Organizational Stress: Policy Recommendations for Police Administrators to Lessen Organizational Stress

Approved: Dr. Camie S. Morris
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ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICE ADMINISTRATORS TO LESSEN ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS

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By

David J Jaeger

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Abstract

Stress is something that law enforcement officers deal with on a daily basis. The types of stress have been linked to two categories; environmental and organizational stress (Bishopp, Piquero, Worrall, & Piquero, 2019). Organizational stress has been associated with sources from within the law enforcement agency such as role ambiguity, role conflict, lack of supervisor support, lack of comradery, and lack of professional opportunities within the organization. Law enforcement officers report they are most affected by organizational stress and not critical incidents (Bitner, 2019). In addition, organizational stress can be associated with officer burnout, exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy (Violanti, et al., 2018). In addition, stress was identified as the second most cited reason for absenteeism (Coffey & Dugdill, 2006).

Specific polices are crucial in managing organizational stress. By implementing stress reducing policies, administrators demonstrate the importance of preventing and managing stress within the organization (Robertson, 2016). The best practice policies can be identified and implemented to help alleviate stressors in the workplace (Finn, 1997). Research conducted by Coffey & Dugdill (2006) found that over half (51%) of all workplaces identified stress reducing policies as the one they would like seen developed. 35% of workplaces recognized stress reducing policy as an area for improvement to benefit workers’ health. Administrators of law enforcement can look outside of the field of criminal justice in an attempt to identify what is working in the private sector. By doing this, new ideas can be implemented into best practice and adjusted to fit the needs of law enforcement. This research will focus on both private and public best practice policy to reduce stress in an organization.
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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Stress is something that law enforcement officers deal with on a daily basis. The types of stress have been linked to two categories; environmental and organizational stress (Bishopp, Piquero, Worrall, & Piquero, 2019). Organizational stress has been associated with sources from within the law enforcement agency such as role ambiguity, role conflict, lack of supervisor support, lack of comradery, and lack of professional opportunities within the organization. Law enforcement officers report they are most affected by organizational stress and not critical incidents (Bitner, 2019). In addition, organizational stress can be associated with officer burnout, exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy (Violanti, et al., 2018). In addition, stress was identified as the second most cited reason for absenteeism (Coffey & Dugdill, 2006).

Specific polices are crucial in managing organizational stress. By implementing stress reducing policies, administrators demonstrate the importance of preventing and managing stress within the organization (Robertson, 2016). The best practice policies can be identified and implemented to help alleviate stressors in the workplace (Finn, 1997). Research conducted by Coffey & Dugdill (2006) found that over half (51%) of all workplaces identified stress reducing policies as the one they would like seen developed. 35% of workplaces recognized stress reducing policy as an area for improvement to benefit workers’ health. Administrators of law enforcement can look outside of the field of criminal justice in an attempt to identify what is working in the private sector. By doing this, new ideas can be implemented into best practice and adjusted to fit the needs of law enforcement. This research will focus on public best practice policy to reduce stress in an organization.
Purpose of the Research

While some agencies have taken steps to mitigate stress within their organizations, some have not. Of the agencies who have, such steps are not enough. For example, a department may implement policy which is considered best practice in law enforcement, but ultimately the policy will create stress in lieu of reducing it. This research will focus on policy associated with reducing organizational stress. It will identify what policies are working in reducing stress in organizations and the benefits associated with the reduction in stress. This research will also look at reasons organizations are failing to reduce stress and why, i.e. what is working in policy, absence of policy, inconsistency leadership. This research will explore what is considered best practice to determine if these policies help in decreasing organizational stress. Finally, this research hopes to provide recommendations to administrators for the best policies identified in reducing stress in their workforce. Administrators of law enforcement agencies need to take a proactive approach to address organizational stress within their departments through policy. This will help to ensure officer well-being and foster a more efficient and effective work force.

Significance of the Research

Organizational stress can be explained as physical, mental, or emotional reactions of employees who recognize their work responsibilities exceed their abilities and/or their resources (i.e. time, help/support) to conduct and complete their work. This stress occurs when the employee believes they are not able to cope with situations where it is essential for them to cope (Lemaire, 2016).

If organizational stress is not addressed, it will lead to issues such as but not limited to; decreased productivity, absenteeism, higher turnover, low morale, reduced job satisfaction, and
burnout (Montiero, Pereira, Daniel, Gomez da Silva, & Ney Matos, 2017). Good stress reduction policy will demonstrate an atmosphere of compassion and bolster an effective and efficient department. This research will identify what makes up good stress reduction policy and how it can benefit employees as well as the organization as a whole.

**Methods of Approach**

The methodology for this research will be the review of secondary data contained in peer-reviewed scholarly articles, textbooks, and credible internet sites. Peer-reviewed scholarly articles will be the main focus of this research. In addition, the knowledge of the author will incorporate insight and context from 28 years in law enforcement experience. Of the 28 years, 20 of them have been in a supervisory role, from a first-line supervisor (SGT) all the way up to the Chief of Police. This knowledge includes experience in the military, corrections, and police agencies.

**Limitations of Research**

In today’s world of law enforcement, policy will be changing at an unprecedent rate. This is where the limitations of this research will be hampered. There is a lot of uncertainty on what will be considered best practices when the smoke clears from recent events in our country. Wisconsin seems to be ahead of the curve in the proposals being presented for change in law enforcement. Steps like consistent review and improvement of policies to ensure they are up to best practice standards, a database for sharing information on bad officers looking to get hired by another law enforcement agency, advanced training in dealing with those suffering from mental health issues, homelessness and addiction, and a drive for law enforcement to become involved in their communities to form better relationships are expectations of well-run law enforcement agencies in Wisconsin. Due to the uncertainty of future best practice in Wisconsin, additional
research will need to be conducted in the future to determine if the standards suggested in this paper are current or have changed since publication.

In addition, relying solely on review of secondary data contained in peer-reviewed scholarly articles, textbooks, and credible internet sites will limit the scope of this research. The author will be providing incite on these reviewed references as it pertains to law enforcement in the present. That being said, there is no determination on what the future holds for law enforcement and what changes will be made. Future research will be necessary.
SECTION II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Stress in Law Enforcement

Now more than ever, law enforcement is in an era of change. The cry for law enforcement reform is louder than it has ever been in our country. With this change, comes stress. Stress has been divided into two categories, organizational and environmental. This research will focus on organizational stress as it relates to the policy of an organization. Our society and the needs of communities are demanding regular review of policy to ensure best practices in law enforcement are put in place. Law enforcement agencies must continue to work at addressing stress by recognizing, understanding and actively managing it (Sewell, 2002).

Organizational stress has been defined in different ways. The most common definition as presented by Lewis (2014) is identifying stress in terms of psychophysiological effects created by one’s feelings towards the inability to cope with demands and being unable to meet the desired expectations. In this definition, consideration needs to be given to the individual themselves. Different individuals working under the same circumstances will experience various levels of stress depending on how the individual perceives the stress (Lewis, 2014). This stress appears as individuals of the organization interact with each other or deal with organizational policies. The outcomes of stress vary according to the circumstances and the characteristics of the individuals involved. Regardless of the individual involved, its consequences are consistently intense (Kula, 2017). In essence, each individual will experience stress in their own unique way.

Problems Created by Organizational Stress

Research has shown that organizational stress is more influential than environmental stress (Kula, 2017). Organizational stress can be associated with several issues such as but not
limited to officer burnout, exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy (Violanti, et al., 2018). Research has shown that stress can be immediately identified in one’s behavioral changes such as being withdrawn, unmotivated or aggressive (Lewis, 2014). Ignoring organizational stress in law enforcement can have severe consequences in comparison to other professions because it can lead to personnel behaving inappropriately when dealing with the public. Research has documented that chronic exposure to organizational stress can have adverse effects on officers. Consequences of this exposure include decline in job satisfaction, increased family problems, substance and alcohol abuse, and reduced performance (Kula, 2017).

In addition to this list, stress has been identified as the second most cited reason for absenteeism (Coffev & Dugdill, 2006). It is often heard from officers in law enforcement the need to take a “stress day”. Unfortunately, sick leave is often used when the officer takes a “stress day” causing unwarranted overtime even though the officer is not ill. This comes as a cost to the agency in that the absence results in a direct payment of sick-pay to the absentee. The agency then needs to bring in personnel to cover for the absentee which in turn means they are paying for the same service twice (Dunn & Wilkinson, 2002).

There is also a myriad of indirect costs to the agency which results in organizational stress rising in employees. Excessive absenteeism is often dealt with through enforcement of policy in the terms of discipline. This can have both positive and negative results. Focusing on the negative, as it pertains to policy, can be if an absence trigger level is set by policy it could encourage employees to use sick leave. For example, if the trigger level sets a level that after 10 days of absence disciplinary action will be taken, it may encourage employees to use nine days. Research conducted by Dunn & Wilkinson (2002) supports policy, along with sanctions resulting from policy enforcement, beset relations of conflict and control. Dunn & Wilkinson argue that
policy enforcement is an essential ingredient in controlling absenteeism. This, in turn, can increase organizational stress. In a study conducted by Gaines & Jermier (1983), research has shown that formalization and rule inflexibility are directly related to organizational stress.

Not only can stress contribute to the issues listed above, it can also have negative consequences on one’s physical and mental health. Stress has been linked to individuals seeking coping mechanisms such as partaking in a permissive drinking culture, increased tobacco use and at times illicit drug use. In research conducted by Lewis (2014) it was discovered that over half a million individuals in the United Kingdom experience work related stress to the extent that it effected their health. It has been documented that stress in the workplace has a negative effect not only on the individual but on the organization as a whole.

Organizational stress has been found to influence police officers’ level of stress more than environmental stress. Research has been conducted supporting that prolonged organizational stress can have a negative effect on employees’ attitudes towards the agency. The negative attitudes can lead to a decline in workplace social support and can be linked to employee burnout. Research has shown there is a strong correlation between individual performance and organizational performance. Due to this, it is critical for law enforcement agencies to understand and analyze organizational stress within their organization in order to address it. This will enhance the agency’s ability to develop and implement stress management strategies. By identifying the sources of stress, law enforcement agencies can implement the appropriate policies and procedures to reduce the impact of organizational stress (Kula, 2017).

**Policy Creating Stress**

Organizational stress can be explained as problematic organizational conditions of police work. One of the factors identified as causing organizational stress is constant organizational or
policy change. In addition, inconsistent enforcement of policy has been associated with organizational stress. Organizational stress governed by policy are things such as but not limited to; policy enforcement, promotional opportunities, career development opportunities, work hours, extra assignments, officer well-being programming, chaplain programming, fitness programming, and employee assistance programming. The findings of research conducted by Kula (2017) revealed the effects of time balance, income sufficiency, work environment, and workdays all played important roles in the well-being of officers. These factors are heavily regulated by policy in the vast majority of law enforcement agencies who implement best practice policies throughout our country.

A key player in combating organizational stress is the supervisor of a law enforcement agency. Supervisors are in charge of enforcing policies and procedures of an organization. The supervisor has some flexibility in this enforcement. It is important that the supervisor creates an atmosphere of cohesiveness in the workplace where employees can feel comfortable interacting with the supervisor in a united manner. This type of approach has been found to lessen organizational stress. Personnel in a highly resilient work environment have been found to manage stress better than do those in a less resilient work environment. In law enforcement, officers deal with peoples’ problems under time constraints. Strong leadership in an organization mitigate the effects of work stress while inadequate leadership can enhance stress by failing to support personnel (Kula, 2017).

Researchers have found that the bureaucratic nature of law enforcement in which personnel have restricted flexibility and must adhere to policies and procedures under a strict command and control structure affects the psychological well-being of personnel (Kula, 2017).
As stated earlier a study conducted by Gaines & Jermier (1983), research has shown that formalization and rule inflexibility are directly related to organizational stress.

Numerous researchers have argued that the presence of policy and/or policy rigidity plays a major role in organizational stress. Gaines & Jermier (1983) found that the presence of policies had no significant effect on organizational stress, but inflexible enforcement of policy positively correlated with it. From what was discovered, the mere presence of policy was viewed as protective when personnel were allowed to use their discretion on how policy was applied. Nonetheless, if policy was rigidly enforced, increased organizational stress resulted.

Gaines & Jermier (1983) learned that organizational stress differs by department when researching inflexible policy enforcement in a police organization. The research supported patrol units experienced a greater frequency and intensity of stress when faced with highly inflexible rule enforcement. Similar results were found when the same research involved investigators. The research concluded that patrol and investigators experienced a greater degree of stress than service employees when faced with inflexible policy enforcement by supervisors.

Organizational success relies heavily on the management of stress and stress related problems. In their research, Gaines & Jermier (1983) concluded all stress in law enforcement is not a result of the work itself, some is a result of organizational stress. Their research supported that change to administrative practices in enforcement of policy can lessen organizational stress. With organizational stress being identified through research as having a major impact on job satisfaction and work-related burnout, a need has been identified for internal policy reform. In this reform, law enforcement agencies need to look for alternative options in how they organize their agencies as well as their policies (Kula, 2017).
Section III – Successful Stress Reducing Policy

What is Working

The mental wellbeing of police officers should be of concern to every law enforcement administrator. Among officers, mental health problems are a leading cause of long-term work insufficiency and absence due to sickness (Purba & Demou, 2019). Law enforcement is recognized as one of the most stressful occupations according to academic researchers, police practitioners, health-care professionals, and psychologists. Law enforcement personnel have become extremely resilient in coping and accepting stressful situations in their profession, more so than the average civilian. Fitness for work is essential to establishing professional police standards. Accordingly, deciding which organizational stressors are related to the mental wellbeing of personnel will enhance the agency’s administration of implementing policy to become more effective (Purba & Demou, 2019).

With organizational stressors being identified as a large source of stress in law enforcement, one has to ask why? In research conducted by Purba & Demou (2019), police officers identified organizational stressors as oppressive, unnecessary, unavoidable, and uncontrollable. The research supported that organizational stressors contributing to increased stress included lack of support, heavy work load, interpersonal conflict with colleagues and administration, inadequate resources, time pressure, and an overly authoritative organizational system riddled with punitive measures and strictly managed. Purba & Demou (2019) also found that mental wellbeing issues associated with organizational stressors included occupational stress, anxiety, psychiatric symptoms, psychological distress, burnout, and suicidal ideations. Lastly, a lack of influence over the way policy and procedures were implemented contribute to
organizational stress. In turn, it is essential to address officers’ mental wellbeing through an agency’s policies.

Organizational stressors which presented as the strongest factors contributing to anxiety and burnout were identified as workload, working hours, and job pressure. The research supported job pressure as a significant predictor of burnout in correctional officers while effort-reward balance was strongly associated with burnout in police officers. Long working hours was found to drastically effect the mental wellbeing of police officers. One conclusion was that working in excess of 48 hours a week increased the risk of psychological health difficulties. A second conclusion found that working in excess of 40 hours a week or more than eight hours a day enhanced the risk of developing symptoms of anxiety or depression (Purba & Demou, 2019).

Research has backed that low levels of support in the work place by coworkers and/or supervisors contributed to depression in personnel. The study demonstrated that lack of social support also increased organizational stress. In contrast, a wider review of organizational literature revealed that high levels of social support at work from coworkers and supervisors have proven to be protective of the mental health of personnel (Purba & Demou, 2019).

**Benefits of Successful Policy**

Those benefiting from a mentally healthy law enforcement organization include the police officers themselves, the agencies, their families and the public. By enhancing personnel wellbeing, an organization can increase morale, productivity, effectiveness, efficiency, and the overall general wellbeing of the organization. Furthermore, the enhanced personnel wellbeing has the potential to reduce compensation claims, on-the-job accidents, civil liabilities for
inappropriate behavior, early retirement, and negative perceptions from the media and public (Purba & Demou, 2019).

Purba & Demou (2019) accentuated organizational stressors which can be addressed by policy to reduce personnel mental wellbeing. These organizational stressors include lack of support, demand, and interpersonal relationships with coworkers and administration. These stressors are able to be changed through amendment or implementation of the organization’s policies. It is important to identify what changes are necessary to address organizational stress in an effort to focus on mental wellbeing of personnel in the law enforcement agency.

When addressing lack of support, policy should be implemented to enhance training and promotional programming for supervisory positions. Flattening the authoritative structure of the organization was also recommended. This means less levels of management. In addition, training for police supervisors focusing on awareness of organizational stressors personnel face to assist in reducing their occurrence as well as lessening their effects. Strategies can be implemented which address how personnel treat each other, promote support seeking for mental health issues, and enhancing police supervisors with training to identify and mitigate organizational stress could result in benefits for both the organization as well as those they serve (Purba & Demou, 2019).

In research conducted by Thoen, Dodson, Manzo, Pena-Watson & Trejos-Castillo (2020) one study was discovered which supported that a combination of wellness programs has the most impact on officer wellbeing. These programs can be rooted into a law enforcement organization through policy. Specific policies which can be implemented to address organizational stressors would be policy supporting a peer support program, chaplain program, physical fitness program, and an employee assistance program. These policies would be unique to individual agencies.
This research will look into specific policy details and will provide supporting data as to why policies supporting these types of programs will reduce organizational stress. There are other areas of policy which should be reviewed and implemented to reduce organizational stress. Future research will need to be conducted to identify additional policies which can be implemented to reduce organizational stress.

Law enforcement agencies have dedicated increased time, training, and funding to the development and implementation of response policies governing emergency events. Despite this, the effort put towards the mental wellness of their personnel has been uneven at best. Even when services are available, they are typically underused or avoided due to several reasons. First is the stigma associated with seeking professional help for mental health issues. For example, when police officers have been identified for seeking help from psychologists, co-workers might perceive that officer as the weak link which cannot be counted on in high stress situations. Second, the culture of law enforcement has accentuated loyalty, cohesion, and secrecy and holds value in macho, action-oriented behavior, authoritarianism. While these can be good traits while on the job, they may, at times, cause interpersonal relationship problems. Lastly, police officers have a known distrust of mental health professionals and consider them outsiders. Due to these concerns, agencies should seek to implement a policy establishing a peer support program as well as other programs demonstrating support for their employees within their departments (Van Hasselt, et al., 2019). Next, programs that have been identified through this research as having a positive effect on organizational stress within law enforcement agencies are discussed

**Peer Support Program Policy**

The idea behind peer support programming is that being able to consult with a peer may alleviate the resistance and stigma associated with seeking help for stress related problems. The
advantages of the programming are peers can be trained to identify risk factors of suicide and other psychological disorders, peers can be used as a first line of defense in the stigma that they will be viewed as weak for seeking help, the level of comfort an officer has in approaching a peer with problems they are experiencing, and peers can provide information on outside resources that may be needed to deal with the problems the officer is encountering. One of the crucial elements of the program is buy-in from officers on the department. Peer team members must be sensitive to issues of trust, confidentiality, and anonymity for peers seeking assistance. Emphasis must be placed on confidentiality of the programming with the exception of matters that violate the law (Van Hasselt, et al., 2019).

In constructing a policy to govern the program, administrators must first identify the program’s goals. The following are recommended goals such as but not limited to; providing a resource for peers during a time of personal and/or professional critical situations, promoting social, physical, and emotional health of peers seeking assistance, recognizing and evaluating conflicts by using active listening skills while offering support, enhancing and bolstering communication, encouragement, trust, and confidentiality in peers seeking assistance, and using program peers as liaison between those seeking help and appropriate services. By identifying goals such as these, the program will be off to a solid start (Van Hasselt, et al., 2019).

In addition, the policy must identify how team members are selected. The selection process can be conducted through a departmentwide email that includes the expectations of the program. Team members must demonstrate an interest, desire and willingness to learn how to support fellow officers. This program is a voluntary program and all team members must agree to complete the mandatory training for the program. It must be evident that the team members are not trained mental health professionals and are not a substitute for professional mental health
services. Nonetheless, the team members are trained to identify risk factors in peers who might need professional assistance and be able to direct them to the appropriate resources when necessary (Van Hasselt, et al., 2019).

The selection process of the policy must also establish characteristics sought in a peer team member and how they are selected. Team members must have good rapport with co-workers, good listening skills, and demonstrate the capability to emphasize and provide support for peers undergoing some level of distress. Team members must also be chosen through a peer selection process, be willing to volunteer, and willing to participate in all required trainings, available to provide support 24/7, and be approachable on a one-on-one basis or as recommended by fellow co-workers. The team members must be diverse and include personnel from every section of the department. Special emphasis should be placed on individuals who have been involved in traumatic incidents and are willing to share their experiences in a supportive role (Van Hasselt, et al., 2019).

The policy should also include the components of the program. The peer program components should consist of required training for the peer team members. Some recommended training modules are identifying stressors, active listening skills, identifying signs of depression, substance abuse, PTSD, and suicide. Other areas would include the ability to demonstrate tactical wellness by modeling healthy lifestyles and leading by example. In addition, training in promoting healthy relationships and a work-life balance should be included. All trainings should consist of scenario-based training to better prepare the team members to assist peers in need (Van Hasselt, et al., 2019).

Finally, the policy for the peer support program should make ongoing training for the team members mandatory. This will enable the team members to retain and reinforce their
knowledge of mental health problems and responses. The implementation of a peer support program established by policy should include behavioral health trainings, employment of critical incident stress management procedures, and the use of outside resources. Constructing policy based on this philosophy will be the start of a successful program in addressing organizational stress through support for personnel (Van Hasselt, et al., 2019).

**Employee Assistance Program Policy**

In research conducted by Thoen, Dodson, Manzo, Pina-Watson, & Trejos-Castillo (2020), law enforcement officers voiced a need to have a program within law enforcement to serve as an outlet exclusively for them. This outlet is a means to address organizational stress and combat the negative effects associated with it. This is the concept behind the employee assistance program. This program can be implemented by the policy of an organization. The policy can inform law enforcement personnel of what the program is as well as what the program can provide for them. In the research, officers voiced the common negative mental health outcomes which arise from stress of the job and the inefficient means to access adequate resources.

The law enforcement employee assistance programming is unique to each individual agency in that it is organized by the department administration. Each agency determines who has access to the programming. In a vast majority of agencies, every employee, any legal dependent, or significant other is eligible for the programming. The policy implemented by the organization for the employee assistance program should establish who is eligible to receive the employee assistance program services (Services, 2020).
The policy should guide department personnel as the law enforcement employee assistance program is a specialized component or the regular program. The special program is designed specifically for the unique needs of the law enforcement profession. In an attempt to educate and/or advise law enforcement personnel, the policy for the employee assistance program should include information on how personnel have an option to request a referral to a counselor who is familiar with the nature of law enforcement and its culture. The policy should provide an understanding which enables personnel to be ensured they will be working with counselors who have a better appreciation of the occupational circumstances surrounding law enforcement. This will ensure departments develop programming supported by policy that is effective (Services, 2020).

Participation in this program is completely voluntary and can be done so anonymously. The policy should cover how the licensed employee assistance program providers are bound to protect the confidentiality or correspondence between themselves and the participant. This information is confidential and protected by law. The policy should cover that no information will be provided to their employer without the written consent of the officer. The policy should also cover the exemptions to the confidentiality of the program. These exemptions include things such as but not limited to; when the officer consents to disclosure, court ordered disclosure, disclosure to medical personnel in a medical emergency, and information provided which may be evidence of a crime just to name a few. All exemptions should be disclosed to personnel so that there are no surprises and/or no participants are blindsided when information is disclosed to the department administration. This will ensure transparency in the program (Services, 2020).
The policy should include the necessary information they must provide to participate in the program. Personnel’s personal information will not be shared. General information, however, will be shared to inform agencies regarding the use of the program. It has been noted earlier in this research that law enforcement hesitates to use programs such as the employee assistance program due to a stigma associated with being weak. Explaining to an employee through policy what will be expected of them upfront will hopefully put their mind at ease. The concept of confidentiality should do the same (Services, 2020).

Others ways to increase utilization of the program was identified in research conducted by Carchietta (2015). Charchietta conducted research which supported the following steps increased the utilization of an employee assistance program. First, the agency needs to promote and program as a wellness benefit and healthy choice. At the conclusion of department meetings, education and discussion about the program will promote it in a positive light. By advertising the program throughout the organization and educating employees through policy of the benefits of utilizing the program, employees will be 16% more likely to participate in the program. Second is training for supervisors. This training should include how to access the program through the formal and informal referral process, recognizing signs that services are needed, how to start the dialogue with subordinates, and follow up with subordinates to ensure they engaged with the program and are obtaining the services they need. Training can be mandated through the policy governing the program. Supervisors should also voice the confidentiality and accessibility aspects of the program. Lastly, supervisors should meet annually to discuss trends, usage and general program needs. Supervisors can utilize this information to address new or trending issues and coordinate subordinate training topics. The steps identified can all be covered in the policy for the program.
Lastly, it is important for department administration to be knowledgeable about the policy and employee assistance program. Supervisors should know how to access the programming and provide guidance to subordinates to access the services provided. The policy should identify the responsibilities of supervision in these aspects. Some of these responsibilities should include testing of the contact information to ensure personnel are able to access the needed services, accessing resources for subordinates, and/or requesting advise and information about services provided by the program. Supervisors can also use the program to consult with a counseling professional on how to formulate a response specific for an employee while offering that employee resources and support through a coaching model in lieu of a counseling approach. Supervisors can use the program as a resource to help those they supervise. (Services, 2020) The employee assistance program is a valuable resource to address organizational stress. By managing this program as an officer wellness program and health benefit will ensure the program’s success (Carchietta, 2015). This is another example of reducing organizational stress and promoting officer well being through a support system supported by policy.

**Physical Fitness Program Policy**

From the time a law enforcement officers starts the academy until retirement, police learn to hold a worldview of ever-present danger. This type of outlook on life contributes to many of the occupational and organizational stressors officers experience. Organizational stressors typically come from the officers being subject to large amounts of organizational control through policy within multilayered bureaucracies. This stress results in negative health and wellness outcomes of law enforcement officers throughout the world (Tewksbury & Copenhaver, 2016).

Law enforcement has significant stress associated with every aspect of their job. Research has supported that law enforcement officers experience more stress due to
organizational stress than occupational stress. When officer experience job related stress, it has been linked to a variety of physical health problems such as heart attacks, weight gain, and ulcers. The stress has also been associated with high rates of alcoholism and/or drug problems (Tewksbury & Copenhaver, 2016).

Research has supported that the majority of law enforcement officers in the United States do little to no meaningful exercise. The research found that approximately 86 percent of officers report lack of exercise and 25 percent are overweight. The relationship between exercise and stress reduction is a logical association. Exercise has been shown to enhance the way one feels about themselves not only physically but emotionally. Officer should often be reminded of the positive benefits associated with exercise. Law enforcement agencies need to embrace the benefits of exercise and its positive impact on reducing stress. Agency administrators can do this by implementing a policy establishing an exercise program with an expectation of a certain level of fitness within the organization. By increasing fitness within an agency, administrators can reduce stress levels induced by organizational stress and enhance officer performance and police efficacy as a whole (Tewksbury & Copenhaver, 2016).

Fitness programs can be implemented at a law enforcement agency through policy. The fitness program should be implemented individually as well as at an organizational level. Although fitness is promoted in law enforcement academies, many officer abandon fitness training programs once they become certified. This may be due to most certifying boards in the U.S. do not require a physical assessment test after the officer receives their certification (Cooper, 2020).

To first introduce a fitness program into the organization, a policy must identify what the goals of the program are as well as the expectations. First the policy must establish a means of
determining the basic foundation of fitness. This can be constructed by mirroring the fitness program of new recruits in the academy. A successful program will work towards preventing on-duty injuries as well as reducing stress within the organization. A proven way to implement a successful program is to create exercise on real life movements. This type of exercise will enhance muscle memory while build muscles to prevent injury. With officers more confident in their physical fitness, they will experience less stress when it comes to doing their job (Cooper, 2020).

Some officers may be hesitant to participate in a department fitness program. To create buy in to the program, administrators must educate their subordinates on the benefits of being physically fit. Supervisors should encourage physical fitness in the workplace by starting with teamwork. Supervisors should encourage a team building concept and support efforts of working out as a group. Supervisors should be innovative by creating a team challenge, encourage competition, and lead by example. Supervisors need to demonstrate how fitness is a priority with the organization. By doing this, officers will see it is important to the department and may become more enthusiastic about participating in the program (Cooper, 2020).

The policy governing the program should educate participants about the benefits of fitness in regards to officer well-being and reducing stress. The policy should incorporate the program into annual evaluations, promotional tests and training standards of the agency. The policy should incorporate training officers and other leaders of the organization to demonstrate a commitment to fitness. This will work to convince other members of the department to view fitness as an essential part of their job (Cooper, 2020).

By implementing a fitness program through policy, an organization can operate more efficiently while reducing stress for personnel. At a minimum, it can lengthen careers due to less
stress within your department. By establishing a fitness program through policy, the agency can prevent on-duty injuries, reduce medical requirements, reduce stress, and unsure members of the organization have long and successful careers (Cooper, 2020).

Chaplain Program Policy

This research searched numerous data bases with negative results on the benefits of a chaplain’s programs within law enforcement agencies. Further research will need to be conducted to determine the benefits of addressing organizational stress with a chaplain’s program at a law enforcement agency. Armed with these results, the author of this research paper relied on an established program within a law enforcement agency. The policy governing the program and personal experience in establishing the program.

The chaplain’s program serves two purposes, providing aid to personnel of the department as well as the community the department serves. This is done through a field service ministry. The biggest hurdle agencies will face when it comes to implementing a chaplain’s program at their department will be the fear that religion is being forced on personnel. When establishing the chaplain’s program, administration must be up front and transparent with personnel as to the reason for the program. Administrators can do this through the policy governing the program. The policy must define the areas of responsibilities and procedures for the program (Minocqua Police Department, 2020).

The purpose of this research was to identify policy which lessened organizational stress in a law enforcement agency. The chaplain’s program works towards this goal by offering support for personnel of the department recognized by the administration of the organization. The policy needs to identify how the chaplains will accomplish this goal. In policy obtained
from a small law enforcement organization, one of the purposes of the service is for the chaplains to provide spiritual guidance and pastoral counseling to all employees of the department and their families in times of need. The services are completely voluntary and available on the basis of need and desire. The policy advises that the chaplains are not intended to replace an individual’s own minister (Minocqua Police Department, 2020).

The policy must identify duties and responsibilities the chaplains are accountable for. It must also identify the matters they are responsible for that pertain to the operation of the service. Responsibilities pertaining to addressing organizational stress include things such as offering counseling services to personnel wishing to participate in the program. Ensuring those taking part in the program are aware that information obtained will be kept in confidence within the parameters of the program, i.e. criminal acts or thoughts of acts that put themselves or others in harm’s way will be disclosed to the administration of the department. Chaplains may also offer additional services outside the program to assist personnel in dealing with the issues and/or problems they are experiencing. Chaplains are available to personnel upon their request and may meet with department members during hours of work and/or outside of work hours. The policy must provide guidelines for how the chaplains must interact with department personnel to ensure the needed support is obtained by individuals participating in the program (Minocqua Police Department, 2020).

The chaplain’s program implemented at the small law enforcement agency has proven beneficial not only to the public the department serves but also to the department personnel who participate in the program. Personnel have met with chaplains in the program and have voiced positive reviews after participating in the program. The policy of the program has provided guidelines which are well received and has presented a positive impact on the overall morale of
the department. All in all, the program has been a positive experience for the agency. The program has been implemented through the policy which governs it and has lessened organizational stress within the department.
Section IV: Recommendations of Best Practice Stress Reducing Policy

Analysis of Stress Reducing Policy

The nature of law enforcement has demonstrated the occupation is naturally stressful. Due to this, research has supported that law enforcement officers are particularly vulnerable to physical and mental disorders. In addition, these disorders may contribute to a person being more vulnerable to work stressors. Hence, organizational stressors can lead to increased burdens to the department such as absenteeism, job dissatisfaction, burnout, and compensation claims. These stressors can also lead to mental and physical ailments which can affect work performance, quality of life, and, at times, lead to early retirement. In spite of this, law enforcement may have no greater organizational stress than other occupations. This, in turn, promotes the conflict regarding the presence and aftermath of mental stressors in law enforcement (Lees, et al., 2019).

Researchers are recommending implementing interventions to manage the disorders and ailments linked to organizational stressors. Policy implementing programming has been believed to improve officer health and coping abilities. Research has supported that continued benefits may be contingent on continued training and education referencing the programming.

Research conducted by Lees, et al. (2019) supported stress management training as having a positive effect on organizational stress and behaviors of personnel. Their research found that stress levels were only reduced after the intervention and the organizational stress levels and behavioral issues were non-significantly increased. The research found organizational stress levels significantly decreased over the first 12 months and then increased. This implies that interventions can reduce organizational stress; nevertheless, the effects diminish over time. The researchers recommend that law enforcement agencies should implement stress management
programs through policy and address continued yearly training related to the programming in the
policy (Lees, et al., 2019).

Research supports that any intervention and wellness program implemented by policy
should offer a wide array of support services including services such as but not limited to;
alcohol abuse treatment, whole life wellness training, and mental health services. These services
should also be extended to family members of the individual. Researchers recommend policies
should include a multipronged plan of attack towards mental health and be ongoing to ensure
continued benefits. In addition, it is recommended law enforcement agencies should proactively
and continuously deal with organizational stressors rather than just providing services after
critical events (Lees, et al., 2019).

**Seeking input from employees of the Agency**

The internal settings of a law enforcement agency often shape the way personnel relate to
their department and reflects directly on how they perform their job. Research has supported the
importance of fairness when creating the supportive organizational atmosphere within the
agency. In particular, when officers feel the policies have been created in a fair manner, they are
more likely to promote a service-oriented style of policing. This is referred to as procedural
justice. Administration should encourage and support procedurally just behavior within the
agency. This tends to positively influence their behavior outside of it. Procedural justice might
not only enhance agency effectiveness and community relations, it will also have a positive
influence on the lives of the officers themselves (Trinkner, Tyler, & Goff, 2016).

With the outcry in our nation for law enforcement reform, efforts will be more successful
over the long-haul if employees are included on the decision making when it comes to policy.
The focus should be on the fairness of the decision-making process in lieu of the outcomes of
those decisions. Procedural justice is a way for administration to demonstrate to personnel that they are an important and valued part of the department. This will affect the organization as a whole on two levels. Initially, personnel will “buy-in” and become more responsive to policies implemented by administration. In addition, employees become more willing to voluntarily perform in a way that will make the organization thrive. By infusing procedural justice into your agency, it will produce a more efficient and successful work atmosphere (Trinkner, Tyler, & Goff, 2016).

Research of Federal law enforcement agencies demonstrated employees felt agency leaders would not use their input to improve the workplace. Employees felt that leaders would not act on their concerns. The research showed that less than 30 percent of employees believed action would be taken on their feedback. In the research conducted by Lunney (2016), an analysis was conducted of 12 federal agencies to determine three major workplace challenges facing law enforcement agencies. The three challenges were identified as health and wellness of employees, open communication, and employee satisfaction and commitment to the mission of the organization. The research supported that given the demands and stress on law enforcement officers, administration should make available through policy, a range of mental health and support services in additional to maintaining enough staff so personnel aren’t overworked. The beliefs presented by employees resulted in the feeling that many workplace concerns will often be bumped off the list of priorities. This type of feeling by personnel can lead to excessive amounts of organizational stress in an agency.

Research has supported that officers want from their organizations the same thing the community wants from the officers; to be treated with respect in an honest and fair way by those who surround them. A good place to start is internally through policy demonstrating support and
fairness for all who work at the agency. These changes will create an atmosphere of happier personnel who are more open toward the kind of policing which will enhance positive and mutually beneficial bonds with the public. By using officer input on the reforms that are being sought in the policy of law enforcement, it will have widespread positive effects that surge throughout the organization and into the community in which they serve (Trinkner, Tyler, & Goff, 2016).

**Training and Stress Reducing Policy**

Training is an ongoing necessity in law enforcement. Research has supported improvements in law enforcement stress and mental health concerns following training. The same goes for continuous review and training of the policy directly related to reducing organizational stress. Studies have shown training is only effective when the organizational framework supports the training program subject matter. This research has identified two training techniques which focus on training that will reduce organizational stress and be more effective than conventional training measures; sense-giving perspective (SP) and mindfulness training (MT).

Sense-giving perspective on training brings new awareness into how to make law enforcement training more effective when it comes to reducing organizational stress. This type of training makes it more palatable to personnel by transitioning from framing unacceptable behaviors (i.e. sexual harassment and discrimination) as playful group cohesion to framing them as unprofessional, rather than illegal harassment. This type of training will be more effective as it addresses undesirable behavior by acknowledging things such as harassment and discrimination through a compassionate approach (Rawski & Workman-Stark, 2018).
Sense-giving perspective brings a new way of training to law enforcement by providing new ways to frame training to avoid resistance. Sense-giving does this by the use of frames and roles that are less friendly to the current machoism culture within law enforcement and replaces them with a more appropriate legal compliance frame and associated victim/harasser roles. Research has supported that the sense-giving perspective will benefit organizations which need effective training the most and are not improving from current training interventions (Rawski & Workman-Stark, 2018).

Another type of training that focuses on reducing stress in law enforcement is mindfulness training (MT). MT concentrates on the unique context, vulnerabilities, and strengths of law enforcement and identifies which type of training will best reduce stress within the organization. MT has been shown to be advantageous and often result in improved health in law enforcement officers (Christopher, et al., 2018).

MT was created to improve resilience for law enforcement officers in the framework of acute and chronic stressors in law enforcement. The curriculum of the training consists of learning strategies to manage stressors implicit to police work, including organizational stress. At the conclusion of the training, personnel reported positive improvement in organizational stressors such as burnout, fatigue and disengagement. Increased mindfulness while at work was also a benefit of MT (Christopher, et al., 2018).

While continuous exposure to organizational stress can have significant effects on the atmosphere of an agency, programs aimed at improving the ability to cope with organizational stress more skillfully, such as the programs described earlier in this research, may help in reducing the harmful effects of stress and behavior at the department. MT may lead to short-term improvements of organizational stress at a department. Ongoing review and training will
prolong these improvements in hopes to lessen this stress. Although organizational stress is inherent to law enforcement, programs identified in policy that teach personnel to cope with the stress more skillfully may help reduce the harmful effects of stress on an officers’ health as well as the organization (Christopher, et al., 2018).

These are two training considerations for administrators to implement a training program within their department to address organizational stress. It is recommended that administrators always evaluate training effectiveness and make the review of training mandatory through departmental policy. By doing this, administrators can implement best practices for training interventions in unsupportive framework and address organizational stress all at the same time (Rawski & Workman-Stark, 2018).

**Considerations when implementing Stress Reducing Policy**

When considering implementing policy that reduces organizational stress, administrators must take into consideration the individuals they put into leadership roles. One of the biggest challenges to addressing organizational stress is having good leadership. Research has defined leadership as a process by which an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Leadership is a powerful tool through which administrators can address organizational stress. Through strong leadership, organizations can motivate personnel to achieve both personal and agency goals. Research has identified four types of leadership styles which should be taken into consideration when selecting the right individual for the position when it comes to addressing organizational stress; directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented (Magombo-Bwanali, 2019).
Directive Leadership

Directive leadership is looked at as autocratic leadership. This means there is one-way communication between the leader and their subordinates. This style of leadership encourages direction to be given to subordinates which targets tasks and responsibilities. The supervisor also explains expected standards, procedures and policies. This style is best applied when emergent action is needed and with inexperienced subordinates (Magombo-Bwanali, 2019).

Supportive Leadership

Supportive leadership is associated with leaders who are friendly and supportive to their subordinates. In this style of leadership, the supervisor is emotionally sensitive to the needs of their subordinates. This style is appropriate when subordinates’ confidence levels are low and there is evidence that the circumstances could lead to the inability to complete tasks (Magombo-Bwanali, 2019).

Participative Leadership

In participative leadership, the supervisor allows their subordinates to be a part of the decision-making process. This style consists of open communication, focuses on discussion and respects ideas of subordinates. This is a team approach to leadership. This style is best implemented when subordinates are skilled and willing to share their expertise. The supervisor in this style of leadership is only required to provide judgement based on a set of procedures. This is the style of leadership which affects morale of the organization the most.

Achievement-oriented Leadership

Finally, the achievement-oriented leadership style challenges subordinates to do their best in order to achieve the desired goals of the agency. This style focuses on motivating subordinates by setting goals and providing guidance that can bring out the subordinates’ best
performance. This style is best implemented when a supervisor has subordinates with high expectations of accomplishing goals and have tasks that are indefinite (Magombo-Bwanali, 2019).

Research has supported that leadership of an organization influences subordinates’ motivation and job satisfaction. Motivation encourages subordinates to work towards attaining the goals of the agency. Job satisfaction is a positive or negative attitude that an individual develops towards their job. Leadership behavior has a direct impact on organizational stress within a department as it affects an employee’s motivation and job satisfaction (Magombo-Bwanali, 2019). Administration of an agency must regularly evaluate the types of personnel which are assigned to each supervisor to ensure the most productive and efficient department. By putting the best suited supervisor with the right team, administrators can establish a culture at their agency which is deemed supportive and efficient. In turn, morale of the department will flourish and organizational stress will be lessened.
Section V: Conclusion

Organizational stress can affect not only the overall atmosphere in a department but can have a detrimental impact on an employee’s well-being. Throughout this research, programs driven by the policy of an agency and strong leadership have been shown to be successful in mitigating organizational stress. It is essential for administrators of law enforcement agencies to identify the programs that best suit their agency and implement the best practice policies governing those programs into their organization. These policies should demonstrate support and accountability for personnel of the department and promote a healthy atmosphere at the agency.

Administrators should also identify their most successful employees and put them into leadership roles to assist with addressing organizational stress. In doing so, the leadership of the administrative team will be able to address organizational stress through supportive measures. Leadership must hold subordinates accountable but at the same time realize policy is a guideline and be flexible in their enforcement of it. Personnel should be allowed to use their discretion and not fear repercussions from supervisors while using it. Strong leadership will possess these characteristics and be at the forefront of mitigating organizational stress.


