

Emotional labour and wellbeing in detective work

Emotional labour and its consequences for wellbeing: How individual differences and social stressors shape emotional regulation strategies among detectives.

Key details

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Police region	North West
Level of research	PhD
Project start date	September 2026
Date due for completion	July 2028

Research context

The aim of the study is to explore how individual differences shape the use of emotional labour by detectives and the impact of emotional labour on their wellbeing. Specifically, the study examines how the 'big five' personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, negative emotionality and open-mindedness) relate to and predict use of emotional regulation strategies when dealing with victims and suspects, such as:

- surface acting (that is, faking or suppressing emotions)
- deep acting (that is, a cognitive shift to genuinely experience the appropriate emotions)

In addition, the study examines how emotional labour relates to and predicts emotional exhaustion and turnover intent (the desire to leave a job). Recent evidence highlights a decline in emotional wellbeing in police officers, leading to recruitment and retention challenges particularly in detectives. Knowledge from this study may help us understand the role emotional labour has to

play in these wellbeing issues.

Research methodology

The project takes a mixed-methods approach.

Study one

Study one is a quantitative study, delivered by way of a questionnaire which takes 10 minutes to complete. This is a cross-sectional, non-experimental design, measuring a range of variables across a sample of individuals at one point in time. Cross-sectional research can examine patterns, associations, attitudes, behaviours and characteristics across groups.

Participants will complete the survey, which has consent acknowledgement prior to completion. Participants can complete demographic information such as gender, age, role, length of service and ethnicity. This is all voluntary. The main survey comprises 51 questions which is expected to take 10 minutes. Participants will be able to pause, save and return to the survey if needed. Participants will have an option to provide their contact details to opt in for further consideration to be interviewed. The results of the survey will be recorded using SPSS software and analysed.

Study two

Study two is qualitative, consisting of inviting detectives for a semi-structured interview. An online meeting using Microsoft Teams will be arranged at a suitable date and time for both participant and researcher. A meeting, expected to last approximately 60 minutes, will be recorded with participant permission, where the topic will be introduced and an outline of the purpose of the research and interview explained further. Following this, the questions will be asked.

Research participation

We are looking for serving detectives to complete an online questionnaire. This study is exploring detective wellbeing by examining emotion use in the workplace. It will explore how personality traits relate to and predict use of emotional regulation strategies such as faking or displaying unfelt emotions when dealing with victims and suspects. The study will also examine how this may relate to emotional exhaustion and potentially lead officers to leave policing. Knowledge from this study may help us understand why this occurs, ultimately leading to policy or practice change to support

staff.

If you are interested in participating, please click the link below. It takes about 10 mins to complete. There is no obligation to take part.

[Participate in survey](#)