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Examining police officers' perceptions of stress: the role of Person-environment fit

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Examining police officers' perceptions of stress: the role of Person−environment fit

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between officer perceptions of fit in their organization and stress (organizational and operational), overall job satisfaction and turnover contemplation (within the last 6 months).

Design/methodology/approach – The authors used cross-sectional survey data from a sample of 832 officers from two Midwest police departments to examine the relationships between fit, stress and work-related attitudes.

Findings – Perceived stress and organizational fit were strong predictors of overall job satisfaction and turnover contemplation; organizational fit accounted for the most variation in stress, satisfaction and turnover contemplation. Organizational stress partially mediated the relationship between organizational fit and job satisfaction and organizational fit and turnover contemplation.

Research Implications – More research is needed to identify predictors of organizational fit perceptions among police officers.

Practical implications – Findings indicate that agencies should pay close attention to the organizational culture and structure when trying to address issues of officer well-being and retention. Further, the person-environment framework can be a useful tool in examining police occupational outcomes.

Originality/value – The authors findings contribute to research on officer stress by exploring perceptions of organizational fit as a predictor of stress and unpacking *how* officer stress matters to important work outcomes, including job satisfaction and thoughts of turnover, by considering stress as a mediator between organizational fit and these work outcomes.

Keywords: Turnover intention, Job satisfaction, Person□environment fit, Police stress

Introduction

Police have a complex job involving challenges across diverse settings (Brown et al., 1996; Violanti and Aron, 1994). On the street, officers encounter violent situations in which their safety is threatened; they must navigate administrative demands at the

station, like training and paperwork. Police also work directly with the public, a challenge influenced by social and political contexts. In the United States, for example, police departments are feeling the effects of several negative high-profile incidents (e.g. urder of George Floyd), including widespread protests, waning community trust and growing calls for accountability. Police around the world were also essential workers during the COVID-19 global pandemic, forced to continue working while adapting to new complications like navigating spread (Stogner, 2020) [1]. Although the current challenges differ from those of the past, the complexity of demands faced by police is persistent, making it a high-stress occupation, physically and psychologically (Purba and Demou, 2019; Webster, 2014).

Stress comes in a variety of forms, with some even considered adaptive or performance-enhancing (Lockey et al., 2021). When not controlled, however, some stressors experienced by police can be linked to negative consequences ranging from job dissatisfaction to mental health problems (e.g. Purba and Demou, 2019). Although previous research has identified several police stressors, they are commonly grouped into organizational and operational stressors (Evans and Coman, 1993; Shane, 2010). Operational stressors (e.g. danger, unpredictability and long hours) can be problematic but are also expected (Shane, 2010; Violanti and Aron, 1994; Violanti et al., 2017). Organizational stressors related to the administrative structure or social strains are often seen as required but unnecessary and, thus, perceived as more problematic by officers (Davey et al., 2001; Galanis et al., 2019; Shane, 2010; Violanti et al., 2017). Although a large body of research on police stress exists, we still lack a deep theoretical understanding of the precursors and consequences of stress, complicated by rare consideration of operational and organizational stressors in the same study and mixed findings across studies (McCreary et al., 2017; Purba and Demou, 2019; Webster, 2014).

Because stress involves psychological or physiological reactions to demands in the environment (Parker and DeCotiis, 1983), it makes sense to consider the role of the environment. In particular, attention should be paid to the role of the organizational environment in policing that is characterized by unique cultural values. Policing involves an organizational culture focused on themes of loyalty, masculinity, the crime fighter image, an "us versus them" mentality, and resistance to procedural guidelines (Terrill et al., 2003). Although police culture involves both widely shared values and variation among workgroups, gender, and rank (Ingram et al., 2013; Reuss-Ianni and Ianni, 1983; Sherman, 1973), some universal values are pervasive (see Sierra-Arévalo, 2019). Further, shared cultural values may help officers cope with their work (Paoline, 2003). However, individuals who do not ascribe to some organizational values may not reap these benefits and may experience negative consequences such as heightened stress or job dissatisfaction.

In the current study, we adopt the Person-environment (P-E) fit framework to examine stress and work-related attitudes because it is uniquely positioned to consider

the individual as they relate to their environment. Originating from organizational psychology, the premise is that the congruence between an individual and their organizational environment may influence outcomes like stress, job satisfaction and turnover (Edwards and Shipp, 2007; Edwards et al., 1998; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Recent work suggests that the P-E fit framework can help build on our understanding of officers in the policing organization (Ingram, 2013; Ingram and Lee, 2015; White et al., 2020, 2021). Adding to this limited research, we use the person-environment fit framework to explore officers' perceptions of stress, job satisfaction and turnover contemplation. Examining perceived organizational fit as a predictor of stress expands our understanding of the nature of stress in policing. Additionally, through consideration of turnover contemplation and job satisfaction, we contribute to the larger conversation about police retention.

Stress in policing

The dangerousness of police work, including the potential for violence, is thought of as especially stressful and linked to poor mental health outcomes (Chopko, 2010). However, violence is uncommon in policing (Piquero et al., 2013). Officers are more likely to consistently face organizational stressors like inadequate supervisor support and lack of cooperation with coworkers (Adams and Buck, 2010; Crank et al., 1995; Morash et al., 2006). These stressors are more strongly associated with stress than operational aspects since they represent unavoidable daily routines (Davey et al., 2001; Gershon et al., 2009; Shane, 2010; Violanti et al., 2017). Specific organizational stressors associated with well-being include psychosocial elements like lack of support, harassment, bias and lack of opportunity (Burke, 1994; Crank et al., 1995; He et al., 2005; Levenson and Dwyer, 2003; Morash et al., 2006).

While stress is common among all officers, variations in experiences of stressors exist based on race, ethnicity and gender, especially when it comes to psychosocial variables like social support. Morash and et al. (2006), for example, found that not having an influence over the work and experiencing bias because of race, ethnicity and gender were some of the most important predictors of officer stress. Female officers reported more issues related to a lack of acceptance and support, having to prove themselves, harassment and more overall stress than males (Backteman-Erlanson et al., 2013; Morash et al., 2006; Shelley et al., 2011; Violanti et al., 2016). Recent findings also suggest experiences of stress differ by race. Non-white officers experience more occupational stress than white officers (Padila, 2020) and different sources of stress like mistreatment by colleagues (Repasky et al., 2020).

Sources of stress must be continually examined if departments want to maintain a healthy workforce and recruit quality candidates. Due to the stressful nature, the prevalence of mental health problems among police is almost double that of the general population (Syed et al., 2020). Consequences of work-related stress can include sleep issues, work-family conflict, alcohol abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and suicidal ideation (Berg et al., 2006; Burke, 1994; Chen et al., 2006; Garbarino et al.,

2019; Violanti et al., 2017). In a review of 67 studies, a top risk for depression, suicidal ideation and PTSD was high occupational stress (Syed et al., 2020). Police stressors can also affect variables like job satisfaction and longevity; research indicates that officers who report higher levels of workplace stress have lower job satisfaction and greater intentions to quit (Allisey et al., 2014; Brown and Campbell, 1994; Kuo, 2015; Lambert et al., 2017).

Person−environment fit

Person-environment fit theory suggests that work-related outcomes are a function of the interaction between individuals and environments (Jansen and Kristof-Brown, 2006) and a key to positive outcomes like job satisfaction, commitment and low turnover intentions (Kristof et al., 2005). Fit is achieved when there is a high degree of similarity between an individual's characteristics and those of their environment (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). The opposite, misfit, occurs when an individual's characteristics do not match those of their environment (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). The person and the environment are not considered separate; P-E fit is about their fit or congruence with each other (Edwards et al., 1998). The P-E fit theory recognizes many facets of the environment like the workgroup, organization or job (Edwards and Shipp, 2007) that contribute to work-related outcomes (Lauver and Kristof-Brown, 2001).

A handful of policing studies have used the P-E fit framework, each highlighting the utility of the fit in predicting occupational outcomes. One of the first studies to apply the framework in policing examined how the fit informed occupational commitment of Australian police applicants and found that job fit and values fit had strong associations with career commitment (Carless, 2005). Research on supervisor fit found role ambiguity was more likely when misfit in role orientation existed between the officer and supervisor (Ingram, 2013); job satisfaction increased when the fit was high (Ingram and Lee, 2015). In another study, higher officer fit was associated with higher self-legitimacy or confidence in authority (White et al., 2020), and organizational fit with managers, public service motivation and self-legitimacy were positively associated with job satisfaction (White et al., 2021).

Stress as a mediator between the fit and work outcomes

Policing has a strong cultural and organizational environment, and officers who struggle to find a fit between their values and that of the organization may experience more stress, less job satisfaction and more likely to consider alternative careers. Although not directly examined in policing, previous research supports the idea that stress mediates the relationship between environmental fit and job satisfaction and turnover. In a recent study of catering employees in China, occupational stress mediated the relationship between job fit and satisfaction (Chen et al., 2016). Other research has broadly linked organizational commitment to job satisfaction (Edwards et al., 1998; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Verqueret al., 2003) and stress to job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Allisey et al., 2014; Johnson, 2012; Matz et al., 2014). Within

policing, stress has been found to mediate the relationship between various working conditions (e.g. work-family conflict) and job satisfaction or turnover intentions (Allisey et al., 2014; Singh and Nayak, 2015). Thus, we explore whether work related stress mediates the relationships between organizational fit and job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

Current study

When departments are scrambling to recruit and retain officers, it is important for researchers to better understand how the unique organizational and cultural contexts of policing may impact stress, job satisfaction and willingness of people to keep working. Informed by the person-environment fit theory, we utilized surveys of 832 sworn police officers to explore the effects of perceived organizational fit on key work-related outcomes including organizational and operational stress, job satisfaction and turnover contemplation. In this exploratory study, we contribute to the understanding of stress by examining the association between operational and organizational stress and work-related attitudes within the same sample. We ask, (RQ1) are organizational or operational stressors more strongly associated with job satisfaction and turnover contemplation? Next, we examine the extent to which a person's values are compatible with their organization and how that relates to stress and related outcomes. (RQ2): Is perceived organizational fit related to stress (operational, organizational) and work-related attitudes (satisfaction, turnover contemplation)? Finally, we examine whether perceptions of stress mediate relationships between perceived organizational fit and work-related attitudes. (RQ3): Does perceived stress account for the relationship between organizational fit and indicators of job satisfaction and turnover?

Method

Sample and setting

Data for this research stems from a larger project focused on the motivations and personality characteristics associated with police entry and on-the-job experiences as related to turnover risk. We surveyed two Midwestern municipal police departments. At the time of data collection in 2018, the larger department (Department 1) had 790 commissioned officers, equal to approximately two officers per 1,000 residents. The smaller department (Department 2) consisted of 341 commissioned officers, equal to 1.2 officers per 1,000 residents. The overall response rate was 79.7% [2]. We collected 506 surveys (of 790) from Department 1 for a response rate of 64%. The response rate for Department 2 was 96%, with 326 of 341 surveys completed. The larger response rate from the smaller department is attributed to distribution via an online training system, which sent multiple automatic reminders.

Of the completed surveys, most officers were male (82%) and employed an average of 14 years. Over half were patrol officers (66%), and three-quarters (76%) had children. Officers from both departments were characteristically similar with a few

exceptions. Two-sample *t-tests* revealed that more officers had children in Department 1 (81%) than Department 2 (69%).

Data collection procedures

Administrative personnel approved participation with different methods of survey delivery. Department 2 requested all surveys be distributed online via the internal training system. Department 1 requested in-person delivery at roll calls for patrol officers and online distribution via their internal email server for the remainder of officers. For the electronically distributed survey, a short message described the purpose and voluntary nature and included an anonymous link to the survey.

We distributed surveys to patrol officers in Department 1 at roll calls. Patrol at this department has three different crews assigned to each shift, with two crews per precinct on a shift on any given day. We visited each of the precincts multiple times across two days, allowing officers from each of three shifts and all three crews to be sampled. We reached at least two crews from each shift (e.g. morning, afternoon/swing and night) from each precinct. We inevitably missed some due to vacation, medical leave, etc.

Measures

Organizational fit. We operationalized organizational fit using a measure that Lauver and Kristof-Brown (2001) adapted from Cable and Judge (1996). Participants were prompted, "Please think about the agency where you work" and then ranked four statements on a five-point agreement scale "My values match or fit the values of this agency," "I am able to maintain my values at this agency," "I fit in well within this agency" and "My agency appreciates me." Answers were measured using a Likert-type scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree ($\alpha = 0.88$). Higher scores indicate higher perceived organizational fit.

Work-related attitudes. Global job satisfaction was indicated by responses to, "Overall, I am satisfied with my job." Turnover contemplation was indicated by responses to, "In the last 6 months, I have thought about quitting my job." Responses for both items were on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Higher scores indicate greater overall satisfaction and stronger turnover contemplation, respectively. Although multiple-item measures are preferred, the survey had multiple objectives, and thus, we had to limit measures to reduce survey fatigue and maximize response rates.

Work stress. Stress was measured using an adapted version of the multi-faced measure created and tested by McCreary and Thompson (2006). The organizational stress scale consisted of five items including (1) dealing with co-workers, (2) feeling like you have to prove yourself in the organization, (3) feeling like co-workers look down on you if you are sick or injured, (4) having leaders overemphasize the negatives and (5) the feeling that different rules apply to different people. Answers were on a seven-point

scale (1 = no stress at all, 4 = moderate stress and 7 = a lot of stress) (α = 0.82). The operational stress scale consisted of the following, (1) upholding an ideal public image, (2) negative comments from the public, (3) traumatic events and (4) negative stories in the media about the police. Answers were on a seven-point scale (1 = no stress at all, 4 = moderate stress and 7 = a lot of stress) (α = 0.80). Higher scores indicate more stress.

Covariates. Control variables included agency, rank, having a child, sex and years employed. Agency was a dummy variable (1 = Department 1), indicating whether respondents belonged to the larger agency. The rank was dummy coded (1 = patrol), indicating whether respondents worked patrol [3]. Sex was a dummy variable (1 = male), indicating whether respondents were male. Years employed was a continuous variable, indicating how long a respondent was employed as an officer. Having a child was a dummy variable (1 5 having a child under 18 years of age). See Table 1 for descriptive statistics.

Analytic strategy

To analyze relationships between perceived fit, organizational stress, operational stress, job satisfaction and turnover contemplation, we conducted ordinary least squares (OLS) regression using Stata 16 (RQ1- RQ2). Then, we conducted an exploratory mediation analysis focusing on organizational stress as a potential mediator (RQ3). This part of the analysis consisted of first using Baron and Kenny's (1986, p. 1176) step-by-step hypothesis [4] tests, followed by Hicks and Tingly's (2011) "Medeff" command.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics by department

	Department 1 (*n* = 506)			Department 2 (*n* = 326)			Combined (*n* = 832)		
	M / %	Sd	*R*	*M / %*	Sd	*R*	*M / %*	Sd	*R*
Male	81.73%	–	0–1	81.62%	–	0–1	81.68%	–	0–1
Years employed	14.03	8.23	1–37	14.16	9.85	1–47	14.08	8.90	1–47
Patrol	63.77%	–	0–1	69.93%	–	0–1	66.09%	–	0–1
Child(ren)	80.64%	–	0–1	68.77%	–	0–1	76.16%	–	0–1
Overall job satisfaction	4.04	0.94	1–5	3.72	1.08	1–5	3.92	1.01	1–5
Turnover intentions	2.16	1.47	1–5	2.72	1.59	1–5	2.37	1.54	1–5
Organizational stress	2.99	1.26	1–7	3.25	1.46	1–7	3.09	1.35	1–7
Operational stress	3.18	1.38	1–7	3.22	1.33	1–7	3.19	1.36	1–7
Organization fit	3.92	0.81	1–5	4.02	0.91	1–5	3.96	0.85	1–5

Note(s): *M*: mean; %: percent; Sd: standard deviation; *R*: range

Results

Are organizational or operational stressors more strongly associated with job satisfaction and turnover contemplation? (RQ1)

We found organizational stress was a stronger predictor of job satisfaction and turnover contemplation [5]. While organizational stress significantly predicted both,

operational stress was not significant in either model (see Table 2). In the first model, higher levels of perceived organizational stress were associated with lower levels of overall job satisfaction (β = -0.44; p < 0.001). In the second model, higher levels of perceived organizational stress were associated with increased reports of turnover contemplation within the last 6 months (β = 0.40; p < 0.001). Patrol officers reported significantly lower levels of job satisfaction (β = -0.16; p < 0.001). Officers in the larger agency, Department 1, reported significantly higher levels of turnover contemplation, but the standardized coefficient suggests that this association was weaker than other covariates (β = 0.13; p < 0.001). As years on the job increased, reported satisfaction decreased (β = -0.17; p < 0.001) and turnover contemplation increased (β = -0.19; p < 0.001). Officers with children reported lower levels of turnover contemplation (β = -0.10; p < 0.05). Overall, the models accounted for 22% of the variance in satisfaction and 23% of the variance in turnover contemplation [6].

Table 2. OLS regression results: Relationship between stress and job-related attitudes

	Job satisfaction ($n = 730$)		Turnover ($n = 730$)	
	b (SE)	β	b (SE)	β
Organizational stress	−0.47 (0.04)***	−0.44	0.63 (0.06)***	0.40
Operational stress	0.02 (0.04)	0.02	−0.06 (0.06)	−0.04
Patrol	−0.35 (0.08)***	−0.16	−0.02 (0.12)	−0.00
Department 1	0.09 (0.07)	0.04	0.41 (0.11)***	0.13
Male	−0.13 (0.10)	−0.04	−0.21 (0.15)	−0.05
Years employed	−0.02 (0.00)***	−0.17	0.03 (0.01)***	0.19
Child(ren)	0.12 (0.09)	0.05	−0.33 (0.13)**	−0.10
Intercept	4.42		2.17	
F	29.40		31.43	
R^2	0.22		0.23	

Note(s): b: Unstandardized regression coefficient. SE: robust standard error. β: standardized regression coefficient. **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Is perceived organizational fit related to stress (operational and organizational) and work-related attitudes (satisfaction and turnover contemplation)? (RQ2)

The predictor variables accounted for approximately 20% of the variance in organizational stress (M1, Table 3). Officers who perceived higher levels of organizational fit (β = -0.39; p < 0.001) reported significantly lower levels of organizational stress. Officers in the larger department reported more organizational stress than those in the smaller department (β = 0.12; p < 0.001), and male officers reported lower levels of organizational stress than female officers (β = -0.17; p < 0.001). Only 4% of the variance was accounted for in the operational stress model (M2). Higher perceptions of organizational fit (β = 0.013; p < 0.01) were associated with lower levels of operational stress. Men reported less operational stress than women (β = -0.08; p < 0.05), and operational stress reports increased with years on the job (β = 0.13; p < 0.01).

Model 3 accounted for approximately 40% of the variance in job satisfaction. Organizational fit was the strongest predictor, such that higher levels of fit were associated with higher levels of overall satisfaction (β = 0.60; p < 0.001). Satisfaction decreased slightly as a function of years on the job (β = -0.02; p < 0.001). Finally, Model 4 accounted for approximately 24% of the variance in turnover contemplation. Again, organizational fit was the strongest predictor indicating higher fit was associated with a lower likelihood of turnover contemplation within the last 6 months (β = -0.38; p < 0.001). The larger department had higher reports of turnover contemplation than the smaller department (β = -0.18; p < 0.001), men were less likely than women to have contemplated quitting (β = -0.10; p < 0.01), and officers with more years on the job had higher turnover contemplation (β = 0.17; p < 0.001). Officers with children reported less turnover contemplation than officers without children (β = -0.08; p < 0.05). Overall, results from regressions indicated that organizational fit was a strong predictor of stress and work-related attitudes as it was significant in all models.

Does stress mediate the relationship between fit perceptions and work satisfaction? (RQ3)

Consistent with Baron and Kenny's (1986) mediation steps, our previous analyses have established that the independent variable (organizational fit) is associated with the mediating variable (organizational stress) and the dependent variables (job satisfaction and turnover intentions) (see Table 3). Further, we have established that the mediator (organizational stress) is significantly associated with the outcomes of job satisfaction and turnover intentions (see Table 2) [7]. Table 4 includes the full mediation models for job satisfaction and turnover intentions. When organizational stress is a mediator, organizational fit continued to significantly predict both job satisfaction (b = 0.62, p < 0.001) and turnover contemplation (b = -0.49, p < 0.001), however the effect was reduced (see Table 3 for comparison). The results indicate that organizational stress partially, not fully, mediated the relationships between the organizational fit and job satisfaction and between the organizational fit and turnover contemplation. Organizational stress accounted for approximately 14% of the total effect of organizational fit on job satisfaction and 26% of the total effect of organizational fit on turnover contemplation.

Discussion

Overall, the findings suggest the organizational context of policing influences perceptions of stress and work-related attitudes. First, organizational stress was a stronger predictor of job satisfaction and turnover contemplation than operational stress. Higher levels of organizational stress were associated with lower levels of job satisfaction and higher levels of turnover intentions; operational stress did not reach statistical significance in either model. These findings align with previous research, suggesting that organizational job aspects may be the most stressful and more closely associated with work outcomes like burnout (Finney et al., 2013; Shane, 2010; Violanti

et al., 2017). Operational stress remains an important factor in policing but may have different consequences for officers.

The importance of organizational context was evident when examining associations between the organizational fit, stress, job satisfaction and turnover contemplation. About 40% of the variance was explained in job satisfaction, suggesting that organizational fit is an important correlation. Officers that felt their values aligned with their organization reported higher job satisfaction and lower organizational stress and turnover contemplation. In other words, fit in the organizational environment, while not the only predictor of work outcomes, was the most important among those considered.

The relationship between organizational fit and job satisfaction and turnover was partially explained by organizational stress. In other words, officers who reported less fit with their organization were more likely to experience high levels of organizational stress, which was associated with decreased job satisfaction and increased turnover intentions. After accounting for the contribution of organizational stress, however, organizational fit maintained a large and unique contribution to job satisfaction and turnover contemplation. Together, these findings indicate that the interaction between an officer and their organizational environment, specifically fit in that environment, is consequential for outcomes like satisfaction and turnover contemplation.

We also controlled for a variety of organizational and officer characteristics, a few of which explained a creditable portion of the variance in outcomes. Having a child under 18 consistently and significantly predicted lower turnover contemplation. Parents with children may have less flexibility and more financial obligations and, thus, are less likely to consider retiring or changing jobs. We found officers in the larger department expressed higher levels of organizational stress and turnover contemplation than officers in the smaller department, which aligns with research indicating that officers in large departments experience more stress from bureaucratic or administrative sources (Brooks and Piquero, 1998). Women experienced more organizational stress than men. This finding may be a result of gendered elements that are more likely to negatively impact women, including gendered policies, uneven training and academy practices, a culture based on masculinity or exposure to incivility and harassment (Prokos and Padavic, 2002; Rief and Clinkinbeard, 2020; Schulze, 2012).

Our findings contribute to research on officer stress by unpacking how stress matters to work outcomes including job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Specifically, by exploring stress as a mediator of organizational fit, this research contributes to understanding the role of stress within policing organizational environments. Further, by considering variables like job satisfaction and turnover intentions, we contribute to the larger conversation about police recruitment, hiring and retention. We consider these outcomes in a new way, through the person-environment fit framework, which considers the value congruence of an individual and their organization.

Table 3. OLS regression results: fit as a predictor of stress and work-related attitudes

	M1: Organizational stress (n = 733)		M2: Operational stress (n = 733)		M3: Job satisfaction (n = 728)		M4: Turnover intentions (n = 728)	
	b (SE)	β	b (SE)	β	b (SE)	β	b (SE)	β
Organizational fit	−0.42 (0.04)***	−0.39	−0.14 (0.04)**	−0.13	0.72 (0.04)***	0.60	−0.66 (0.06)***	−0.38
Patrol	0.06 (0.08)	0.03	0.15 (0.09)	0.07	−0.13 (0.07)	−0.06	−0.16 (0.12)	−0.05
Department 1	0.25 (0.07)***	0.12	0.07 (0.07)	0.04	−0.08 (0.06)	−0.04	0.59 (0.10)***	0.18
Male	−0.43 (0.09)***	−0.17	−0.20 (0.10)*	−0.08	0.01 (0.08)	0.00	−0.39 (0.13)**	−0.10
Years employed	0.00 (0.00)	0.04	0.01 (0.00)***	0.13	−0.02 (0.00)***	−0.13	0.03 (0.01)***	0.17
Child (ren)	0.05 (0.08)	0.02	0.04 (0.09)	0.02	0.10 (0.08)	0.04	−0.31 (0.13)*	−0.08
Intercept	0.05		−0.18		4.16		2.39	
F	29.63		5.34		80.13		36.70	
R^2	0.19		0.04		0.40		0.23	

Note(s): b: Unstandardized regression coefficient. SE: robust standard error. β: standardized regression coefficient. $*p < 0.05$; $**p < 0.01$; $***p < 0.001$

Table 4. Mediating effect of stress on the relationship between organizational fit and work-related attitudes (job satisfaction and turnover intentions

	Job satisfaction (n = 732) b (SE)	β	Turnover intentions (n = 732) b (SE)	β
Organizational fit	0.62 (0.04)***	0.52	−0.49 (0.06)***	−0.29
Organizational stress	−0.24 (0.04)***	−0.22	0.42 (0.06)***	0.27
Patrol	−0.11 (0.07)	−0.05	−0.21 (0.12)	−0.06
Department 1	−0.03 (0.06)	−0.01	0.50 (0.10)***	0.16
Male	−0.11 (0.08)	−0.04	−0.20 (0.14)	−0.05
Years employed	−0.01 (0.00)***	−0.12	0.03 (0.01)***	0.16
Child (ren)	0.11 (0.08)	0.04	−0.32 (0.11)**	−0.09
Intercept	4.22		2.35	
Mediated (%)	14%		26%	
F	73.77		66.34	
R^2	0.44		0.29	

Note(s): b: Unstandardized regression coefficient. SE: robust standard error. **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$

Despite important contributions, there are limitations. The sample is representative of only two departments ranging in size from large to mid-sized with participants averaging 14 years on the job. This is a limitation because officers employed for this length of time may report qualitatively different perceptions of fit, work stressors and work-related attitudes from officers who worked shorter periods. Future research should examine perceptions of fit at all stages of the hiring and career lifecycle. A second limitation was the use of single items for job satisfaction and turnover outcomes. This was a result of space and time considerations and alternative goals in the initial survey development. Future research should replicate the current study using multi-faceted measures of job satisfaction and turnover contemplation to see if the findings hold.

Conclusion

Given recent simultaneous crises in policing, research must continue to unpack stress and outcomes related to retention and turnover. Thus, we examined correlation of officer stress, overall job satisfaction, and turnover contemplation. Organizational fit was the most dominant predictor, suggesting that police agencies should pay close attention to organizational culture and environment when trying to address well-being and work-related attitudes. A work environment that fosters respect and acceptance towards a range of values, attitudes and personalities is important to officer well-being and work-related attitudes.

Research is needed to understand what types of interventions successfully address organizational fit and ultimately impact issues of satisfaction and retention. Possible areas to explore are the role of supervisor relationships and workplace interactions. This is also important if departments are looking to attract and hire officers from diverse backgrounds who may not perceive value fit with the organization even though they possess the skills to perform well. As police organizations experience changing needs and foci, fit may also be shaped in recruitment, hiring, and socialization

processes through utilization of more balanced and transparent approaches focusing on the realities and needs of policing, not just idealized adrenaline-inducing aspects of the job (Clinkinbeard et al., 2020; Police Executive Research Forum, 2019; Swaney et al., 2012).

Notes

1. Data for this study were collected in 2018 before the global health pandemic brought on by Covid-19 and police protests that began summer of 2020.

2. The response rate was calculated using the number of officers employed at each department and the number of completed surveys. We cannot account for officers that were unavailable to receive a survey due to vacation, leave, etc. as these specifics were unknown to the research team.

3. Rank was coded dichotomously because patrol officers represented almost 70% of the sample.

4. Some scholars are critical of their method, but as previous research on police stress has shown, it provides a useful framework for testing mediation (e.g. Bishopp et al., 2020).

5. The variance inflation factors of all independent variables, including organizational stress and operational stress, were below 1.5.

6. Original models also included marital status and race as control variables but there were initially included in the analyses but were dropped for the sake of parsimony. Neither covariate was significantly associated with any of the outcomes in all models.

7. When considered alongside organizational stress in Table 2, operational stress was not a significant predictor of job satisfaction or turnover and so operational stress was not included in the mediation models.

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