kevin also identified the legislative downsizing as stressful, but for him it was stressful because he no longer had office staff to discuss stressful situations with. Bill noted the downsizing and the lack of control over the situation was stressful in part because he worries his caseload could increase if there are more cuts.

Coping

The JPOs used seven primary strategies to cope with stress: disengage, family, planning, religion, avoidance, situation awareness, and supervisor. The JPOs disengaged through time with family and activities, and both Kevin and Bill used their commute to work as a way to disengage. Both stated during the commute to work they would organize their

workday, and on their way back home they would use the time to separate work from their home life. Bill also uses the quiet time on the drive home to reduce stress. Bill stated,

I've got an hour drive before I get home to see my family and kids. If I had a stressful day here, I've got that hour to separate everything, get my mind right, before I go into being a father and a husband.

The JPOs also engaged in activities to help them disengage from the stress of work. For example, Joan and Bill walked their dogs. The JPOs also mentioned gardening and exercise as activities that helped them to reduce stress.

The JPOs turned to family, planning, religion, avoidance, situation awareness, and supervisors as key strategies for responding to stress. Joan and Kevin indicated their spouses were helpful in responding to stress. Kevin's comment about his wife shows him turning to family and planning for stressful situations involving isolation. Specifically, he stated he will often let his wife know where he is traveling throughout the week. Kevin stated,

I talk with my wife, and I say, "Hey, hon, I'm going to Alchemy today." And I got a phone tracker thing, an app that says this is where he's going. This is how fast he's going. So, she knows if someone clonks me on the head and drops my body off in the badlands or something. She'll know where I'm at, or my phone.

Kevin noted religion was a way to respond to stress, and each of the JPOs described strategies for avoiding stress that relied on situation awareness.

The JPOs all cited their supervisor as a support for reducing their stress. Joan has worked with her supervisor for many years, and he has been supportive, "the most

supportive supervisor [she's] had." She said he will defend her if a parent complains about her. Kevin, who has the same supervisor as Joan, expressed the same sentiments as Joan, noting the availability of his supervisor as one of the ways in which he is supportive. Bill also has a positive relationship with his supervisor, and he said his supervisor will reach out if he thinks Bill might be stressed.

Although all of the JPOs described their supervisor as supportive, they did not find the stress training they received from DOC to be helpful. Joan noted having administrators present during the training contributed to it being unhelpful. She stated,

So they offer corrections fatigue training annually, and it's through a company called Desert Waters in Colorado. I believe it's where they're out of. It is a terrible training. It was wrote to the curriculum; it was wrote for institution, like we were discussing earlier, not really applicable to us. And what I really find interesting is a lot of our stress comes from our administration, and the administrators sit in the room with you during the training. So you go, "Oh, okay. How can I say anything?" And so you have a room of 15 agents going, "We're not talking, we're not gonna say anything. Everything's hunky-dory." So, then what happens is we all have group coping skills where we're texting and bashing and doing things we shouldn't be doing. Because we can't talk to anybody.

Kevin also mentioned this training and stated, "We've done some exercises in how to reduce stress and... I just remember doing it." Kevin went on to say he couldn't remember anything else about it. His lack of specific memories about the training likely means the program was not ultimately helpful in his efforts to reduce work-related stress.

Although Joan and Kevin remembered being offered stress-related trainings from the DOC, none of the workplace documents explicitly refer to stress or stress reduction strategies. The State Employee Handbook describes benefits for state employees, which include an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP program offers employees and their family's online resources and will pay for up to five counseling sessions (South Dakota Bureau of Human Resources, 2019). Joan referenced the EAP and said, "We have complained about this also for the last about 4 or 5 years, because the employee assistance program is through our Community Mental Health Agency." There was some hesitation with used the Community Mental Health Agency because the counselors were familiar with the Joan as well as the juveniles she works with. The handbook also includes programs that could reduce stress—even though it does not specifically reference stress. Those programs are Preventative Care and Assistance and beneFit Well-Being Program. The beneFit Well-Being Program offers state employees online health screening and assessment. The DOC policies neither reference stress nor discuss any programs that discuss stress management.

The JPO job description lists the essential functions of the job as well as challenges and problems, which it describes as "Challenged to maintain public safety through appropriate placement and supervision of juveniles". Further challenged to arrange needed services for juveniles while dealing with scarce resources. Typical problems resolved by the incumbent include dealing with uncooperative juveniles or parents, arranging appropriate aftercare services, dealing with revocation issues, and making temporary custody arrangements" (Challenges and Problems). All of these challenges could and do lead to stress; however, the job description does not name them as such or recognize the possibility for work-related stress associated with these duties and challenges.

Summary

Chapter 4 discussed and presented data collected from the three JPO interviews. In addition, the chapter described how the data was gathered, who the participants were, and the data analysis—including the process of identifying codes, categories, and themes. The findings indicate JPOs do perceive and experience stress in rural communities and have various outlets to reduce stress. The themes that emerged were related to the JPOs' appraisal of stress and coping strategies for responding to stress. The next chapter, Chapter 5, presents further discussion of the results and the overall conclusions of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine JPOs' perceptions of and possible experiences with job-related stress, including perceived causes of stress and the strategies they use to reduce stress in rural South Dakota juvenile probation departments. The state of South Dakota is predominately rural, and juvenile probation offices are spread out over a vast area; these offices often lack resources that urban areas may have to assist in treating juvenile delinquency (Gelb, 2016).

I conducted semi structured interviews to understand the JPOs' perceptions of stress and, if relevant, the strategies they use to reduce stress in rural South Dakota juvenile probation departments, exploring their understandings of the relationship between the rural context, the job demands, and their experiences of stress. Workplace documents were collected, such as job descriptions or duties and stress management resources, to consider JPOs' professional context in relation to their perceptions of stress.

This study aims to address a gap in knowledge about perceived stress among JPOs and their coping strategies (Ekman, 2015). Also, the findings from this study provide insight on how rural juvenile probation officers perceive, respond to, and reduce stress. The findings can provide juvenile justice managers in rural settings with a better understanding of how they might help JPOs manage or reduce their stress.

Interpretation of Findings

This research study expands on the literature on JPOs' experiences with workplace stress. JPOs perceive stress and cope with stress like many of their counterparts in the legal system, including adult probation and parole, corrections, and the police. There are three

primary sources of stress for parole and probation officers and JPOs: (a) high caseloads, (b) large amounts of paperwork, and (c) deadlines (Greenwood, 2016; Pitts, 2007; Skowroński 2015). Although, the JPOs interviewed did not perceive their caseloads as high, all of them mentioned the amount of documentation and paperwork the DOC requires each month to ensure the JPO maintains contact with the juveniles. Despite these similarities between causes of stress for JPOs and their adult counterparts, the data revealed distinctions in causes of stress for the JPOs in relation to working with juveniles and working in a rural environment. This study also provides insights in relation to using TTS to study stress in the corrections environment. The remainder of this section describes each of these implications in detail.

Juvenile Probation Officers

The JPOs interviewed reported stress when working with juveniles' parents. They noted parents expect the JPOs to resolve their child's issues while not taking responsibility for their child's offense. Moreover, the JPOs described performing many of the responsibilities of a parent, including taking children to appointments and monitoring school activities. Finally, two of the JPOs noted cultural differences between themselves and juveniles' parents as a cause of stress. This finding that JPOs experience stress in relation to juveniles' home environments supports research from White et al. (2015), who stated JPOs experience stress when working with different entities, such as parents, foster parents, and education professionals. Moreover, this study extends other research that has attempted to catalog the causes of stress for JPOs (Greenwood, 2016; Salyers et al., 2015) but does not include the home environment as a factor.

Another stressor related to working with juveniles was visiting the juveniles at their homes. According to El Sayed et al. (2019), environmental stressors are those events that expose law enforcement to dangerous or violent situations. The JPO participants in this study were exposed to dangerous situations when they visited juveniles in isolated areas such as the reservation. According to the JPOs, these visits were more dangerous because emergency services may not be able to support them in these remote areas.

Skowroński (2015) reported the lack of emotional and social support is a stressor for JPOs. However, this study offers contrary evidence. Specifically, the JPOs interviewed for this study did not indicate or suggest they lacked emotional and social support and stated they received this type of support from their families.

Rural Environments

The JPOs interviewed reported three categories of stress in relation to working in a rural environment: (a) safety, (b) isolation, and (c) employment. These categories of stress relate to three of the four unique dimensions of stress in rural police departments as reported by Oliver and Meier (2004): (a) security, (b) social factors, and (c) working conditions. The JPOs cover a large geographic area and can be isolated with little support. In urban areas, JPOs would not cover such a large geographic area, which would reduce the risk of being isolated. Each of the JPOs discussed the possible dangers from being isolated by covering a large geographic region. In response to this unique stress factor, two of the JPOs in this study coped by planning ahead before going into remote areas: Bill would contact the sheriff's office to alert them when he was going to be on the reservation, and Kevin would inform his wife so she would know where he was in case something went wrong.

Two of the JPOs also discussed safety in terms of interactions with juveniles in the community. This theme is likely not an issue for JPOs in urban areas as they may not be as easily recognized or as likely to run across juveniles they have supervised in their communities. All the JPOs reported stress in relation to the downsizing of DOC, which was related to reduced numbers of juveniles in the probation system. Again, in urban environments with higher populations, this may not be a concern for JPOs. An additional result of the downsizing could be related to a lack of funding. According to Oliver and Meier (2004), a lack of funding can impede training opportunities in rural corrections offices compared to urban areas. If the DOC is reducing JPO positions, it seems possible there would also be limited financial resources for additional training, and two of the JPOs reported dissatisfaction with the existing training on stress.

Transactional Theory of Stress

In order to examine JPOs' perceptions of stress and their coping strategies, the TTS model was used to examine the progression of stress in terms of an appraisal and coping process, in which individuals evaluate and respond to threats to their well-being (Goh et al., 2010; Shirley, 2015; Webster et al., 2011). According to this model, although stress is inevitable, how individuals perceive stress and cope with it could affect how they address the stressful situation (O'Bryan, 2008). The TTS model highlights the significance of the appraisal process during the progression of stress because it is how individuals evaluate circumstances of the stressful situation (Webster et al., 2011). Moreover, this theoretical model takes into consideration the fact that individuals and their settings coexist.

The data from this study align with the TTS theory and other research that has used the TTS model to examine stress, showing the JPOs appraise stress by identifying aspects of

their jobs and setting that cause stress, and they cope with stress through strategies largely independent from their working environment. Specifically, the JPOs discussed various coping mechanisms they use to reduce stress: disengaging through family time, gardening, exercise, getting advice from family, planning in advance, turning to religion, and avoiding stress largely through situational awareness. In contrast, they did not identify coping mechanisms they used at work to reduce stress except for mentioning their supervisors were supportive.

Using the TTS model in this study allowed for an identification of gaps in coping strategies. Specifically, because the JPOs interviewed for this project did not report on coping strategies that was supported by the DOC and critiqued the stress workshops the DOC offers, this is a key area to address moving forward. A focus on improving stress workshops or work-sponsored coping strategies aligns with existing research. Specifically, Lewis et al. (2013) recommended educating adult probation officers on the contributions to stress, which would allow them to anticipate coping and regulation of stress reactions. Ekman (2015) stated juvenile justice organizations need to offer more trainings not only to address stress but also to support JPOs' interpersonal needs, which could assist in achieving an emotional balance. At this time, the DOC does not appear to have a successful training program addressing stress management.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of this study is generalizability. With such a small sample—three interviews—it could be inappropriate to generalize to a larger population. With only three participants it was difficult to consider whether certain demographic features, such as gender, could influence JPOs' perceptions of and experiences with stress. Another limitation

was only conducting one interview with each participant. It could be that stress levels and experiences are different at different times of the year or during election years given the importance of legislative decisions on the interviewed JPOs' work experiences.

An additional limitation specific to the interviews is determining if the data collected accurately reflects the interviewees' perceptions and experiences. However, the analysis of the workplace documents provided additional data to contextualize the interviews. Despite these limitations, the study design is appropriate for an exploratory study and can later be expanded to include a larger geographic area, additional interviews, and even other data sources such as observations.

Recommendations

An initial recommendation for future research would be to extend the scope of this study to another state with similar populations and geographic areas, which could allow for an investigation of how other states assist JPOs in managing stress and whether legislative decisions cause as much stress for JPOs in other states. Salyers et al. (2015) state the causes of stress for JPOs is due to an increase in caseloads, excessive paperwork, and ineffective leadership. Future research could ask specific questions about these factors and whether JPOs experience them. This data could be instrumental in guiding department administrators as they develop guidelines to incorporate a stress management program. Future research could also ask JPOs direct questions about what stress is, what its symptoms are, and what its effects are in order to better understand how JPOs conceptualize stress, which didn't appear in the data from this study.

Another way to expand this research would be to include observations. The observations could include going with JPOs when they meet with juveniles in their home environments in rural areas in order to further explore key categories of stress uncovered in this research. Observations could also include attending the DOC stress-relief trainings that Joan and Kevin referenced in the interviews as unhelpful.

It could be beneficial to interview the JPOs' supervisors to get their perspective on perceptions of stress and compare these perceptions to the JPOs' perceptions. This comparison could benefit both the supervisors and JPOs to be sure they have better understanding of causes of stress in the JPO offices as well as the DOC. Also, this information could be beneficial in developing a stress management program for the DOC, and if it is successful, it possibly could benefit all state departments. Interviewing other rural JPO supervisors in other rural states would benefit the literature. The researcher could compare and contrast the data which could offer more insight on the perceptions of stress for JPOs and what can supervisors do to decrease their stress. Additional research on JPOs' safety and its relationship to their stress levels is needed.

With the qualitative research findings from this study, a quantitative study could be generated to produce results that could be generalized. This alternative research method would allow the researcher to implement a quantitative method such as using a survey, which would allow a researcher to possibly expand the research pool and for the results to be generalizable. A quantitative study could expand this study to similar states and geographic areas.

Expanding the study to JPOs in an urban could prove beneficial. Although there has been more research completed in urban areas, there is still not an abundance of literature on urban JPOs. By expanding this research to urban JPOs, a researcher may be able to still address gaps in the literature in regard to stress among JPOs. Also, the data could detail if the urban and rural JPOs experience similar or different stressors, and how these perceptions of stress effect their employment and personal life.

The existing literature does not discuss if religion assists with coping with stress. Although, there was only one JPO who mentioned religion as a means to reduce their stress, further research could detail if a JPOs' religious beliefs assist in reducing stress and if so, how. This research would be relevant among urban and rural JPOs.

Implications

As one of the few studies to research stress among JPOs in a rural environment, the findings of this study support and expand the literature on stress in corrections positions by highlighting JPOs do experience work-related stress. Moreover, they experience stress specific to working with juveniles and specific to the rural environment. This is significant because although there is an abundance of literature pertaining to stress among law enforcement, corrections and adult probation, there is limited research about the rural JPOs' experience. This study adds to existing research and provides insight that can be used in future research on stress of JPOs in rural areas.

According to Gelb (2016), there is limited research on the perceptions of stress and coping strategies among JPOs working in a rural setting in comparison to their counterparts in an urban setting. Existing research on JPOs has largely been conducted in the urban

setting because studies have shown that juveniles commit more delinquent acts in urban settings (Blackmon et al., 2016). This study adds to the limited research on JPOs' perceptions of stress and coping strategies in rural areas.

One finding was the JPOs did not engage coping strategies while on the job; their coping strategies were related to creating distance from the stressors of their job or finding support in their personal lives. Moreover, they noted the DOC-sponsored training for stress-reduction was unhelpful. Ekman (2015) states human service organizations should implement stress management programs. There has been limited implementation of stress management programs in juvenile corrections or probation. For example, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) funded stress reduction programs for juvenile justice officers were implemented primarily in adult correction facilities at approximately 11 juvenile facilities (Ekman, 2015). It is feasible if the DOC implemented a stress management program, it could be an avenue not only for JPOs to reduce stress but as a means to connect with the other JPOs throughout the state.

For example, to alleviate the isolation JPOs feel within their geographic region, a program could be developed where the JPOs could contact each other when needed. This may occur now, but it may lack the structure to ensure the JPOs feel connected to other JPOs and consider this to be a coping strategy for responding to job-related stress. Technology could be used to reduce JPOs' stress. Instead of using the phone or email as the primary form of communication, an online platform, such as Skype, could be used. Having this virtual face-to-face contact could reduce stress by being able to directly ask questions to the parties involved instead of replying to emails. According to research, a lack of social and emotional support contributes to JPOs' stress (Greenwood, 2016; Wells et al., 2016; White et al., 2015).

Although the JPOs in this study did not report on a lack of social and emotional support, the only support they referenced was their families and supervisors.

Although none of the JPOs interviewed had any negative comments regarding their supervisors, a second recommendation is for supervisors to have more contact with JPOs in rural offices. The JPOs interviewed stated the primary means of communication was through email or the phone. This is probably the most convenient form of communication, but it lacks the face-to-face communication is needed for JPOs to feel supported and to counteract the isolation they noted as being stressful. Dombek (2014) states when supervisor support is average or below average, there is an increase in probation officer burnout, and a high level of work pressure was also correlated to burnout. To mitigate this type of burnout, Dombek (2014) suggested JPOs should have increased contact and support from management.

The JPOs indicated there was no formal or mandated training on stress management. Stress management is not listed in either the pre-service or annual in-service training for the DOC. According to Reddington and Kreisel (2003), most states' JPO trainings focus on working with juvenile delinquents. Not offering a training on stress reduction is a failed opportunity for the DOC to support the JPOs and to thereby reduce the risk of stress, burnout, and turnovers.

A protocol could be initiated outlining a weekly schedule for out-of-office visits or transports. This schedule would let supervisors know where the JPOs are at weekly, or an alternative would be to install GPS on the state vehicles. There are many apps on cell phones that could be beneficial as well as inexpensive.

Conclusions

This qualitative research project studied JPOs' perceptions of stress and the strategies they use to reduce or avoid stress in rural South Dakota juvenile probation departments. The JPOs in this study maintained a balance between their job and personal life and overall appeared to deal with the responsibilities exceptionally well. They identified areas of stress that are unique to the JPO community (working with juveniles' parents) and to the rural environment (isolation and certain kinds of safety and employment concerns). The JPOs noted support from their supervisors but also stated the communication with the DOC administrators could improve regarding legislative changes. The recommendations informed by this study are to implement a stress management training or program and to increase modes of communication and contact between the JPOs themselves and the JPOs and their supervisors.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Describe a recent stressful event that occurred at work?
    - What was the cause of the stress?
    - Why was the event stressful?
    - If you can't think of an event that caused you stress, were there any events that had the potential to be stressful?

2. How did you cope with the stress?
    - Were there any activities or thoughts that helped you cope with the stress?
    - Did you feel like those strategies helped? If so, how? If not, why do you think you weren't able to cope with it?

3. Tell me about the strategies your managers and leaders used to reduce stress in the specific event you mentioned in question one?
    - Can you give me an example of this strategy and explain why you think it helped in reducing stress?
    - What other type of strategies could they have used to assist in reducing your stress?

4. Aside from the event you've just described, what other kinds of stress do experience in your job?
    - Is there any office work that might create stress?

- If you don't experience stress, do you have strategies to help avoid stress? If so, can you describe them?

5. Other than what you've already mentioned, are there any other strategies you use to reduce stress?
    - How do your co-workers help you when you are stressed?

6. Do you think there are certain types of leadership models that are helpful in reducing employee stress?
    - If not, what do you think would work?

7. How does stress affect your job as a juvenile probation officer?

8. Tell me about how you reduce stress levels outside of the work environment?
    - Could you give an example of activities do you participate in to reduce stress?