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Acknowledgment and Psychiatric Symptoms in Police Officers in Switzerland

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The way supervisors acknowledge specific contribution and efforts of their employees has an impact on occupational health and well-being. Acknowledgement is a protective factor when it is sufficiently provided. We carried out a study about occupational health in police officers with special emphasis on acknowledgment and reward.

A questionnaire was sent to 1000 police officers and inspectors working for a cantonal administration in Switzerland. In total, 695 participants answered the questionnaire. We used the TST questionnaire (French version of the Langner's questionnaire on psychiatric symptoms) to identify cases characterized by potential mental health problems. Multiple choice items (5 modalities ranging from "not at all" to "tremendously") were used to measure acknowledgment.

The score for psychiatric symptoms was high (TST score ≥ 9) for 86 police officers and inspectors for whom health might be at risk. Compared with police officers having low or medium scores for psychiatric symptoms (TST score < 9), police officers with high TST scores were more likely to report the lack of support and attention from the supervisors (odds ratio [OR] 3.2, 95% confidence interval [CI] 2.0 to 5.1) and the lack of acknowledgment by the hierarchy (OR 3.0, 95% CI 1.9 to 4.8). They were also more likely to mention that judicial authorities have a low consideration for police officers (OR 2.7, 95% CI 1.7 to 4.3) and that the public in general have a low appreciation of police officers (OR 1.8, 95% CI 1.2 to 2.9).

Preserving mental health in occupations characterized by high emotional demand is challenging. Our results show that acknowledgment and mental health are associated. Further research should address a potential causal relation of acknowledgment on mental health in police officers and inspectors.

New Teachers Under Stress: Social Support Predicts Turnover Intention

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Objectives: Voluntary employee turnover is a problem within all occupations, but is especially critical among teachers. Less than 10% of teachers reach normal retirement age, while new teachers are 2.5 times more likely to leave the profession than those who have been teaching for more than 2 years. Existing theory and empirical evidence suggests that intention to turnover itself is the strongest predictor of leaving. Social support has emerged as a key predictor of turnover intention. The present study examined three routes through which social support may exert its influence on turnover intention, in a sample of new teachers: (a) directly, (b) as a buffer against workload, and (c) indirectly, through job satisfaction.

Methods: Questionnaires on the study variables (i.e. workload, social support, turnover intention) were collected from 71 new teachers. There were 14 men (19.7%) and 57 women (80.3%), and the average teaching experience was 1.82 years (SD = 1.71). We controlled for the possible effects of age, gender and teaching experience in our analyses.

Results: First, we found evidence for a direct relationship between social support and turnover intention. Second, a significant interaction emerged between support and workload. Social support buffered the effects of high workload on turnover intention, such that teachers with higher social support had lower turnover intention in the face of higher workload, compared to teachers with lower support. Third, we examined a mediational hypothesis, and found evidence that social support acts indirectly, through job satisfaction in relation to turnover intention.

Conclusions: These findings suggest that social support can be a valuable resource for new teachers and that it can affect their turnover intention through multiple routes: directly, via increasing job satisfaction, and by ameliorating the negative effects of workload.