Work-family conflict and job-related wellbeing in UK police officers: the role of recovery strategies

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Policing is one of the most stressful occupations

- High levels of organisational and operational stressors (Brown et al, 1999; Houdmont et al, 2012)
- Comparatively poor physical/psychological health and low job satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2006)
- High risk of burnout, particularly emotional exhaustion and PTSD (Burke, 1993; Hall et al, 2010)
Police and work-family conflict

- Negative impact on family life
  - Job demands, long/unpredictable hours, dangerous/emotionally demanding work, high job involvement (e.g. Burke, 1993; Johnson et al, 2005)

- More insight required into work-family conflict in police and the impact on wellbeing
  - Time/strain based conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985)
  - Behaviour-based conflict – more salient in inter-dependent jobs with more interpersonal contact (Dierdorff & Ellington, 2008)
Recovery experiences during non-working time

- Recovery opportunities related to wellbeing and job performance (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007)

- Recovery experiences predict work-family conflict, strain and life satisfaction (Moreno-Jimenez, 2008)

- Relaxation and socialising particularly important for police (Iswasaki, 2003)

- Psychological detachment = positive outcomes; rumination (affective and problem solving) = negative outcomes (Cropley & Purvis, 2003)
Aims of study:

- To examine relationships between work-family conflict and job satisfaction and job-related mood
- To investigate associations between recovery strategies, work-family conflict and outcomes
- To examine whether recovery strategies mediate the link between work demands and work-family conflict
- To explore the strategies utilised by police officers to recover from work demands
Sample and method

- 547 police officers (61% male) $M$ age=36 ($SD=10$) all working shifts
- Quantitative job demands
- Work-family conflict: strain, time, behaviour-based (Carlson et al, 2000)
- Recovery: affective rumination, problem solving rumination and detachment (Cropley, 2008)
- Job satisfaction (Warr et al, 1990)
- Job-related mood: depression-enthusiasm and anxiety-contentment (Warr et al, 1990)
- Open-ended question about recovery strategies utilised
**Results: 1**

- **Moderate levels of all 3 WFC dimensions** (time-based $M=3.62$ (SD=1.07); strain-based; $M=3.41$ (SD=1.14); behaviour-based $M=3.21$ (SD=.98))

- **Significant positive relationship between job demands and all 3 dimensions of WFC** ($p<.001$)

- **All 3 dimensions of WFC significantly associated with job satisfaction and job-related mood** ($p<.001$)
Results: 2

- *Detachment* = better WF outcomes, more job satisfaction and better job-related mood

- *Problem-solving rumination* = poorer WF outcomes and worse job-related mood (job satisfaction non sig.)

- *Affective rumination* = poorer WF outcomes, less job satisfaction and worse job-related mood

- All recovery strategies had stronger effects on strain-based conflict than other dimensions
Mediation effects of recovery strategies

Job demands → Affective rumination

Job demands → Strain-based WFC

Strain-based WFC → Detachment

Job demands → Problem-solving rumination

Problem-solving rumination → Strain-based WFC

Job demands → Strain-based WFC

Detachment → Strain-based WFC

Affective rumination

Strain-based WFC

Problem-solving rumination

Detachment

Strain-based WFC
Recovery strategies

- A wide range of strategies utilised
  - Spending time with family and friends
  - Sleeping, relaxing and watching TV
  - Engaging in voluntary work
  - Hobbies and interests
  - Exercise – gym, dog walking
  - Drinking alcohol and smoking

- Unpredictable demands interfered with recovery
- Many had little time available to disengage from work activities and concerns
Conclusions:

- Findings highlight the important role played by work-family conflict in the job-related wellbeing of police.
- Evidence that police experience behaviour-based conflict, but strain-based is most damaging.
- Recovery strategies are important mechanisms by which job demands are translated into WFC.
- Diary studies need to examine mechanisms by which job demands impact on recovery strategies which, in turn, impact on non-working life.