A Qualitative Investigation of Police Officers’ Reports of Stress and PTSD While on the Job

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Abstract

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is most commonly known as PTSD. It is affecting people of all ages, races, and genders. Very subtle lines have been done on pinpointing post traumatic stress disorder specifically in police officers, and a lot of police officers aren’t even knowledgeable on the effects and symptoms of police officer PTSD. The major hypothesis is that when PTSD levels increase, on the job stress rates increase. Mixed methods will be used in conducting research for this topic.

Data Collection and Methods

Sample
Conducting interviews was a very vigorous process. I made sure to let the personal that I was interviewing know that confidentiality was a key factor in this process. I interviewed the Chief of the Bernalillo Police Department, and three different officers from varying agencies. Officer A, is with the New Mexico State Police and has been an officer for a little over one year. This officer was interviewed on the phone for about 10 minutes.

Officer B is a medically retired LAPD detective. He was on the force for 13 years until he decided to medically retire. Officer B was interviewed on the phone and that lasted close to twenty-five minutes.

Officer C is an officer of the Bernalillo Police Department and he has been on the force for 9 years. His interview was conducted in person at a coffee shop in Bernalillo, New Mexico. This interview lasted about twenty-five minutes.

Officer D is a Deputy with the Santa Fe County Sheriffs Department and has been on the force for 9 years. He is a veteran of war and his interview was also conducted through the telephone. This interview took about 10 minutes. I asked for informed consent to conduct every interview, just for validity on my part. Even though police officers are a “public figure” in uniform and we don’t need consent. I asked anyway to boost my validity in efforts for more reliable answers. All interviews were conducted with respect and integrity to this subject of PTSD. None of the interviews were recorded and or video taped.

Discussion

• Limitations of my data findings were being able to question and find time for all the ones I interviewed. A chief is a very busy man and he has a swamped schedule. Another limitation of data collection would be not being able to interview more police officers or every police officer that has ever served.

Conclusions

I found out a lot of great information about officer PTSD and stressors that they have encountered on the job. I realized that a police officers job is very rigorous not just physically but mentally. A lot of officers either have or know someone who has suffered from PTSD. I have conducted qualitative research from reliable resources, people who do this day in and day out. It was at times hard finding correlations between answers, due to all the different outlooks on police work.

The null hypothesis is to take the opposite point of view than my theory took. My theory was that A, Police Officers suffer from high levels of PTSD due to the job stressors. And B, that if treatments were given to officers, they would use them. At this time I have to reject the null for A, but accept the null hypothesis for B

References


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