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In-house counselling services : to use or not to use? the relationship between demographic variables, perceived organisational support and South African police officers' perceptions.

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ABSTRACT

The nature of police work in South African cities places profound demands on police officers everyday. The impacts of trauma on police officers are well known. However, the reason as to why police officers do not seek help, particularly from in-house counselling (IHC) services within the SAPS has received minimal attention in the literature. The aim of this research, is therefore to examine, and to understand police officers' perceptions of IHC services and the willingness to use them. In particular, to see what the range of perceptions is, to see if this varies by demographic variables and lastly, to see if this is related to perceptions of organisational support. In addition to this, as the context for the use of psychological services is the exposure to traumatic events, the degree of exposure and examining its relevance to the primary aim will also need to be assessed. The current study adopted a non-experimental research design, which was categorised as cross-sectional in design. A non-probability procedure was also utilised. A sample of sixty-five (65) police officers from the Midrand headquarters was obtained. The procedure involved the anonymous completion of several self-report measures which included a biographical blank with open-ended elements regarding the use of IHC services, the Use of IHC Services Checklist, Perceptions of IHC Services, Perceived Organisational Support (POS) Scale, the Impact of Event Scale-Revised (IES-R) and the Exposure to Traumatic Events Scale. Results from the correlation analysis reflected a negative correlation between Trauma Severity, Use of IHC services and POS. However a positive correlation was found between Use of IHC services and age, POS and Perceptions of IHC services as well as Use of IHC services and POS. T-tests also revealed a difference between black and white police officers, as well as male and female police officers with regards to Perceptions of IHC services. They additionally revealed a difference between black and white police officers with regards to Use of IHC services. Analysis of variance suggested that there is a difference between language groups with regards to the Use of IHC services. Additionally, when participants were given the opportunity to express themselves in the open-ended questions, they revealed that issues of confidentiality, cultural differences, SAPS Knowledge, and the advertising of IHC services affect their up-take of IHC services. The study underlines the need for additional research, including longitudinal investigation into the reasons why police officers to do utilise IHC services.