

Effects of Shift Work in Policing,

What Types of Shifts Work Best?

Research Proposal

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Every community needs police officers to protect and safeguard the members of the community. The members of the community count on police officers to enforce the law and keep the community a safe place for everyone to live. Without police officers, communities would not be civilized. It would be a place of chaos. So police officers are very important to each community. Police officers are always on duty in a community, so they must work shift work. Shift work can be very difficult on police officers and it could affect their ability to perform their duties to the best of their ability. Shift work has an effect on a police officer's health, safety, performance, personal life, and job satisfaction. It is important that police departments select shifts that provide the officers with the best for their health and safety, all while increasing the morale and providing adequate manpower to cover the twenty-four hour period each day. The problem is that most administrators do not know what types of shifts are best for their officers and their department.

It is important that research be conducted to determine which shifts are better in policing and the effects that each type of shift has on the officers and the department as a whole. Some police departments work twelve hour shifts, others do ten hour shifts, some departments do nine hour shifts or eight hour shifts, and some do a combination of several different shifts. Each department has their own reasoning for why they work a certain shift schedule, but do these departments have actual facts as to what type of shift is the most beneficial for their department? If this research is conducted it could provide police departments with both the positives and the

negatives to each type of shift work and they could then determine the type of shift that would be the most beneficial for their department.

Based on previously conducted research, it is likely that twelve hour shifts will provide the most rest time for officers between shifts. Twelve hour shifts will also provide the officers with more time off, which will in turn be better for officer's personal lives. However, twelve hour shifts may cause the officer to be more fatigued on the days that they are actually working and this could cause more accidents and injuries, which would put the officer at a greater risk. The ten hour shifts would likely be the best shift for the health and safety of the officer, as well as the morale of the officer. The ten hour shifts are not likely the best for the department as a whole, due to not providing as much manpower.

Some of the key terms that are mentioned in this proposal are police officer, shift work, health, safety, morale, and manpower. According to Neil Kokemuller, a police officer is someone that "monitors criminal activity, takes part in community patrols, responds to emergency calls, issues tickets, makes arrests, investigates crime and testifies in court as needed" (2016). Shift work is defined by the National Sleep Foundation as work that is not the normal Monday through Friday, 9 am-5 pm, work and it is work that involves day, evening, and night shifts, as well as rotating shifts (2016). Health "is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (Nordqvist, 2015). Safety is the "condition of being protected from or unlikely to cause danger, risk, or injury" (Collins, 2016). According to the business dictionary the word morale is the "psychological state of a person as expressed in self-confidence, enthusiasm, and/or loyalty to a cause or organization" (BusinessDictionary.com, 2016). The Business Dictionary also defines manpower as the "total

supply of personnel available or engaged for a specific job or task” (2016). These are all key terms that you will see throughout this proposal.

It is imperative to see the importance of researching different shift schedules within police departments and to decide which shift is best for the health, safety, and morale of the police officers and which shifts allow for more manpower for the police departments. Certain shift schedules could have a negative effect on police officers and police departments. Something as simple as choosing the correct shift schedules to put police officers on could have negative consequences that could be as severe as injury or even death.

Review of Literature

This is a review of literature on the topic of shift work in policing and the effects that it has on police officers. These literatures go hand in hand with displaying the effects of shift work in policing. They too, show the need for research in this area and the importance of the research. The literature used for this topic was taken from the Arkansas Tech University library educational database. The search criteria that was used for this topic was, “Shift Work in Policing”, “Effects that Working Shifts have on a Police Officers”, and “Work Scheduling in Policing”. This review will address the following questions:

1. Does shift work affect the health, safety, and performance of police officers?
2. Does shift work affect the personal life of a police officer?
3. Does the length of the shift (8, 10, or 12 hours) have an effect on police officer job satisfaction or morale?

Police officers face many challenges in their job. They put their life on the line each time they put their gun and badge on and walk out the door. They are faced with violent situations each day that could cause them injury or even death. Could there be other factors of a police officer's job that could be doing them harm as well? Factors such as shift work could possibly affect officers both physically and mentally. This review of literature of these peer reviewed journals will give the reader an overview of the positive and negative impacts that shift work has on police officers.

Does Shift work affect the health, safety, and performance of police officers?

The management of police departments should be aware of the possible effects that shift work can have on police officers. Working hours that are not the normal Monday-Friday, 8-5, could present certain physiological problems for individuals. According to Barger, Lockley, Rajaratnam, and Landrigan those problems can consist of "sleep-wake and alertness rhythms" which in turn can be "associated with decrements in workplace performance, health, & safety" (2009). There are four factors that play a part in alertness performance. Those factors are time of day, number of hours awake, chronic sleep deprivation, and impaired performance upon waking (Barger, Lockley, Rajaratnam, & Landrigan, 2009). Each of these factors have been associated with an increased risk of accidents and according to Barger, Lockley, Rajaratnam, and Landrigan, those who work shift work experience all of these to some degree, but it all varies depending on the occupation (2009). According to their research accidents kill more police officers than felonies do (2009). There is also research that shows that shift work can cause both short-term and long-term health problems, such as heart disease, gastric problems, sleep deprivation, obesity, and even cancer (2009). There is not a whole lot of data on police fatigue,

but there is an increasing indication that shows that fatigue does play a role in accidents, injuries, and citizen complaints that involve police officers (2009). Barger, Lockley, Rajaratnam, and Landrigan give suggestions on intervention strategies to help with the effects of shift work such as “increasing the rate of circadian adaptation to shift schedules, promoting wakefulness during work and sleep during rest times, and alertness monitoring” (2009). They conclude that shift work is related to fatigue and poor performance (2009). This contradicts what Ed Sanow states regarding shift work and fatigue, as he believes that fatigue is not a problem (2006).

Back in the early 1990’s Pierce and Dunham note in their research that there have been studies done that indicate that shift work can be a factor in developing heart disease, sleep problems, appetite disruptions, as well as digestive problems (1992). This shows that shift work has been known to possibly be a factor in health related problems for quite some time now. Pierce and Dunham also state that there were reports of decreased stress and fatigue when shift workers were given more consecutive days off in a row to rest and so supervisors should consider that when determining shift schedules (1992).

Amendola and Hamilton researched the impacts that 8-hour, 10-hour, and 12-hour shifts had on police officers in regards to their performance, health, safety, sleep, fatigue, and alertness (2011). Amendola and Hamilton concluded that there did not appear to be any important performance, health, or safety concerns that go along with compressed work schedules in policing (2011). Amendola and Hamilton do state that implementing 12-hour shifts should not be done until careful consideration is given in regards to the potential concerns of fatigue (2011). Amendola and Hamilton’s research contradicts the works of others such as Pierce and Dunham and Barger, Lockley, Rajaratnam, and Landrigan. However there are others, such as Smith,

Folkard, Tucker, and Macdonald that say that there is “no conclusive evidence that extended work shifts compromise safety from the point of view of increased accident rates, or from reduction in job performance, or increase in error rates” (1998). They feel though that this could be due to the preventative measures that have been put into place to keep this from happening (1998).

According to the work of Waters and Ussery constant shift change can have a major impact on the health of police officers (2007). It is believed that “changing sleep patterns, digestive system circadian rhythms, and other bodily functions affects both physical and psychological well-being” (2007). This negatively impacts police officers lives.

Does shift work affect the personal life of a police officer?

Police officers deal with the stresses of their job even after they leave work. These stresses do not only affect them, but it affects the lives of their families as well. Shift work is not ideal for everyone and it could cause problems in the personal lives of police officers. According to Waters and Ussery shift work not only takes a toll on police officers, but it disrupts the family as well because they have to adjust not only to the sleep schedule of the police officer, but also the police officer in their life missing important life events, such as birthdays and holidays (2007). Waters and Ussery also state that the fatigue that shift work causes has a negative effect on self-control which could lead to domestic violence. “Officers working the night or swing shift and/or more than 50 hours per week, and those suffering from sleep deprivation and ‘burnout’ are frequently involved in domestic violence” (Waters & Ussery, 2007).

Police officers work schedules make it difficult to have a typical personal life. Not only does their schedule interfere with their personal life, but according to Waters and Ussery the “disruption of their circadian rhythms leads to temper tantrums and lack of patience” (2007). This is why some police departments are electing to go to 12-hour shifts because it gives police officers more days off to spend with their family, that is as long as they do not spend that extra time off working second jobs (Waters & Ussery, 2007).

According to Amendola and Hamilton, when police officers work compressed work weeks, which are longer work days but the amount of work days are less, show an improvement in their personal life (2011). This includes “increased leisure, personal, and family time or greater satisfaction associated with them” (Amendola & Hamilton, 2011). It was also reported by Amendola and Hamilton that police officers that worked compressed work weeks also reduced the amount of work-family conflict (2011).

Does the length of the shift (8, 10, or 12 hours) have an effect on police officer job satisfaction?

Shift work is difficult on police officers. There are numerous work schedules that police departments work across the country. Some departments work 8-hour shifts, 9-hour shifts, 10-hour shifts, or 12-hour shifts. Some departments even have multiple shift hours within their department. There are a lot of factors that determine which length of shifts police officers prefer and they differ for each officer individually. According to Solar, police officers prefer shift work schedules that are more compatible with their personal activities and give them more flexibility (2009). The 8-hour shift work schedule is not the best for those who work midnights because they do not have enough time off in between their working days to adjust to normal life (Solar,

2009). The 12-hour shift work is becoming the most popular with officers because it gives them so much more time off. According to Solar it gives police officers almost 80 more days a year off and it gives them a three day weekend every other weekend (2009). Solar notes that moving to a 12-hour shift schedule “can be expected to improve morale, reduce sick-time usage, and possibly result in increased productivity” (2009).

According to Todovic, Makajic-Nikolic, Kostic-Stankovic, and Martic police officers prefer a compressed work schedule, such as 10-hour or 12-hour shifts, but supervisors prefer the 8-hour or 12-hour shifts (2015). It is important that when making shift schedules supervisors take into account the needs and demands of the police officers.

Further Study

Shift work in policing affects many different areas in a police officer’s life. Shift work has an effect on a police officer’s health, safety, performance, personal life, and job satisfaction. Different lengths of shifts also have different impacts on a police officer’s life, some are positive and some are negative. Every police officer is different and different things affect others in different ways, so what may affect one officer may have no effect on another officer.

The different outcomes of the researcher’s work cited in this review on the effects that shift work has on a police officer’s health, safety, and performance makes it difficult for one to come to a conclusion that shift work does have this affect a police officers. Some works cite that shift work does affect police officer’s health, safety, and performance, while other works say there is no affect. If shift work does affect a police officer’s health, safety, and performance, is it

all shifts (8, 10, 12 hours) or just certain ones? Could certain lengths of shifts actually improve an officer's health, safety, and performance?

It appears as though shift work does affect police officer's personal lives. The research included in this review is consistent in the fact that it does affect police officer's lives. According to some of the literature 12-hour shifts could have a more positive impact than other shifts. More research could be done to determine the effects that all shifts (8, 10, & 12 hours) have on a police officer's personal life. Also determining both the positive and negative impacts the different shifts have on police officers in regards to their personal life.

There is also further research that needs to be done to determine whether or not shift work affects police officers job satisfaction and morale. Is there a significant difference, when it comes to police officer morale, based on the length of their shift? Does the affect that shift work has on a police officer's personal life affect their job satisfaction? These are some questions that should be answered more clearly.

Method

Participants

The participants for this research will be taken from four different police departments in the Northwest Arkansas area that are approximately the same size. Ideally the departments would consist of approximately 120-175 sworn police officers. It is also desired that the departments that are selected for this research have different shift schedules. One department working twelve hour shifts, one department working ten hour shifts, one working an eight hours shift schedule, and the last department working a combination of the different shift schedules. Only the sworn

officers working those shift schedules will be selected to participate, as well as supervisors within the department.

Research Questions/Design/Data Collection

A qualitative research method will be used for this research. Qualitative research is the best method for this research as it allows the researcher to examine the behaviors of the officers in their current shift work schedules and to see how those shift work schedules affect the officers in both positive and negative ways.

The participants of the research, who are sworn police officers, will be asked the following questions:

1. How long have you been a police officer?
2. What different shift schedules have you worked while being a police officer?
3. How many times have you been injured on the job?
4. What shift schedule were you working when you were injured?
5. Do you feel fatigued while working your shift? If so, at what point in the shift do you become fatigued?
6. How often do you call in sick?
7. Does your shift work schedule allow for adequate personal time?
8. How would you rate your job satisfaction?

The following questions will be asked to the participants of the research who supervise the patrol officers that work shift work:

1. How long have you been a supervisor?
2. What shift work schedules has your department worked since you have been a supervisor?
3. Does the shift schedule that your department currently works provide for optimal manpower for each shift?
4. What would you rate the job satisfaction of your officers on your shift?
5. How often does one of your officers get injured on your shift?
6. How often do your officers on your shift call in sick?
7. How often do your officers request vacation time off on your shift? How often are the officers denied vacation?

The data will be collected through an online survey. Officers and supervisors will be given two weeks to submit the survey to the researcher. There will also be some interviews conducted by the researcher of some of the higher command staff at the departments.

The researcher believes that the results will differ for each type of shift schedule that is studied in this research. Once all of the results are in and the data is analyzed, it should show which shift schedule has the most positive effect on police officers and departments.

Discussion

There is a great need for this research to be conducted. Not only do the shift work schedules affect the health, safety, performance, and job satisfaction of police officers, but it also affects the communities in which these police officers are serving. If an officer gets injured or their performance is not up to par due to the shift schedules that the police department is working, it could have a negative effect on the community. When an officer gets injured it takes them off the street and that is just one less officer that the communities have out there protecting and safeguarding the community. It is imperative that the officers work shift schedules that put them at less risk of accident or injury.

The police department as a whole could also be suffering if they have a shift work schedule that does not provide them with optimal manpower. The departments need to see exactly what shift work schedule will give them the greatest manpower and at the same time provide high job satisfaction for their officers and protect their health and safety.

If this research is conducted it will provide answers to police departments in the Northwest Arkansas area, on what would work best for them and their officers. Officer's health and safety, as well as having as many officers on the street as possible at one time should be a priority for any department. This research will provide answers that could allow them to make the best decision for their department, their officers, and ultimately the community as a whole.

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