

Risk and Resiliency Among Diverse PSP

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How does studying risk and resilience support Public Safety Personnel (PSP)?

PSP are necessarily at higher risk for experiencing mental health challenges because of their work, but risk factors and individual resilience may influence the development of mental health challenges.

If we can find ways to reduce risk factors and increase individual resilience, we may be able to help reduce some of the occupational risks of mental health challenges for PSP.

Background

PSP are at a higher risk of developing mental health challenges compared to members of the general population, due in large part to the occupational hazard of frequent exposure to potentially psychologically traumatic events and other occupational stressors, which are associated with more frequent and severe mental health challenges.

Emotional Resilience Skills Training (ERST) is a 13-week peer-to-peer mental health training program, adapted with and delivered by PSP for PSP, and all based on one of the most evidence-based treatments in the world: the Unified Protocol for the Transdiagnostic Treatment of Emotional Disorders.

The current study

The current research focuses on assessing how effective ERST is for reducing risk factors and increasing individual resilience among PSP from four sectors: firefighters, municipal police, paramedics, and public safety communicators. The data were collected using a self-report survey administered to the same participants at each of three time points over the course of 18 months (i.e., before ERST, after ERST, 1-year after ERST).

Results

Participants reported lower scores on risk factors, and higher individual resilience after ERST. All improvements at post-ERST were still there 1-year after training.



Individual Resilience

Associated with better mental health

Risk Factors

Associated with mental health challenges

Pre- vs Post-ERST Training

- ↑ Individual resilience
- ↓ Anxiety sensitivity
- ↓ Fear of negative evaluation
- ↓ Illness and injury sensitivity
- ↓ Intolerance of uncertainty
- ↓ State anger

Conclusions

The study results indicate ERST is effective at reducing risk factors and increasing individual resilience among PSP from different sectors, which may help reduce their risk for developing mental health challenges. The improvements occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, during which many PSP experienced worsening mental health, underscoring the potential benefits of ERST. Additional research will help to clarify specific benefits of ERST and to clarify how broadly effective ERST can be for different PSP.

We would like to thank all participating PSP for their involvement in the PSP-PTSI Study. The PSP-PTSI Study is made possible by a large and diverse team. We thank each team member, past and present, for their contributions to the study. A list of participating PSP agencies, PSP knowledge users, PSP trainers, and additional information is available in English at www.saskptsistudy.ca.

*The original wording of the study was changed and condensed for the current research infographic.



Read the full study here:

Khoury, J. M. B., Teckchandani, T. A., Nisbet, J., Stewart, S. H., Asmundson, G. J. G., Afifi, T. O., McCarron, M. C. E., Krätzig, G. P., Sauer-Zavala, S., Neary, J. P., MacPhee, R. S., Brunet, A., Keane, T. M., & Carleton, R. N. (2024). Putative risk and resiliency factors after an augmented training program for preventing posttraumatic stress injuries among public safety personnel from diverse sectors. *Cognitive Behaviour Therapy*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16506073.2024.2420636>



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