

Methodology

Introduction

The current chapter will describe the methodological approach utilised within the current research with the aim to examine whether police officers adequately trained to respond to mental health incidents. Additionally, the chapter will provide a rationale as to why a survey research method was chosen and the epistemological and ontological approaches taken within the project. Furthermore, the chapter will discuss the reasons as to why a content analysis was chosen to analyse the results. Lastly, the chapter will discuss the limitations of the research method and how the researcher will overcome these along with ethical considerations.

Rationale

A survey will be utilised to gain officers perceptions of whether they believe police officers are adequately trained to respond to mental health incidents. A survey has been chosen as it can reach a wide population within a short period of time (Owens, 2002). Moreover, it allows participants to answer anonymously which will encourage honesty in their answers. Whereas if a face-to-face research method was utilised, participants may feel obliged to provide answers which show their employee in a good light.

Additionally, due to the demographic being officers with busy schedules, a survey will allow ease of completion with participants being able to choose when to conduct the survey as opposed to interviews for example which would be difficult to arrange due to differing shift patterns.

Prior research in the field has been conducted on a small number of officers prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the current research is needed to obtain first-hand accounts of a larger number of officers of various ranks who are tasked with responding to mental health incidents during and after the COVID-19 pandemic which has seen a rise in mental health calls (Brühlhart et al, 2021).

Epistemological and Ontological considerations

Ontology is described as “the study of ‘being’ and is concerned with ‘what is’, i.e., the nature of existence and structure of reality as such” (Crotty, 2003, p.10). Whereas epistemology is concerned with understanding and interpreting human behaviour through gaining the views of the participants and identifying patterns or behaviour (Hashil, 2014).

The current research sits within the interpretivist epistemological approach as it aims to gain the perceptions of participants and their views on whether they are adequately trained in managing mental health calls through gathering qualitative data. Thus, subjective perceptions are gained as opposed to an ontological approach which focuses on objective right or wrong answers or researcher theories.

Methodology Process

The research methodology utilised within the current project is a survey. The survey will allow both qualitative and quantitative data to be gathered by using both open and closed questions. Open questions will be used to gain descriptive answers where participants are able to give their beliefs

and feelings which is central to the current project, without limiting their response through only utilising closed questions. Closed questions will also be utilised to gain data which will be easier to quantify. Moreover, the use of both open and closed questions should encourage participants to participate in the project as the questions will be simpler and quicker to complete for those participants with limited time.

An opportunity sample will be utilised. The sample will be chosen by the researcher as it is focused on a specific group of individuals working for South Wales Police. The sample technique is also convenient, which is important for the chosen demographic who have busy schedules with differing shift patterns. Thus, the participants will be 50 police officers from South Wales police. Officers will be of any rank with any length of service.

A link to the survey will be posted on the South Wales Police intranet page for participants to complete. Survey results will be stored on an encrypted laptop which the researcher has access to. Results will not be stored any longer than necessary and will be destroyed following the completion of the project.

Participants will not be asked to provide any identifiable information therefore the results will be anonymous.

Survey results will be analysed via content analysis. Content analysis was chosen as it uses both quantitative and qualitative data. Content analysis will allow the research to determine themes and patterns within the survey results.

Methodological Limitations and Ethical considerations

The current chapter considers the limitations of utilising a survey. Firstly, due to being web based and not face to face with a researcher, there is a likelihood of missing data. A participant might begin the survey and not finish it or miss some questions. To avoid this, a mixture of both open and closed questions will be utilised to increase the ease of completing the questions. Moreover, when advertising the survey, it will be noted how long is expected to complete the survey.

Additionally, due to the research not being present to clarify questions, there could be a difference in how people understand the questions leading to biased results. To avoid this, questions will be carefully constructed and simplistic to avoid any misunderstandings.

Participants will be informed of the ethical considerations within the invite to the research. The invite will outline that the survey is voluntary, and outline the aims of the research, what will happen to the results and how they will be stored. By following the link to the survey, the participants will be providing their consent. Participants will also be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage. Respondents will be reassured that no identifiable information is gathered therefore their data is anonymous and confidential. Any potential for harm will be kept to an absolute minimum.

Summary

In summary, a survey will be used to gain both quantitative and qualitative data on whether police officers adequately trained to respond to mental health incidents. A survey is used to encourage participants to provide honest beliefs and feelings through anonymous responses. Moreover, due to the busy schedule of officers, the survey will enable participants to complete the survey when they have the opportunity resulting in an increased uptake. The sample will be 50 police officers of various ranks working within South Wales Police of any ages or gender. Data will be stored on an encrypted laptop and will be destroyed following the completion of the project. The following chapter will outline an analysis of the results of the survey using content analysis.

Total- 1,049 words

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