

Research into Workplace Factors, Well-being, Attitudes and Behaviour in Policing

Summary of Evidence and Insights

Presented for the Front Line Review of Policing

24 June 2019

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the individual police officers and staff who gave up their valuable time to provide the data for this research. We express our gratitude to the policing staff representative bodies for their support for this project and to the National Police Chiefs' Council. Without the hard work and commitment of the individuals in each force we have worked with, this collaborative research would not have been possible. In particular, within policing, we thank Mike Barton, Nick Caveney, Steven Chase, Jo Farrell and Gillian Routledge. We also thank our colleagues in the International Centre for Leadership and Followership for their provision of expertise and support for this research. In particular, we thank Olga Epitropaki, Rosalie Hall, Steven Lockey, Robert Lord, and Xiaotong Zheng. We also thank the College of Policing and the ESRC Impact Acceleration Account who provided partial funding for this work.

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24 June 2019

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Executive Summary

This report was produced with the purpose of contributing to the research evidence used to inform the Front Line Review of policing. A summary of the evidence and insights from research conducted in thirty-one Home Office police forces in England and Wales over a two-year period, ending 1st December 2018, is presented and discussed.

The research findings indicate that police officers and staff perceive their work as being of high value to society and the communities they serve and that they see their work as meaningful. Public service motivation was found to be, on average, at a high¹ level for both the 27,009 police officers and the 21,499 police staff involved in this research². This confirms that police personnel have a strong desire to serve the public, take action for the benefit of others, protect vulnerable people, and influence the well-being of society.

Police officer and staff perceptions of the level of importance of their force's organisational mission were also found to be high. However, police officers' perceptions of the clarity of their force's vision were found to be, on average, only at a moderate level. Police staff perceptions were, on average, slightly more positive at a moderately high level. Prior research outside of policing [1] [2] suggests that when an organisation's vision is clear individuals have a better understanding of their job and performance expectations. The findings of our research confirmed that the clarity of a force's vision is positively associated with police officer and staff motivation, engagement in their work and their level of discretionary effort.

Police officer perceptions of how fairly they are treated by their force (i.e. the level of *perceived organisational fairness*) were found to be at a moderately low average level. This was also the case for the extent to which they perceived that their force values their contributions, cares about their well-being, and will support them when they face difficult situations (i.e. the level of *perceived organisational support*). Police staff perceptions of these two measures were slightly more positive at a moderate average level. Perceptions of organisational fairness and organisational support were found to be important factors affecting police officer and staff well-being and their willingness to reciprocate through engaging in discretionary effort and improvement behaviour. Our findings provide empirical evidence to support the HMIC (2014) [3] recommendation that to achieve future success police forces should strive to improve police officer and staff perceptions of fair treatment and the level of support they provide to their employees.

Effective leadership in policing has been argued to be essential for the achievement of service excellence and public confidence [4]. The College of Policing (2015) [5] argued that an authoritarian (command) style of leadership risks disempowering people and is the greatest obstacle to forces achieving a positive culture. Consistent with prior research [6] [7] we found that supportive leadership has positive effects on police officer and staff well-being, ethical behaviour, and discretionary effort and preparedness to engage in improvement activity while authoritarian leadership has detrimental effects on these outcomes. Our findings provide robust empirical evidence to support the College of

¹ Please refer to the methodology section for an explanation of how this was assessed.

² Although not all measures were included in each of the thirty-one force surveys used to generate the sub-sample weighted-average scores used to calculate an overall sample average, the sample sizes involved are large enough for us to be confident in the robustness of the findings reported. Where the sample size is limited i.e. less than seven forces, this is noted in the text. Unless reported, predictive findings discussed have been replicated in a minimum of five studies.

Policing's [5] assertion of the need for policing to move from a command style of leadership to a more positive style for the achievement of future success.

The average levels of engagement in their work and confidence in their job skills for police officers and staff are encouraging, as is the level of discretionary effort they are prepared to make for the public. Our research findings indicate that police officers and staff would feel greater responsibility for improvement activity, and would be more likely to engage in improvement behaviour, if they had more resources available to them for these activities.

Commentators in policing [8] [9] [10] have argued that for long term success policing needs to move from a culture which is characterised by *blame* or being *defensive* and limits ability to achieve a *learning culture* where people have more freedom and ability to admit to mistakes and errors. The findings in this research supported that when police officers and staff perceive a more positive organisational learning culture in their force this is associated with lower fear of making mistakes which acts to encourage them to engage in proactive improvement behaviour [11].

While police officers and staff were found to experience positive levels of job and life satisfaction, of particular noteworthiness is that the level of emotional energy, which is a key measure of long-term well-being, was found to be low for police officers. For police staff emotional energy was found to be slightly higher at a moderate average level.

Depletion of emotional energy occurs when job demands are high and job resources are limited [12]. The occurrence of low levels of emotional energy is indicative of individuals facing substantial strain and warrants attention [13]. When individuals' emotional energy is low, they feel overextended and exhausted, and find it difficult to meet the daily challenges and demands of their job. Low levels of emotional energy have been found to have serious negative consequences for both individuals and organisations [14]. The findings of this research indicate that while the amount of work, time pressures and demand (*challenge stressors*) act as a strain on police officers and staff and impact their well-being, they are also associated with high levels of motivation and preparedness to engage in discretionary effort. On the other hand, the findings show that the strain caused through experiencing work-related demands that police officers and staff view as constraining and hindering their performance and achievement at work (*hindrance stressors*) has a larger negative impact on their well-being and are also associated with reduced motivation and engagement. Due to the level of demand that policing currently faces it may prove difficult to reduce the level of challenge stressors. The research findings suggest that a reduction of the level of hindrance stressors and barriers that are perceived to exist in the workplace would be beneficial for police officer and staff well-being.

Due to its occupational nature, policing is a stressful job [15] [16]. Police employees are frequently exposed to highly emotionally demanding situations (e.g. dealing with victims of crime, accidents and other forms of serious harm to members of the public) and have to make quick decisions that can have serious consequences for the safety of members of the public [15]. While organisational and job factors affect individuals' well-being, a further critical mechanism is whether individuals can adequately recover, psychologically and physically, from the demands and strains they face at work [17]. For recovery to occur, individuals need to psychologically detach or '*switch off*' and not work or think about work-related problems or issues in their non-work time [18]. Our findings confirmed that police officer and staff ability to psychologically detach in their non-work time was positively related to their well-being; a higher level of psychological detachment was associated with more positive well-being than lower levels of psychological detachment. Of note, is that the average level of psychological detachment for police officers was moderately low, and moderate for police staff.

The importance of sleep for restorative daily functioning is well-recognised [19]. Although we have only studied the impact of sleep quality in three forces to date, higher sleep quality was found to be related to higher levels of emotional energy than when sleep quality was low. Experiencing high workload and high levels of hindrance stressors were both associated with lower sleep quality. Sleep quality was found to be lower for police officers than staff, and for those who worked shifts rather than those who did not.

Ensuring the well-being of employees is a fundamental ethical issue and has important consequences for individuals, organisations, and service delivery for the public. The findings of this research provide support for the HMICFRS (2018) [20] assertion of the importance of police officer and staff physical and mental well-being and the need for police leaders to make the well-being of the people they work with a key priority.

When managers are faced with significant operational pressures, they tend to adopt a short-term focus and, through them having insufficient time to achieve depth of understanding of problems and issues [21], the quality of their decision-making can be adversely affected [22]. These factors can result in solutions and redesigned work practices being implemented that are misguided in that they have negative consequences for employee well-being in the longer-term. Actively seeking feedback and listening to employee views and opinions has been argued [23] to be a key enabler of the introduction of effective policies and practices for improvement of employee well-being.

Uncertainty has been argued to be detrimental to individual wellbeing [24]. Police officer and staff levels of uncertainty at work were found to be at a high and moderately high level, respectively. The findings also demonstrated that individual well-being was adversely affected by high levels of felt uncertainty. Investigation of reasons and issues that are causing police officers and staff to feel uncertain at work, and listening and effectively communicating with them on these issues, would act to reduce levels of concern and strain.

The main objective of this research project is to contribute to the evidence of the current condition of the policing workforce and to increase police leaders' knowledge and understanding of the impacts of organisational factors on the well-being, attitudes and behaviours of police officers and staff. We hope that the evidence and explanation of the underlying theory presented and discussed in this summary report will contribute to the quality of police leaders' decision making and support the development of policy changes, interventions and effective actions which will be of benefit not only to policing but also to individual police officers and staff and the communities they serve.

Prior research outside of policing has supported a positive association between the use of employee attitude surveys and improved employee well-being and organisational performance [25]. However, if employees do not feel that their views are taken seriously, they may react with frustration, cynicism and a lack of preparedness to engage in discretionary effort and improvement behaviour [26]. We note therefore that workforce attitude surveys such as those conducted in this research are only useful, rather than unhelpful, if appropriate actions and changes are implemented.

1. Introduction

This overview report has been produced to meet the request from the Front Line Review Steering Group led by the Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service, the Right Honourable Nick Hurd MP, to provide a summary of the key findings and insights from the collaborative research conducted by researchers from Durham University and police forces in England and Wales. The work is based on the internationally-leading research conducted by members of the International Centre for Leadership and Followership within Durham University Business School.

How people feel they are treated by the organisation and the environment they work in affects their attitudes, behaviours and service delivery. This report summarises the findings from the recent collaborative research conducted with police forces across England and Wales to study the impact of workplace factors on police officer and staff well-being, attitudes, and behaviours.

The key aim of this research is to build a body of evidence, based on rigorous research, which can inform both local decision-making and national policy to improve police officer and staff well-being and policing service provision to the public. Through discussion of the research evidence and findings and the underpinning theory in this research it is hoped that police leader decision making at all levels of police forces can be improved.

2. Methodology

This report summarises the findings and insights from the collaborative research conducted in thirty-one Home Office Police Forces in England and Wales for the two-year period of November 2016 to November 2018. The average response rate for the surveys in each force was 41.0%, resulting in a sample size of 27,009 police officers and 21,499 police staff.

All surveys were entirely voluntary and confidential and were predominantly circulated online using a secure server hosted independently by Durham Constabulary. A small selection of the research was conducted using paper surveys to enable the collection of matched co-worker, supervisor and/or spouse ratings alongside individuals' responses in order to strengthen the quality of evidence for relationships between variables. A large number of the online surveys utilised a two-stage collection process to reduce common method variance bias [27] [28], distributing an initial Part I survey and a shorter follow-up Part II survey which could be matched using a respondent-generated anonymous code. The average response rate for the shorter Part II surveys was 28.7%.

Whilst in cross-sectional studies it is not possible to establish causality, we adopted an approach of prediction of relationships between variables from theoretical considerations and from prior research. We tested predicted relationships using linear regression analyses, including mediation, moderation and conditional process analysis [29]. Where appropriate, we also used structural equation modelling and confirmatory factor analyses. We controlled for the effects of role, gender, and tenure in policing, alongside topic-specific related measures where relevant. The minimum confidence level of significance adopted was $p = .05$. For the purpose of this report, for consistency and ease of understanding, the measures used have been converted to a nine-point scoring system ranging from *extremely low* to *extremely high*³. A strength of this research is that, where possible, we collected multi-wave data and data from different sources, which increases the robustness and reliability of the findings.

³For example, for a 1 to 7 scale measure the average converted descriptions would be 1.00 to 1.67 *Extremely Low*, 1.68 to 2.33 *Very Low*, 2.34 to 3.00 *Low*, 3.01 to 3.67 *Moderately Low*, 3.68 to 4.33 *Moderate*, 4.34 to 5.00 *Moderately High*, 5.01 to 5.67 *High*, 5.68 to 6.33 *Very High*, and 6.34 to 7.00 *Extremely High*.

Although not all measures were included in each of the thirty-one force surveys used to generate the sub-sample weighted-average scores to calculate the overall sample average, the sample sizes involved are large enough for us to be confident in the robustness of the findings reported. Where the sample size is limited i.e. less than seven forces, this is noted in the text. Unless reported, predictive findings discussed have been replicated in a minimum of five studies⁴.

3. Policing as Meaningful Work

Public service motivation can be thought of as an individual desire to pursue the common good, serve the public, take action for the benefit of others, and to influence the well-being of society [30]. It has been identified as having four related components: civic duty or commitment to the public interest, attraction to policy making and taking action, self-sacrifice, and compassion for vulnerable people [31].

The results from the last two-year period confirm that the average level of public service motivation for both police officers and police staff is high. As can be expected, we found public service motivation to be positively related to commitment to the public. That is, when public service motivation is higher, police officers and staff generally feel a greater sense of commitment to the public than when public service motivation is lower. Our findings also confirmed that commitment to the public is very high for both police officers and police staff.

Meaningfulness of work refers to the extent to which individuals perceive their work as generally being of value and worthwhile [32]. Policing has an important role to play in society due to the nature of the service that it provides to citizens and communities. People working in policing can therefore, in general, feel their work has meaning [33]. Our findings supported this with the average level of meaningfulness of work reported as high for police officers and very high for police staff. Experienced meaningfulness of work is one of the most important factors affecting work attitudes and behaviours [34]. We found that public service motivation is positively related to meaningfulness of work, and through meaningfulness of work is then associated with police officer and staff willingness to 'go the extra-mile' and engage in discretionary effort beyond their role requirements for the organisation and their co-workers, to serve the public, and to fight serious organised crime. Perceived social impact, which refers to whether individuals feel that their work is having an impact and making a difference in society, was found to be moderately high for police officers and high for police staff. When police officers and staff felt more strongly that their work was having a positive impact on society, this was associated with higher job and life satisfaction.

The findings that police officers and staff experience high levels of public service motivation and meaningfulness in their work is very positive as this provides significant beneficial impacts for the public and the society that they serve, the forces they work in, and for their own individual life and job satisfaction. However, it is important to be aware that our analyses and results also suggest that a high level of public service motivation can lead police officers and staff to make very high investments of their personal time and energy into their work [35]. High public service motivation was found to be related to higher engagement in work activities outside of normal working hours (e.g., taking work home, working longer hours, working while on holidays and at weekends), and also in them having difficulty switching off from their work and relaxing and recovering in non-work and

⁴ Due to the limited sample size (< 32) at a group (force) level, predictive analyses were conducted at the individual level.

leisure time [35]. Both of these factors have important implications for individuals' long-term well-being (see section 7.7 below).

4. Senior Leadership and Human Resource Practices

4.1. Force Mission Importance and Vision Clarity

Public sector organisations often have missions with broader scope and more profound impact on individuals' work attitudes and performance than those typically found in the private sector. If individuals view their organisation's mission as important, they tend to regard their roles as more personally meaningful and incorporate organisational goals into their daily work activities [1] [36].

The findings of this research indicate that while individuals' perceptions of the importance of their force's mission was at a high average level for police officers and a very high average level for police staff, the level of vision clarity was found to be at a moderate level for police officers and a moderately high level for police staff.

The importance of an organisation's vision for motivating and directing both individual and collective efforts towards the desired future state of the organisation is well established [2]. When the clarity of an organisation's vision is low and organisational goals are not clear, an individual's place within the organisation, including both job and performance expectations, are less clear to them and the impact of the vision on their attitudes and behaviours is reduced [1] [2]. Our findings supported these assertions in that vision clarity was found to be an important factor for police officer and staff engagement in their work and their level of discretionary effort.

4.2. Perceived Organisational Support

How employees are treated by their organisation affects their views concerning the extent to which the organisation values them and their contributions [37]. In the wider organisational support literature, two different values systems on how organisations treat employees have been identified [38]. The first approach is one involving a *command-and-control strategy* in which employees are seen as a resource, the workforce is repeatedly reduced in size to save money, and employees are given increasingly more work to make up for understaffing and are not required to think above their pay grade. The underlying assumption is that employees will accept poor treatment as they have little choice but to do so. When this values system underpins the organisational culture and how it treats employees, individuals will feel that they are regarded as just a '*number*', and that the organisation does not care about them and will not support them in times of need. The second approach recognises the importance of employees' talent and skills and the importance of their contributions. Employees understand that their efforts are appreciated. The focus is on developing employees and providing them with support, particularly when they face difficult or challenging circumstances when carrying out their duties [39].

Individuals' perceptions of organisational support are influenced by the organisation's policies, procedures and decisions, and reflect employees' beliefs regarding the degree to which the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being [37]. The organisation's treatment of co-workers also shapes and influences individuals' views on how they will be treated in similar circumstances. When individuals feel valued, their socio-emotional needs of respect, being cared for and receiving approval are met, and they will reciprocate with higher levels of discretionary effort and felt obligation [38] [40].

In this research, the average level of perceived organisational support for police officers was found to be moderately low, while the average level for police staff was slightly higher at a moderate level. (See section 4.4 below for discussion of findings on how perceptions of organisational support impact individual behaviour).

4.3. Organisational Procedural Justice (Fairness)

In human resource management, organisational justice (fairness) has increasingly become seen as of key importance [41]. The HMIC report on the State of Policing [3] identifies the need for fair treatment of employees as an important factor that affects police officer and staff attitudes which will in turn influence their behaviours. *Organisational procedural justice* relates to employees' perceptions of the fairness of the methods and processes used across their organisation to make decisions and to determine the distribution of outcomes among individuals [42]. For a decision to be considered fair, six principles need to be evident. These are that procedures are applied consistently, bias is not evident in decision-making, accurate information is used for decision-making, there is an option to correct unfair decisions, decisions conform to high ethical standards, and it is evident that the ideas and opinions of people affected by the decision have been considered [42]. Being treated fairly signals to an employee that they are valued [43] and that the other party can be trusted and will deliver on obligations to the individual [44]. Thus, fair treatment at work signals to individuals that the organisation respects and cares about them [45]. Organisational fairness also plays a key role in determining whether or not individuals link their social identity to an organisation, which in turn impacts whether employees will engage in discretionary effort for the organisation [46] [47] [48]. One way to measure the level of linkage of individual's social identity to that of their force is to consider how proud they are of working in that force.

Police officer perceptions of organisational procedural justice (fairness) were found to be lower than that of police staff (average levels of moderately low and moderate, respectively). Our findings confirmed that at an individual level, when police officers and staff had higher perceptions of fair treatment from their force, they had higher levels of organisational pride than when they felt they were not treated fairly. As can be expected from these results, police officers' levels of pride in their force were also, on average, lower than that of police staff (moderate and moderately high levels, respectively).

4.4. The Impact of Organisational Fairness and Support

Individuals' perceptions of how they are valued, treated and supported have a strong influence on the 'tone' or culture of an organisation, and on police officer and staff attitudes and behaviour [49]. Perceptions of both organisational fairness and of organisational support were found to be positively related, both directly and indirectly through organisational pride, to police officers' and staff levels of enthusiasm and effort at work and to their levels of discretionary effort and improvement activity [47] [48]. Our findings on the impact of fairness and perceived organisational support on positive behaviour are consistent with prior research conducted in policing [50] [40].

Our research findings also demonstrated that police officer and staff perceptions of fair treatment and organisational support are positively related to their job satisfaction, life satisfaction and well-being [48]. When decisions are perceived to have been made in a procedurally fair manner, individuals are more likely to accept and support the decision, and their sense of being valued and respected will not be adversely affected, even if they do not benefit from the decision [47]. As recommended by the HMIC [3], police forces should strive to improve police officer and staff perceptions of fair treatment and support provided by the organisation as this will affect both

individuals' well-being and their willingness to reciprocate through engaging in discretionary effort and improvement behaviour. Improvements in fairness and in perceptions of fair treatment and levels of organisational support can be made at all levels within the organisation [38]. Supervisors' treatment of their people (see section 5 below), the manner in which human resource policy is designed and implemented, and how senior leaders shape the organisational culture and design organisational strategies will all affect these perceptions.

4.5. Adopting a Culture of Learning from Failure

Organisational learning theorists have argued that the long-term success of an organisation is dependent on its capacity to learn from experience [51]. Moreover, it is the organisation's reaction to experiences of failure, rather than success, which has the most important impact [52]. However, prior research [53] in a non-policing context has suggested that many organisations do not learn from mistakes. Attitudes towards occurrences of failure and how they are dealt with can be considered as indications of an organisation's culture [54]. Policing commentators [8] [9] [10] have identified that while it is difficult in the current context, there is an urgent need for policing to move from a defensive culture, which can be closed and limits ability to learn from failure, to that of a learning culture, where people have more freedom and ability to admit to mistakes and errors. A culture which encourages learning has been argued to increase capability to control damage, reduce the likelihood of negative consequences that arise from failure, and encourage longer term learning and innovation [55].

In this research project we developed a measure to assess the extent to which individuals perceive that their organisation, and others within the force, view failure as a source of feedback for improvement in daily work and as an opportunity for the organisation to learn and improve systems and processes through discussion, analysis, and information-sharing on failure [11]. In the nine forces where we studied this topic, the average level of learning culture was moderate for police officers and moderately high for police staff. (See section 6.3 below for the effect of organisational learning culture on individual improvement behaviour).

5. Supervisory Leadership Behaviour

It has been argued that effective leadership in policing is essential for the achievement of service excellence and public confidence [4] [56]. In our research, we adopt a philosophy that leadership is a social influence process which does not reside in a leader or a follower, but in the relationship between an individual and their supervisor, and emerges through the communication and dialogue that occurs between them [57]. A significant body of research demonstrates the importance of leadership as an influencing factor on employees' values [58], how they see themselves [59], and their well-being, behaviours and performance [60] [61].

Historically, directive leadership was considered to be an effective style of leadership for the realisation of employee performance [62]. However, it has been argued [62] that this was due to the fact that employees' core work tasks were relatively stable and predictable which allowed directive leaders to effectively determine, in advance, goals and direction for their subordinates. While research in the mid-70s [63] suggested that police officers held a preference for a more autocratic leadership style, more recently there is growing acceptance of the need for a different style of leadership to be adopted in policing [64]. A leadership style based on rank, and command and control, is now increasingly recognised as no longer appropriate for future success in policing [65]. Moreover, in a review of policing leadership, The College of Policing (2015) [5] argued that as a command style of

leadership acts to disempower people, and may be the greatest obstacle to achieving a positive culture in police forces. The review recommended a more collective style of leadership that acts to improve communication and shifts power to all levels of the organisation should be adopted to enable police forces to meet the challenges facing them [5].

As there is only limited leadership research in policing, particularly in the United Kingdom, robust empirical evidence to support these arguments is limited [4]. A primary focus of our research was to investigate both the level of occurrence of different leadership styles and their differential impacts on police officers and staff. We studied police officer and staff views of their immediate supervisors' leadership behaviour to gain an understanding of the prevalence and impact of contrasting leadership styles throughout police forces. The two main styles of leadership we considered were that of *authoritarian leadership*, which can be thought of as a directive, command and control style, and *supportive leadership*, which relates to a more caring and empowering style of leadership.

Authoritarian leadership is associated with a focus on safeguarding a group's hierarchical order and ensuring subordinate behavioural compliance with group norms. Authoritarian leaders behave in a commanding and controlling fashion and exert high levels of discipline over their subordinates [66]. They require their subordinates to obey their instructions without question and centralise decision-making. If their subordinates do not follow the leader's instructions, it is clear they will face sanctions. Authoritarian leaders emphasise the need for 'best' performance and express displeasure with their subordinates if this is not achieved [67]. It has been argued [68] that an authoritarian leadership style can be effective in contexts where hard or unpopular decisions need to be made and where a high degree of behavioural compliance is required. Prior research outside of policing has provided support for these arguments and also confirmed that authoritarian leadership can act to benefit group performance in harsh economic conditions [69] and is associated with behavioural compliance [70]. However, prior academic research has also consistently shown that authoritarian leadership is associated with negative outcomes for employee work attitudes, performance and well-being [7] [70].

Supportive leadership theory stresses the importance of the leader's competence and their conscious, genuine concern for serving and helping communities and members of the public. Supportive leaders behave ethically. They are open, honest and treat their people fairly. Through their positive behaviour, they act as role models, build trust, and provide feedback and resources to their people [71]. Supportive leaders care about their people, and their well-being, and focus on the empowerment and development of their people to their fullest potential through an understanding of each person's different characteristics, strengths and interests.

Encouragingly, we found that on average in the total sample, police officers and staff experience a high level of *supportive leadership* behaviour from their immediate supervisor. The average level of *authoritarian leadership* behaviour experienced by individuals from each of these two groups was reported to be low. Our findings suggest that while some supervisors still adopt an authoritarian leadership style, the prevalent style of leadership in policing is moving to a supportive style of leadership behaviour. These results build upon the findings of Porter and colleagues [72] who, from analysis of interviews conducted with police officers and staff in five police forces in England and Wales, concluded that a large majority of interviewees felt there had been a positive shift in the style of police leadership in recent years.

5.1. Leadership Behaviour, Individual Values, Attitudes, Behaviours and Well-being

Our research findings indicate that supportive leadership is associated with higher levels of respect for the supervisor and increased belief in their effectiveness, while authoritarian leadership behaviour is negatively associated with leadership effectiveness. These results suggest that in policing, consistent with research in other contexts [6], supportive leaders are more respected and seen as more effective by the people who work for them than authoritarian leaders [7].

We found that supervisory supportive leadership behaviour has a positive impact on police officer and staff values and ethical behaviour [73] [74]. Supportive leadership was also found to be associated with lower levels of moral disengagement⁵, higher levels of internal motivation to overcome bias and prejudice and hence more positive diversity attitudes [75] [76] [77]. In contrast, authoritarian leadership was found to be associated with higher levels of moral disengagement, lower levels of internal motivation and higher levels of external motivation to overcome bias and prejudice, and less positive diversity attitudes [78].

Feeling trusted can be thought of as a ‘*vote of confidence*’ by a supervisor in their people which enhances an individual’s confidence in their own abilities and their feelings of being valued. Felt trust acts to increase an individual’s motivation to complete difficult tasks [79]. Our findings indicate that supportive leadership is positively associated with feelings of being trusted for both police officers and staff, while authoritarian leadership is negatively associated with felt trust. The results of our analyses also supported a positive relationship between supportive leadership and individuals’ enthusiasm and engagement in their work and their levels of discretionary effort [79]. Moreover, at higher levels of supportive leadership, police officers and staff reported, on average, lower levels of fear of making mistakes, greater levels of feeling responsible for making improvements and changes to their work processes, and were more prepared to engage in innovation.

Authoritarian leadership was found to be negatively associated with all of these factors. When authoritarian leadership is high, police officers and staff feel less trusted, experience reduced meaning in their work, feel greater levels of fear of making mistakes, experience lower levels of responsibility for improvement behaviour, and are less prepared to engage in discretionary effort and extra-mile behaviour⁶. Furthermore, supportive leadership was found to be positively related to individual well-being, while authoritarian leadership was found to have detrimental effects (see section 7.5, below).

In summary, a supportive leadership style is associated with positive outcomes, while an authoritarian leadership style is associated with detrimental outcomes. These findings provide robust empirical evidence to support the College of Policing’s (2015) [5] assertion of the need for policing to move from a command style of leadership to a more positive style for the achievement of future success.

Leaders can often be put in situations where they face conflicts between their duties, personal interest and the common good [80]. Given the difficult operating environment policing currently

⁵ Moral disengagement occurs when an individual’s ability to self-regulate fails, resulting in them being able to behave unethically while not experience feelings of distress or concern [130]. It occurs through a process where the individual reframes their personal view of their action to be able to justify it to themselves. For example, they may attribute responsibility for the unethical act to others (e.g. I am just following orders, they deserve to be treated that way) or they may diminish the severity of the unethical act (e.g. I am just borrowing it) [131]. Consideration of moral disengagement theory aids in the understanding of how individuals are able to engage in unethical acts, misconduct, organisational wrongdoing and corruption [132].

⁶ i.e. the amount of time and effort that individuals will put in above what is contracted in their job description and normal duties.

faces, police leaders will at times have to make difficult decisions quickly and decisively. This will act to make the adoption of a supportive leadership style at all levels of the organisation more difficult. Nevertheless, while an authoritarian leadership style may still be appropriate in difficult situations where unpopular decisions have to be made, or in emergency situations where task complexity is low and time scales are limited, our research findings indicate that an increase of supervisors' levels of supportive leadership knowledge, ability and skill would result in improved police officer and staff well-being, discretionary effort and preparedness to engage in improvement activity.

6. Work Engagement, Discretionary Effort and Improvement Behaviour

6.1. Work Engagement

When people are engaged in their work, they are willing to invest their emotional, cognitive and physical energies into their work and job roles [81]. For them to do this they need to feel that their work has meaning, that they are supported, and that they have the necessary resources and skills.

As previously discussed, the findings from this research indicate that police officers and staff have high average levels of motivation to serve the public, see their work as meaningful, want to protect vulnerable people and make a positive difference to society. Police officers and staff were also found to have high and very high average levels of confidence in their job skills, respectively. As can be expected from these findings, average levels of work engagement were found to be high for police officers and very high for police staff.

6.2. Extra-Mile Behaviour and Discretionary Effort

It has been argued in the wider organisational literature that well-functioning organisations not only need people who are reliable in the way they carry out their specific roles and job requirements, but who also engage in innovative and spontaneous activity that goes beyond their role requirements. Extra-mile behaviour, or discretionary effort, is based on personal initiative and involves individuals making a conscious decision to engage with their work and job activities beyond their formal contractual obligations [82].

We found in this research that average levels of discretionary effort to serve the public are high for police officers. Police officer discretionary effort towards their force was, however, only moderately high. One explanation for this difference is the impact of police officers' perceptions of the relatively low levels of fair treatment and support their force provides them, which reduces their sense of pride in the force and their willingness to reciprocate. Police staff reported a high average level of discretionary effort directed towards their force.

6.3. Improvement Behaviour

In the academic literature [83] it has been argued that while discretionary effort from employees is important for service delivery, and is important to meet short-term demands, it is not sufficient for organisational success in the longer term. Constructive change through employees challenging the present state of operations and engaging in improvement behaviour is essential for future organisational performance [83]. Employees need to feel a personal sense of responsibility to bring about improvements and changes in the workplace, to correct problems, and to deal with issues. When felt responsibility for change activity is higher, individuals will more frequently work to make improvements with respect to how work is executed within the contexts of their jobs and work units in

order to increase effectiveness and find solutions to organisational problems [83] [84]. Prior research in a non-policing context has shown that availability of resources for improvement activity is a key motivational factor of innovation and improvement behaviour [85]. Resources may include, for example, small amounts of funding, periods of time, adequate personnel and suitable equipment [84].

Our research results confirmed that access to resources was an antecedent of felt responsibility for making improvements, engagement in improvement activity, and innovation for both police officers and staff. While police staff reported moderate levels of resource access for improvements, average scores for police officers were moderately low. Police officers and staff both reported, on average, feeling moderately high levels of personal responsibility for improvements and a high average level of preparedness to voice suggestions for improvements. The average level of engagement in improvement behaviour was found to be moderately high for police officers and high for police staff.

When individuals make an error or mistake, their attitudes and motivations are particularly adversely affected when they perceive potential negative consequences from their failure becoming known to others [54]. However, it is often not possible to achieve change and improvement without making mistakes [55]. As discussed in section 4.5, it has been argued in the academic literature that an organisation's capacity to learn from experience and failure is essential for long-term success [51]. Our findings from research in seven forces support that when individuals perceive a more positive organisational learning culture this is associated with a reduced fear of making mistakes, which in turn is associated with their engagement in proactive improvement behaviour [11].

In summary, perceptions of procedural fairness and organisational support were found to be positively related, both directly and indirectly through organisational pride, to individuals' levels of engagement in their work and to their levels of discretionary effort and improvement activity. Moreover, moving from a '*blame*' culture to one of '*learning from mistakes*' could have a positive impact on forces' ability to learn from experience through police officers and staff feeling able to be more open about failure, and the force using prevention of future failure as a key driver for improvements and changes to working methods, policies and processes. As previously discussed, supportive leadership behaviour from individuals' line managers is associated with higher levels of discretionary effort and improvement behaviour, while authoritarian leadership behaviour discourages positive behaviours from the people in their team (see section 5.1 above). Moreover, if resources (such as small funding, time, etc.) are made available to police personnel this will act to increase their level of felt responsibility for constructive change and they will have higher levels of engagement in innovation and improvement activity.

7. Well-being of Police Officers and Staff

Behaviour that demonstrates consideration and concern of the needs and well-being of others is generally considered to be ethical [86] [87], while a lack of interest in other people's needs is considered to be unethical [87] [88]. The well-being of employees is a fundamental ethical issue which has important consequences for individuals, organisations, co-workers, people who are served, and family members [89]. The HMICFRS Leadership Report [20] stresses the importance of police officer and staff well-being, and the role of police leadership for its achievement. Police officer and staff well-being can be thought of as the overall quality of their experience and ability to function effectively [90]. In this research project we considered a number of variables to investigate the impact of workplace factors on police officer and staff well-being. Each of these is discussed below.

7.1. Job and Life Satisfaction

An individual's job is a major part of their life and their level of job satisfaction is an important indicator of their subjective well-being [91]. An individual's judgement of their life satisfaction is dependent on their assessment and view of their personal circumstances against an internal standard which they set for themselves. Life satisfaction can also be considered as a measure of an individual's subjective well-being [92]. Job satisfaction and life satisfaction were both found, on average, to be moderately high for police officers and high for police staff.

7.2. Emotional Energy

The amount of emotional and mental energy individuals have available to them is central to individuals' physical and mental well-being. Depletion of emotional energy occurs when job demands are high and job resources are limited [12]. Job demands can be thought of as the physical, social, or organisational factors in an individual's job that require them to expend physical or mental effort and result in physiological or psychological costs [93]. Job resources can be thought of as the physical, social, or organisational factors in an individual's job that act to reduce the impact of job demands, allow the individual to achieve valued goals and outcomes, or help them to develop themselves and their skills [93]. The occurrence of low levels of emotional energy is indicative of individuals facing substantial strain and warrants attention [13].

Low levels of emotional energy are characterised by high levels of physical and mental fatigue [94]. When individuals' levels of emotional energy are low, they feel overextended and exhausted, and find it difficult to meet the daily challenges and demands of their job [95]. Low levels of emotional energy have been found to have serious negative consequences for both individuals and organisations [14]. Previous academic research outside of policing has shown low emotional energy to be related to negative mental health outcomes such as anxiety and depression [96], and negative physical health such as increased risk factors for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, exacerbation of the inflammation process and impairment of the immune system [97] [98]. Furthermore, prior research has also shown that people suffering from low emotional energy are more likely to negatively affect their co-workers through personal conflict and disruption of job tasks [95].

An important finding of this research is that the average level of emotional energy for police officers was found to be moderately low. The average level for police staff was found to be at a moderate level. The research findings confirmed that when emotional energy is higher, police officers and staff have higher levels of mental well-being and commitment to their work, have a stronger sense of responsibility for making improvements, and are more prepared to make suggestions and take action to achieve constructive change in their work processes and service delivery for the public.

7.3. Workplace Stressors and Well-being

Prior research in policing has indicated that organisational factors can be perceived by police officers and staff as stressful [99] [100]. Organisational stressors can include characteristics of the organisation and behaviour of its members, or others, which can cause employees to experience stress. Examples may include unfair processes, lack of support, feeling pressurised, having an excessive workload and unnecessary and/or inefficient administrative duties [101], or negative social interactions with both co-workers and the people they serve or interact with in the course of their work [102].

As mentioned previously, our results support that perceptions of fair treatment and organisational support are positively related to police officer and staff well-being. Both factors were found to be positively related to police officer and staff job satisfaction, life satisfaction and emotional energy.

That is, when perceptions of fairness and organisational support were higher, police officers and staff reported higher satisfaction with their job and life, and higher levels of emotional energy, than when individuals perceived low levels of fairness and organisational support. As expected, experiencing incivility in the workplace was negatively related to emotional energy, job satisfaction and life satisfaction.

Academic research outside of policing [103] [104] suggests that some job demands will be viewed as *challenges* and others will be appraised as *hindrances*. *Challenge stressors* reflect individuals' perceptions of work-related demands such as workload, time pressures, and levels of responsibility. While individuals may find them stressful, they will consider them as an opportunity for the achievement of outcomes that are important to them and for personal growth and development. Through this process, challenge stressors are associated with high levels of motivation and experiencing positive emotions. *Hindrance stressors*, on the other hand, refer to work-related demands that individuals view as constraining and hindering their performance and achievement at work. They may include ambiguity in an individual's job role, workplace politics, red tape and inefficient work policies, procedures, and processes which hinder them in their work. Due to individuals believing that even expending high levels of effort is often unlikely to result in overcoming these barriers, hindrance stressors are associated with individuals experiencing low motivation and negative emotions such as anger and frustration.

We found that the average level of challenge stressors police officers perceived in their work was very high. The average level of hindrance stressors police officers reported experiencing was moderate. This suggests that, on average, police officers experience very high levels of responsibility, workload and time pressure, but frequently face barriers that hinder the accomplishment of their work. For police staff the average levels of perceived challenge and hindrance stressors were high and moderate, respectively.

Our research findings confirmed that both challenge and hindrance stressors cause strain and are associated with reduced police officer and staff emotional energy. However, the strength of this negative effect is significantly lower for challenge stressors than for hindrance stressors. Not only do hindrance stressors have a significantly larger negative effect than challenge stressors on emotional energy, but of particular note is the negative relationship between hindrance stressors and work engagement [105]. The finding suggests that when individuals experience higher levels of constraint at work, which are perceived as blocking them from doing their job, their levels of engagement are likely to decline. In contrast, challenge stressors were found to have a positive relationship with work engagement. This suggests that when individuals perceive high levels of responsibility and workload expected of them, although they may find this a strain, they will also view this as an opportunity for the achievement of their valued objectives [105].

While hindrance stressors are at a moderate average level, which could lead to the view of this not being a priority for action, the findings in this research of large effect sizes for the relationships between hindrance stressors and police officer and staff well-being have important practical implications for policing. If the level of barriers that people feel they have in relation to them doing their jobs well were to be reduced, this would be associated with an increase in police officer and staff well-being.

The research findings also suggest that hindrance stressors have a negative impact on individuals' perceptions of fairness and organisational support, which in turn adversely affects their well-being and results in a reduction of their feelings of responsibility for making improvements. Moreover, experiencing hindrance stressors was found to be associated with higher levels of rumination and

worrying in non-work time, which further acts to decrease police officer and staff life well-being through reducing their ability to recover in their non-work time (see section 7.7).

7.4. The Impact of Uncertainty

Uncertainty has been argued to be detrimental to individual wellbeing [24] [106]. Prior research outside of policing has shown that workplace communication plays an active role in the job-stress process [107]. When individuals are not provided with clear information and explanation of workplace factors that will affect them, they are more likely to experience high levels of felt uncertainty [106].

We found that the average levels of felt uncertainty were high for police officers and moderately high for police staff. Our research findings confirmed the negative impact high levels of felt uncertainty have on police officer and staff well-being. This has important implications for policing. If the reasons and issues that are causing policing personnel to feel uncertain can be established, employees are listened to, and effective communication is provided to them on the issues they are concerned about, this would act to reduce unnecessary strain and hence would have a positive impact on their well-being.

7.5. Leadership and Well-being

As previously mentioned (see section 5.1), supportive leadership was found to be positively associated with police officer and staff well-being, while authoritarian leadership was found to have a detrimental impact. When supportive leadership behaviour was higher, emotional energy, job satisfaction and life satisfaction were all found to be higher compared with when supportive leadership behaviour was lower. Authoritarian leadership was found to be negatively associated with these factors. Higher levels of authoritarian leadership were also associated with negative factors for well-being such as experiencing higher levels of hindrance stressors in the workplace. Furthermore, the negative impact of authoritarian leadership was found to spill over into police officer and staff personal lives in that it was found to be positively associated with their reduced ability to switch off after work, with high levels of authoritarian leadership being related to increased rumination and reduced quality home time.

7.6. Mindfulness

Mindfulness refers to a receptive attention to and awareness of what is taking place in the present [108]. Being mindful includes individuals experiencing emotions and being conscious of these emotions, staying focused on what is happening in the present, and engaging in activities and being fully attentive to them. Prior empirical research in other contexts has found that mindfulness is associated with decreased levels of stress [109], reduced negative emotions [110], and increased levels of psychological well-being [111].

Our research findings confirmed that mindfulness was positively related to police officer and staff well-being, and both job satisfaction and life satisfaction. We also found that mindfulness was associated with higher levels of commitment, engagement, and ethical decision making, and lower occurrence of incivility to the public and co-workers. Our findings suggest that training interventions to improve police officer and staff mindfulness could prove useful for their well-being and their service delivery to the public.

7.7. The Importance of Recovery in Non-work Time and of Sleep Quality for Well-being

While organisational stressors and experiencing stressful events affect individuals' well-being, a further critical mechanism is whether individuals can adequately *recover*, psychologically and physically, from the demands of their job [17]. To replenish the emotional energy that individuals expend through the efforts they make to meet the challenges and demands of their work, individuals need to achieve adequate recovery outside of their normal working hours [112].

A lack of recovery can have serious impacts on individuals' health, well-being and performance [113]. Recovery can occur through two complementary processes. Firstly, not engaging in work demands, and avoiding activities that expend the same internal resources as those required in the individual's work, and secondly, through gaining internal resources such as energy and positive emotions [114]. For recovery to occur, an individual needs to psychologically detach or '*switch off*' and not work or think about work-related problems or issues in their personal time [18].

The use of smart devices as a way of engaging in work tasks in non-work time has become increasingly prevalent [115]. Together with high work demands, this has implications for individuals' ability to psychologically detach from their work in their non-work time and recover from the challenge and strains they have experienced in their work.

Of note is that the average levels of psychological detachment were moderately low for police officers and at a moderate level for police staff. Moreover, our findings confirmed that police officer and staff ability to switch off and psychologically detach in non-work time was positively related to their well-being; a higher level of psychological detachment was associated with more positive well-being than lower levels of psychological detachment.

Individuals' ability to switch off outside of work may be affected by thoughts about work-related issues and events. Rumination about work is an emotional response, where individuals find it difficult to escape and unwind from their work and instead dwell on negative thoughts which can overshadow their personal time [116]. Individuals may worry or ruminate about work-related issues such as negative events or difficult issues, which have already occurred or that they are concerned may occur in the future [117].

Although we have only studied this topic in three forces to date, it is noteworthy that, while we found the average level of affective rumination was moderately low for police staff, it is moderately high for police officers. Rumination was found to be positively associated with lower levels of ability to detach from work and decreased well-being. Our findings also showed that experiencing a high frequency of hindrance stressor occurrence reduces police officer and staff life satisfaction through an increase in rumination about work related issues in their non-work time.

Individuals have finite time resources and, although their personal energy levels can be replenished [118], when they are highly motivated by their jobs they may over-engage in their work, which can have negative implications for their personal and family lives [119]. Police officers and staff face high workloads and frequently need to take work home [120] [121]. Moreover, concerns on the impact of '*leaveism*' [122], which describes hidden sickness absence and work undertaken during non-work time, on police officer and staff well-being have been identified [122] [123].

If incompatible demands occur between individuals' work and home roles then conflicts will occur [124]. This is very important for both individuals and organisations, as work-home conflict has been found to relate strongly to decreased employee health, well-being, commitment and performance.

Our findings confirmed that, as expected, average scores for work-home conflict were high for police officers. For police staff the average level was moderately low.

As discussed previously, our research results indicate that high levels of public service motivation are associated with police officers and staff deriving greater meaningfulness from their work, which in turn increases job satisfaction. The findings also indicate that high levels of public service motivation and work meaningfulness can result in individuals investing time and energy into activities that blur the boundaries between their work and personal lives [35]. This suggests that when public service motivation is higher, police officers and staff engage in a higher level of work task-related behaviours conducted in their personal time (such as working extra hours, taking work home, and dealing with work-related issues in non-work time or when they are on leave) than when public service motivation is low.

Due to its occupational nature, policing is a stressful job [15] [16]. Police employees are frequently exposed to highly emotionally demanding situations (e.g. dealing with victims of crime, accidents and other forms of serious harm to members of the public) and have to make quick decisions that can have serious consequences for the safety of members of the public [15]. Furthermore, due to the nature of demand and the need to provide a 24/7 service, many police officers are required to undertake shift working. In research outside of policing, both of these factors have been found to contribute to the risk of developing *sleep problems*, such as reduced sleep and disturbed sleep [125] [126].

While the importance of sleep for restorative daily functioning is well-recognised [19], research on work stress, sleep quality and emotional energy / well-being is surprisingly scarce [127]. Exposure to emotionally stressful situations has been shown to be associated with reduced sleep quality and higher levels of sleep disturbance [19]. Experiencing work stressors not only has a direct negative impact on emotional energy and well-being, but also reduces individuals' ability to recover through negative effects on sleep quality and quantity [128]. Prior research outside of policing has shown that insufficient sleep (less than 6 hours) and poor quality sleep are strong predictors of emotional exhaustion and reduced well-being [127] [128]. Moreover, when reduced sleep quality occurs, sensitivity to emotional and other stressful situations increases, which can exacerbate the impact of stressors on individual emotional energy and well-being [19]. Furthermore, recent studies have shown that physiological activation may continue for several hours after the stimuli has been removed and even during sleep [129], and late night use of smart devices for work tasks interferes with sleep quality [115].

We consider this topic as of very high importance for further investigation in policing. To date we have completed two studies and intend that this topic will be a key focus for our future research in policing. In a first exploratory study, in a single force, we found that as expected, work intensity was associated with lower levels of sleep quality. Sleep quality was lower for police officers than staff, and lower for those who worked shifts than those who did not work shifts. Of importance is that higher sleep quality was found to be positively associated with higher levels of emotional energy and lower levels of absence compared to when sleep quality was low. In a second study, conducted in two forces, sleep quality was again found to be lower for those who worked shifts than those who did not. Police officers were again found, on average, to have lower levels of sleep quality than police staff. Both experiencing high workload and high levels of hindrance stressors were associated with lower sleep quality. Of particular note is that higher sleep quality was found to strongly predict higher emotional energy and lower incivility towards the public, both measured four weeks later in a second survey.

In summary, while high levels of police officer and staff engagement with their work outside of normal work time may be beneficial to organisations and to the communities served, it negatively affects employee work-life balance and has negative implications for their well-being. High levels of investment of time and energy, and prolonged exposure to work demands and cognitive stress-related

processes, such as rumination or anticipation, will act to impede recovery through sustaining individuals' physiological activation. Sustained activation will have negative consequences on individuals' health in the longer-term, if adequate recovery, rest and sleep do not occur. Interventions and policy changes that enhance psychological detachment, recovery and sleep quality in policing could prove to be useful to improve police officer and staff well-being.

8. Closing Comments

When managers are faced with significant operational pressures, the quality of their decision-making can be adversely affected due to having insufficient time to achieve depth of understanding of problems and issues [22] and a tendency to adopt a focus on short-term solutions [21]. These factors can result in managers proposing solutions and implementing redesigned work practices that are misguided and have negative consequences for employee well-being in the longer-term. Ensuring the well-being of employees is a fundamental ethical issue [86] [87] [89]. It not only has important consequences for individuals, but for organisations, co-workers, the people they serve and their own family members. The HMICFRS Leadership report [20] stresses the importance of police leadership for police officer and staff well-being. The evidence from this research supports that placing police officer and staff well-being at the heart of organisational policy-making and improvement activities presents an opportunity to improve outcomes for both the public and policing.

Moreover, academics [23] have argued that actively seeking feedback and listening to employee views and opinions is a key enabler of organisational success for the introduction of effective policies and practices for improvement of employee well-being. Prior research in 1,000 private sector organisations showed that organisations that regularly carry out staff attitude surveys are characterised by higher retention of employees, as well as higher productivity and performance [25]. However, it should be recognised that if employees do not feel that their views are taken seriously they may react with frustration, cynicism and a lack of preparedness to engage in discretionary effort and improvement behaviour [26]. Hence, we note that staff attitude surveys and other forms of consultation can be an effective tool for the realisation of improved employee well-being and force performance, but careful consideration of the results and appropriate action needs to be taken for them to be useful rather than unhelpful.

The purpose of our writing this summary report of our research in this period in policing was to provide explanation and discussion of both the evidence of the levels of the constructs considered, how workplace factors influence police officers and staff well-being, attitudes, motivation and behaviour, and the underpinning theory.

Our hope is that our research, and this report, will help to increase awareness, knowledge and depth of understanding of the current condition and well-being of policing and that through identification of key issues and opportunities for improvement it will contribute to the quality of policy changes and police leaders' decision-making.

9. References

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