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UNIVERSITY OF
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School of Sport and Exercise
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College of Social Science

Briefing Notes

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Psychological wellbeing, social support, and personality in police force employees

Summary

This study examined the relationship between psychological wellbeing, social support, and personality variables using a cross-sectional design. Limitations include the use of a cross-sectional design and the collection of data from a single regional police force in the UK.

Context

Police officers and police staff in a UK regional police force

Introduction and Aim

Police work is regarded as a particularly stressful occupation (e.g., Russell, 2014) and police employees have reported lower than average scores on psychological wellbeing relative to other occupations (Johnson et al., 2005). Therefore, it is paramount to understand how psychological wellbeing can be enhanced in police organisations by identifying correlates and predictors of this construct in this population. The aim of the study was to examine the relationship between psychological wellbeing, perceptions of available support from work colleagues, ratings of received support from work colleagues, and personality characteristics in police employees.

Key Points

Findings provide extend understanding of psychological wellbeing in police employees.

Psychological wellbeing was significantly and positively associated with perceived support, received support, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience.

Further investigation of these relationships using multiple logistical regression analysis found that perceived support, received support, extraversion, and emotional stability were significant predictors of psychological wellbeing.



Dr Patricia C. Jackman, Dr Hannah Henderson, Miss Georgia Clay (all UoL), Dr Adam Coussens (Newcastle University)



College of Policing, <https://whatworks.college.police.uk/About/Pages/What-is-EBP.aspx>

Method

A total of 381 employees in a police force in the Midlands region of England took part in the study. The sample consisted of operational (police officers $n = 208$, police community support officers $n = 15$) and non-operational (police staff $n = 101$, staff from a private agency $n = 33$) employees. All participants completed an online questionnaire, which obtained measures of psychological wellbeing, perceptions of available support, perceptions of received social support, and the big-five personality characteristics. Spearman's rank order correlation and multiple logistical regression were used to analyse the data.

Results

Moderate-to-strong associations were found between psychological wellbeing and: perceived support; emotional stability; received support; and extraversion. Of the seven independent variables entered into the multiple logistical regression model, four were significant predictors of psychological wellbeing. Specifically, police employees with higher levels of received support, perceived support, extraversion, and emotional stability had significantly higher odds of increased psychological wellbeing.

The findings of the current study could have important implications for the enhancement and maintenance of psychological wellbeing in police employees by influencing empirically-based psychosocial interventions. Such interventions should focus on:

- enhancing perceptions of available support and received support within police organisations
- educating police employees on the types of behaviours and support that are beneficial in police work
- promoting a culture that encourages employees to seek support from their colleagues

In Conclusion

The study examined the relationship between psychological wellbeing, perceived support, received support, and personality variables. Received social support was the strongest predictor of heightened psychological wellbeing among the predictor variables, while higher perceptions of available support, extraversion, and emotional stability also significantly increased the odds of greater psychological wellbeing.

References

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