

## Public Abstract

First Name:Shiloh

Middle Name:Jordan

Last Name:Varvel

Adviser's First Name:Mary

Adviser's Last Name:Heppner

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

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Title:Gender role conflict, problem-solving appraisal, and the psychological functioning of firefighters

Firefighting is a male-dominated career in which traditional masculine characteristics are valued and the ability to effectively problem-solve is necessary for success and safety. The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of how male role beliefs, via the construct gender role conflict, and appraisal of problem-solving abilities influence the psychological functioning of firefighters. Past research has predominately shown greater gender role conflict to be related to increased psychological distress, while appraisal of one's self as an effective problem-solver has been related to increased psychological functioning. Whereas the majority of firefighter research has focused on trauma, this study evaluated psychological functioning within the context of daily stress and is the first to look at both gender-role conflict and problem-solving appraisal in a sample of firefighters. Participants were ninety-five male firefighters from a municipal fire department in a mid-sized Midwestern city who completed a one-time survey. The results provide several implications for reducing psychological distress in firefighters by targeting problem-solving appraisal and gender role beliefs. More specifically, increasing one's identification as an effective problem-solver is likely to have a direct impact on decreasing psychological distress. In addition, effective problem-solving is also likely to indirectly increase psychological functioning by reducing gender role conflict. The results provide insight into the general psychological functioning of firefighters, while also identifying specific ways of improving functioning in this population. Thus, the findings are useful to clinicians, researchers, and consultants who work with firefighters and others in predominately male high-stress work environments.