An examination of social support, personality, and psychological wellbeing in police employees

Dr Patricia C. Jackman¹, Dr Adam Coussens², Georgia Clay¹, and Dr Hannah Henderson¹

1. School of Sport and Exercise Science, University of Lincoln; 2. School of Biomedical Sciences, Newcastle University.

Introduction

• Psychological wellbeing is a fundamental aspiration of wider society (Steptoe et al., 2015).
• Workplaces are one of the most important influences on psychological wellbeing (Harnois & Gabriel, 2000).

Psychological Wellbeing in Policing

• Policing is a stressful occupation (Russell, 2014) and can be detrimental to psychological wellbeing (Juniper et al., 2010).
• Police officers have reported lower than average scores on psychological wellbeing relative to other occupations (Johnson et al., 2005).

Social Support

• Low levels of work-related social support linked to poorer general mental health in police officers (Hansson et al., 2017).
• Divided into two functional components (e.g., Barrera, 2000): (1) perceived support; and (2) received support.

Personality

• Extraversion and neuroticism significantly related to perceived support (Tong et al., 2004) and were strong predictors of wellbeing (e.g., Hart et al., 1995) in police officers.
• Research has yet to examine relations between psychological wellbeing and the big-five personality traits, perceived support, and received support in police employees.

Aim and Hypotheses

• Aim: Examine the relationship between psychological wellbeing, perceived and received support from work colleagues, and personality in police employees.
• It was hypothesised that:
  1. Perceived support would be positively related to and significantly predict psychological wellbeing;
  2. Perceptions of received support would be positively related to and significantly predict psychological wellbeing; and
  3. Extraversion and emotional stability would be positively related to, and significantly predict, psychological wellbeing.
Procedures and Participants

- Ethical approval obtained from a school ethics committee at a British university.
- Online questionnaire made available to all employees in a police force in the midlands region of England over a four-week period via the organisation’s intranet site.
- A total of 381 employees (M age = 42.49 years, SD = 9.85) took part.
- Sample primarily consisted of police officers (n = 208) and police staff (n = 101).

Measures

- Shortened Inventory of Socially Supportive Behaviours (Barrera & Baca, 1990).
- Ten-Item Personality Inventory (Gosling et al., 2003).
- Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (Tennant et al., 2007).

Data Analysis

- SPSS 22.
- Data were not normally distributed.
- Spearman’s rank order correlation
- Multiple logistical regression analysis (MLRA)

Results - Spearman's Correlation

- Moderate-to-strong associations found between psychological wellbeing and: perceived support (r = .47, p < .05); emotional stability (r = .47, p < .05); received support (r = .40, p < .05); and extraversion (r = .35, p < .05).
- Small-to-moderate correlations found between psychological wellbeing and: agreeableness (r = .19, p < .05) and openness to experience (r = .19, p < .05).

Discussion

- Findings extend current understanding of social support in police organisations by highlighting the importance of receiving and perceiving available support from colleagues for psychological wellbeing.
- Consistent with previous research, emotional stability and extraversion were strong predictors of psychological wellbeing.
Applied Implications
• Interventions should seek to increase perceptions of available and received support in police employees.
• Provide and harness opportunities to highlight the supports that are available.
• Ensure that sufficient time is available for structured support to be accessed.
• Educate employees on the types of support that are beneficial for colleagues in police work.

Conclusion
• Police employees face work-related challenges that can be detrimental to psychological wellbeing.
• Perceived support, received support, extraversion, and emotional stability were significantly related to and predicted psychological wellbeing.

References

Thank You
Email: pjackman@lincoln.ac.uk

@Trish_Jackman