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## The Role Of Positive Psychology In Enhancing Resilience And Stress Management Among Investigating Officers And Crime Scene Experts: A Study On Psychological Well-Being In The Context Of Exposure To Graphic Crime Scenes.

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### Abstract

Law enforcement professionals, particularly Investigating Officers (IOs) and Crime Scene Experts (CSEs), face persistent psychological challenges due to repeated exposure to traumatic crime scenes. This descriptive quantitative study examines the emotional and cognitive impact of such exposures and evaluates the perceived need for resilience-building interventions guided by positive psychology. Data were gathered from 30 professionals (15 IOs, 15 CSEs) using a structured 10-item questionnaire investigating trauma exposure frequency, psychological distress, coping methods, and attitudes toward resilience training. Results indicate high levels of emotional distress (83.3%), mental exhaustion (76.7%), and cognitive disturbance (53.3%). Adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies were observed, while 90% endorsed the need for resilience-focused interventions. Findings echo recent international studies highlighting high rates of PTSD and stress among forensic professionals, supporting calls for the institutional adoption of positive psychology approaches to mental health and capacity-building in law enforcement. Limitations include sample size, purposive sampling, and self-report bias. The study underscores the urgency for preventive, strengths-based psychological support in forensic policing.

**Keywords:** positive psychology, resilience, law enforcement, trauma exposure, stress management, Investigating Officers, Crime Scene Experts.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Positive psychology, pioneered by Seligman (1998), shifts the focus of psychology from pathology to flourishing by emphasizing strengths such as resilience, optimism, and emotional intelligence. These constructs are crucial for law enforcement personnel engaged in high-stress roles, especially Investigating Officers (IOs) and Crime Scene Experts (CSEs), who repeatedly face graphic crime scenes involving violence and death. Their work necessitates balancing professional detachment with empathy while sustaining cognitive clarity under persistent psychological pressure.

Research indicates that occupational exposure to trauma among forensic professionals precipitates compassion fatigue, emotional numbness, and an elevated risk for PTSD and depression (Evans & Sharma, 2025). Despite this, law enforcement training has tended to prioritize technical skills, often overlooking proactive mental health care. Positive psychology interventions offer preventive tools to foster resilience and adaptive coping, potentially preserving officer well-being and enhancing ethical and effective policing.

This study explores the psychological outcomes of repeated crime scene exposure and the applicability of positive psychology frameworks in strengthening resilience among IOs and CSEs. It seeks to inform policy and training reforms promoting mental health integration within forensic law enforcement.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

International studies highlight positive psychology's efficacy in mitigating stress in policing. Resilience training improves emotional regulation and job satisfaction (Smith et al., 2023), while mindfulness-based stress reduction enhances cognitive flexibility under pressure (Edwards & Chen, 2023). Programs also elevate emotional intelligence, fostering better community engagement (Randhawa & Singh, 2020).

In India, occupational stress among police has been documented (Shah & Patel, 2024), yet research specific to forensic professionals such as IOs and CSEs remains sparse. These roles involve unique psychological burdens from direct and repeated trauma exposure, frequently resulting in secondary traumatic stress and vicarious trauma symptoms (Dawson et al., 2019). Cultural stigma and scarce mental health infrastructures further hinder proactive care.

Existing stress management efforts are often reactive, insufficiently grounded in evidence-based positive psychology approaches (Adams et al., 2023). Thus, there is a critical need for focused research and preventive psychosocial interventions to support these specialized officers.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- a. **Participants:** Thirty law enforcement professionals were purposively sampled, including 15 Investigating Officers (IOs) and 15 Crime Scene Experts (CSEs), all of whom routinely attend crime scenes as part of their work.

- b. **Instrument:** A structured 10-item questionnaire was used, with five yes/no questions and five single-word response items. The questionnaire assessed frequency of trauma exposure, emotional impact, coping strategies, cognitive effects, empathy/detachment, and openness to resilience training.
- c. **Procedure:** Participants were recruited voluntarily and provided informed consent before data collection. Responses were anonymized and coded for quantitative analysis, focusing on prevalence rates for various psychological outcomes and attitudes toward resilience interventions.
- d. **Data Analysis:** Descriptive statistics were used to analyse prevalence rates, and group comparisons between IOs and CSEs were conducted to assess differences in distress levels and openness to psychological support interventions.

#### 4. RESULTS

- a. **Emotional Impact:** 83.3% of participants reported emotional effects following trauma exposure; 76.7% experienced mental exhaustion.
- b. **Interpersonal Spillover:** 33.3% indicated that trauma impacted their personal relationships.
- c. **Resilience Training:** 90% endorsed positive psychology-based resilience interventions.
- d. **Coping Strategies:** 56.7% relied primarily on maladaptive approaches (suppression, avoidance), while 43.3% used adaptive methods (meditation, peer sharing).
- e. **Cognitive Effects:** 53.3% experienced impairments such as sleep disturbances and lapses in attention.
- f. **Essential Qualities:** Participants equally valued resilience/strength and emotional balance.
- g. **Long-Term Exposure:** 70% associated repeated trauma with worsening fatigue and frustration, while 30% described increased acceptance or strength.
- h. **Role Comparison:** CSEs reported higher distress and greater openness to resilience training compared to IOs.

#### 5. DISCUSSION

The data indicate a high prevalence of psychological distress and functional impairments among forensic professionals, echoing global findings on trauma exposure in police work. Maladaptive coping remains widespread, and mental health stigma within law enforcement culture hinders disclosure and access to care (Soomro, 2018). The overwhelming endorsement of positive psychology-based interventions signifies readiness among officers for structured support that incorporates mindfulness, resilience, and peer support. Differing distress levels between IOs and CSEs likely reflect variations in operational demands and trauma exposure intensity, suggesting a need for role-specific psychosocial interventions.

## 6. LIMITATIONS

This descriptive cross-sectional study limits causal interpretations. Small purposive sample size may affect generalizability. The questionnaire lacks formal psychometric validation. Self-report bias and absence of a control group are additional constraints.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Law enforcement professionals, especially IOs and CSEs, face significant psychological challenges from repeated exposure to traumatic events. Evidence strongly supports the benefit of positive psychology-based resilience interventions, which may reduce distress, improve coping, and safeguard professional effectiveness. Institutional adoption of structured, strengths-based psychological support can enhance officer well-being and integrity in forensic policing. Further large-scale research is needed to validate these findings and guide policy reforms towards comprehensive mental health integration in law enforcement agencies.

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