

Building Resilience through Integrated Knowledge Transfer in Public Safety Organizations

Summary of Research Process

Research Team

PI: Dr. Greg Anderson, Thompson Rivers University
Drs. Liana Lentz & Sandra Jasinowski, Thompson Rivers University

Collaborators:

Dr. Joy MacDermid (Western University)
Dr. R. Nicholas Carleton (University of Regina)
Dr. Heidi Cramm (Queen's University)
Dr. Rosemary Ricciardelli (Memorial University)
Dr. Stephen Czarnuch (Memorial University)
Dr. Renée S. MacPhee (Wilfrid Laurier University)
Dr. Deborah Norris (Mount Saint Vincent University)

Knowledge User:

Dr. Donald McCreary (DRM Scientific Consulting; Brock University)

Research Process Summary

Introduction

This study adopts a novel operational definition of resilience, conceptualized as an eco-system that includes **three pillars of resilience - the individual, their family, and their workplace** - as its framework. Each of these pillars influences one another reciprocally and has a major impact on an individual's ability to respond to traumatic exposures. In addition, a holistic multi-level perspective of resilience, including biological, psychological, social, sex, gender, and environmental factors, is recognized in this study.

The immediate aim of the project is to promote resilience in fire and police organizations to foster long- term post-traumatic growth and decrease the risk of public safety organization employees (PSOE) developing post-traumatic, operational, and organizational stress injuries. The long-term goal over the course of this three-year project is to **develop and implement user-informed psychoeducational materials that will improve resilience**, which in turn will reduce the risk of developing post-traumatic stress injuries and/or mental health disorders that plague PSOE.

The process of this study may also be novel to your organization. Using integrated knowledge transfer [iKT], this innovative study takes a co-creation approach to research where participating public safety organizations are viewed as partners and knowledge users. In other words, the organization drives the focus of the study.

Case Study Process

Each organization will act as a case study to a larger project. The following outlines the within-organization process (also see [Figure 1](#)).

Phase 1

Identify organization's needs regarding employee psychological health and safety

- ❖ This may already be done or in the process of being completed. The research team can assist in this process through data gathering and data analysis.
- ❖ In addition to internal data, the researchers could assess:
 - Current mental health state of the organization through use of psychological surveys. Data would be delivered in summary format and not attributable to any person.
 - Employee's perception of psychological safety and support in their organization. This could be done through an anonymous survey or focus groups. The research team could facilitate focus groups at a non-organizational site or virtually to reassure confidentiality of participants.

Phase 2

Organization selects psychoeducational material

Once gaps and needs are identified, the organization can select interventions designed to improve the resilience and psychological health and safety of the organization. The mode of delivery can also be discussed. Psychoeducational materials target each of the "three pillars" – Individual – Family – Organization. Topics may include:

Individual:• **Resilience**

- Research indicates that resilience promotion programs can be effective in reducing symptoms of depression and burnout and improving coping and resilience.
- Would the organization be interested in psychoeducation and skills training in individual resilience?
- What are the characteristics of a resilient person?

Stress and Trauma

- Would the organization be interested in psychoeducation and skills training around personal and occupational stress?
- *How to Identify and Manage Stress* (Canadian Institute of Public Safety and Training - CIPSRT)
- How our body and brain respond to stress.
- Healthy ways to decrease stress.
- The difference between trauma and stress.
- Any other topics?

Coping

- Would the organization be interested in psychoeducation and skills training around different coping styles and strategies for individuals?
- What strategy is appropriate for different circumstances?
- Identifying personal coping strategies?
- *The PSP Wellbeing Course* – This course is designed to provide individual PSP with a more proactive approach to managing their mental health. This course provides people with tools and techniques to manage the thoughts, behaviours, and physical symptoms that are impacting their wellbeing.
- *The PSP PTSD Course* – This course is designed to provide education and guidance on effective techniques specifically focused on managing symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder. Taking this course may help PSP with thoughts, behaviours, and physical symptoms related to posttraumatic stress disorder
- *SIX Steps to Finding a Clinician* - A guide for Public Safety Personnel seeking Mental Health Treatment (from the Canadian Institute of Public Safety and Training - CIPSRT)
- Something else?

Other:

- *Moral Injury*. What are morals, ethics, and values are and how can they affect mental health when they conflict (Canadian Institute of Public Safety and Training - CIPSRT)
- How to decrease the risk of OSI.

Family:• **Resilience**

- Would the organization be interested in psychoeducation and skills training in resilience for their employee's families?
- Signs that your PSP family member may have work related psychological injury and how to help them.
- Family support mechanisms
- Dealing with shift work and uncertainty
- Peer support for employee families.
- How to talk to your family member(s) about stress and mental health.

- **Stress**
 - How stress can affect relationships.
 - How to recognize a partner's stress, and start a conversation
- **Coping**
 - Dedicated family time, and timing of such activities

Organizational:

- **Psychological Safety**
 - What is Psychological Safety
 - Workplace Behaviour: Civility, respect and collaboration
 - Employee Engagement: Leadership, structure, process team relationships
 - Equity, diversity and inclusion: unconscious bias, microaggression, discrimination
- **Other**
 - *How to evaluate wellness products and services intended for public safety personnel* (Canadian Institute of Public Safety and Training - CIPSRT)
 - *Leading Through a Crisis: Tips for Public Safety Leaders* (CIPSRT)
 - *Understanding and Overcoming Gender Disparities in Policing* (CIPSRT)
 - Review of organizational communication and policy for language that may affect psychological safety of employees.
 - Gendered language
 - Positive language
 - Clarity/Precision/Transparency

Additional Ideas

- **Psychological injury and mental health**
 - Would the organization be interested in psychoeducation and skills training around signs, symptoms, and language around psychological injuries that may affect employees and how they can impact the individual, their family and the organization?
 - Learning how to talk to family and colleagues about mental health?
 - How to be in charge of the effects of operational stress, versus the effects of operational stress being in charge of them?
 - Moral injury and how personal ethics may clash with professional ethics? Identifying personal and organizational ethics and values in order to be able to identify if there is internal moral struggle?
 - Moral Injury Guide for Public Safety Personnel
 - Any other topics?
- **Understanding research**
 - *Research 101* - a course designed to provide PSP and their leadership with the skills to access, assess, interpret, and evaluate health research. This course also gives participants the skills to effectively engage with researchers and practitioners.
- **Other psychoeducation and skills training**
 - Are there other topics or types of training or education that the research team could help with?

Phase 3

Baseline measures

- This phase will only be necessary if baseline measures regarding selected topics have not been previously gathered and/or analysed.
- For example, surveys (e.g., Organizational Police Stress Questionnaire, focus groups, internal

data.

- This phase can overlap with Phase 4

Phase 4

Research team develops and/or modifies psychoeducational material

- Research team develops any training/education material/KT that was indicated by the organization during Phase 2 but does not yet exist
 - Materials may need to be created and/or modified to fit with the organizations needs
 - Materials will be added to the open-source website for the organization and pilot tested
- The multidisciplinary team is affiliated with CIPSRT & other public safety-focused research consortia and academic institutions across Canada and has subject matter expertise in several areas including:
 - PSOE health and wellness,
 - occupational stress/physiology,
 - public health,
 - mental health,
 - clinical psychology,
 - data management & security,
 - spirituality and philosophy.

Phase 5

Implementation of psychoeducation and skills training

- Each training item selected will act as a sub-project meant to supplement and enhance existing efforts to improve workplace health through the exploration of organizational system interactions. They may or may not be implemented simultaneously.
- Separate proposals will be submitted for organizational approval for each sub-project.
- Each sub-project will have its own ethics approval.
- Implementation of sub-projects will be staggered.

Phase 6

Post Measures

- Data will be gathered and analysed separately for each project. The data required will be dependent on the outcome being measured and in relation to the intervention topic.
- Employees will be surveyed or interviewed for feedback regarding the interventions.

Phase 7

Evaluation

- Once the qualitative and quantitative data are analysed, the project effectiveness will be determined

Phase 8

Follow-up

- Longitudinal effectiveness of projects will be measured to determine sustainability of knowledge at 3, 6 and 12 months post-intervention.
- This will assist in identifying the timeline for ongoing “booster” training, if necessary.

Phase 9

Modification of project implementation

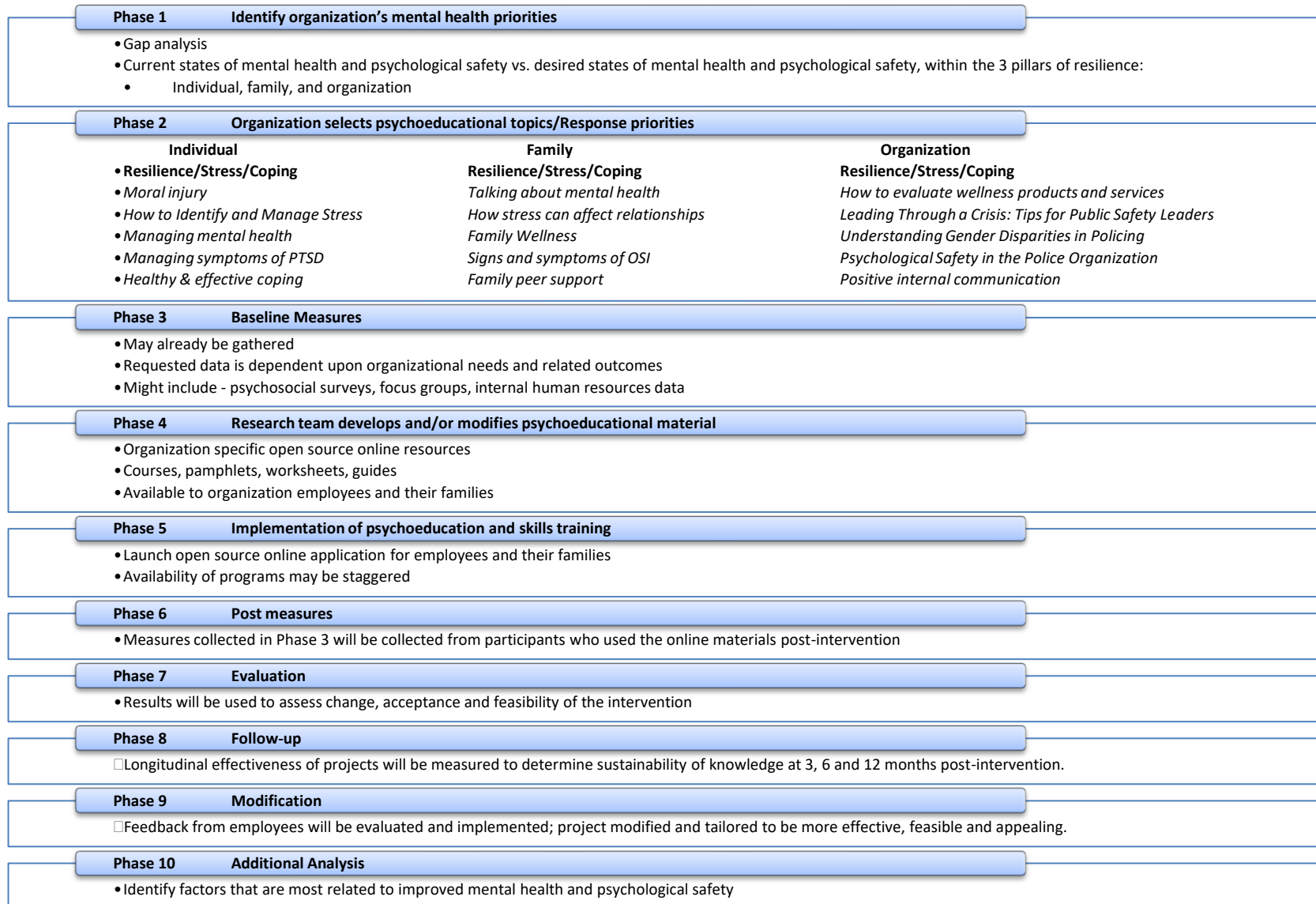
- Feedback from employees will be evaluated and implemented; project modified and tailored to be more effective, feasible and appealing.

Phase 10

Additional Analysis

- Identify factors that are most related to improved mental health and psychological safety

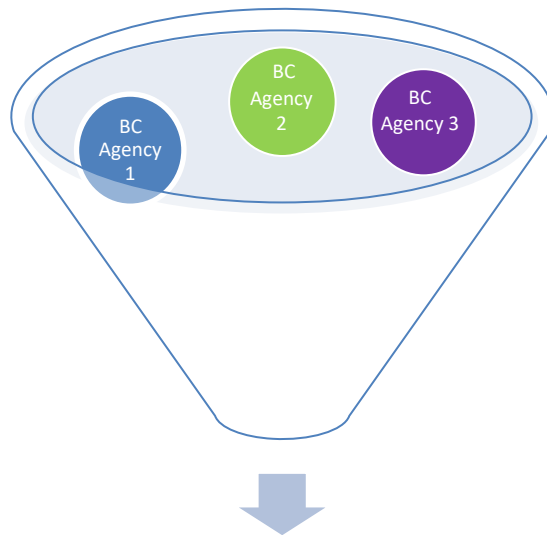
Figure 1: Case study research phases.



Aggregated Case Study

Once each case study is completed ($n = 3$ for each public safety organization), comparisons will be made amongst them to try to identify the common factors related to improved mental health and psychological safety in police and fire. See [Figure 2](#).

Figure 2: Aggregated case study process.



Compare similarities and differences.

Identify factors most related to improved mental health and psychological safety

Statistical analysis power calculation