

Chapter 5 – Findings and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

Within this chapter, each research objective will be examined to see if the data obtained has met these objectives. This chapter will also discuss the results of this survey in correlation with existing literature and literature discussed in Chapter 2. The research objectives are as follows:

- To investigate how officers cope with operational and organisational stressors.
- To determine how long officers have been in the role of a response officer.
- To determine the types of incidents response officers attend.
- To analyse the number of officers considering leaving response for another department.

Practical recommendations will be made from this discussion on how to improve the service given to officers.

5.2 To investigate how officers cope with operational and organisational stressors

In section 4.2 of the previous chapter, it was stated that the number of individuals who met the criterion for this study was 1156. However, only 95 responses were received with a response rate of 8.2%. This links with the research of Demou et al. (2020) where it was stated that the stigma of mental health within policing is high, and officers are unlikely to discuss their experiences.

It has been noted that there is little available literature where participants discuss how they 'unwind' after their working day. This research builds a picture of how officers often use physical exercise with 39 participants stating they go to the gym and 42 participants go for a walk after their working day. This highlights that physical activity outside of work allows officers to relieve stress and improve their mental wellbeing.

Research conducted by Thornton and Herndon (2015) found that only 1 in 13 officers would voluntarily seek support for their mental health. In comparison, this research found that 76% (58) of participants would speak with others about how they are feeling. This highlights that since 2015, more officers are likely to speak with others however it is clear that some are not willing to speak openly about their mental health.

This research highlights the increased stress levels that response officers feel when in their working environment as 74% (70) of participants stated yes and 26% (25) stated no. This helps show that response officers work in a stressful role where officers may require a higher level of support for their mental health.

5.3 To determine how long officers have been in the role of a response officer

This research found that 32% (30) had between 1-3 years' service and 30 participants had over 8 years' service. An unexpected finding was that 21% (20) participants stated that they had over 10 years of service as a response officer. The majority of participants (74) who took part in this research are of the rank of Constable with only 6 Inspectors participating. This was an expected finding due to the number of postings given to Constables compared to Inspector.

These findings add to the literature as it highlights the short length of service currently held by those working in the role of a response officer.

5.4 To determine the types of incidents response officers attend

The findings within this research have shown how officers attend incidents ranging from domestic violence to mental health calls to violent assaults. This builds on research conducted by Soomro and Yanos (2018) where it was stated that the most commonly endorsed traumatic events involve someone being seriously injured. This research further shows this as participants described certain incidents such as ‘an incident where a male with dementia nearly killed their partner because they didn’t recognise them’ (Participant 7). During their research 33% of respondents stated that they had endured being seriously injured intentionally and this is also echoed within responses received during this research where certain participants described being seriously assaulted.

The research conducted highlights that response officers attend a large variety of incidents, where any incident they attend can end in a traumatic experience due to their unpredictability. This research found that 80% (76) of participants have experienced a traumatic incident whilst on duty which indicates how demanding the role of a response officer is.

5.5 To analyse the number of officers considering leaving response for another department

Research conducted by Cooper and Ingram in 2004 found that there is a high resignation rate from the role altogether of officers still within their probationary period due to the pressure and nature of the role. This research found that 56 participants were not likely to remain in the role of a response officer within the next 5 years in comparison to 9 who stated yes. This builds on the research conducted by Cooper and Ingram as well as the research discovering that 46% (35) of participants stating that they considered resigning from the force altogether due to the negative impacts the role is having on their mental health. However, this research also found that 51% (39) of officers had not considered leaving the role due to their mental health.

This research adds discussion to the retention of police officers in the role of a response officer as 80% stated that they have considered transferring department away from response with 41% stating this was due to their mental health.

5.6 Conclusion and Recommendations

To conclude, a limitation to this study was the low response rate given the target sample however it was higher than the researcher expected and has provided honest answers from those who have participated. This research has found that the role of a response officer is a stressful one and that more officers are seeking help for their mental health. It also shows however there is still a stigma associated with mental health and the need to seek support for that. It also shows that there is a link with officer retention on response and officer mental health.

A recommendation from this study would be for senior management teams to be more visible within the junior ranks and to not just be seen as disciplinary figures. By being more relatable, officers are more likely to be openly discuss issues with them. Another

2131732

recommendation would be for mandatory check in with occupational health every 6 months as seen in other departments such as firearms due to the regular occurrence of traumatic incidents witnessed by officers.

This research highlights that further research is required in to the mental health of those working in the role of a response officer nationwide and that more needs to be done to support those working in the role.

Word Count – 1,024