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Under Pressure: Occupational Differences in Stress, Resilience, and Decision-Making Across High-Stakes Professions

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Abstract

High-stakes situations need individuals to make decisions that often have serious, far-reaching, and irreversible consequences. This study examines the relationship between perceived stress, resilience, high-stakes exposure and decision making in four professions: Law & Order, Healthcare, Corporate, and Athletes. The present research employed Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), Brief Resilience Scale and Decision-Making Questionnaire on 123 respondents from four different professions. The results found that there was a significant difference in stress, resilience, high-stakes exposure, and decision-making between the 4 main professions. Law & Order professionals were shown to have the highest perceived stress as well as high-stakes exposure. Healthcare professionals demonstrated the highest overall decision-making scores, whereas athletes generally scored lowest across several decision-making dimensions. Corporate professionals demonstrated the highest resilience and control. Resilience demonstrated significant negative correlation with perceived stress. Additionally, in most professions' resilience had strong positive correlations with control, Law & Order being the exception. Relationships among decision-making dimensions were strongest among athletes and Law & Order professionals, whereas fewer significant associations were observed in the healthcare and corporate groups. High-stakes exposure demonstrated different patterns of association across professions. Multiple regression analyses further revealed that resilience was the strongest positive predictor of decision-making control, while perceived stress significantly predicted increased hesitancy and reduced decision-making control. High-stakes exposure also significantly predicted both hesitancy and control. These findings highlight the importance of resilience-building and stress-management interventions for professionals working in high-pressure occupations.

Keywords: decision making, resilience, high stakes exposure, perceived stress, athletes, law & order, healthcare, corporate