

Mental Health in Forensic Science Placements

Includes:

Final Report (3 videos)

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CBR Project Next Steps

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This document will aim to highlight some of the appropriate next steps for the Mental Health Readiness in Forensic Science community-based research project. This report supplements a short series of videos that will also address some much-needed future steps for the research project. Videos in the series can be found at the following links:

Part 1: <https://youtu.be/yQql5g4vnKs>

Part 2: <https://youtu.be/83xoEPREmN8>

Part 3: <https://youtu.be/BBeWeO1RQkA>

Over the course of the project, there have been a number of significant research findings including statistics on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) prevalence amongst first responders, some of the details of the prevention programs that have been used in other industries, and even the impact that attachment styles play on an individual's susceptibility of developing PTSD symptoms. This project has highlighted the importance of a strong and detailed PTSD prevention program for individuals entering first responder fields. Since they experience more stressful and traumatic stimuli on a daily basis they are at an increased risk of developing these trauma symptoms (Wilson et al., 2016). In order to establish an effective training module there is still a lot of work that needs to be done. Extra steps need to be taken and more information needs to be found. Since there is a lack of research in this particular field of interest, it makes it difficult to simply rely on further research to fix all of the gaps in

knowledge. Although it does play a role in the next steps that need to be taken, there is also a large need for interviews with industry professionals, surveys on current students, and taking additional steps to understand the best ways that students learn. These factors paired with specific research on aspects of the project where there was a lack of information will aid in the development of a functional module that can be administered to students at Trent University and other individuals who would like to enter first responder fields.

Throughout the course of the project, there were many significant research findings that had a lot of room for supplementary information that will strengthen the integrity of the information that we found. Attachment styles refer to different ways that individuals interact or behave, most often in the context of intimate and personal relationships (Duggan, 2019). These attachment styles can provide implications and aid in predicting how people may respond to stressors in their daily life and can provide more insight into how or if people take steps to resolve the issues (Maunder & Hunter, 2015). Depending on an individual's attachment style, it can lead them to become more or less likely to be negatively affected by a stressful or traumatic event and increase the chances of them developing PTSD-related symptoms (Garcia, 2022). It would be beneficial to discover what attachment style the majority of Trent students possess. This can provide important implications for understanding how students perceive the stressors that they experience in their personal and academic life (Maunder & Hunter, 2015). This knowledge will help with understanding how stress-inducing the module should be and provide an idea of how many students may react in a negative way to some of the stimuli produced in the module.

A study should be conducted with the goal of going in-depth into the various prevention programs that use self-assessment tools to identify risk factors that are searched for at the beginning of the prevention intervention and identify their criteria for what constitutes a PTSD risk factor. Developing a list of risk factor qualities can help establish a clear identification index of what specific personal qualities can cause one person to have a higher probability of developing PTSD symptoms than somebody else. Having this information will ensure that the module design is effective in identifying these traits and succeed in correctly tailoring the module for each individual who participates in the prevention program. Having a wide range of risk factors from many different prevention programs will help in determining what elements are typically checked for in the assessment stage of various industries and fields. These findings will make it possible to assemble a list of risk factors that need to be considered in this module design and by informing which factors may be more applicable to this population. Many of the strategies that are used in existing programs can be applied to newer module designs and could aid in improving participants' resilience to traumatic stimuli. Many military programs are intense in order to ensure that soldiers are prepared for anything they see in the field (Hourani et al., 2011).

Among all the first responder PTSD prevalence rates, military PTSD is the lowest, even lower than the general population (Wilson et al., 2016). It is important to understand why this is. There are many different factors that can contribute to that particular prevalence rating. Perhaps their prevention program is extremely effective, or perhaps there are other strategies that the military use to be able to have their troops better prepared against negative psychological

stimuli. There is even a chance that military personnel only recruit people who do not display risk factors for developing PTSD. Having a better understanding of this relationship may help identify effective strategies used by the military so that they can be applied to this module.

Students would benefit from having practice quizzes and engaging in various forms of active learning throughout the course of the prevention program in order to help them solidify the information that they are learning (Cook & Babon, 2017). It would be important to find other beneficial strategies that students can use to learn more effectively. By finding out this information then we can take bigger steps towards implementing tactics that will aid in cognitive retention when participating in the mental preparedness program.

In order to achieve the goal of preparing Trent students for careers as first responders, a valuable next step would include the administration of various surveys that are sent to the students at Trent University. Surveys could generate information on the demographics and characteristics of this specific target population, helping the developers of the module to design it in a manner that can suit people's needs in the most effective way possible. In conclusion, there are a variety of next steps that should and can be taken in order to ensure that the participants for this future mental health readiness program are receiving the best information and are being taught in the most effective way possible.

References

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