Garda Stress: Stress levels among male and female Garda, working in rural and urban areas.

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<u>Title</u>

Stress level among male and female Garda, working in rural and urban areas.

__Abstract__

CONTEXT: The Garda are an important part of society, who communicate with the public on a regular basis and provide a feeling of safety and security to many. The occupation of a Garda is a unique occupation which often places the officers in dangerous and compromising situations. Stressful situations are encountered on a regular basis, and over a long period of the untreated stress may have a damaging impact on the officer's health. It is the aim of this research project to explore firstly, the difference in stress experiences between male and female Garda. The second aim of the research is to examine the difference in stress levels experienced by Garda working in rural and urban areas. METHOD: A quantitative research design was used for this research. There were 197 participants in total. Of these there were 109 males and 88 females, and 102 were rural Garda and 93 urban Garda. RESULTS: In looking at gender difference in stress the female mean score was 29.39, and the male mean score was 28.19. In looking at area and stress, results showed that the mean score for stress in urban areas was 29.90, whereas for rural areas the mean score was 28.53. Stress was slightly higher for Garda working in rural areas, but there wasn't a significant difference. CONCLUSION: In looking at the mean stress scores for males and females working as Garda it is evident that females are slightly more stressed than males but there is no significant difference. In looking at the mean scores of stress for Garda working in urban areas and Garda working in rural areas it is evident that stress was slightly higher for Garda working in urban areas, but there was no significant difference.

<u>Introduction</u>

Police officers have a unique occupation, in which they are more likely to experience traumatic events which may be harmful to their physical and emotional well being (Anshel 2000; Anshel, Robertson & Caputi 1997; Deschamps, Pagnon, Badiner, Marchand & Merle 2003; He, Zhao & Archbold 2002; Violanti & Aron 1995). Police officers are rated number three in the surveillance of occupational stress and mental illness. In the work police officers do they are more open to experiencing issues such as stress, anxiety, relational problems, and physical health problems (Burke 1993). There is a growing amount of literature to suggest that stress can have negative effects on a person's ability to be able to perform tasks properly. This then suggest that their potential inability's to perform tasks efficiently may put others they are working with at risk (Regehr, LeBlanc, Jelley & Barath (2008). As society is constantly changing so are the working demands and roles of police officers. This makes policing a highly stressful occupation. In England 26% of medical retirement is due to psychological ill health. This in turn would be a costly expense to the state. Due to technological, economic and social changes in society the role of police officers has been transformed, creating new work demands (Deschamps et al 2003). Officers are expected to apply good judgment in dangerous situations (Deschamps et al 2003).

Problems in organisation conditions, such as poor communication, are more common in public sector services as they have public management strategies which are constantly striving for more efficiency (Brunetto & Farr-Wharton 2005).

Their experience of stress arises from the exposure to physical and psychological demands in work, and the lack of resources available to deal with these demands. Stress occurs when a person does not have the resources to meet the demands (Kemeny 2003). This results in using an umbrella of coping strategies in an attempt to restore balance (eg. Eden 1990). Stress can affect a person's performance, and can often impair their ability, although this is not always the case and individual differences can counteract this (Bolger 1990). Research suggests that

the outcome of this process could be influenced by extraneous factors, such as gender, age and personality. Although the study carried out by Ortega, Brenner & Leather (2006) hypothesis that gender, age, rank tenure and personality would be significantly associated with occupational stress was showed that gender, age and rank did not show any significant relationship to the endogenous variables. Although personality and tenure were found to be significantly related to occupational stress and coping mechanisms. This study had emphasized the importance of including personality in occupational stress research.

The unique work environment police and Garda face is often dangerous and unpredictable (Common & Evans 1991; He Zhao & Archbold 2002; Vedanta & Aron 1993). A lack of peer support and trust may contribute to, and escalate job related stress (Graf 1986; LaRocco, House & French 1980). Graf (1986) believes that this could be because work related stress might only be truly understood by people within that particular organisation. According to Violanti & Aron (1993) the bureaucratic nature of the police force may be a contributing factor to job related stress. It has a quasi-military nature, and there is very little individual input (Coman and Evans 1991). According to Brown (1996) and Manolias (1983) another contributing factor which may contribute to stress in the police may be due to hierarchical and military culture, poor managerial style and lack of support. The unique work that police do may have an impact on their personal lives, making it difficult for them to balance work and private life (Burke 1993; Jackson & Maslach 1982)

According to Breslau (2002) 80% of the general population stated that have experienced at minimum, one traumatic event in their life. Of the people 7% to 12% of them develop post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Seedat & Stein 2001). According to the American Psychiatric Association (2000) traumatic events and PTSD and more common in high risk populations, such as law enforcement officers (this also includes disadvantaged

urban dwellers, survivors of car accidents, ex- military personnel). Experiencing trauma may have damaging effects on physical health (Sareen, Cox, Clara & Amsundson 2005; Schnurr &Green 2004), and may be damaging to mental health causing issues such as panic disorder (Lesking & Sheikh 2002).

Another factor which may contribute to work related stress in the police force is choice and availability of coping mechanism. Psychological stress can be defined as the functions of the persons' assessment and perception, of the difference between the demands of the situation and a person's ability to meet those demands. The process that reduces the imbalance between demands and the ability to meet those demands is 'coping' (Lazarus, 1993, 1999). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) differentiated between 'problem focused' and 'emotion focused' coping strategies. Anshel (2000) progressed to further explain these as 'approach' and 'avoidance' coping strategies. Approach or problem focused strategies are used are used to try to improve the situation and reduce the imbalance according to Ashel (2000) and Dewe et al (1993). Avoidance or emotion focused is used in an attempt to reduce the emotional strain experienced. Treason & Muhonen (2003) found no link between problem focused strategies and health, a persons health didn't improve by confronting the problem. Ashford (1988) found that in some cases problem focused strategies could have stressful implications for a person. It has been suggested that men usually used problem focused strategies, whereas women tend to use emotion focused strategies (Hurst & Hurst 1997). Although some authors such as Parkes (1990) found that there were no gender differences in coping. Long (1990) is of the opinion that females cope with issues in a more passive manner than males, can be seen as gender stereotyping. Narayanan, Menon & Spector (1999) argue that it is not the gender which is important when looking at coping strategies, but rather it is the individuals place in the hierarchical structure of an organisation that matters. There is evidence to suggest that police officers often use maladaptive emotion focused

behaviors for immediate stress reduction (Evans & Comman 1993; Richmond, Wodak, Kehoe & Heather 1998; Volanti, Marshall & Howe 1985). It is noted that along with coping strategy, individual differences are important in relation to how exposure to traumatic events affects someone (Regehr, Hill & Glancy 2000). According to Ingledew, Hardy & Cooper (1997) avoidance coping strategies often lead to psychological stress and poor well being. Many Studies have found that psychological and personality characteristics are important in determining which coping strategy to use. Evans, Coman and Stanley (1992) and Kaufmann & Beehr (1989) have said that there are other variables important in determining the coping strategies, such as, age, gender, rank and tenure.

Studies have shown Anxiety Sensitivity (AS) to be more severe in people who suffer from panic disorders and PRSD, compared to those with other anxiety disorders (Taylor et. al 2001, 2003; Taylor, Koch & Mc Nally 1992).It is thought that AS plays a role in PTSD. It can be seen that (a) the degree of AS is positively correlated with the severity of PTSD symptoms (Asmundson, Norton, Allerdings, Norton and Larsen 1998; Fedoroff, Taylor, Asmundson and Koch 2000; Stewart Conrad, Samoulk, Pihl & Dongier 2000). (b) Reductions in AS are associated with reductions in PTSD symptom severity after twelve weeks cognitive behavioural therapy for PTSD (Federoff et al 2000). Although the results of (a) and (b) are not withstanding. AS is a large dimension that has many smaller dimensions, these include fear of mental incapacitation, fear of publicity observable symptoms, and fear of somatic symptoms (Zinbard, Barlow & Brown 1997; Zvolensky, Mc Neil, Porter & Stewart 2001). Although few studies have been done on lower AS dimensions and PTSD symptom severity.

It has been established by Amsundson & Stapleton (2008) that AS is more severe in

Patients with panic disorder and patients with PTSD compared to those with other anxiety disorders (eg. Taylor et al 1992). Research conducted by Amundsen & Stapleton (2008) also found that a higher percentage of officers with PTSD scored positively on the brief screen for panic disorder (Apfeldorf at al 1994) compared to those without PTSD. According to Amundsen & Stapleton (2008) PTSD symptom severity was predicted by depressive symptoms, number of reported traumas, and AS somatic concerns. AS psychological and social concerns were not significant predictors of PTSD total symptom severity.

A study was conducted by Ortega, Brenner and Leather (2005) in order to see (a) if there was a correlation between personality well-being and work attitude. They also sought to find out (b) if coping strategies were directly related to well being and work attitudes. The results of these found that personality traits were directly related to work related stress, coping strategies and burn out. Personality traits were also found to be negatively related to overall job satisfaction. Gender, age and rank didn't show any significant correlation with any of the endogenous variables. Occupational stressors were linked to low organisational commitment and poor overall job satisfaction. Also, Coping strategies are directly related to organisational commitment and job satisfaction.

McLaughlin & Murji (1993) believe that there has been a change in managers style in recent years, and refer to it as 'new managerialism'. The methods and models of management have changed. From this there has been a rise in the stress levels of public sector staff that are expected to manage this change (Cox, Boot & Cox 1988; Higley and Cooper 1986).

Police in Britain have received much criticism of their work in terms of efficiency (Sheehy 1992), Probity (Morton 1993) and core functions (Posen 1994). Davidson & Veno (1980) suggest that the criticisms the police are receiving are causing and contributing to pressures and tensions of officers. This along with proposed organisational change may lead to further stress of police officers. In relation to organisational change, new managerial

innovations expect different work demands of police officers, including senior police officers. These officers were once selected for their operational skills and may now be resistant to change (Bradley, Walker & Wilkie 1986). The work of Manning (1991) shows that senior officers attitude to IT is willful ignorance. A change which is required of them may lead to stress. Research conducted by Brown, Cooper & Kirkcaldy (1996) on occupational stress among senior police officers found that the main source of stress were staff shortages, unsettling turnover rates, insufficient finance or resources, a lack of consultation or communication, mundane administrative tasks or paperwork, characteristics from the organisation structure, too much work, factors not under their direct control and keeping up with new techniques.

Much research looks at crime only in urban areas, instead of comparing urban and rural areas (Smity & Huff, 1980). Crime rates in an area are thought to be a significant factor in the stress officer's experience. Crime in rural areas has always been lower than crime in urban areas, and much literature suggests this is still true of today's society (Weisheit, Falcome & Wells 1994). Smith (1980) suggests that these crime rates are lower due to informal structures and controls in rural society. In America the Uniform Crime Report (1990) stated that violent crime is significantly lower in rural areas. Although property crime is similar between rural and urban areas. In America the National Crime Survey (1990) explains the 25% of victimisations of rural residents happen away from their communities, while the same fact was only true for 10% of urban dwellers. Many researchers believe that rural areas that are expanding rapidly often experiences large increases in crime. Fischer (1980) believes that with advances in technology, communication and transportation rural and urban differences are becoming less apparent, he called this 'massification'. In contrast with this belief, the National Crime Survey reported that from 1973 to 1990 there has been a decrease in

victimisation, across both rural and urban areas. Fischer (1980) also stated that what is happening in urban areas diffuses to smaller cities and eventually to rural areas. Huff (1990) states that gang members are typically inner city, but over time they have diffused out to rural areas (Weingarten & Coates 1989). Although crime in rural areas is lower than that of urban areas, there is a misguided perception that rural areas are 'crime free'. Crime rates in rural areas have been rising through the years, and there are often serious crimes taking place in these small areas. A factor which may deter people in rural communities from committing crimes is informal social relationships. People is small communities often know each other and have social relationships with each other, and this may deter someone from committing a crime. Although this can also be negative as people may be naive about crimes being committed, and believe that it is not someone from the local area. Crime, Violence and gangs usually appear first in urban areas, so in an attempt to deal with this problem policy makers focus only on these areas. These crimes often spread out to rural areas, and there are no resources to deal with them as policy makers have often used up the resources available in urban areas were the problem is more severe, and were the problem originated. This can be seen in a case of America, in 1968 the Omnibus crime Control AND Safe Streets Act was passed in an attempt to reduce lawlessness and much funding was provided by the government (Carter 1982. However, this funding was only distributed to urban areas, as rural areas were thought not to be affected. As a result of the neglect of these rural areas there was a rapid increase in crime. This crime rates was then referred to as 'urban spill over'. It is recognised that in rural areas, less serious crimes are committed than in urban areas and that crime rates are lower. Although there should be policies put in place to ensure crime does not rise, a proactive approach should be taken (Hunt, 1965; Polk, 1969; Gibbons, 1972; Phillips, 1976; Fisher, 1980).

In America in 1959 the Federal Bureau of Investigations published a Uniform crime

report. This report showed for rural areas the 397 crimes reported to law enforcements, for every 100,000 persons living in rural areas. Since then this figure has risen to 2, 105 in 1991, which shows that rural crime has risen 430% since 1959. It is also noted that crime rates on theft have always been higher in urban areas than rural areas. These crimes were at an all time high in 1977, but have since then decreased. According to the Uniform Crime Report in 1991 in America there is only a slight difference in burglary rates in rural and urban areas, although there was a difference in how entry to the house was gained. There was a much greater amount of forced entry in urban areas; while in rural area two thirds of the burglaries did not involve forced entry. The thief often gained access through an unlocked door or window. It is thought that much of the burglaries could have been prevented with more security precautions being taken by homeowners. Rural crimes are often as a result of opportunity, rather than premeditated. Weisheit at al. (1993) speaks of how 'fear of crime rates' were higher in urban areas in the 1970, but in the 1980's there has been a convergence of urban and rural 'fear of crime' rates.

Rural crime is often thought to be an effect of urban crime, but it is unfair to blame the nearest urban area for all the problems of the rural area. Rural areas are changing over time, and with this come effects such as crime rates. The causes of these increases in crime in rural areas can be explained by factors. Opportunity is a factor, along with peoples homes being left vacant more often, as most people now have cars and travel further distances away from home. At third factor is due to the decline in agriculture as a way of life, neighbors are less likely to know each other. This may result is less surveillance of the house.

Traditionally police forces were male dominated, although that is changing in recent times. There was a system where senior police officers views were mainly traditional in their

outlook (Bryant, Dunkerly & Kelland 1985). They are less likely to discuss their problems because they want to be seen as 'macho' (Reiner 1985). A study by Alexander and Walker (1994) on Scottish police officers showed that senior police officers are more likely to take their problems home with them. In a study by Brown, Cooper & Kirkcaldy (1996) few officers would approach senior officers or get professional help, although two-thirds did speak to their colleagues about problems. Brown (1998) and Brewer (1991) believe that a credible external threat can create a sense of solidarity and unity among officers, which may increase their interdependence.

Models of stress need to be occupational specific, so the specific sources of stress in an occupation can be realised, and not overlooked (Dollard, Dormann, Boyd, Winefield & Winedield 2003; Sparks & Cooper 1993). Occupation specific stress scales are more reliable than general stress scales (Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua & Stough 2001). Subgroups within an occupation may also experience stress differently (Johnson, Cooper, Cartwright, Donald, Taylor & Millett 2005). Gender and different races are such an example of this subgroup (Morash & Haarr 1995).

Dollard et al. (2003) states that human services employees experience a unique kind of stress because they deal directly with clients and the public. Sparks & Cooper (1990) support the idea of job specific models of stress, so the experience of job stressors can be more easily understood. Job specific stress models have already been developed for police (Anshel, Robertson & Caputi 1997), there is a two factor police system in looking at police stress, which are operational and management/ organisational (Brown & Feilding 1993). Police officers often face operational stressors such as exposure to danger, death, traumas and dealing with violent and abusive members of the public (Ashnel et al 1997; Thompson, Kirk-Brown & Brown 2001). Management/ organisational stressors faced are problems such as,

work overload, staff shortages, poor communication and lack of support. Although these models of police stress are based on only males.

For female officers there are two main types of stress they may face, these are static factors and dynamic factors. Static factors refers to social status of being a police woman, and research shows that due to the traditional police organisational culture women are likely to experience more stress than a male (Brown & Cambell, 1990; Burke, 1988; Deaux & Ullman, 1983; Galinski, Bond & Friedman 1993, 1996). Many social theorists believe that many stressful experiences that people face may often be down to social structures, and a person's place within that social structure. Women are often expected to act in gender appropriate ways, and expected not to step outside the cultural norms. Although female police are often seen to be breaking this mould, it may result in stressful feeling for them (Balkin, 1988; Deaux & Ullman, 1983; Martin 1980, 1990, 2004). Dynamic factor include issues such as the police working environment in general, and coping mechanisms adopted to deal with work related stress. Morash & Haarr (1995) state that males and females experience stress differently, and if so then the operational and management structure may not be suitable, as it may not suit females. Females entering the police force are entering into one of the most stereotypically male occupations (Martin 1980, 2004). Some subgroups in occupations, such as race and gender may experience stress differently to someone in a different subgroup (Morash & Haarr 1995). A person may be more likely to experience stressors depending on their race and gender (Berdahl & Morre 2006). The reasons why they may experience more stressors are because they are more likely to experience issues such as racial harassment (Harrell 2000) and sexual harassment (Avina & O'Donohue). Males and females often experience workplace stress differently due to the gendered nature of the organisation (Haarr & Morash 1999; Morash & Haarr 1995). Just because they work in the same environment does not mean they experience stress the same. Young (1991) indicates that police women

are given low status, and denied social value by many policemen. Women are more likely than men to report feelings of isolation and feeling undervalued, in relation to their male co-workers. This in turn makes those more likely to suffer from stress (Brown et al 1999).Women may be more stressed than men as they often must try to juggle family life and work. This extra burden is usually dealt with by mother rather than father. There are issues that make it difficult for the two tasks to run in harmony together due to the nature of police work. These include issues such as, the abnormal hours of shift work, overtime, travelling long distances to work and taking phone calls when off duty. Silvestri (2003) speaks of how women often do not support other women in the police force, even though they may often go though similar experiences of discrimination and look to each other for support. He refers to it as "being in the sisterhood of no sisters". Martin's (1979) distinguishes between two types of female police officers "policeWOMEN" and "POLICEwomen". "POLICEwoman" refers to women who see their job as their primary role, and they get involved as the same tasks as men. "policeWOMEN" is talking of a woman that does not take her role as an officer as her primary role. Dangerous situations are often avoided. This view is in line with the stereotypical view many people have of female officers. Stress for female officers is often present before the nature of the job is taken into account. Female officers are more likely to have to deal with higher levels of harassment, overt hostility, and other types of negative social interactions on the job (Brown & Campbell, 1990; Haarr & Morash, 1999; He et al., 2002; Pendergrass & Ostrove, 1984).

Women experience issues such as harassment bias, which account for 5% more of variance in reported stress. The likeliness of belonging to a highly stressed group increase by 48% for females, than males (Morash & Haarr 1999). Women are more likely to be stressed by interpersonal conflicts, and responsibility for relationships (Fotinatos- Ventouratos & Cooper 2005). According to Pines & Zaidmam (2003) having emotional support available is

more important to females than males. For females it is important to have people there to support them in times of stress, whereas this is not as important for males (Belle 1987; Greenglass 2003). Female police officers report more sexual harassment and discrimination issues than men, which in turn may lead to more stress (Brown & Fielding 1993; Burke & Mikkelsen 2005). In a study conducted by (Sheridan 2009) results showed that 57% of respondents felt that women were treated differently by supervisors when they were allocating duties. This included issues such as not allowing two police women to patrol together. Women were often places in public offices and they are deemed to have more interpersonal skills for dealing with the public. Discrimination such as this is likely to result in women becoming stressed, as they often have to prove themselves. Halford (1997) is of the belief that no matter how hard a woman works and how competent she is, she will never be accepted in the same way as her female counterpart. This can lead to frustrations and stress. Negative male attitudes towards policewomen ability to do their work, may often deter women from seeking promotions (Wexler and Quinn, 1985). Anderson et al, (2003) recognized that sexual harassment is highly prevalent in the police force. Sexual language and discourse are often displayed regularly. This may lead to female officers experiencing feelings of objectification on their bodies. Women in the police force may be treated as sexual objects rather than police officers (Hunt 1990).

Although, the general perception of stress in seen to be a negative, it also has positive implications and stress is not necessarily a bad thing (Nelson & Simmons 2003). Eustress is the positive type of stress, whereas distress is negative stress (Selye 1976). Simmons and Nelson (2001) found eustress to be tied to hope, meaningfulness and positive emotions. In the past there was much attention paid to the negative effects of stress, but now there should be a shift to how stress can be positive for health, growth and well being (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2000). If stress is managed in the right was it can be energizing, stimulating

and push people to achieve their abilities (Quick, Nelson & Quick 1990). There are two hypothesis for this research. The first is that it is hypothesised that female Garda will score higher than male Garda in stress levels. The second hypothesis is that Garda working in urban areas will be more stress than Garda working in rural areas. There is much previous literature on stress levels and the police force. Although there is very little research done on the Garda this is a void which needs to be filled. At the time of this research there was no research on the differences in stress levels in different areas in Ireland. This research is relevant as it may highlight very high levels of stress for certain sex Garda, or for Garda working in certain areas. Action can then be taken in an attempt to relieve the stress for all experiencing it, in particular for the highly stressed groups. If stress is not addressed it can have damaging effects on the person. With counseling services set up, and efficient programmes to help those in need of them, this may then result in a happier and more efficient Garda force. This in turn may make the general public feel more secure and trusting in the capabilities of the Garda.

Method

Materials: The questionnaire used in this study is the Perceived Stress Scale (PPS) by

Cohen, Kamarck and Mermelstein 1983). The questions asked about feelings and thoughts of

stress that the person experienced in the past month. There were 14 items on the PSS these

ranged from 0= never, 1= almost never, 2= sometimes, 3= fairly often to 4= very often.

Scores range from 4 to 56, with higher scores indicating more stress. Closed questions are

used and are useful as they provide uniform responses, which are easy to analyze (Maxfield

& Babbie, 2005).

Participants: Participants were obtained by means of an opportunistic sample. There were

197 participants in total. There were 109 males and 88 females. There were 102 from a rural

area and 93 for an urban area.

*Design***:** A Quantitative methodology is the preferred method for gathering and analysing

data for this research. This was used as results can be seen more explicitly, and it is allows

for easier comparisons, and also allows for easier summarisations (Maxfield & Babbie,

2005). Bachman & Schutt (2008) believe that questionnaires are a good way of collecting

data as they are well designed and can provide much information on a verity of social issues.

This is a non-experimental research design. The criterion variable is stress, and the predictor

variable is area and sex.

*Procedure***:** A cover letter was sent to the superintendents in each of the four Garda stations

explaining the nature of the study. It included information about the researcher, it explained

the reasoning for conducting the study and it asked for Garda co-operation in filling in and

returning the questionnaires. Also included was a copy of the questionnaire. They were

advised of the anonymity of the study. There were no identifiable features on the survey, to ensure the individuals completing the survey could not be identified. This was followed by a phone call to secure permission and when written permission was received the questionnaires were sent to the stations, along with a self addressed return envelope. The researchers contact details were sent to the stations encases of any questions or misunderstandings or clarifications needed regarding the study. Once the questionnaires were filled out by the Garda and returned, they were analyzed using a computer programme for analysing data called SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientists).

Results

Gender difference and stress: For females the mean score was 29.39 (SD= 4.27). This was slightly higher than the males the mean score for stress levels in Garda depending on sex, which was 28.19(SD= 5.24). However, an independent t-test indicated that there was no significant difference in stress levels between males and females, t(185)=-1.698,p>.05.

Table I Difference between male and female stress levels,

sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
male	102	28.18 63	5.23456	.51830
female	85	29.38 82	4.27087	.46324

The table above shows that there is a slight difference between male and female stress levels, with females being slightly more stressed.

Area difference and stress: The mean score for urban Garda was 29.90 (SD= 4.42). This was slightly higher than the Mean score for stress levels for Garda working in rural areas which was 28.53 (SD = 5.23). However, an independent t-test indicated that there was no significant difference in stress levels between urban and rural Garda, t(183)=.514, p>.05.

Table 2 Garda stress in rural areas

area	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
urban	89	28.89 89	4.41857	.46837
rural	96	28.53 13	5.23139	.53393

The table above shows that there is a slight difference between Garda stress in rural areas, and Garda stress in urban areas. The Garda working in urban areas were slightly more stressed.

<u>Discussion</u>

Introduction: This research was conducted in an attempt to see if stress levels in Garda were affected by 1. Sex and 2. Working in rural/ urban areas. The results showed that female Garda do experience more stress than male Garda, although these results were not significant as female Garda were only slightly more stressed than male Garda. It also showed that Garda in urban areas are more stressed than Garda in rural areas, but once again these results were not significant as Garda in urban areas were only slightly more stressed than Garda in rural areas. These results followed in the right direction prediction of the hypothesis, although the results were not significant. Therefore the hypothesis was not supported.

Possible reasons for similar stress of Garda in rural and urban areas: The literature on Garda in urban areas being more stressed that Garda in rural areas is limited. The available literature suggests that Garda in urban areas would be more stressed than Garda in rural areas, although the results found no significant difference in stress levels. There is little previous literature in this area, and the literature is not swaying in one direction. The reason for this for this may be that crimes in rural areas are on the rise. Such evidence of this can be seen across many news paper articles and the news. This can be seen in an Article where a senior Garda from mayo speaks of the rise in crime in rural areas. There has been a rise in almost all areas of crime. The senior officer has also recognized that the number of Garda in rural Mayo has decreased. This may have resulted in extra pressure for other members of the Garda, and therefore a rise in stress levels. This can also be seen in the case of the Uniform Crime Report in America which shows that from 1959 to 1991 crime in rural areas has risen by 430%. Although the fact that urban areas have more serious crime than urban areas, may have been thought to be more stressful for Garda working in urban areas.

The Irish Rural Link, which represents over three hundred rural organizations speaks

of the rising crime rates in rural England, and how this is likely to become the same in rural Ireland. A possible reason for this may be the ban on recruiting Garda at the moment, as part of the Government cutbacks. This results in less Garda available to protect communities. There is also fear of some small Garda stations in rural areas being closed down as part of the Government cutbacks, which would result in more pressure and possibly stress for Garda in nearby stations.

According to the American Psychological Association (1993) in both rural and urban areas the moral influence of religion, family and schools have now been weakend due to the emergence of violence, drug use and the emergence of gangs. Therefore crime is no longer as unacceptable as it once was. The American Psychological Association (1993) the influence of the media, which is widely read and viewed in rural and urban areas, is desensitizing the consequences of violence and making it more acceptable and the norm to people.

Crime once predominantly took place in urban areas, however it must be now said that there is a shift in crime to rural areas. It is thought that this shift may be due to the spread of drug trafficking from urban areas. Drug trafficking can be seen as the driving force for the spread of drug use, and the development of gangs in rural areas. Rural officers are often forced to work with less staff, less resources, lower budgets and few written policies. This may result in a more stressful experience as a Garda. Although in the US it has been stated that rural officers are deemed to be more respected and efficient than urban officers.

Possible reasons for similar stress experiences of males and females: The results of this study which showed that females were not significantly more stressed than males were not consistent with Kanter (1977) research. The vast majority of the previous literature suggested that females are likely to be more stressed than males and only a small minority of the literature disagreed with this.

Reasons for the similar stress levels in male and female Garda may be due to the coping mechanisms which they use. Women often use emotion focused coping strategies ,while problem focused coping strategies are more associated with men. Brown and Cambell (1990) state that personality factors are important to the way in which people cope with stress. Another potential reason why females are not significantly more stressed than males may be due to their rank in the Garda. The first female Garda entered the force as recently as 1959. The first woman to be promoted to superintendent took place in 1989, and the first woman to be promoted to Assistant Commissioner took place as recent as 2003 (Human Resource Management 2009). In the Garda males have always held the more dominant positions, while females were usually lower down in rank. It may be possible that females are not significantly more stressed than males because they are not in highly positioned roles. According to Human Resource Management (2009) 70% of female Garda are in the lower ranked jobs with less than ten years service.

Females Garda may have once been more stressed than male Garda, but the results of this research showed that there is no longer a significant difference. It is possible that female Garda were once more stressed then male Garda due to factors of discrimination. Until 1973 women were not allowed to join the Garda until aged 20, whereas the age for males was 18. They were also discriminated in terms of pay, as until The Equal Pay Act 1974 females only received 85% of men's wages, for similar work. This discrimination and subordination may have lead to female Garda once being more stressed than male Garda. This may have then died out as much due to equality legislation was being enforced. Sheridan (2009) presents that 74% of women believe that their male colleagues did not form a barrier, for the females succeeding in their career. Women seem to be much more accepted by male colleagues, than they once were. This may have resulted in a decrease in stress levels in female Garda. Another potential reason why females are not significantly more stressed than male Garda,

may be due to Kanter (1997) hypothesis on 'assimilation'. This refers to female Garda being placed in more feminine areas and taking part in more feminine duties, in comparison to male Garda. They rarely take part in 'male' work. This in turn suggests that women Garda are not as involved in disturbing and threatening situations to the extent that male Garda are, and therefore may not be highly stressed.

Limitations: If doing this research again the researcher should take into account the extraneous variables which were not controlled for in this research. These include factors such as the age of the Garda, the rank, the period of time which they have worked as a Garda, and the Garda's personality. Each one of these variables could have had an impact on the results. Another factor which may have influenced the results is the sample size. There were 197 participants in total, which 109 were males and 88 were females. This is a relatively small sample size, and future researchers may want to gather a greater sample size. This would be likely to improve the validity of the study. This should also strive to gather an equal amount of males and females.

Also, there were only four Garda stations involved in this study, as there were time limitations. For the rural areas the two Garda stations were in Co. Louth, and for the urban areas the two Garda stations were in Co. Dublin. Future researchers may which to gather a sample from other rural and urban counties, as this would also give the study more reliability and validity. This study does not allow for national generalization. Although it does give an in depth report of the stress felt by the Garda in these certain areas.

Access: Permission was granted from the superintendents at each of the four Garda stations. The questionnaire were then posted to each of the superintendents, to be completed by other Garda, and then returned. There was a slow response in the returning of questionnaires.

Originally there were few questionnaires returned, as they had not been completed or were misplaced. In one of the stations, a second batch of questionnaire had to be redistributed. It took many phone calls and letters over a long period of time, in order to get the sufficient number of questionnaires returned. Ott, (1989) speaks of how police officers can often be distrustful and unwilling to fill out questionnaires about personal issues. Brown (1996) progresses to explain that obtaining information can be difficult.

Impact of results: These result findings recognize that stress levels are similar for Garda who work in rural or urban areas. Therefore Garda who work in urban areas are not entitled to higher salaries. If the results of this study had showed that there was a significant difference in stress levels between Garda in rural areas and Garda in urban areas, this may have resulted in the more stressed Garda demanding pay increases.

In doing this research it became apparent to the researcher that the numbers of female Garda is much lower than the number of male Garda. This may be due to the difficult task of combining work life and family life. Westmarland (2001) believed that although women are free to choose their career directions, there are certain 'barriers' which influence these choices. It appears to be difficult for women to have a career as a Garda and to also contribute efficiently in family life. There should be policies put in place which allows women to combine a career in the Garda with childcare.

It is widely accepted that Garda have a stressful job, as Garda are likely to experience traumatic events. Even in looking at this study it can be seen that many Garda are stressed individuals. If as a result of stress and research conducted about stress, programmes were put in place to help these individuals deal with their stress, this could also have positive implications. Actions may be taken in a proactive manner or a reactive manner. Proactive focuses on trying to take action before the problem occurs, or prevent the problem occuring

altogether. This can be done by training programmes and selection programmes and by using better selection criteria, and by administrative methods. Whereas reactive focuses on alleviating the problem of stress, by using methods such as counseling or rehabilitation programmes. In the 1990 'trauma training' was introduced to Balkans. There were teachings of traumatic stress and mental health issues, but for many these teachings were not helpful, but can be hurtful (Maynard 1990). Walker and Walter (2000) speak of how the Red Cross World Disaster Report strongly criticised many mental health initiatives, and called for a better standard of teachings. Therefore, if Ireland was looking at adopting mental health teachings and traumatic stress reduction programmes, there must be much care taken into what programmes are implemented. There would have to be much research done to ensure the proposed measures to deal with stress and trauma, are not harmful to those receiving it.

Due to this research and the previous literature it is evident that crime seems to be rising. There should be a proactive approach to the prevention of crime, which should result in lower crime rates, and in turn lower the stress levels of the Garda. Although it must be said that in attempting to prevent crime there must be caution taken, as different communities are highly diverse. What may work in one community will not necessarily be successful in another, so appropriate research must be carried out

Ethics: The World Medical Association drew up a declaration of ethics for human experimentation. They stated that the research must benefit the person in some way, the participants must be informed about the study, and it should be made clear that participation in voluntary. This study will benefit the Garda in many ways. It will give them an opportunity to express their feelings on stress. From this, services could be set up to help Garda cope with stress efficiently. Also, in Garda training in Templemore there should be a programme introduced on the stressful situations Garda may face, and how to cope with

them. If coping strategies were introduced this should lead to a stress reduction for Garda, because they would be aware of the best ways to deal with oncoming stress. There should be counselling available and easily accessible for Garda who have faced traumatic events.
It may also make the public aware of the stressful situations Garda face.
The questionnaires filled in anonymously, so the identity of the Garda could remain confidential.

Validity and Reliability: Validity and reliability were ensured by providing anonymity to the participants. Due to this participants could freely and honestly answer questions, while keeping their identity sealed. The independence of the researcher was made clear, so that participants would not be pushed to answering in a certain way. This ensured that participants would not answer in a way, which they believe the researcher wants them to. By using standardised questionnaires validity and reliability were increased, as there was no chance of the questions being reworded by the interviewer, in a different way which could influence the participants answer. Also, by not conducting face to face interviews lessens the chance of the researcher influencing the participant's answers.
Another factor which would have increased reliability and validity is the use of SPSS computer programme. This was used to analyse the data and reduces the possibility of human error in analysing the data.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire which was distributed.

Perceived Stress scale

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?

2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?

3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?

4. In the last month, how often have you dealt with irritating life hassles?

5. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were effectively coping with important changes that were occurring in your life?

6. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?

7. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?

8. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things you had to do?

9. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?

10. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?

11. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control?

12. In the last month, how often have you found yourself thinking about things that you have to accomplish?

13. In the last month, how often have you been able to control the way you spend your time?

14. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

0 = **never**
1 = **almost never**
2 = **sometimes**
3 = **fairly often**
4 = **very often**
Instructions

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way. Although some of the questions are similar, there are differences between them and you should treat each one as a separate question. The best approach is to answer each question

fairly quickly. That is, don't try to count up the number of times you felt a particular way, but rather indicate the alternative that seems like a reasonable estimate.

For each question choose from the following alternatives:

PSS-10 scores are obtained by reversing the scores on the four positive items, e.g., 0=4, 1=3, 2=2, etc. and then summing across all 10 items. Items 4,5, 7, and 8 are the positively stated items.

PSS-4 scores are obtained by reverse coding items # 2 and 3.

PSS-14 scores are obtained by reversing the scores on the seven positive items, e.g., 0=4, 1=3, 2=2, etc., and then summing across all 14 items. Items 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 13 are the positively stated items.

The PSS was designed for use with community samples with at least a junior high school education, The items are easy to understand and the response alternatives are simple to grasp. Moreover, as noted above, the questions are quite general in nature and hence relatively free of content specific to any sub population group. The data reported in the article are from somewhat restricted samples, in that they are younger, more educated and contain fewer minority members than the general population. In light of the generality of scale content and simplicity of language and response alternatives, we feel that data from representative samples of the general population would not differ significantly from those reported below.

Appendix 2

Dr. Bernadette Quinn,
Research Coordinator,
Social Science Programme,
Dublin Business School.

22nd October 2009.

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Re: Permission to conduct a research study with members of your organisation.

Grace Duffy is enrolled as a final year social science student at Dublin Business School. DBS social science students are required to complete an independent research project during their final year of study. Grace Duffy's final year research project aims to examine stress levels among the Garda, in both urban and rural settings.

All research conducted by final year students is done for the purpose of meeting course requirements. All results obtained are strictly confidential, and to be used for assessment of the researching student's qualifications for receipt of a BA in Social Science. Grace is requesting written permission, as soon as possible, to collect research data.

Please feel free to address any questions regarding this research to Dr. Bernadette Quinn, Research Coordinator, Social Science Programme, Dublin Business School. Grace Duffy [grace.duffy@hotmail.com] can also provide further details about how she will conduct her research study. Thank you for your time.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr. Bernadette Quinn
Tel: 01 4178737
Email: Bernadette.quinn@dbs.ie

Appendix 3

The Glebe

Inniskeen

Co. Monaghan

087-6157082

grace.duffy@hotmail.com

26/01/10

Superintendent Teady Muldoon

Kevin St. Garda Station

Kevin St.

Dublin 8

Co. Dublin

Dear Superintendant Muldoon,

My name is Grace Duffy and I am currently a final year student in Dublin Business School, where I am studying Social Science. As part of course requirement as a final year student I must complete a thesis.

As I have great interest in the Garda and see it as a possible future career for myself it seemed ideal to focus on this area for my thesis. I wish to measure the different levels of stress in Garda depending on the area in which they work. I propose to disperse approximately fifty to sixty questionnaires each to four Garda Stations. These Garda stations will consist of two from Co. Dublin and two from Co. Louth.

I have spoken to you approximately six weeks ago in relation to information I require from the Garda for the completion of my thesis, and you authorised me to send the Questionnaires directly to you.

All results and findings from this study are confidential, and are just for the purpose of the thesis. I have enclosed sixty copies of the questionnaire along with a self addressed envelope and stamps. I ask for your co-operation it their completion and return.

I look forward to your response,

Yours sincerely,

Grace Duffy.