Validation Study of the Law Enforcement Officer Stress Survey (LEOSS)

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Introduction

• **Stress** - A physiological reaction that prepares the body to manage environmental changes, threats, or demands, whether actual or imagined (Selye, 1978).

• **Stress inducing occupations:**
  – Medical Intern / Surgeon
  – Cooperate Executive / Administration
  – Air Traffic Controller / Commercial Pilot
  – Coal Miner
  – Paramedic / EMT / Fireman
  – Police Officer
Law Enforcement Officers Engage in a Wide Range of Stress Inducing Activities

- Operational Stressors:

- Organizational Stressors:
Detrimental Effects of Police Stress

- **Physical**
  - Hypertension
  - Cardiovascular disease
  - Cancer
  - Ulcers

- **Psychological**
  - Anxiety
  - Depression
  - Burnout
  - PTSD

- **Behavioral**
  - Disturbed sleep
  - Substance abuse
  - Marital discord
  - Suicide
Purpose of the Present Study

• Extend research on a brief, early warning screening measure of stress among law enforcement officers: the Law Enforcement Stress Survey (LEOSS; Van Hasselt et al., 2003, 2008).

• This project expands upon previous research on this instrument by:
  – (1) obtaining normative data on a clinical sample of police officers
  – (2) developing a scoring system that can be employed to detect stress, and stress levels, in this population.
Law Enforcement Officer Stress Survey (LEOSS)

LEOSS sample items

-Scenario-

- You are executing an arrest warrant when the suspect barricades himself/herself.
- You respond to a major motor vehicle accident with multiple injuries and possible fatalities.
- You must rely on employees that you feel are not trustworthy or incompetent.
- You find that work is taking up more time, leaving you with little left for family and recreation.
- Changing shifts has interfered with your sleep patterns.
Method

- Participants are currently being recruited from the Broward Sheriff’s Office Employee Assistance Program (BSO EAP). Participants are being given packets that contain a cover letter, a demographic questionnaire, and a copy of the following instruments to be completed:

  - Law Enforcement Officer Stress Survey (LEOSS)
  - Reynolds Short Form A (RFSA)
  - Acute Stress Disorder Scale (ASDS)
  - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder symptom checklist (PCL)
  - Post Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI)
  - Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Op)
  - Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Org)
  - Brief Symptom Inventory - 53 (BSI-53)
  - Job Stress Survey (JSS)
  - Dispositional Resilience Scale - 15 (DRS-15)

The aforementioned measures were considered for this project because of their brevity, sound psychometric properties, and relevance to police stress.
Data Analysis and Hypothesis

• Descriptive statistics and the internal consistency reliability will be computed for each measure. Correlations will be calculated among the measures and factor analysis performed to evaluate the number and nature of dimensions tapped by the LEOSS.

• *Hypothesis 1*: the LEOSS is a practical measure with good reliability and validity.

• *Hypothesis 2*: a clinical cutoff score can be identified that differentiates between clinical and non-clinical law enforcement officers.
Practical Implications

• Develop a short, easily administered screening measure of police stress, having heuristic value in both clinical and research contexts.
• Ascertain prevalent sources of police stress
• Promote measures that help officers and administrators collectively combat operational and organizational stress
• Discuss avenues for additional research
Future Directions

- Researchers should consider: conducting longitudinal and/or cross-sectional studies on police officers to investigate any changes in occupational and organizational stress levels with changes in:
  - years of experience
  - Rank
  - Age
  - education level
  - shift-work time
  - work environment
  - personal factors (e.g., marital status and number of children)

- The goal of this research would be to determine which variables are related to different forms of police stress so they may be targeted via programs aimed at reducing and/or preventing such stress
Researchers should ascertain the efficacy of:

- individual counseling
- stress management training
- critical incident stress debriefing
- employee assistance programs

Summative and formative program evaluations will investigate the effectiveness of these programs.
THANK YOU
References