THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON
School of Social Sciences

Investigating stress and positive psychological capital within the police force

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APRIL 2017

Submitted in part-fulfilment of the requirements for the BSc Psychology degree as awarded by The University of Northampton.
DECLARATION

I, Nicole Victoria Usher, declare that this dissertation has been composed by myself, and that the work presented herein is my own.

Where any work or material that is not entirely my own has been used, its source is clearly stated and acknowledged.

Word Count: 9,740

Date: 01/05/17

Signature:
Nicole Usher
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Content Page
Abstract

The investigation of this study is to look at the relationship between stress and psychological capital (PsyCap). The sample population uses officers from different regions around the UK, including Thames valley, Leicestershire, and Wales. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen, Kamarck, Mermelstein, 1983) and Psychological Capital Scale (Sapyaprapa, Tuicomepee, & Watakakosol, 2013) were the two questionnaires used to measure stress and PsyCap. A Pearson’s correlation analysis test was run and results showed a significant negative correlation between stress and PsyCap within police officers ($r = -0.683$, $n = 40$, $p = 0.000$). Other variables were investigated and are discussed as well as possible areas for future research.

Introduction

Stress is a worldwide factor that affects all individuals at some point in life. It is a growing concern that needs to be managed in order to live a healthy lifestyle. Although small amounts of stress can be good as it can enable motivation, it is important to maintain the correct amount of stress as too much can lead to many health and psychological problems. This report focuses on the perceived stress levels of police officers around the UK and looks at the correlation between stress and Positive Psychological Capital (PsyCap). PsyCap is defined as ‘the developmental, positive state of individuals, which is created by four components, high self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resiliency’ (Avey, Luthans, & Youssef, 2010). It is important to understand the levels of both stress and psychological capital and the relationship between the two variables in order to help officers to ultimately reduce stress resulting in them reaching their full job potential whilst maintaining a healthy positive lifestyle.

Hypothesis

There will be a negative correlation between stress and PsyCap, meaning those police officers who score high levels of stress will score low on levels of PsyCap.
Stress

Stress has been widely studied in many aspects of psychology and has proved to have effects on performance, mental health and physical health. Understanding stress is very important to enable a healthy positive lifestyle. Stress affects us all at one time or another and can occur in many different aspects of life including everyday events. As well as stress within the home, family social interactions and education, it is often found in the workplace. Stress that occurs in the workplace is very common in all professions but some jobs are more stressful than others and individual differences such as personality traits can affect the amount of stress and how well a person copes with stress (Bickford, 2005). The following diagram shows the rate of stress within different professions including health and human services, education and public admin and defense per 100,000 employees between 2014 and 2016.

Figure 1. A Graph to show prevalence rate for work related stress, anxiety and depression per 100,000 people employed in the last 12 months, averaged over the period 2013/14 – 2015/16 – (Health and Safety e (HSE), 2016)

Further statistics show between 2015 and 2016, 488,000 cases of work related stress were recorded. That as a ratio shows that 1,510 people per 100,000 are likely to experience some kind of work related stress. ("Statistics - Work related stress, (GB)", 2016). Previous research has also shown that those who are more positive and happy and less stressed had better physical and mental health outcome and behaviour (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). Therefore it is important to know peoples levels of PsyCap and Stress in the hope of increasing PsyCap and reducing stress if there is a significant relationship between the two
variables. From the previous research, in figure 1 it is clear that stress is a problem in any organisation, which has produced the hypothesis that there will be a significant relationship between the two as PsyCap can increase happiness and well-being which has been proven to prevent stress.

Different Types of Stress

Stress is sometimes hard to identify as there are many different characteristics, symptoms, durations and treatment approaches. It can be categorised into three main areas; acute stress, episodic acute stress and chronic stress.

Acute Stress

Acute stress is one of the most common types of stress as it develops from demands and pressures from the past present and future (American Psychological Association, 2017). It is small doses of acute stress that can in fact benefit an individual as it can provide a thrill and produce motivation to meet the demands. However, too much of acute stress can cause exhaustion. An example of this would be going skiing down a tough slope, to start with it is exciting but continuing to go down the same slope becomes exhausting and tiring. Additionally, skiing down a very difficult slope tests a person’s motivation and abilities and if they are not careful it could lead to injuries. This is the same with acute stress, too much of it can cause psychological distress, and many other symptoms such as headaches, migraines and sickness. So it is important to find the balance in order to allow stress to work as a motivator rather than becoming a problem. Acute stress can usually be managed and does not occur constantly.

Episodic Acute Stress

Those who can’t cope with the constant demands of day to day events experience higher levels of stress and this is categorised as episodic acute stress. Characteristics of a person suffering from episodic acute stress include showing signs of always being in a rush and constantly being on the go. Their lives can become disordered and can lead to a chaotic lifestyle. It is for this reason that those individuals can become short-tempered, irritable and anxious. These individuals tend to be unable to cope well with working and find the workplace a very stressful environment. This is partly because individuals make
unrealistic or unreasonable demands which produce chaos and stress therefore, stopping them from accomplishing their goals. Those experiencing episodic acute stress are linked to having type ‘A’ personalities (Mae Sincero, 2017). Characteristics of a type ‘A’ personality are commonly found in those who suffer episodic acute stress. Some examples of characteristics for type ‘A’ personality include being overly competitive, showing aggressive behaviour, and are occasionally hostile. Previous research (Friedman, and Rosenman, 1986) has shown that those individuals with type A personalities are more likely to suffer from coronary heart disease, which is a common symptom from suffering with episodic acute stress, than those individuals with type B personalities.

**Chronic stress**

Acute and episodic acute stress, if managed correctly, can be used to motivate an individual as it gives a sense of thrill. But chronic stress is a dangerous level of stress, one which destroys ‘bodies, minds and lives’ (Miller, & Smith, 1994). Chronic stress is developed by individuals unable to cope with demands and feel unable to control emotional pressures within their environment over a prolonged period of time. The demands they are trying to control are on a bigger scale then those found in acute stress. Examples include, dysfunctional families or being in an unhappy marriage, over time these stressors become too much to deal with. Chronic stress arises when a person can no longer see the positives or a way out of a bad situation. They become hopeless and may give up trying after so long. The results of suffering from chronic stress can be life-threatening. There are many negative effects for example making a person become violent and can lead to suicide in some cases, to other health problems such as serious psychological and mental problems as well as heart attacks and cancer. Chronic stress doesn’t just originate from environmental pressures and demands it can also stem from traumatic events in a person’s childhood which continually cause internal pain despite being conscious or unconscious.

It is therefore very important to be able to understand stress and have the knowledge to know what causes stress and what can be done to prevent or reduce stress levels.
Problems with measuring stress

Levels of stress can be hard to measure because stress is a complex system which comes from a combination of different variables from external factors such as work and relationships to internal factors like personality types, feelings and attitudes. Each factor contributes to the levels of stress an individual faces. It is impossible to measure for all factors. It is for this reason that psychologists only focus on one factor of stress at a time. This experiment focuses on perceived stress which is the perception of stress and measures the situations in a person’s life which are seen to be stressful. However, this only allows us to measure external factors and doesn’t consider internal factors. The objective way to define stress is looking at it as a real and observable phenomenon (Natelson, 1984). Whereas the subjective view explains stress as a result of relationship between the individual and the environment causing stress to be an experience. Therefore, it is an interaction between external factors and the ‘appraisal process’ within the individual (Lazarus,& Folkman, 1984). This shows that a person’s view and perception of stress affects the way it can be measured.

Other issues with stress are what apparatus is best to use to collect data. Questionnaires are one of the most commonly used ways to collect data to analyse stress. It has been praised for collecting quantitative scientific data which is why it has been used in this experiment to allow it to provide reliable and scientific data analysis. Questionnaires have many benefits for testing stress as the questions are standardised which means all participants are asked the same questions in the same order. This is very beneficial as it makes the study easy to replicate and enables the study to be checked for reliability. This also allows a second researcher to conduct a study using the same questionnaire which will show if the results are consistent with each other. However, there have been criticisms for using a questionnaire because of the lack of detail as questionnaires only allow for fixed answers usually on a scale. This doesn’t allow for participants to show their true feelings or explanations on the topic. To overcome this problem it is recommended to conduct and interview as well as a questionnaire to get as much information as possible. But this is very time consuming and is much harder to analyse results that produce scientific, statistical results. (McLeod, 2014)
Occupational stress and work performance

There has been a lot of previous research that looks at stress within the work environment. It is now known that stress does have an effect on performance (Ndambakuwa, & Mufunda, 2008). Findings have been able to produce three main components which show the process of job stress (Alsharm, S. 2005, & Alamian, M. 2005). The first one is stimulus and this is a primary stimulant that occurs from feelings of stress from the individual, the environment or the organization. The second process is the response which is the psychological, physical or behavioural reactions that an individual undergoes which is represented through frustration and anxiety (Sur, S. and NG, E. 2014). The final stage is the interaction which is the relationship between the stimulus and the response. It is important to understand the processes in order to overcome them. In occupation the effects of stress can be huge and because 40% of workers are extremely stressed (NIOSH.1999) it is important to study ways which help prevent stress in the working environment. Previous research has provided evidence which has allowed interventions to be introduced for example the prevention model has been adopted and applied which prevents factors that reduce the well-being of the employees in a workplace (Quick, Nelson, & Hurrell, 1997).
Positive Psychological Capital

Positive psychology is relatively new to the world of science. It is defined as a developmental state which is made up of four components; hope, optimism, self-efficacy and resilience (Luthans, 2007). Whereas most theories of psychology focus on the negative symptoms and effects of certain variables or psychological disorders, positive psychology has a different outlook and focuses on the positives drawing on happiness with its overall aim to increase well-being. The fathers of positive psychology (Seligman, M. & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) have produced great scientific results that have dramatically influenced the direction of psychology. There has been a lot of research on psychological capital which suggests improvements on performance and satisfaction (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman 2007) but firstly it is important to understand the true depth and understanding to what is defined as PsyCap. PsyCap is a type of Positive organizational behaviour and positive organizational behaviour is defined by Luthans (2002b, pg. 59) as “the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement”.

From previous research in order to distinguish positive organizational behaviour from other approaches certain criteria has to be met. The first one is it must be grounded in theory and research. The second is that it must have a valid measurement. Next it must be fairly distinctive to organizational behaviour. It must also be state-like, which is why it can be developed and can change rather than it being a fixed trait. Lastly, it has to have a positive impact on work-related performance at an individual level and must include performance and satisfaction (Luthans et al., 2007).

The positive psychological components that meet all of the above criteria include hope, resilience, optimism and self-efficacy which together create PsyCap. (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). PsyCap is a “State-Like” approach which is defined as rather flexible which makes it able to be developed. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1993 pg. 262) PsyCap is about “the state of the components of your inner life. When you add up the components, experiences and capital, it makes up the value.”
Hope, resilience, and optimism are not the only components that are “state-like”. There are other positive components that are also “state-like” such as wisdom and well-being (Luthans et al., 2007). Because PsyCap components are defined as “stake-like”, that means they are more like to develop and change rather than stay constant. Whereas “trait-like” constructs, for example the Big Five personality dimensions (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003) or core self-evaluations (Judge, Erez, Bono & Thoresen, 2003) cannot be developed and are fixed. Much research supports the idea that PsyCap can be open to change and each component of PsyCap is developable. Bandura (1997) demonstrated strategies to increase self-efficacy. Snyder (2000) provides evidence that hope can be developed with his state–hope scale (Snyder et al., 1996). Carver and Scheier (2005) more recently discuss strategies to develop optimism. Seligman (1998) explains “learned optimism” in his well-recognised book and explains evidence that supports learned optimism to be developed. Masten and Reed (2002) focused on resilience-based developmental interventions and Wagnild and Young (1993) have developed it further as a state-like measure.

**Current interventions**

Several studies have shown the advantages of increased PsyCap can have such as Ruderman & Clerkin (2015) who conducted a study and found that Leadership Development Program (LDP) increases PsyCap as it builds efficacy, increases optimism, gives hope and builds resilience. The workplace performance can have critical improvements when PsyCap is considered as an important variable. It is related with lower employee absenteeism, less employee scepticism and plans to quit, higher job satisfaction and commitment (Luthans et al., 2006). Those Employees with higher PSyCap are more likely to be more emotionally stable than those with lower levels (Ruderman & Clerkin, 2015).

Psychological Capital is a psychological state whereas psychological traits such as introversion and extroversion are not. Therefore, with the correct training and knowledge, individuals can work on improving their psychological capital and draw on it when faced with difficult stresses.

Luthans (2005) offered the famous psychological capital intervention (PCI) (Figure 2), which was validated after many empirical studies. The diagram shows
how to develop hope, optimism, and self-efficacy and strengthen resilience. The model offers a good way of thinking for enterprise’s practice of PsyCap development and interventions.

Figure 2. Influencing effects of PCI - (Zhao & Hou, 2009b)
UK Police Force

The key area of research uses participants within the police force. Law enforcement officers distinguish that stress is part of the occupation and working conditions but over the years the statistics show a major increase in the levels of stress which is becoming a concerning national headline within the media.

Over the past few years there has been an overwhelming amount of job losses and cuts within the police force. The total number of police officers in England and Wales fell by almost 17,000 from 2010 to 2015 (DeRigne, Stoddard-Dare, & Quinn, 2016). An officer from the MET quoted “The cuts mean there are less officers to deal with the same amount of crime, which of course leads to increased stress levels for the officers on the ground” (Liu, 2011 pg. 336). Due to an overload of work for the remaining officers, stress levels have also increased and the amount of sick leave being taken is rising significantly. A study conducted by Collins (2003) found that organizational culture and workload as the main stressors in a working environment.

The figures, released under the Freedom of Information Act which provided information using 40 different police regions around the UK, showed that the number of police employees on long-term sick, which is 28 days or more increased from 19,825 in 2010-11 to 22,547 in 2014-15. Job cuts are one of the most newly presented stressors but even without the cuts working in the police force is a very mentally and physically challenging job. The nature of the job requires officers to be deeply involved in the lives of those who have committed crime or have been a victim of crime. Officers work with people who are experiencing high levels of distress and being around this negative state is bound to have an effect on an individual’s emotional state (Hansen, 2014). Although the job can be very rewarding, they spend a considerable amount of time around suffering, pain and sadness. With worrying figures that show number of sick days increasing, it is important to understand the underlying causes of stress and interventions to overcome the problem and improve overall job satisfaction and personal well-being. If there is a significant relationship between stress and psychological capital then this opens many opportunities to create interventions which improve PsyCap resulting in lower stress levels with can be used within the police force to create high performance levels, increased job
satisfaction and overall wellbeing which could be the answer the UK law enforcement is looking for.
Methodology

Research Design

A quantitative approach is used in the study to enable precise scientific objective findings. The study takes a positivists belief (Learning, 2017) that using quantitative data and analysis is best to test hypothesis and allows the creation of new theories.

Participants

Participants in the study include police officers from different regions around the UK, including Themes valley, Leicestershire, and Wales. Participants included 10 female officers and 28 male officers as well as 2 who preferred not to identify their gender. The officers age between 18 and 50+. Participants vary in years of service from under three years to over 25 years as well as being in different ranks from PC’s, sergeants and inspectors. All participants in the study were volunteers and consented to taking part. Participants could be any age, gender, or rank. The only requirement needed was that the participant was a working officer in a police force. Consent from the general inspectors from every region firstly had to consent that his or hers team are allowed to participate if they wish (See appendix 1).
Instruments

Informed consent forms (appendix 2) as well as the information sheet (appendix 3) which informed participants about the procedures and benefits, as well as the risks of participating and an explanation how to obtain the results of the research once completed. It also provided details of counselling services in case needed. Participants were also told that the study was voluntary. Lastly they were given contact information if they had any further questions.

Additional materials included a Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., Mermelstein, R. 1983) (appendix 4) which consists of 10 questions on 5 item liker scale. This questionnaire has been widely used to study perceived stress within psychology and has high reliability and validity.

The second questionnaire is Psychological Capital (Sapyaprapa, S., Tuicomepee, A., & Watakakosol, R. 2013) (Appendix 5) which is a 24 item questionnaire also on a 5 item liker scale. From previous research, this questionnaire is one of the best for testing psychological capital. This questionnaire presented by Luthans (2002b) focuses on the main four scales that determine best to meet the criteria of positive organisational behaviour. Luthan’s (2002b, pg. 59) defines positive organisational behaviour as “the study and application of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement”.

Other psychologists helped in deciding which characteristics best fit the definition depending on their specialism. Hope (Snyder et al., 1996) resilience (Wagnild & Young, 1993) optimism (Scheier & Carver, 1985) and self-efficacy (Parker, 1998).

Participants are asked to fill both questionnaires out honestly to the best of their ability on how each statement relates to them from 1 to 5, 1 being never/strongly disagree and 5 being very often/strongly disagree.

The statistical programme SPSS was used to run statistical tests to analyse the data and produce the results.
Procedure

To gain ethical approval, consent from general inspectors in each region needed to be gained. Communication between the general inspectors was carried out through email. Each general inspector signed a copy of an overall consent form agreeing that officers from that region are allowed to take part in the study if they wished too. These were signed and sent back by email where it was kept on a password protected email and computer. Once consent from the general inspector was gained, then officers were passed on an email with a link to the questionnaires (Appendix 6). All processes were carried out electronically using Google forms. An information sheet explaining the study is presented to the participants on the first screen. If the officers were interested in taking part knowing that it was confidential and voluntary, they are then shown a consent form on the next page. The participant must tick the box to say they agree to the conditions of the study and agree to participate. If they agree then they proceed to the first set of questions which ask for gender, age, years of service and rank (Appendix 7). Participants are told in the consent form that they do not have to answer any question where they feel uncomfortable to do so. They then progress to the first questionnaire which is the perceived stress scale. It is a short questionnaire with only 10 questions. Participants must tick on a scale from ‘never’ to ‘very often’ on how they much they believe the statement agrees with them in the last month. Once this is completed they progress to the Positive Psychological Capital questionnaire. This has 24 questions on Hope, Optimism, Self-efficacy and Resilience. The same procedure applies, only the answers are on a number scale from one to five, one being strongly disagree and five being strongly agree. Once the questionnaires have been completed a debrief form is presented to the participant thanking them for their contribution to the study.
Ethical Procedures

Ethical procedures were closely followed to successfully meet the ethical guidelines produced by the British Psychological Society (2010) also known as BPS. The main purpose of these procedures is to protect participants who wish to take part in the study. Before any data could be collected an ethics application needed to be approved by stating the procedures and protocol that would be taking place to provide protection of participants.

Consent

Consent from inspectors of each police region needed to be granted to allow any police officers of that station to be able to take part in the study if they wish too. Some police inspectors did not wish for them or their team to take part for several reasons such as they didn’t have the time or they were not comfortable in taking part in a study which may reflect badly on that station, for example, if the results showed high stress levels within their officers. Those people whose inspector granted permission to undergo the study were sent a link to a Google form where they were presented an information sheet and a consent form which stated information about the study, the procedures, withdrawal and voluntary participation. No one was allowed to take part without agreeing to consent to the study.

Deception

No deception was used during the study. Participants were told exactly what the study was about and the hopeful outcomes, as well as been told exactly that stress and PsyCap were the two variables being measured.

Withdrawal

Participants were told from the beginning the rules on withdrawing. The information sheet and consent form both stated that participants were allowed to withdraw at any point up until the completion of both questionnaires. The reason for not allowing withdrawal after this point is because it would be impossible to
know which questionnaire was submitted by which participant as all information given was anonymous.

Confidentiality and protection of participants

All information provided by the participants remained confidential and stored securely on a password protected computer under a password protected Google account. Protection of participants was conducted by not asking for any names to provide anonymity and there was no way for me to be able to trace where the questionnaires were being filled out from. Because it was all conducted online there was no reason to gain participant signatures which allowed it to be even more anonymous. Instead, to agree to consent, participants had to tick an ‘agree’ box before being able to fill out the questionnaires.

Scoring

From the data collected by the questionnaires, a score for stress and PsyCap were produced for each individual. The stress score was produced by firstly numbering each scale as 0-4, zero being never and four being very often. Then the perceived stress score was obtained by reversing the responses, e.g. 0=4, 1=3, 2=2, 3=1, 4=0. Then adding up the scores for questions 4, 5, 7 and 8 which are the four positively stated items. A high score represents a high stress score so the higher the score the more stressed the individual is. To obtain the PsyCap score a similar procedure was carried out. For all questions the number chosen by the participant was added up to produce an overall score, and because all the questions except question 12 were positive, the higher the score the higher level of PsyCap the individual has.
Results

Assumptions

In order to be able to carry out a correlation test there are 4 assumptions that must be met. The first assumption is that the two variables being tested must be measured at a continuous level. This assumption is met as both variables are interval variables that are measured on a continuous scale. The second assumption is that the data must be linear. This was tested using a scatter plot. From the following scatter graph (Graph 1) it is clear that there is a negative linear distribution shown by the line of best fit. The third assumption is that the data must be normally distributed. To ensure that the data was distributed normally a Shapiro-Wilk Test was conducted and found that all significant values of the Sharprio-Wilk test was were greater than 0.05 meaning all data is significantly normally distributed. Sharprio-Wilk test was used rather than Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test because of the sample size. The last assumption is that all data must have no outliers. This can also be seen from graph 1 as there are no obvious outliers. Because all assumptions were met, a pearson’s Product-Moment Correlation was the preferred statistical test to conduct.
Graph 1. A scatter graph to show linear regression line with no significant outliers.

Linear Regression

Graph 1 also shows the linear regression line and an R-squared value of 0.46. The R-squared value measures how close the data is to the fittest regression line. This shows that there is just less than 50% chance that those who have high levels of stress will have low levels of PsyCap. This produces a negative correlation. Although 50% may seem to be low in terms of the level of PsyCap being the reason for the levels of stress but it is very uncommon in psychology to get a R-squared value higher than 50% because it is much harder to predict human behaviour than for example, physical processes (Frost, 2017).

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<th>Missing Number</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived</td>
<td>PC</td>
<td>29 100.0%</td>
<td>0 0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress Score</td>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>4 100.0%</td>
<td>0 0.0%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Inspector</td>
<td>5 100.0%</td>
<td>0 0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prefer not to</td>
<td>2 100.0%</td>
<td>0 0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>answer</td>
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Table 1. Case Summary for Perceived Stress scores
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<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
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<td>PC</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>7.0000</td>
<td>.54139</td>
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<td></td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5.8910</td>
<td>8.1090</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Median</td>
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<td>Variance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Range</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.0000</td>
<td>1.04881</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>1.0880</td>
<td>6.9120</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Median</td>
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<td>Variance</td>
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<td>Std. Deviation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Range</td>
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<td>Inspector</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.2500</td>
<td>1.93111</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>95%</td>
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Table 2 shows the mean scores of all the different police ranks for perceived stress scores. From looking at the mean, it is clear that those with the ranked of PC have a higher perceived stress level score than any other rank (mean=7.00) with a small standard error score of 0.541.

Whereas, sergeants score the lowest perceived stress score with a low mean of 4.00 and a standard error of 1.04. Inspectors show similar ratings with a mean of 4.25 and a standard error of 1.93 meaning on a whole they are slightly more stressed than sergeants but not considerably. Two participants preferred not to state what rank they were. The mean stress score for those officers was 5.00 with a standard error score of 5.00 which shows that they have a closer score to the inspectors then PC’s. Looking at the table we can estimate that those officers

<table>
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<th>Upper Bound</th>
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<td>-1.8956</td>
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| Median | 4.5000 |
| Variance | 14.917 |
| Std. Deviation | 3.86221 |
| Range | 8.00 |

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<th>Prefer Not to Say</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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<tr>
<td>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upper Bound</td>
<td>68.5310</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Median | 5.0000 |
| Variance | 50.000 |
| Std. Deviation | 7.07107 |
| Range | 10.00 |

Table 2. Descriptive Table of Rank for Perceived Stress Score
were either inspectors or sergeants due to the similar scores. However, this is only a suggestion and isn’t scientifically proven.

Correlations

Several correlations were conducted and overall there are significant correlations between Perceived stress and PsyCap scores. There are still significant correlations when looking at both genders. However, when looking at the correlation between variables such as stress and Psycap scores for those who have been in service under 3 years and those who have served more than 25 years, there is no significant correlation found. A person’s correlation analysis was conducted using SPSS. Table 2 shows the results and from the table it is clear that there is a significant (P<0.05) negative correlation between the two variables, Stress and PsyCap (r = -0.683 n =40 p = 0.000) for all participants. Although for it to be an exact correlation the r value should be 1.00. Therefore the correlation is not strong but does show that there is a relationship between the two variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Stress score</th>
<th>Pearson correlation</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>PsyCap Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived stress score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.683</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3. Pearson’s Correlation between perceived stress and PsyCap scores**
When conducting a Pearson’s correlation between Stress and PsyCap for just males there is still a significant negative correlation \((P<0.05)\) between the two variables \((r=-0.696, n=28, p=0.000)\).

Furthermore, when conducting the same correlation for Stress and PsyCap for women only (Table 5) there is a stronger negative significant correlation \((r=-0.803, n=10, p=0.005)\). This shows that as one variable increases (Stress) the other variable decreases (PsyCap). However, the number of males to females \((M= 28, F=10)\) is not equal and will be discussed later.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Stress score</th>
<th>Pearson correlation</th>
<th>Perceived stress score</th>
<th>PsyCap Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PsyCap Score Males</th>
<th>Pearson correlation</th>
<th>Perceived stress score</th>
<th>PsyCap Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>-0.696</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Pearson’s Correlation between Stress and PsyCap for Males only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Stress score</th>
<th>Pearson correlation</th>
<th>Perceived stress score</th>
<th>PsyCap Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>females</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PsyCap Score females</th>
<th>Pearson correlation</th>
<th>Perceived stress score</th>
<th>PsyCap Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>-0.803</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Pearson’s Correlation between Stress and PsyCap for Females only
Further correlations were conducted to be able to see if there is a relationship between the years people have been working in the police force and their levels of stress and PsyCap. This was done by only using the data for those who have been in service for 3 years or under (see Table 6) for both stress and Psycap and conducting a correlation analyses for that specific data. The results show that there is a relationship (r=-.676). However, the relationship between the two variables for those in service three years or under is not significant as p=.095 (P<0.05). That means, increases or decreases in one variable do not significantly relate to increases or decreases in the second variable and so we can conclude that there is no significant relationship between the years of service and stress and PsyCap levels. This is due to the fact that there may be people can join the police at any age so age could be the reason for stress. However, it is more likely that those working for three years or under are PC’s and therefore we would expect to see a significant negative correlation because from the means it is clear that PC’s are the most stressed.

The same analysis was conducted for those who have been in service for twenty five years or over (see Table 7) and the same conclusion can be made as there is a relation between stress and PsyCap (r=-.699) but the relationship is not significant (p=.301) P<0.05.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Stress score for under 3 years of service</th>
<th>Pearson correlation</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>PsyCap Score for under 3 years of service</th>
<th>Pearson correlation</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Stress score for under 3 years of service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>PsyCap Score for under 3 years of service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PsyCap Score for under 3 years of service</td>
<td>-0.676</td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>PsyCap Score for under 3 years of service</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6. Pearson’s correlation between Stress and PsyCap for Under 3 years of service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Stress score for over 25 years of service</th>
<th>Pearson correlation</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>PsyCap Score for over 25 years of service</th>
<th>Pearson correlation</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Stress score for over 25 years of service</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-.699</td>
<td>.301</td>
<td>.301</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PsyCap Score for under 3 years of service</td>
<td>-.699</td>
<td>0.301</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Pearson’s correlation between Stress and PsyCap for Over 25 years of service

The relationship between stress and PsyCap and age

The following bar charts (1 & 2) show the mean scores for PsyCap and Stress for each category of age. When comparing the two charts it is clear that those aged 36-49 are the most stressed with a mean score of 7 and have the lowest mean PsyCap score of 75. This supports the hypothesis that as officers aged 36-49 are more stressed and have lower levels of PsyCap. Furthermore, those aged 50 or over have the lowest levels of stress with a mean of 5 and the highest PsyCap score with a mean of 84 which supports the hypothesis further. Additionally, those aged 18-25 have a mean stress score or 5.6 and a mean PsyCap score of 81. This shows they are only slightly more stressed than those aged 50 or over and score slightly lower on PsyCap with a mean of 81. To conclude, the two graphs show that there is a negative relationship between the levels of stress and PsyCap as when Stress levels rise, PsyCap levels decrease, supporting the hypothesis. Furthermore, those police officers aged 36-49 are the most stressed.
Chart 1. A bar chart to show the mean PsyCap scores for each age category

Chart 2. A bar chart to show the mean Stress scores for each age category
The relationship between Stress and PsyCap and Rank

The following graph (Graph 2) shows the mean score for perceived stress for each rank; PC, inspector, Sergeants and those who preferred not to say. From the graph it is clear that PC’s have a much higher stress score than any other rank with a mean score of 7. Inspectors and sergeants have a much lower stress score (Inspectors m= 4.25, Sergeants m=4.00). This shows that those ranked as sergeants are the least stressed. For those who preferred not to say show a mean stress score of 5.00 so only predictions can be made on what rank they are in.

Graph 2. A Graph to show the mean score for Perceived stress for each rank
Graph 3 shows the mean score for PsyCap for each of the ranks. It shows that PC’s have the lowest levels of PsyCap with a mean score of 66. Furthermore, those who preferred not to state their rank also had a low PsyCap score of 82. This supports the hypothesis as the scores show that those ranks that have high stress levels have low levels of PsyCap. However, inspectors have a slightly higher score for PsyCap (mean=100) than sergeants (mean=98). From looking at Graph 2 we would expect that because inspectors have a slightly higher stress level than sergeants, that they would have a slightly lower level of PsyCap. There are possible explanations for this which will be explored further on in the discussion.

Graph 3. A Graph to show the mean score for PsyCap for each rank
The relationship between stress and PsyCap and Gender

Graph 4 shows the mean scores for perceived stress for males, females and those who preferred not to say. Graph 5 shows the mean score for PsyCap for males, females and those who preferred not to say. When comparing the two graphs there is not an obvious relationship as all genders scored very similar on PsyCap with males showing a mean score of 80, females showing a mean score of 80.8 and those who preferred not to state their gender scored a mean of 80. However, the scores for stress differ from each gender. Males have the lowest mean stress score with 6 and females have a slightly higher mean stress score of 6.2. Those who preferred not to say scored a mean of 8.9. This shows there isn’t much of a difference between males and females scores for both stress and PsyCap. This will be discussed further on in the discussion as to possible reasons why.

Graph 4. A Graph to show the mean score for Perceived Stress for each Gender
Graph 5. A Graph to show the mean score for PsyCap for each gender.
The relationship between Stress and PsyCap and years of service

Graphs 6 and 7 show the mean scores for stress and PsyCap for each year of service category. From graph 6 it can be concluded that those who have been working for 25 years or over have a dramatically low stress score compared to the other years of service. Possible explanations for this will be discussed later on. From looking at graph 7 it shows that those who have been in service for 25 years or over have the highest mean score for PsyCap levels which again supports the hypothesis that those who have low stress levels will have high PsyCap levels. Furthermore, those who have been in service between 15 and 25 years have the highest mean score for stress (mean= 8) and the lowest mean score for PsyCap (mean=70). There is a pattern within the PsyCap scores as there does not seem to be a relationship between the PsyCap levels and age. The scores fluctuate from high too low to high to low. Lastly those who have been in service between 10 and 15 years score a high stress level (mean=7) and also a high mean PsyCap level of 82. This does not support the hypothesis and reasons for why this could be will be explained in the discussion.
Graph 6. A Graph to show the mean Stress scores for the years of service

Graph 7. A Graph to show the mean PsyCap scores for the years of service
Discussion

Stress and PsyCap

The correlation analysis conducted between stress and PsyCap supported the hypothesis as it showed there is a strong significantly negative relationship between the two variables ($r=-.696$). This has proven great evidence for the police force and allows interventions to be looked at in helping increase PsyCap levels. The findings from this study allow further investigations to be made in other occupations as it shows how important PsyCap is. Many people and organisations do not know or understand the reasoning and importance of PsyCap. This study has demonstrated that organisations should be looking at ways to improve employee’s PsyCap levels because of the considerable effect it has on an individual’s stress level.

Linear Regression

The linear regression, shown in graph 1 gives an R-squared value of 0.46. This is a good outcome as it supports the fact that there is a relationship between the two variables and as stress increased the levels of PsyCap decreases. Although the R-squared value is just below 50% which may seem there is only a 50/50 chance of this being the case, it is good in this area of research. Human behaviour is a complex area to examine which is why an R-squared value of 50% or below is very common within psychological studies (Frost, 2017).

Rank and Stress

From the results it is clear that overall; PC officers are the ones who undergo more stress as they score the highest mean level of stress within all the participating regions. This is to be expected as it is the PC’s that are the ones who are on the frontline dealing with crimes and problems head on. They are the ones who deal with situations and interact with the public. Whereas those of a higher rank, inspectors and sergeants score a lower mean score proving that they undergo less stress. An explanation for this is although they are at a higher rank and have more responsibility, they often are not the ones who deal with situations head on. A lot of work from inspectors and sergeants is office based.
and they are the ones giving the orders rather than the ones perusing the orders, like the PC’s. Inspectors are at a higher rank than sergeants and from the hypothesis we would expect the results to show in order of stress, from highest to lowest, to be PC, Sergeants and then Inspectors. Possible explanations of why inspectors are more stressed than sergeants is because sergeants are in the middle, they give orders but also receive orders from inspectors. Whereas the inspectors are in charge of everything and that produces more responsibility and could create stress. However, because inspectors are usually office based and a lot of their work involves paper work, rather than dealing with cases hands on, this can explain why they are less stressed than PC officers.

The results from table 2 also show that PC’s have a lower standard error meaning it is a close assumption that the same mean would occur no matter what the population size. However, for sergeants and inspectors the standard error score was higher, this could have possibly been overcome if the number of participants was increased.

**Rank and PsyCap**

Graph 3 in the results section shows the difference in PsyCap levels between each rank. It clearly shows that PC’s have the lowest levels of PsyCap. The findings for the PC’s support the hypothesis because overall they have a low mean PsyCap score and a high mean stress score. From the findings between stress and rank it was found that inspectors were more stressed than sergeants so it would be predicted for inspectors to have a lower level of PsyCap than sergeants. However, this is not the case as inspectors have a slightly higher score for PsyCap than sergeants. There are several reasons why this might be the outcome. Firstly, the number of sergeants (n=5) and inspectors (n=4) are very small. If the number was to be increased the results may have differed. Secondly, inspectors are of a higher rank than sergeants and it could be assumed that they have worked in the force for longer meaning they have had the experience to be able to develop their PsyCap abilities and if they have the knowledge and understanding to be able to be an inspector then it is most likely they are good at understanding and strengthening themselves through the four main areas, Hope, Optimism, Self-efficacy and Resilience.
Age, stress and PsyCap

From looking at bar chart 2, it is noticeable that those aged between 36 and 49 score the highest mean stress score (mean=7). From looking at graph 1, it is clear that those officers aged between 36 and 49 score the lowest mean score on PsyCap (75). This visibly supports the hypothesis that as stress increases, PsyCap levels decrease. An explanation as to why that age group is the most stressed could be because they are PC’s. Usually the expected age for a PC would be 18-25 because they are young and starting off in their career. However, if they were PC’s at the age of 36 to 49 that could mean they have not been able to get a promotion which would cause them to be more stressed. Another explanation is that at that age officers will not be as fit as the younger officers and this could make the job more challenging and overall more stressful. However, we do not know what ranks those officers are and therefore we can only make assumptions. Because they have very high stress levels they do not score high on PsyCap. Furthermore, those aged 50 or over have the lowest levels of stress with a mean of 5 and the highest PsyCap score with a mean of 84 which supports the hypothesis further. The assumed reason for this is it would be expected for inspectors to be of an older age because it takes time and experience to be promoted. This would therefore, support the other findings that it is inspectors who are less stressed. However, this is not always the case as officers have been promoted to inspector at a younger age than 50.
Gender, stress and PsyCap

From looking at graph 4 and 5, it is hard to spot an obvious pattern. That is because male, female and those who preferred not to state their gender all score very similar on PsyCap. This shows there is no difference between males and females score for PsyCap no matter what rank, age or years of service. However, graph 4 shows the mean scores for stress for all genders. Male and females both score very similar (males mean=6, females mean=6.2). This is the expected outcome as they both scored similar in PsyCap. Despite this, there were 2 participants who did not wish to state their gender and those officers scored a mean of 8.2 which is higher than the males and females. The reason for not stating their gender is possibly because they knew they were much stressed and for that reason wanted to keep it anonymous. A problem with the study is that there are more male officers (n=27) than females (11) and this could have influenced the results. The way to overcome this would be to get more female officers to participate. The reason for having less females take part is because only 28.2% of officers are female (Gov.UK, 2017), which is why more males took part.

Years of service, stress and PsyCap

Graph 6 concludes that those who have been working for 25 years or over have a dramatically low stress score compared to any other years of service. Possible explanations which would match the former findings is that those who have been working in the service for twenty five years or more are likely to have been promoted a higher rank, most likely, inspectors. This would conclude that those inspectors aged over 50, who have been working in the service for over twenty five years are overall the officers who are least stressed. Furthermore, those who have been in service between 15 and 25 years have the highest mean score for stress (mean=8) and the lowest mean score for PsyCap (mean=70). Possible reasons for this is that officers aged 15-25 are most likely to be looking for a promotion and may be struggling to succeed. This could be the result of high stress levels at that age.
Procedure

The procedure to gain participants was challenging because the police force was the organisation chosen to be studied. The police are very busy and have very important jobs to be doing. Therefore, taking part in a questionnaire falls at the bottom of their list of priorities. Because the regions being studied were all around the UK it is impossible to contact officers directly. Instead all communications were carried out through email. This is very time consuming as in some cases it took a long while to get a response and some police forces didn’t reply at all. In order to meet the ethic requirements, the general inspector from each region had to give consent first before any other officers could participate. This was done so they could check that this study was suitable for officers. However, this again is very time consuming because time was needed for the general inspector to read and decide if they wished for his/her team to participate and then sign and email back the completed consent form. However, despite this method being time consuming it was the easiest way and the procedure from that point on was more straight forward. A link to the questionnaire was then sent to the general inspectors where they send out an email explaining the study. This method also had limitations for example, not everyone would have looked at the email or some officers may be too busy to read the email. It would have been more reliable if the questionnaires could have been handed out individually. But this could not be done because of the time it would take to hand out and they would have to send it back which is also time consuming. A positive of having all the data online is it allows everything to be anonymous. There is no way of knowing who submitted which data or which region they were from. It also made it very quick to gather the data and it was a good way for all the data to be kept together, without worrying about losing or mixing up pieces of the questionnaires.

Apparatus

Questionnaires were used to gather the data and there are many advantages of doing so. Questionnaires are practical and allow for large amounts of data to be collected in a short space or time and from a large number of participants. (Hutchison, & Popper, 1959). Both questionnaires used were quick to fill out which is suitable for police officers as they have very little time to spare. The use
of questionnaires allows the data to be analysed more scientifically and objectively than other methods of research for example, qualitative methods such as interviews. Analysing the data is also much quicker and easier to produce results by using statistical software called SPSS.

However, there are some limitations of using a questionnaire which needs to be discussed. Firstly, it is argued that questionnaires are inadequate in understanding some of the information, for example, they cannot consider the changes of emotions, feelings and behaviour of the participant. To overcome this problem for further investigation it would be beneficial to carry out an interview alongside the questionnaire to understand how and why the individual chose the answer they did for the questions. This can only be done if the researcher has a lot of time. It may also be difficult for police officers to find the time to be able to commit to taking part in an interview. Secondly, there is no way of knowing how truthful the participant is being when answering the questions and there could be a case of demand characteristics. Demand characteristics are when a participant answers in a certain way to fit the experiments purpose (Matta’s, 2017). For example, officers were told that the studies main focus was levels of stress. This could have influenced the participant to say they are very stressed or not stressed depending on their interpretation. However, because there was no in direct contact with the participants this lowers the possibility of demand characteristics as well as experimenter bias as participants were not told anything that could influence their answers. Another possible limitation that needs to be addressed is there is no way of knowing how much effort the participant put in to answering the questionnaires (Hughes, 2012). Because police officers are very busy this could have meant they rushed the answers. Furthermore, because the questionnaires were on scales of one to five, there is a middle option, number 3 which represents ‘sometimes’. It is occasionally the case that participants choose this option because it is the easiest and quickest way. This does not give an accurate account of their feelings. To overcome this, for further research I would use a different scale where there is no option to sit on the fence and answer ‘sometimes’.

Scientists argue that using questionnaires allows the research to be in control when developing the questionnaire to their advantage. The researcher uses their own assumptions and decisions on what information is important and what is
not. For this reason, the two questionnaires used in this experiment have already been used in other studies of stress and PsyCap. This shows that the questionnaire was not made with bias intentions to produce the hopeful outcomes that match the hypothesis. The a Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., Mermelstein, R. 1983) has been used many times before by psychologists because it has high validity. Evidence of this is that high stress scores have been previously associated; failure to quit smoking, more likely to become ill (Cohen, 1998). This questionnaire has also been used to investigate health for example, Cohen (1998) found correlations between perceived stress score and health behaviours, health services measures and smoking status. The questionnaire asks participants how they have felt in the last month. The reason for this is because levels of stress is influenced by everyday events, the predictive validity of the perceived stress score is expected to decline fast after four weeks (Andreou et al., 2011).

Participants

This study used 40 participants, 27 males, 11 females and 2 who did not wish to say. If this study was to be carried out again in the future it would be important to try and gain more participants so that the results would be more accurate. The ratio of males to females is not equal. The reason for having less females take part is because only 28.2% of officers are female (Gov.UK, 2017), which is why more males took part. Also the number of PC’s (n=29) was larger than the amount of inspectors (n=5) and sergeants (n=4). In order to provide valid results it is necessary that there is an equal amount of participants for age, gender and rank.

Overall, the study supports the hypothesis that there is a significant negative correlation between stress and PsyCap. Further findings showed that the rank of officers has an effect on the levels of stress and PsyCap in the police force. PC’s are the most stressed and inspectors are the least stressed. Furthermore, between 36 and 49 years is the age of officers who are most stressed. Further research could look into that age range because it could be all participants were 36 and those aged over forty were not stressed. Other findings showed that those who have worked in the police force between 15 and 25 years are the most stressed and those who have worked for 50 years or over are the least
stressed. To conclude, inspectors aged 50 or over, who have been working in the service for over twenty five years are overall the officers who are least stressed. PC’s aged between 36 and 49, who have been working in the police force between 15 and 25 years, are the most stressed officers. There was no significant difference between genders.

**Further research**

For further research it would be interesting to test each variable of PsyCap individually. Unfortunately this would have been too time consuming to complete under the timed conditions. It would be interesting to see if officers scored similar for each variable of hope, optimism, resilience and self-efficacy or if the scores would differ. Carrying on, it would be beneficial to use more participants because having a bigger sample of participants makes the results more representative to the population. It also decreases the influence of any outliers that may appear. Because the findings support the hypothesis, it is important to explore ways in which PsyCap can be maintained or increased in order to reduce stress. This allows room to build interventions that the police force can use. The police force does not have their own psychology team and this could be something that might benefit the police force in order to increase PsyCap and reduce stress. Having a psychology team within the police force makes it easier for officers to gain help without having to look outside of their work. This could save a lot of money and time because if levels of stress can start to decrease then there is more chance the percentage of sick leave would decrease, meaning less stress on the other officers and eventually resulting in a higher level of well-being for officers meaning a higher standard of work and satisfaction at work.
Reference List


33. NIOSH. (1999), Stress at Work, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, publication no. 99-101


