Organizational Factors and Public Safety Personnel Mental Health

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Mitigating Potential Bias

- The information presented in this program is based on recent information that is explicitly "evidence-based".

- This Program and its material is peer reviewed and all the recommendations involving clinical medicine are based on evidence that is accepted within the profession; and all scientific research referred to, reported, or used in this CE/CPD activity in support or justification of patient care recommendations conforms to the generally accepted standards

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Describe organizational factors and their impact on PSP mental health
2. Recognize which organizational factors can be modified

Introduction

- Public safety personnel (PSP) have a higher prevalence of mental health conditions than the general population

- Workers' compensation mental health claims have risen for PSP in Ontario

- A multitude of complex operational, organizational, and personal factors contribute to PSP mental health

- Research to date has focused on person-level interventions, including psychotherapy, resilience training, and peer support

- *Research related to organization-level interventions is still developing, along with the evidence for best practices in return to work for this population*

Review question

What organizational factors exist in public safety organizations, what are their mental health impacts for public safety personnel, and how does the frequency of organizational factors compare with personal and operational factors?

Scoping Review Process & Findings

- Followed JBI Scoping Review Guidelines

- 13543 records were retrieved, after screening, 97 primary studies remained for analysis

- The majority of included studies were conducted in North America (n=62)

- Police officers (n=48) were the most frequent population studied

- Correctional officers and paramedics (each n=27) were the second most frequently identified populations, followed by firefighters (n=20)

Edgelow, M., Scholefield, E., McPherson, M., Legassick, K., & Novecosky, J. (2022). **Organizational factors and their impact on mental health in public safety organizations.** *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *19*(21), 13993.

Factor Definitions

Operational	Content of the work
Organizational	Context of the work
Personal	Individual, family, and community elements

Factor Frequencies

Factor	Negative	Positive	Total
Operational	119	7	126
Organizational	145	63	208
Personal	206	67	273
Totals	470	137	607

Operational Factors

Positive	Operational Factors that Impact Mental Health of Public Safety Personnel	Negative
Role		Exposure to critical incidents
Tenure		High workload
Rank		Threats or risk of violence
Department setting		Administrative duties
Perceived threat to safety		Negative public perception of career
		Workplace stress
		Risk of injury
		Work overload
		Risk of death
		Experiencing violence

Increasing frequency

Increasing frequency

Organizational Factors

Project ECHO®
Public Safety Personnel

Organizational Factors that Impact Mental Health of Public Safety Personnel

Positive	Negative
Co-worker support	Lack of co-worker support
Supervisor support	Lack of supervisor support
Positive workplace culture	Negative workplace culture
Autonomy	Interpersonal conflict with colleagues
Adequate training	Limited resources to perform work
Access to mental health specialists, good leadership	Stigma/barriers to seeking help
Recognition of good work	Leadership issues
Role clarity	Overtime hours
Team dynamics	Understaffing
	Shift work

Increasing frequency

Increasing frequency

Public Safety Personnel

Personal Factors

Personal Factors that Impact Mental Health of Public Safety Personnel

Positive

Job satisfaction or meaning

Family support

Gender

Work/life/family balance

Adequate sleep

Coping skills

Good physical health

Race

Resilience

Social support

Increasing frequency

Negative

Health conditions (mental)

Job dissatisfaction

Gender

Work/life/family conflict

Poor sleep

Lack of coping skills

Health conditions (physical)

Fatigue

Substance misuse
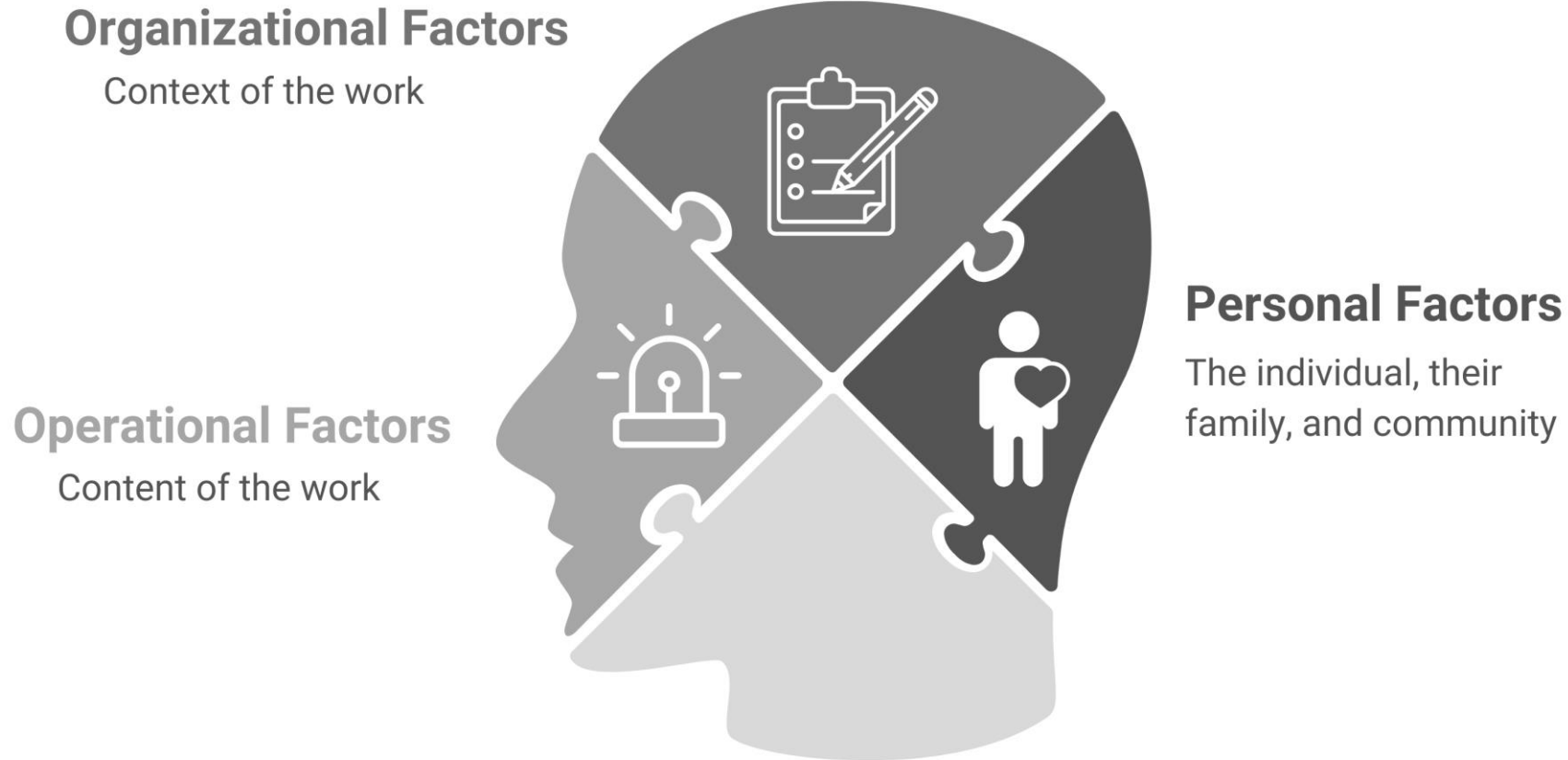
Burnout

Increasing frequency

Organizational Factors & PSP Professions

- **Police & Corrections:** Workplace culture
  - Demou et al. (2020) identified that police officers in particular "are afraid of being identified as individuals who have been compromised by stress" (p. 703).
  - Dugan et al. (2021) noted that correctional officers operate in a masculine culture, where personnel are expected to display strength and control and suppress emotions.

- **Paramedics & Firefighters:** Limited resources to perform the work
  - Mahony (2001) identified that paramedics were, "constantly pushed to achieve more with less resources" (p. 141).
  - Smith (2019) identified that line-of-duty operations (such as firefighting) are expected to be performed flawlessly despite limited available resources.

Edgelow et al., 2022

Developing the TROOP Model

- Literature review scoped the most relevant workplace factors (Edgelow et al., 2022) and contributed to the development of a novel model
  - Model highlights the need to consider the combined impacts of operational, organizational, and personal factors on PSP mental health

- The **TRi-Operational-Organizational-Personal Factor Model (TROOP)** depicts these key factors as three large pieces of a larger puzzle that is PSP mental health

- The TROOP gives working language for public safety organizations, leaders, and researchers to broadly consider the mental health impacts of public safety work

Edgelow, M., Fecica, A., Kohlen, C., & Tandal, K. (2023). **Mental health of public safety personnel: Developing a model of operational, organizational, and personal factors in public safety organizations.** *Frontiers in Public Health*, *11*, 1140983.

Tri-**O**perational-**O**rganizational-**P**ersonal Factors Model (TROOP)

Organizational Factors
Context of the work

Operational Factors
Content of the work

Personal Factors
The individual, their family, and community

Edgelow et al., 2023

Managing Workplace Factors

- Operational risks associated with PSP work are often thought of as inherent to the job
  - BUT- All jobs with safety risks can be approached with an occupational and public health lens to reduce work-related risk
- Personal factors are also complex
  - BUT- Organizations can offer mental health supports to employees and their families and adopt policies that encourage work-life balance
- ***Organizational factors may be the most modifiable***

Edgelow et al., 2023

Take home messages

1. Operational, organizational, and personal factors all impact PSP mental health

2. Organizational factors can be modified, and employers have a responsibility to manage these

3. Moving beyond a person-level focus in public safety mental health research is important

References

Edgelow, M., Scholefield, E., McPherson, M., Legassick, K., & Novecosky, J. (2022). Organizational factors and their impact on mental health in public safety organizations. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 19*(21), 13993. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192113993

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Questions?

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