Officer Involved Critical Events: Effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Coping Skills

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Abstract

Critical incidents within the law enforcement profession is possibly one of the most overlooked hazards a law enforcement officer can face. Recognizing how critical incidents effect each person differently through common disorders and identifying coping skills associated with the aftermath could be instrumental in saving the careers or possibly the lives of law enforcement officers. A personal experience on my own account of the entire critical incident process sheds light on how real this issue is within the local agencies, but more so, across the entire nation. The repeated oath and shine of the badge comes with a debt of personal sacrifice some will never regain. Agencies from all over the state of Florida were surveyed to help give insight on this topic with real data.

Introduction

"Shots fired". "Officer down", followed by the dreaded knock on the door at 2 a.m. How many officers have encountered being involved or witnessing traumatic events while working? Personally, I have experienced this scenario, where I suffered a traumatic event that would later present a desire to conduct this research process. Law Enforcement has become a less appealing job to the upcoming generation of millennials due to lack of recognition and the media outcry of wrongdoings by officers in general. This presents the question of why the older generations of law enforcement have stayed committed to selfless work, but more so, how they deal with critical events throughout their career.

Law Enforcement officers come in every race, creed and gender. Male and Female officers are vulnerable to the taxing limits of the profession and most likely will encounter some type of traumatic event during their career. Evaluating what a traumatic event is, and to what level of real danger it presents, is obviously debatable. Work related motor vehicle crashes, violent or malicious acts towards officers, suicide, crimes involving death and officer involved shootings have become more frequent during an officer's career. Determining the severity of each one of these situations may vary when evaluated or researched from the medical aspect.

Agencies must now find ways to help officers overcome these traumatic events and return to work. Using internal sources like critical incident teams and advocates is one step, but outside sources such as mental health counselors have become more prevalent with mandatory clearance before returning to full duty. Regardless of proper help and unlimited outlets, the officer must learn to cope with events that cannot be erased. Each officer will experience symptoms, changes and possibly depression from whatever event they determined to be traumatic. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

(PTSD) is recognized by professionals within the medical field, as real and present within society and specifically law enforcement. Proper training techniques and adopted coping skills could result in saving an officer's career or even their life.

Literature Review

Real Life vs Perception:

  Every kid somewhere has played cops and robbers. Usually the game results in an epic ending of the robber being caught by the cop. A triumphant victory for the good of mankind has now been visualized by the kid playing the cop. Having a family member that is respected for being a law enforcement officer can give hopes of following in the same footsteps at a later age. The overall perception of law enforcement has changed over the years and shows signs of being trapped in a vicious cycle of negativity and grief. Officers have become victims to the same crimes of violence and mental anguish, as those they serve and protect. (Malone, 2015)

  Citizens have always been taught to call the "Cops" when danger is present, but often only become enraged with the outcome or limits the law has set forth regarding justice. Retired officers are now joyful if their kids are not following the path they chose when becoming an officer. Needless deaths or involvement with traumatic events are happening more frequent, which means danger has become a new normal way of life for some. (Malone, 2015)

  With these negative aspects comes a real appreciation for officers on an internal level. Preserving life is most commonly associated with the profession, but with unknown costs to officer's well-being. Behavior accountability and enforcing mandated laws is the primary goal of law enforcement officers. The interaction with different people tends to create an unknown work environment each day, which can be viewed as exciting or challenging. (Malone,2015)

  The thin blue line family has become recognized as one of the hottest trends and mysteries of the unknown by civilians. Entering a family of brothers and sisters, who will serve as a replacement for missed family events, possibly become lifelong friends, or might even lose their life for you to keep yours. (Roufa, 2019)

Mental Health

  Most standard law enforcement officers share a distinctive trait known as Alpha personalities. Though this trait provides humans to relate back to ancient times of the Spartans, it can be detrimental to the overall career of certain officers. "Nature versus Nurture" is one prime reason we as humans operate the way we do. An officer will be tasked with answering calls for service over and over, which creates real scientific studies related to PTSD. This silent illness cannot be specifically proven or explained, but on the same token cannot be disproven when claimed. Simple reasoning backed by medical professionals suggests that having "prolonged" stress magnifies the production of natural hormones in the body resulting in brain issues. (Higgins, 2004).

One major medical study of PTSD involving traumatic incidents was performed by Columbia University epidemiologists. A breakdown was done to first determine who had PTSD based on specific criteria. Once the proper people were selected a process was established to complete the research project. By using blood samples, it was determined that once a person is subject to traumatic events signs of epigenetics was more prevalent or obvious. Epigenetics is defined within the medical world as "Something that affects a cell, organ or individual without directly affecting its DNA. An epigenetic change may indirectly influence the expression of the genome." (Shiel,2018). In relation to nature versus nurture this proved that people, who were subject to major events and have PTSD, are more likely to have heightened immune systems and quicker problem-solving methods during events involving stress. To give transparent meaning to the research, it would be fair to say that traumatic events make people more cautious and less empathetic in their responses. (Clark, 2010)

Stress Disorders

Linking stress disorders to law enforcement can be a way to move forward in understanding what is needed to help officers recover the proper way. Stress can be defined in numerous ways depending on who is asked. Generally, law enforcement officers view stressful situations differently than non-law enforcement civilians. Officers must learn how to adapt and become two different people between working and during days of rest. When separating Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), it is fair to say each disorder is alike and different. Both, ASD and PTSD are defined by Dr. William Shiel as follows: ASD is "The anxiety and behavioral disturbances that develop within a month of exposure to extreme trauma. The symptoms of an acute stress disorder usually begin during or shortly following the trauma. Such extreme traumatic events include rape or other severe physical assault, near-death experiences in accidents, witnessing a murder, and combat." (Shiel,2018). PTSD as defined by Dr. Shiel as "A common anxiety disorder that develops after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened. Family members of victims also can develop the disorder. PTSD can occur in people of any age, including children and adolescents. More than twice as many women as men experience PTSD following exposure to trauma." (Shiel,2018) One commonality of both disorders is that stress is the major component or catalyst. Acute Stress Disorder can occur for a time period of 3 days to one month after a traumatic event. Some would argue or suggest that ASD could be a precursor to PTSD. (Tull,2019)

Determining stress can be done through medical evaluations or external sources such as surveys. The survey process is less intrusive, which may result in the ability to give truthful answers without fear of showing weakness. The Law Enforcement Stress Survey highlighted in an issue of Behavior Modification talks about evaluations of psychometric properties in relation to law enforcement. Medical statistics gained during a study in Ohio revealed that approximately 13% of the sample had signs of PTSD after being exposed to traumatic events. To show relation of officers within America and other countries such as Europe, a study was also done of the Dutch Police. "Carlier, Lamberts, and Gersons (1997) reported PTSD in 7% and lower levels of PTSD

symptoms in 34% of a Dutch police sample with trauma exposure." (Carlier, N. E., Lamberts, R. D., & Gersons, B. P. 1997)., as cited in Van Hasselt, 2018)

The background and development of this survey is broken down into five main steps when determining levels of specific stress. Situations or scenarios are first formulated from events within the law enforcement career, and then it is determined how frequent or possible it would be for the scenario to occur. Once this is determined, a specific formula and response is worked out to place some type of grade on the scale of stress each scenario fits. A copy of the exact survey used by the Behavioral Modification Team is attached as Appendix B. (Van Hasselt, et al., 2018)

Behavior Signs and Symptoms

The diagnosis or identification of behavior associated with PTSD can sometimes be difficult or complex to recognize. Looking at subject matters like officer rationalization and constant situational awareness is true signs of behavior traits of law enforcement officers. Repetitive thoughts of how major events played out can be overwhelming to the human mind causing doubt or remorse. As listed in an article written by Richard Lumb, Ph.D., officers are forced to have the "suck it up attitude" or approach within the profession. This burden creates factors to be considered when assessing the damage or trauma of a major event. Some can be medical issues, insomnia, lack of sexual attraction to their spouse and/or constant changes in mood. Some cases of severe PTSD or similar stress disorders have resulted in suicide or self-destroying antics performed by suffering officers. (Lumb, 2016)

A study done by the *Anxiety and Depression Association of America* (ADAA) talks more in depth about the factors associated with PTSD. This study is not law enforcement specific, which supports association of the illness with people not affiliated with actual law enforcement. Specifically, the diagnosis is judged by two or more actions being present: flashbacks of the event and psychological factors of external cues that resemble the event. Though this independent opinion is more civilian based,

Coping Skills within Law Enforcement

Normally everything within law enforcement is based around training. Mental Health within most agencies has become more recognized, but focus is being shifted to dealing with stress by designated training seminars or procedures. For example, the state of New York has implemented training across the entire state in hopes of preventing unnecessary suicide or personal damage of officers. (Lumb, 2016)

Specifically, options like Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and free classes have become readily available through training divisions and Human Resource outlets within agencies. Family members of traumatized or deceased officers are now speaking more publicly, which creates more public awareness that this illness is real. One mother of a slain officer, Karen Howard, speaks as an advocate of the EAP program. "When a traumatic event happens, you're not aware of what you're going through, and you need your Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) people or whoever is around you to show you the way," (States News Service, 2013). Training like this class

in New York somewhat removes the officer from speaking with medical staffs, and focuses on the use of fellow officers. (States News Service, 2013)

A better breakdown of EAP and stress awareness is what officers need after trauma related incidents. A sense of security in using the program will enhance growth with agencies, better yet; provide a trustworthy approach for officers who live with mental anguish from work related experiences. Family interaction is expressed as a valued asset when dealing with mental illness. Family members generally suffer the most from an officer's experience, but often, deal with it due to an emotional connection to the officers. Old sayings like "your family will always love you" stands true, especially in dealing with those traumatized in work related events. Officers carry a certain presence within their profession, which can bleed over to family life when magnified through mood disorder. A disconnect generally will surface due to compiled feelings not understood by someone not associated with law enforcement. Studies indicate that families of officers partaking together in the Employee Assistance Program generally result in successful outcomes like less divorce or marital issues. (Estep & Allen, 2017).
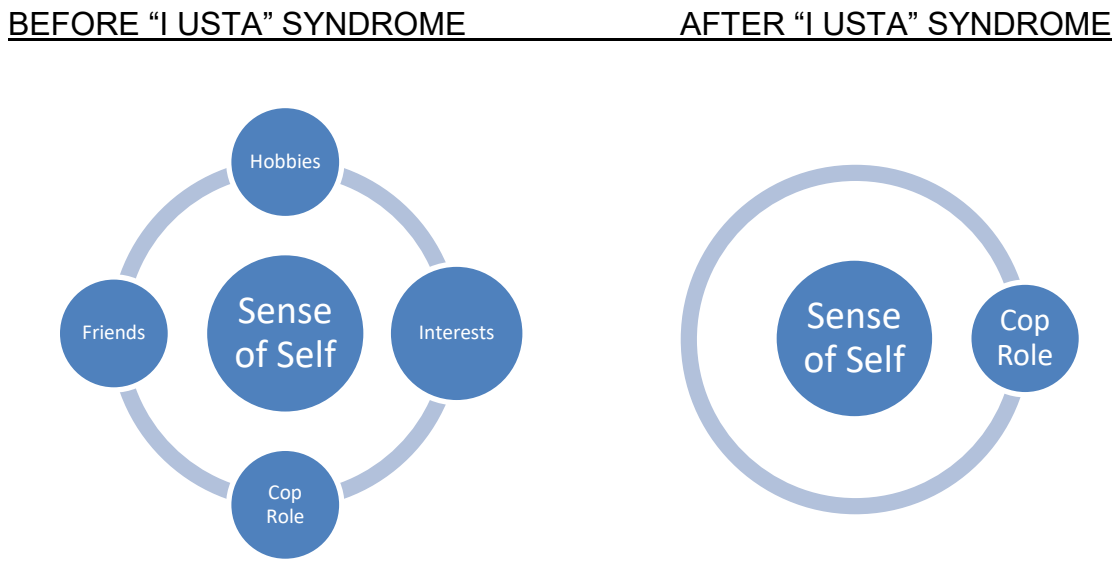
Long-Term Effects

A significant comparison between military and law enforcement has been identified regarding effects of traumatic events. Law Enforcement serves as protectors within the civilian world of society. Military Enforcement is used to protect our nation or homeland from outside threats or acts of violence. The job of being a soldier in the military is indicative with that of a law enforcement officer. Both serve and protect, but on different levels. While serving in whatever capacity of government protection efforts they may, it would be fair to say, that both services result in the effects of trauma from exposure to acts or threats of personal harm. Commonly, prior military members turn to a career in law enforcement, to fill a void of serving others and the militaristic structure. (The Marshall Project, 2017)

Victimization is best applied when describing how traumatic events unfold within the lives of law enforcement officers. The officer may not label themselves as victims, it is fair to say the calls for service and exposure to problems makes them victims as well. Within the book Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement, a title for effects is labeled the "roller coaster". Explanation of this theory is when a normal person becomes a law enforcement officer and has no prior association with trauma, now becomes a different person over a long-term period. Officers begin the profession with clear minds and expectations of great things, but over time, this changes and tainted thoughts become more frequent. (Gilmartin, 2002)

One definitive belief of why things change over time is a syndrome or theory named "I Usta". A definition of this syndrome is described by Kevin M. Gilmartin, Ph.D. when officers begin to experience the roller coaster effect by placing life hobbies or passions aside for work. For instance, if an officer enjoys riding a motorcycle in their offtime, but later in their career never uses the motorcycle or takes it out of a garage, this may be signs of "I Usta". One thing noticed by Gilmartin was that officers tend to replace feelings with possessions. Simple values of life begin to go away and worldly possessions become important. The problem with this type of therapy is the same officer must now work endless hours to afford the possessions, allowing no time for joy

or decompression. Below is an example of a replicated model for the syndrome taken from Gilmartin. (Gilmartin, 2002).

BEFORE "I USTA" SYNDROME   AFTER "I USTA" SYNDROME

By researching and evaluating how trauma effects officers, furthermore finding results or recommendations, a source of methods and results will provide a better understanding of long term illness associated with law enforcement. Personal stories, interviews and compiled data will all give validity to the research and discussion associated with this topic.

Methods

The purpose of this research was to address critical incidents with law enforcement and how officers deal with traumatic events during their career.

Data was gathered through surveys given to officers from the Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office and Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office. These agencies are close in officer count and have encountered publicized traumatic events over the past 5 years. Personal interviews were also used for data collection based on personal experiences, specifically officer involved shootings. Survey data was also obtained from the Miami-Dade Police Department.

Survey questions were formulated as basic questions with minimal input or details needed. To elaborate on aspects like PTSD a form of piping was used as well. Information about participants' age, gender and years of service was used to show the difference in opinions or thoughts about levels of trauma related to law enforcement.

The survey was anonymous in order to get honest and objective answers without fear of being judged by their peers.   A weakness in the data collected is the lack of participation due to possible recognition of internal problems by independent officers.

Strength to counter this was the personal interviews and thoughts to support the overall research.

Results

The survey was sent to 634 law enforcement officers ranging from sheriff's offices located in the panhandle and one police department in south Florida. I received 220 responses, for a response rate of 34.7%. Some survey questions were skipped by the total respondents.

The first two questions identify gender and time served as a law enforcement officer. The departments that participated were Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office, Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office and divisions of the Miami-Dade Police Department (Tactical Unit & Canine Unit).

Gender

- One hundred and eighty-two respondents (82.73%) were identified as males.
- Thirty-eight respondents (17.27%) were identified as females.
- All respondents answered the question.

Time in Service

- Sixty-five respondents (29.82%) answered 0-5 years.
- Twenty respondents (9.17%) answered 6-10 years
- Forty-Five respondents (20.64%) answered 11-15 years
- Thirty-One respondents (14.22%) answered 16-20 years
- Fifty-Seven respondents (26.15%) answered 21-25 years
- Two respondents skipped this question.

The third question asked the respondent if they were a military veteran. One hundred and fifty-four respondents (70.32%) said "no" while sixty-five respondents (29.68%) selected "yes". Only one respondent skipped this question.

The fourth question was to identify the respondents who believed they had been involved in a critical incident while acting as a civilian law enforcement officer. One hundred and forty-six (66.67%) selected "yes", while seventy-three respondents (33.33%) selected "no". One respondent skipped the question.

Question number 5 was to determine what the respondent considered a critical incident. The following options were made available to the respondent using pre-populated selections to include automobile accidents, felonious attacks, an officer involved shootings and other. Respondents that selected "other" selected all that applied. The below listed chart provides the answers given by two hundred and thirteen respondents excluding the seven respondents who chose to skip the question. As indicated in the data, forty-three respondents (20.19%) selected "other" and generally eluded to death and suicide as critical incidents. (See below)

What do you consider a critical incident?

Response	Percentage
Automobile Accident	8.45%
Felonious Attack	20.66%
Officer Involved...	50.70%
Other (please specify)	20.19%
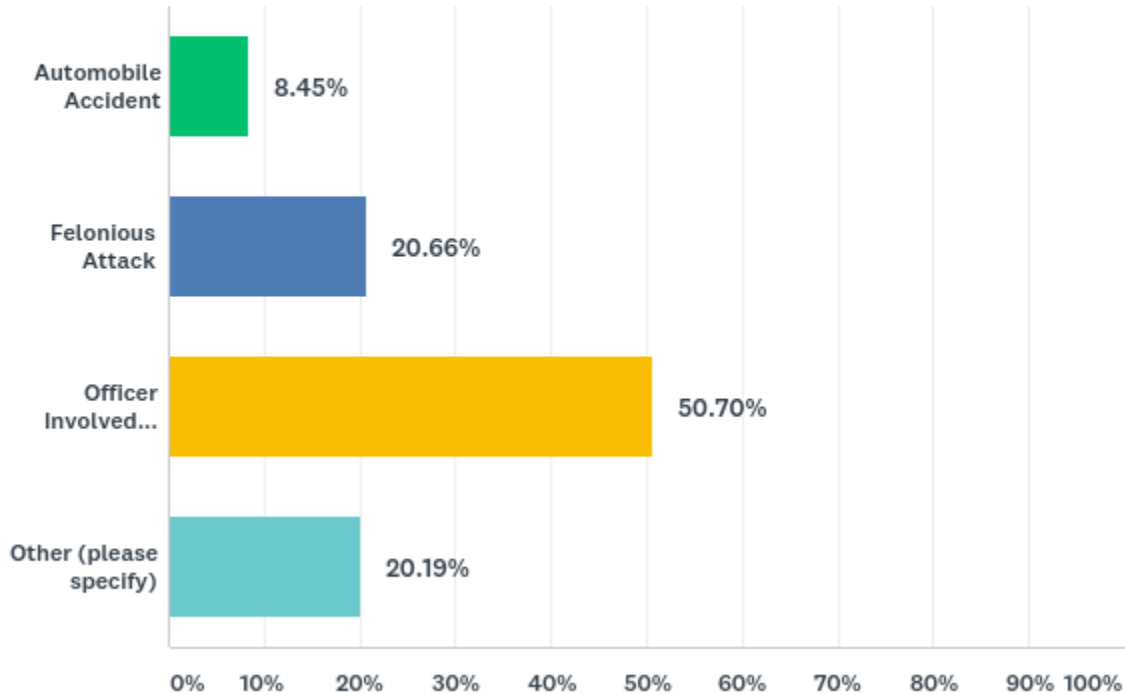
Question 6 asked the respondents if they still feel the effects of the critical incident since returning to work. This question only applied to the respondents who answered "yes" to question four. One hundred and forty-seven respondents (70.33%) selected "no" and sixty-two respondents (29.67%) selected "yes". Eleven respondents chose to skip the question.
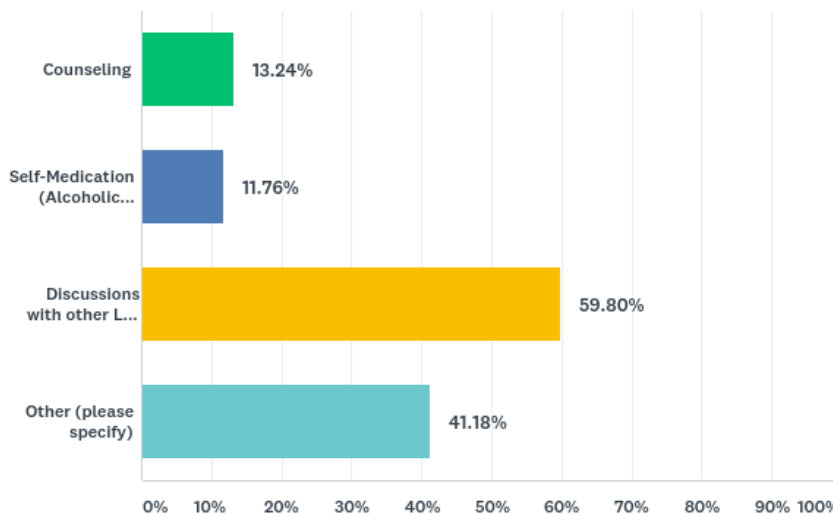
Question 7 asked the respondents if critical incidents from work impact their personal lives. One hundred and fifty-three respondents (71.16%) said yes and sixty-two respondents (28.84%) stated no. Five respondents chose to skip the question.

Question 8 expanded on question 7 by asking the respondent to select one or more pre-populated responses if they answered yes to question seven. The following effects were given as choices for the question: Failed personal relationships, lack of trust, insomnia, and other (respondent was asked to specify). Twenty respondents (11.83%) selected failed personal relationships, thirty-five respondents (20.71%) selected lack of trust, forty-seven respondents (27.81%) selected insomnia, and sixty-seven respondents chose other. A consensus for other was stress, anxiety and all the above. Fifty-one respondents chose to skip the question.

Question 9 asked the respondents what coping techniques they used to deal with the stress of critical incidents. The following pre-populated choices were given to be selected by the respondents: Counseling, self-medication to include alcoholic

beverages, discussions with other law enforcement officers, and other. One hundred and twenty-two respondents (59.80%) selected discussions with other law enforcement officers, eighty-four respondents (41.18%) chose other, which mainly emphasized some type of physical training or family time. Twenty-seven respondents (13.24%) selected counseling and twenty-four respondents (11.76%) selected self-medication. Sixteen respondents chose to skip the question. (See Below)

What coping techniques do you use to deal with the stress of critical incidents?


Question 10 gave the definition of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and asked the respondents if they believed the disorder was real. Two hundred and ten respondents (96.77%) selected "yes" and seven respondents (3.23%) selected "no". Three respondents chose to skip the question.

Question 11 gave the definition of Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) and asked the respondents if they believed the disorder was real. Two hundred and fourteen respondents (97.72%) selected "yes" and five respondents (2.28%) selected "no". One respondent chose to skip the question.

Question 12 asked the respondent if they would choose a different profession based on being able to predict being involved in a critical incident as a law enforcement officer. Two hundred and three respondents (93.55%) selected "no" and fourteen respondents (6.45%) selected "yes". Three respondents chose to skip the question.

Question 13 asked the respondent if they feel more at ease when at work than during their days off. The respondents were given pre-populated choices listed as: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The below listed chart provides data of the selected choices by two-hundred and nineteen of the respondents excluding one respondent that chose to skip the question.

You feel more at ease when at work than during your days off.
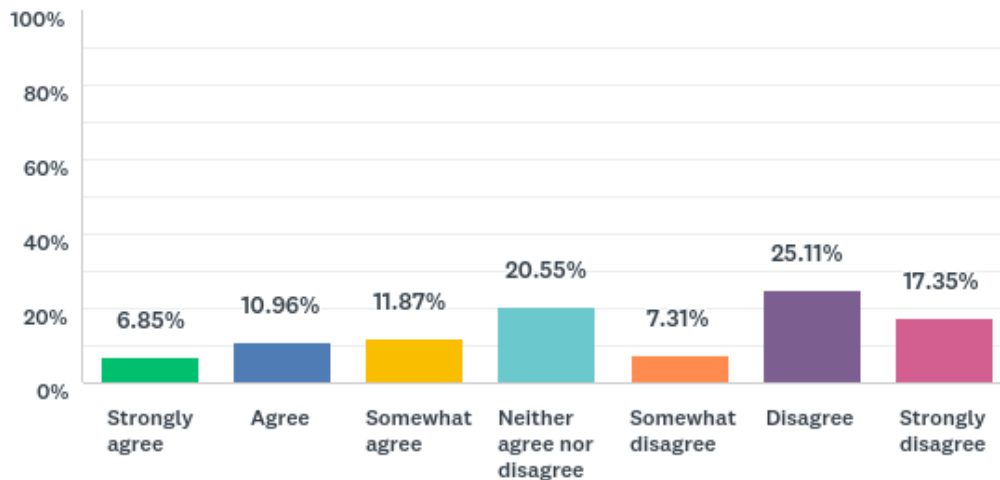
Question 14 asked the respondents if they feel enough assistance in dealing with mental health issues after critical incidents is available. One hundred and twenty-five respondents (57.60%) stated "no" and ninety-two respondents (42.40%) stated "yes". Three respondents chose to skip the question.

The final question of the survey was to ask the respondents if they would consider using the Employee Assistance Program provided by their agency if needed. One hundred and eight-five respondents (84.47%) selected "yes" and thirty-four respondents (15.53%) selected "no". One respondent chose to skip the question.

Discussion

The survey gave consistent data that can later be used in possible training or counseling associated with critical incidents. Medical terminology like PTSD and ASD have been recognized by 97.72% of the respondents as real. It seems that through doing the survey and the structure of questioning, a synopsis of a personal timeline can be generalized through most of the questions. For instance, 66.67% of the respondents claim to have been involved in a critical incident while performing their duties. This gives validity to the fact that most law enforcement officers in some way face challenges never understood by the citizens which they serve.

Another main point supported by the survey is realizing critical incidents do impact everyone associated with the officers. One interesting fact obtained from the data was 59.80% of the respondents claim to cope with stress by having discussions with other law enforcement officers. This could be recognized as hurtful or misleading to the direct family of the effected officers, but as mentioned before it is a culture. Leaning on those who suffer from the same anguish or disparities brings an intimate sense of security, which ultimately begins the healing process. With an uptick in self-medication across the nation, law enforcement use of medication or anti-depressants

stemming from critical incidents may be the root of law enforcement suicides. No data was collected to support this theory, but through personal testament medication is an initial band aid to fix the issues. Though the survey only indicated 11.76% of respondents self-medicated, it could be argued that even within the confidentiality of an anonymous survey, people in general still feel the need to hide habits or weakness.

Regarding mental health assistance for officers, the survey indicated a slight difference in opinions about the resources available to officers who deal with critical incidents. Surprisingly, the difference was only 26.38%. The final question asked in the survey arguably is the most important of them all. Would officers utilize Employee Assistance if needed? 84.47% of the respondents stated they would, which means officers may be recognizing the mental issues associated with critical incidents earlier on within the process. Through personal testament the difference in options or outlets has drastically improved since 2004.

Law enforcement officers live totally different lives than people outside law enforcement. Media is outspoken about the downfall of trust and connection between citizens and law enforcement officers. Every day in some small town to the largest cities an officer is experiencing exposure to the negative emotions and physical acts of critical incidents. Some would venture to say that the profession is a dying breed and turnover rates are at the highest points.

Personal relationships hold the most vulnerability when facing the effects of critical incidents. Though the survey indicated most law enforcement officers felt comfortable when spending time with family, the data revealed a sense of security when in the presence of other law enforcement officers. Law Enforcement officers are always expected to be in control. This can range from answering violent calls for service to dealing with dramatic events within the family dynamics. The disciplinarian or mentor of the family is centered around the ability to be a problem solver as noted earlier in this project. Data would suggest most officers relate officer involved shootings as one of the most recognized critical incidents. This brings a valid question to mind if a separate survey would indicate "officer involved shootings" as the most associated critical event paired with law enforcement. From a personal perspective anything involving a firearm seems more "critical" based on the immediate thought of dying in mere seconds versus working a critical incident involving unknown parties. Human nature and personal selfishness has to be considered when evaluating data driven answers.

Outreach programs like employee assistance is becoming more popular and used within agencies all over the nation. The stigma of having post-traumatic stress disorder or acute stress disorder seems to be less judged, but still not completely understood. Separate surveys or data collection from the mental health side of law enforcement would be helpful in further research projects to find solutions or better coping skills. Mental health is somewhat understood, but not mastered enough to prevent officer suicide, less divorces, or officer retention after critical incidents. Legislation seems to be making more of an effort to identify and account for the listed disorders, but time constraints and limits have still been implemented making the process difficult to fix or assess.

Recommendations

By evaluating some highlights from the survey, it would be fair to say that agencies must become more aware of how critical incidents effect everyone differently. Command staff may tend to generally promote up and lose touch with the rank and file day to day business. Becoming more aware of the issues and finding easy to use programs would be beneficial to not only future liabilities, but in retention of valuable employees. Employee groups or outreach programs provide security in job stability without fear of retribution or disgrace to the badge.

Human Resources are tasked with hiring employees for the initial needs of officers for the agency but must also face the risk management side of critical incidents taking place after the hiring process. A challenging factor is determining if officers can perform their duties safely and to the standards set forth by policies and procedures. The outlying problem is making the appropriate call on what is mental issues and what is defiance by job neglect or not caring.

Leadership positions most likely have the biggest impact on how officers will work through the initial stages of PTSD or ASD. Allowing employees to take part in training centered on Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is a necessity. Often coverage of shifts or lack of freedom to take leave for training starts with the front-line supervisor. Mid-level command positions must be willing to explore uncomfortable conversations with critical incident employees and help. This could be taking a day off with their families, to staying after a shift for hours to discuss personal issues shared by the employee. Being available to the lower level troops is and should be considered a necessity when taking command of law enforcement personnel. Proper training and selection of the right leadership roles need to remain a constant priority moving forward in the succession of battling the aftermath of critical incidents. A sense of trust and acceptance is needed to ensure law enforcement officers feel that they have options and support before making crucial decisions in their personal lives, as well as, their career.

As noted in the discussion most officers yearn to meet the approval of their fellow comrades. Implementation of mentoring programs allows officers to vent or express emotions with other officers at or away from work. Family dynamics can be misconstrued to the human eye and what seems positive and uplifting may be the beginning stages of disaster. Multiple times throughout this project the law enforcement profession is labeled as family or culture. Professionals in the medical field show interest in the understanding critical events leading to disorders, but without real-life input from those involved, the truth may never be discovered.

Lieutenant Roman Jackson began his law enforcement career with the Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office on July 02, 2002. During his time with his agency, Roman has served as a patrol officer, S.W.A.T. officer, field training officer, and canine officer. In 2004, he received the Purple Heart Award being recognized for injuries suffered during a critical incident. In 2014, he promoted to the rank of Sergeant and served as a patrol and canine supervisor. In 2017, Roman was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant where he supervised Canine, Traffic, School Resource and Court Security. He recently transferred back to Patrol Operations as a district commander. Roman completed his associate's degree in 2018, and will complete his bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from Columbia Southern University in 2020.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

1. What is your gender?
   Male   Female

2. How long have you been a law enforcement officer?
   0-5 years
   6-10 years
   11-15 years
   16-20 years
   21-25 years

3. Are you a military veteran?
   Yes   No

4. Have you personally been involved in a critical incident while acting as a civilian law enforcement officer?
   Yes   No

5. What do you consider a critical incident?
   Automobile Accident
   Felonious Attack
   Officer involved shooting
   Other (Please specify)

6. Do you still feel the effects of the critical incident since returning to work?
   Yes   No

7. Do you think critical incidents from work impact your personal life?
   Yes   No

8. If you answered yes on the previous question please select one or more effects.
   Failed personal relationships
   Lack of trust
   Insomnia
   Other (Please specify)

9. What coping techniques do you use to deal with the stress of critical incidents?
   Counseling
   Self-Medication (Alcoholic Beverages)
   Discussions with other law enforcement officers
   Other (Please specify)

10. The definition of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is defined as a mental health condition that is triggered by a terrifying event-either experiencing it or witnessing it. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event. Do you believe this disorder is real?
    Yes   No

11. The definition of Acute Stress Disorder is acute stress that can develop following a person's exposure one or more traumatic events. Symptoms may develop after a person experiences firsthand or witnesses a disturbing event involving a threat of or actual death, serious injury, physical or sexual violation. Symptoms begin or worsen after the trauma occurs and can last from three days to one month. Do you believe this disorder is real?
    Yes   No

12. Would you have chosen a different profession if you could have predicted being involved in a critical incident as a law enforcement officer?
    Yes   No

13. Do you feel more at ease when you are at work than during your days off?
    Strongly agree
    Agree
    Somewhat agree
    Neither agree nor disagree
    Somewhat disagree
    Disagree
    Somewhat disagree
    Strongly disagree

14. Do you agree law enforcement officers are given enough assistance in dealing with mental health issues, after a critical incident?
    Yes   No

15. Would you consider using the Employee Assistance Program provided by your agency if needed?
    Yes   No

Appendix B

Table 1

Law Enforcement Officer Stress Survey (LEOSS) Items:

Item Scenario

1. You are called to a burglary in progress. The assailant may be armed.

2. You are called to respond to a silent alarm from a bank.

3. You are executing an arrest warrant for a violent criminal and are unsure of

his/her location.

4. You are executing an arrest warrant when the suspect barricades himself/herself.

5. You respond to a major motor vehicle accident with multiple injuries and possible

Fatalities.

6. You are engaged in a promotional process.

7. You have been brought up on civil rights violations which are untrue.

8. You have plans with your family, but work demands interfere, and you are unable to
go.

9. You are responsible to notify the parents of a child killed by a hit and run driver.

10. You are called to contain a public rally that is becoming agitated.

11. You are recruited to investigate a fellow officer.

12. You find that your subordinates did not complete the assignment you gave.

13. You must rely on employees that you feel are not trustworthy or incompetent.

14. You are trying to solve a high-profile case while the public pressures for immediate

results.

15. You have spent hours putting data into your computer, only to have it go down

and data is lost.

16. You find that work is taking up more time, leaving you with little left for family and recreation.

17. You are unable to work on a project because your supervisor keeps changing the direction.

18. You are on your way to a high emergency call when the radio has interference.

19. Changing shifts has interfered with your sleep patterns.

20. You frequently argue with your spouse but are unable to resolve anything.

21. You are making progress on a case when pulled off for political reasons.

22. You are on a high pursuit chase in icy conditions.

23. You are investigating an officer's death in which suicide is suspected.

24. You have been injured and your back-up is late responding.

25. You respond to a shooting in progress between two gangs.