

SPORE

Strengthening Probation Officers' Resilience in Europe

consequences for probation and prison education

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Background, rationale and aim

- Project SPORE was developed to address the issue of wellness of probation officers in Europe. This was in recognition that the capacity and personal suitability of staff is closely related to the effectiveness of the complex work they do. The project aims included:
 - Recognizing good practice in probation agencies
 - Strengthening the resources and support mechanisms of criminal justice organizations to support the resilience and wellness of employees
 - Averting burnout, stress and trauma

Background, rationale and aim

- The project was conducted between March 2012 and September 2013 and was initiated, co-ordinated and managed by the State Probation Service of Latvia.
 - Partners: Viru Prison (Estonia), CEP, Avans University (Netherlands), University of York (United Kingdom), Fund IGA (Bulgaria)
- Key components of the project :
 - 1. An on-line psychometric survey, for completion by front line staff from the four partner countries
 - 2. Focus groups involving front line and managerial staff
 - 3. Desk studies by each partner country to identify relevant literature and collect organizational data
 - 4. An international workshop aimed at identifying good practice in developing and maintaining resilience in probation services across Europe

Setting the Scene

A Critical Occupation

One where there is high risk of exposure to traumatic events that may, under certain circumstances, exert critical impact on the psychological well-being of those within it (Paton & Violanti, 1996)

Caring about members of Critical Occupations means working to ensure that “any damage is only temporary, and that they will succeed in their struggle to restore their psychological integrity” Lazarus (1999)

What is Resilience

- “When individuals and groups can use their psychological and physical resources and competencies in ways that allow them to render challenging events **coherent, manageable and meaningful**” (Antonovsky, 1990).
- Critical incidents create a sense of **psychological disequilibrium** where existing interpretive frameworks (schemas), which guide expectations and actions, have lost their ability to organize the experience in meaningful and manageable ways (Janoff-Bulman, 1992).
- Critical incidents could improve future events management and promote self growth (**Resilience**) (Aldwin, Levenson, & Spiro, 1994).

The Stress Shield Model of Resilience

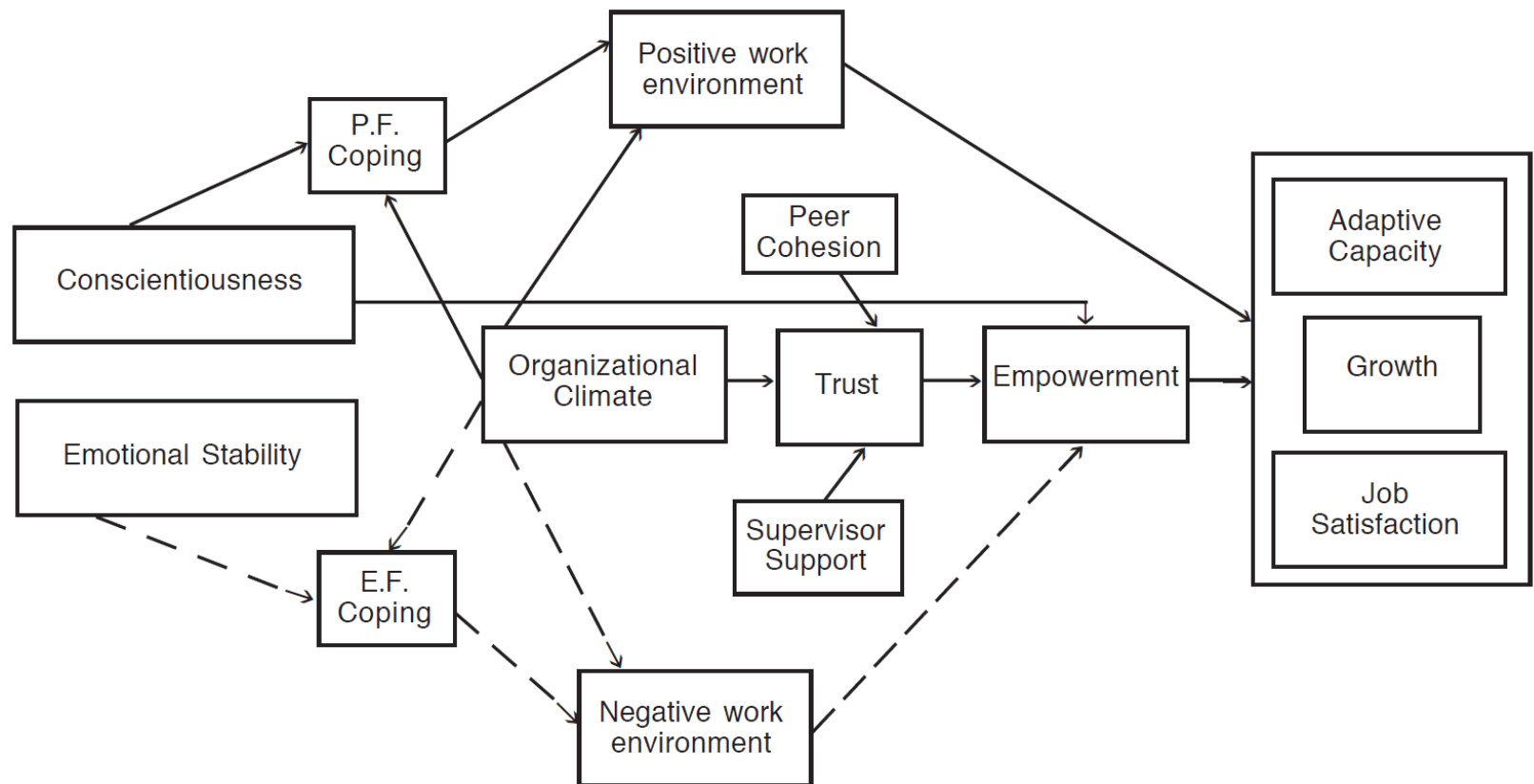
Paton, Violanti, Johnston, Burke, Clarke and Keenan (2008)

- The Stress Shield model of Resilience is developed by integrating and building on various theoretical models:
 - Occupational Climate
 - Personality
 - Peer Relationships
 - Empowerment Theory

The Stress Shield Model of Resilience

Paton, D., Violanti, J. M., Johnston, P., Burke, K.J., Clarke, J., & Keenan, D. (2008)

Figure 4: The Stress Shield model of resilience. Solid lines indicate positive influences on adaptive capacity and growth. Dashed lines indicate pathways with a negative influence on empowerment.



The Stress Shield Model of Resilience

Paton, Violanti, Johnston, Burke, Clarke and Keenan (2008)

- **Occupational Climate:**

- The individual's perception of how their organisation functions provides him with a context to which they can interpret and act during critical situations (Paton, 2006).
- Organizational climate is correlated negatively with emotion-focused problem solving and “hassles” in work experience, but positively with problem-focused solving and “uplifts” work experience. (Burke and Paton, 2006)

The Stress Shield Model of Resilience

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- **Personality factors influencing resilience**
 - Conscientious individuals have greater experiences of meaning and competence in their work, especially during times of disruption and critical events (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).
 - Committed to contributing to collective efforts (Behling, 1998).
 - Demonstrate greater levels of perseverance (Hough, 1998).

The Stress Shield Model of Resilience

Paton, Violanti, Johnston, Burke, Clarke and Keenan (2008)

- **Peer related factors in Resilience**
 - Supervisory support: Leadership improves cohesion between groups and facilitates trust and positive reinforcement: all these factors improve self-efficacy and empowerment.
 - Peer Cohesion: facilitates meaning in individual's work, sharing of knowledge and skills lead to competence and resilience, and help in resource acquisition.
 - Trust: facilitates competence allows individuals to experience meaning in their work and encourage teamwork; therefore contributes to resilience.

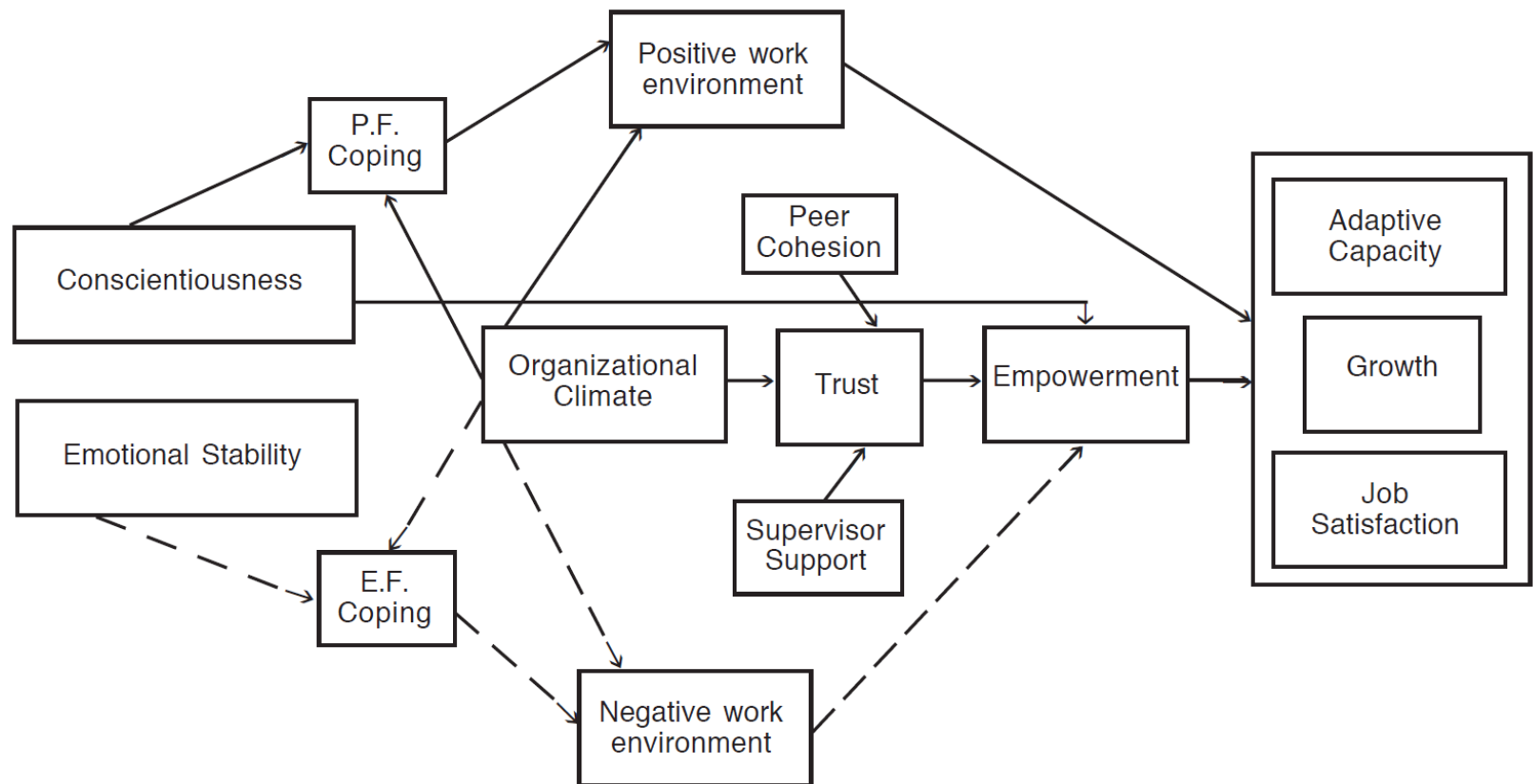
Empowerment

- If resources (psychological, social and physical) are available, and the individual is able to use them, then he will be able to effectively confront challenges (Conger & Konungo, 1998)
- It is predominantly through empowerment that individuals develop resilience
- Empowerment allows for positive self event assessment
- All the factors mentioned earlier relate to Empowerment (organizational climate, peer cohesion and personality)

The Stress Shield Model of Resilience

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SPORE Methodology

- Respondents: Employees working in probation environments in the community or in prisons.
- Questionnaire data collected electronically from Latvia, Estonia, the Netherlands and Bulgaria
 - Number of participants = 547
- Qualitative data collected face-to-face via focus groups (6-8 members).
 - Each partner country conducted three focus groups, two with front-line workers and one with managers, based on the SSM.
 - Information derived from the focus group was used to support and where appropriate to explain quantitative findings.

Respondents

	Bulgaria	Estonia	Latvia	Netherlands	TOTAL
Number (%)	64 (11)	130 (23.8)	185 (33.8)	168 (30.7)	547 (100%)
Gender					
Males	44 (69)	25 (19)	30 (16)	78 (46)	177 (32%)

Quantitative Analysis

- WES Work Environment Scale (WES) (Moos, 1994)
- ECQ Emotional Control Questionnaire (ECQ) (Roger & Najarian, 1989)
- Stress-related Growth Scale (SRG) (Park et al, 1996)
- C-SURV
- Resilience coping style questionnaire (RCSQ)
- Coping Styles Questionnaire (CSQ) (Elklit, 1996)
- Physical work environment satisfaction questionnaire (PWESQ) (Carlopio, 1986)
- Job Satisfaction Index (JSI) (Brayfield & Rothe, 1987)
- Conscientiousness (NEO-PI-R) (Costa & McCrae, 1976)
- Supervision Scale (SS)
- Interpersonal workplace trust scale (IWTS)
- PEI The Psychological Empowerment Instrument (Spreitzer, 1995)

Desk Studies

- Conducted by local researchers to add support to both the quantitative and qualitative aspect of the data:
 - staffing levels, turnover rates, sickness absence, caseloads, and risk levels of offenders

Results (hierarchical regression)

	Bulgaria	Estonia	Latvia	Netherlands	Overall
Job Satisfaction					
Physical work environment	X		X	X	No.1
Detached coping		X	X	X	No.2
Organisational climate	X	X	X	X	No.3
Conscientiousness	X		X	X	No.4
Adaptive Capacity					
Detached coping	X	X	X	X	No.1
Conscientiousness			X		No.2
Organisational climate				X	No.3

Recommendations (1)

- **To enhance job satisfaction, address organisational climate and the physical work environment**
 - Climate: Check management style, empowerment, workload and communication
 - Physical: quick wins for senior leaders
- **Develop a psychological proforma for probation staff to identify personal areas of strength and vulnerability**
 - **Psychometric assessment of resilience characteristics** can be helpful in enabling staff to consider their own well-being
 - It can also provide a focus for supervision
 - Supervisors and managers should also be encouraged to monitor their own well-being.
- **To enhance job satisfaction and adaptive capacity, **train probation workers in detachment****
 - The ability to disengage oneself from overwhelming emotion and keep matters in perspective)

Recommendations (2)

- **To enable the cost-effective targeting of resources, look into levels of exposure of staff to potential trauma and frequency and intensity of actual trauma**
- **Consider the value of appropriate sharing of personal information in the workplace.**
 - Trauma outside the workplace has been evidenced to negatively effect well-being within the workplace.
 - Specialist guidance to supervisors, personal well-being proformas that are regularly updated, **training of peer mentors** or use of employee assistance programmes
- **Work towards developing an empowered workforce**

Empowerment in Practice (→training)

1. Set inspirational, meaningful goals
2. Express confidence in subordinates together with **high performance expectations**
3. Foster opportunities for subordinates to **participate in decision making**
4. **Provide autonomy** from bureaucratic constraints
5. Appoint leaders that use power positively
6. Introduce reward systems that emphasize innovative and unusual performance
7. Ensure **task variety**
8. **Ensure personal relevance by conducting skills/task audits**
9. **Allow and encourage appropriate autonomy**
10. Keep levels of established routine and rules to a minimum
11. **Set progressively more challenging but attainable targets**
12. **Promote vicarious experience** – seeing similar others perform successfully can be highly motivating
13. Use verbal persuasion such as praise
14. **Support staff to manage their own emotion through training**, having clearly defined roles, reducing information overload and offering technical and administrative assistance

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