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A prospective study of predictors of depression symptoms in police

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Abstract

Police work is one of the most stressful occupations. Previous research has indicated that work stress and trauma exposure may place individuals at heightened risk for the development of depression symptomatology. This prospective longitudinal study was designed to examine predictors of depression symptoms in police service. Participants comprised 119 healthy police recruits from an ongoing prospective study. They completed baseline measures of depression symptoms, childhood trauma exposure, neuroticism, and self-worth during academy training. Follow-up measures of depression symptoms, PTSD symptoms, critical incident exposure, negative life events, and routine work environment stress were assessed after 12 months of police service. Hierarchical linear regression analysis was conducted to examine predictors of current levels of depression symptoms, controlling for baseline depression symptoms and current PTSD symptoms. Greater childhood trauma exposure, lower self-worth during training, and greater perceived work stress in the first year of police service predicted greater depression symptoms at 12 months. Depression symptoms at 1 year of police service

depression symptoms at 12 months. Depression symptoms at 1 year of police service were partly independent from PTSD symptoms at 12 months. Greater childhood trauma exposure and lower self-worth during training may be important variables to screen as risk factors for duty-related depression. Strategies to reduce routine work environment stress have the potential to decrease duty-related depression in law enforcement.



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Keywords

Depression; Childhood trauma; Self-worth; Work stress

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