"We Have a Lot of Responsibilities, and I Think That Gets Overlooked": Canadian Federal Parole Officers' Experiences of Occupational Stress

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Introduction

Studies on the occupational experiences of community correctional workers, specifically probation and parole officers (PPOs), have identified how stress laces through the job. PPOs face stressors arising from a variety of on- and off-duty sources (O'Donnell & Stephens, 2001; Slate & Johnson, 2013), with occupational stressors that can be broadly categorized as either operational (i.e., arising from the specific requirements of the job) or organizational (i.e., emerging from internal aspects of the correctional organization) (Norman & Ricciardelli, 2021). Most PPO research has unsurprisingly focused on how PPOs supervise probationers or parolees in community settings. However, there also exists a group of parole officers (POs) who work inside correctional facilities and contribute to community correctional services by preparing prisoners for their eventual release while they are still incarcerated. This latter group has received significantly less attention by criminologists. In Canada, the federal Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) employs more than 1,200 POs who work in either community or institutional settings (CSC, 2019). Responsibility for the Canadian correctional system is split between the federal system (for "persons sentenced to two years or more") and 13 provincial/territorial systems (for "persons sentenced to a maximum of two years less a day") (Ricciardelli, Crichton, & Adams, 2014, p. 100). The CSC is responsible for both the incarceration and community supervision of individuals in the federal system. Although community parole officers (CPOs) are based primarily in parole offices or residential facilities and provide supervision and support for former prisoners on conditional release during their reentry into the community, institutional parole officers (IPOs) work at federal correctional institutions, providing pre-release support and planning to incarcerated individuals. The CSC (2021, para. 2) states that:

> [Community correctional services are composed of] gradually releasing offenders, ensuring that they do not present a threat to anyone, and helping them adjust to life in the community.

At the CSC, IPOs serve a crucial role in helping prisoners prepare for community reintegration and in providing informed risk assessments of prisoners' likelihood of reoffending and of their needs for successful desistance from crime.

This article outlines key findings from a study on the occupational experiences of POs, based on 150 interviews with 54 CPOs and 96 IPOs employed by the CSC. It provides a window into the realities and challenges of parole work in the Canadian correctional system and contributes to the literature on community correctional workers' occupational stress by providing a nuanced analysis of the shared and distinct operational and organizational stressors experienced by POs working in both community and institutional contexts. Our main argument is that POs think of themselves as "people people" (Worrall & Mawby, 2014). That is, they believe that building relationships with individual parolees/prisoners is crucial and should be at the forefront of their concerns and actual work duties. A number of overlapping occupational stressors, however, limit their ability to perform as true supporters and careful supervisors of parolees. We begin this study by briefly summarizing the literature on occupational stress in community correctional work, recognizing in particular the lacuna in literature on IPO experiences. With this context established, we outline our methods and then proceed with our findings focused on participants' experiences of organizational and operational stressors, unpacking both the overlapping and distinct stressors experienced by CPOs and IPOs. We conclude by discussing the research implications and possible future directions.

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Organizational and Operational Stressors in Community Correctional Work: The Literature

Research on community supervision, most of which has focused on the United States, has identified several common organizational stressors among PPOs. Finn and Kuck (2005, p. 2), for example, identified large caseloads, a high volume of paperwork, and tight or unpredictable deadlines as the "'big three' sources of stress." Their findings are echoed by international researchers studying stress as experienced by community correctional workers (DeMichele & Payne, 2007; Farrow, 2004; Norman & Ricciardelli, 2021; O'Donnell & Stephens, 2001; Simmons, Cochran & Blount, 1997; Slate, Wells & Johnson, 2003; Thomas, 1988; West & Seiter, 2004; Whitehead & Lindquist, 1985). Other notable organizational stressors for PPOs include relational tensions with colleagues and/or management, the perception that probation

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and parole work is not valued within the organization, and the belief that pay and/or opportunities for promotion are limited (DeMichele & Payne, 2007; Farrow, 2004; Finn & Kuck, 2005; Moran, 2008; Norman & Ricciardelli, 2021; O'Donnell & Stephens, 2001; Slate and Johnson, 2013).

Researchers have also identified several operational stressors that shape the job realities of PPOs. These focus on concerns about risk and safety emerging from client contact or the cumulative impact of exposure to often difficult and sensitive material (e.g., reading case files about their clients' criminal history; seeing difficult images). Specifically, several studies have highlighted the stressful nature of interacting with clients, including those with complex personal, psychological, and social problems or violent criminal histories (Finn & Kuck, 2005; Lewis, Lewis & Garby, 2013). Exposure to potentially difficult or sensitive materials—including details of criminal activity, traumatic personal histories, or victims' statements—is a regular aspect of PPOs' work that can expose them to secondary (or "vicarious") trauma (Goldhill, 2019; Norman & Ricciardelli, 2021; Page & Robertson, 2021; Rhineberger-Dunn et al., 2016; Severson & Pettus-Davis, 2013). Unlike direct exposure to potentially psychologically traumatic events (PPTEs), vicarious trauma emerges from "the emotional, cognitive, and physical consequences of providing professional services to victims or perpetrators of trauma" (Severson & Pettus-Davis, 2013, p. 7).

Building on this body of literature, our study provides insight into the realities of POs in the Canadian context, drawing attention to the organizational and operational stressors as narrated by POs working both in community and institutional settings. By identifying and unpacking the experiences, both shared and unique, of these two groups, we provide a nuanced contribution to existing studies and contribute to the limited body of scholarship on Canadian community correctional workers. The primary intention of this article, however, is to inform practitioners, stakeholders, and employers of stress experiences among POs and to put forth suggestions for addressing these stressors.

Study Methods and Participants

We interviewed 150 parole officers who identified as either CPOs (n = 54) or IPOs (n = 96), although many had experience in both roles. At the time of interview, some participants were working in temporary or permanent management positions. The CSC is a federal government agency, thus bilingual, and has staff who are fluent in either or both English and French. We conducted one-on-one telephone interviews in English with 145 participants and two focus groups for 5 French-speaking participants. Given that the authors are not French speaking, the focus group was translated in real time and helped us make the study accessible to Francophone POs. In total, 76% (n = 114) participants identified as female, 22% (n = 33) identified as male, and 2% (n = 3) did not identify their gender. Nearly all participants (98%; n = 147) were employed full-time. We conducted semistructured interviews, following the conversation paths of the participants. Most interviews lasted between one and two hours. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and, following a semi-grounded constructed approach (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Ricciardelli et al., 2010), were coded in an open-ended manner that allowed us to identify salient themes that emerged from participants' statements. Funding for the current study was provided by the Union for Safety and Justice Employees, which represents POs working in Canada's federal correctional system. Recruitment was conducted with the assistance of the CSC, which used internal listservs to inform about the study. The study received ethics approval from Memorial University of Newfoundland's research ethics board (#20201495).

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Study Findings: Organizational Stressors in Canadian Federal Parole

Our data reveal that federal POs, whether working in the community or institutions, face several overlapping organizational stressors that affect their well-being on the job as well as their perceived ability to perform their duties to the best of their abilities. First, participants voiced workload-related concerns (i.e., the type, frequency, or quantity of job tasks), the two most prominent being their caseload size as well as the frequency of meetings with parolees under their supervision. Participants also mentioned organizational deadlines and the volume of paperwork and other administrative duties in general as sources of work-related stress. These particular concerns intersect with concerns about staffing (i.e., short-staffing or lack of backfill when taking leave) and tensions with management. For some POs, these organizational stressors are interpreted as barriers to the relational aspect of their job, meaning their ability to build relationships with parolees/prisoners and, therefore, to adequately fulfil their job mandate (i.e., provide support and supervision with the goal of ensuring public safety).

Caseload Size. Although both CPOs and IPOs described concerns about the volume of clients on their caseload, the nature of supervision differs between these two groups. IPOs, with some exceptions for those working in specialized units, described managing caseloads that typically consisted of 28 to 32 prisoners. CPOs, meanwhile, are assigned a minimum frequency of contact (FOC) that they must maintain with the clients on their caseload. This minimum FOC is determined by the CSC "based on the offender's specific reintegration needs and risk of reoffending" (OAGC, 2018, para. 6.42). In both roles, POs are expected to build supportive relationships with their clients, ensure regular communication, and gather information that will help them make informed professional risk assessments—duties that many participants believe are compromised by high caseloads or FOC volumes. Participants in both groups routinely identified their caseload size or FOC volume as a source of stress, particularly as these quantitative measures fail to capture the potentially challenging nature of particular individual cases:

> The work that we do it's really nuanced and it's really important and I think we can do better work . . . if we just had less individuals we had to work with. 'Cause every person is an individual and every person deserves our full attention and our support if we're gonna protect the public and help that person get rehabilitated and reintegrated. . . . At the end of the day, parole officers are risk management officers I think, right? So how much time you give to a person is gonna be based on how much risk to the public

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> they might be—like, that's how we decide how often we're gonna see that person, the frequency of contact. . . . With some people you need more contact than others. . . . [POs] are doing the best that they can, and I think that their ability to do their job and the quality of the work that they do could really be improved . . . if the number was relaxed (participant 18, female, CPO).

> Right now at [name of institution] I think our caseloads are averaging about 28, which is just kind of on the cusp of being about too many. We've been as high as 34–35 before, and I've been as low as 24. But I don't know how much CSC recognizes how much work one individual case is. You'll get the occasional easy case where a guy is early into a 25-year sentence and doesn't need a whole lot, but that just makes it so you have enough time to deal with the higher needs guys with mental health issues or [who] are doing short-term sentences or require a lot of casework early on. And the hard part's the juggling and then also individual cases . . . where you have the pretty heavy [cases] and sex offenders. And the institution shrugs its shoulders and says, "well we don't have to keep you at 28 [cases]; 28 is a luxury.". . . I know there's been a proposal for where if we went over 28 [cases], we got compensated extra for taking on additional offenders. I think that would deter the institution from making us go over and at least we're then being compensated for the extra stress from that workload (participant 1, male, IPO).

In these statements, participants 18 and 1 voice the concern, echoed by many POs, that their caseload size combined with the associated FOC requirements has left them unable to dedicate sufficient time to individual parolees/prisoners, particularly those who are deemed to be greater risk and in need of greater levels of support. Participant 18 explains that the level of FOC requirements is actually detrimental to public safety, as it leaves less time for providing hands-on support to parolees by limiting the time POs can devote to individual clients. Participant 1 similarly identifies caseload size as a barrier to effective supervision and support provision for prisoners, particularly those with "higher needs," and suggests that IPOs should be compensated for the "extra stress" created by higher caseloads. CPOs and IPOs describe quantitative supervision targets as inadequately capturing the subjective interpersonal aspects of parole work—factors that are crucial for providing effective support to clients and making informed risk assessments, however risk assessments are interpreted.

Deadlines. Related to PO concerns about caseload or FOC volumes is the organizational stressor of deadlines. Many deadlines are legislated, such as when reports must be submitted for a prisoner's Parole Board of Canada hearing or when community housing must be arranged for a prisoner who is nearing his or her conditional release date. In addition, participants explained how they are regularly confronted with unanticipated deadlines that can arise quickly and, as a result, force them "to drop everything" (participant 15, female IPO) or focus on "putting out fires" (participant 12, female, IPO) before returning to their normal work routine. Participants noted the impact of both legislated and unanticipated deadlines on their workload and effectiveness at maintaining public safety:

> I think it's very challenging when there are high caseloads, and with that expectation you tend to lose sight of certain things that you need to get done. And I don't think that you have enough time to complete a proper risk assessment when you're fighting to meet the deadline. I think that interferes when you have high caseloads, you're understaffed, there's nobody to cover you if you're away—basically the work will fall on you, even in vacation and stuff. If you want to take a vacation, you're going to have to do the work ahead of time and when you return, it's not like somebody can just take over work you're doing. I think that's a big challenge (participant 132, female, CPO).

> I think that a lot of the time [POs] don't get viewed as our job is that stressful. I think it's like, "well you write paperwork, you write reports, you don't respond to incidents, you know, how stressful can it be?" But it's like, "well we're dealing with deadlines where things will get done on time or the safety of the public can be in real danger." So we have a lot of responsibilities and I think that gets overlooked (participant 30, female, IPO).

As these participants indicate, POs feel pressure to complete certain tasks by predetermined deadlines, adding to the feelings of stress they experience in their jobs. As participant 30's words evidence, POs understand that failing to meet a deadline can have ramifications not only for their own job performance review but also for their clients' legal future. Participant 132's words demonstrate how other organizational factors, such as staffing levels, can amplify the stress of deadlines.

Administrative Tasks and Paperwork. A final workload-related stressor for both CPOs and IPOs is paperwork and other administrative tasks. As with caseloads/FOC and deadlines, POs identified the burden of administrative tasks as stressful and felt the time they devoted to paperwork distracted them from other supervision responsibilities, including those more oriented toward helping parolees/prisoners on their desistance pathway. Participant 7 (female, IPO) explained:

> I think we're becoming over-reliant on this paperwork, excuse my language, but [this] "cover your ass" kind of thing, where we've gotten away from parole work. And just the whole offender management system, it's just so ridiculous. Like, I can do a report and then it takes me a good half an hour to just add the conditions, import the report into the system, and fix, cause once I save it it's going to be all jumbled up and then I got to go back in and straighten it all out. . . . When I have to enter [a report] into the system, it's going to take a good half hour, 40 minutes at least. It's quite ridiculous. . . . I know it won't ever change [laughing]. Just, it's just the bureaucracy, the slowness of the system of entering, like the offender management system that we use, or . . . submitting in a claim for travel, it's all the administrative stuff that just drives me crazy.

As participant 7 demonstrates, paperwork and inefficient technology represent time-consuming parts of POs' daily work routines, creating frustration for some POs. Moreover, POs recognize that paperwork serves multiple purposes, including a form of protection from legal vulnerabilities (see Ricciardelli, forthcoming), which increases stress and occupational burden given that there is an omnipresent recognition that POs can be held accountable if their actions, for whatever reasons, result in adverse behaviors on the part of their clients. Moreover, beyond the paperwork itself, the system and administrative processes that the paperwork must follow remain a further source of stress, as time is spent administratively

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and dealing with technology rather than continuing to productively move forward with occupational responsibilities directly tied to client supervision.

Management. In addition to workload-related stressors, many participants also expressed a disconnect between frontline POs and management—management referring to a person in a position of authority. The concept of "management" expressed by many POs was ambiguous, at times directed at direct supervisors, other times at the employers or even the government more broadly. The POs felt that, while colleagues (i.e., other POs) were generally supportive and respectful, their work was not always respected by management. CPOs and IPOs provided a large range of examples to illustrate the divide, including feeling they are not trusted to work remotely part-time; managers provide feedback on their performance only when there has been a negative outcome; managers do not provide adequate equipment or professional workspaces; and their professional expertise is not respected. Touching on some of these concerns, participant 50 (female, IPO) stated:

> I find we're highly underappreciated. [There's a] general lack of support, lack of acknowledgement of making good calls. Like, there's no positive feedback that comes out . . . . I have to buy my own pens and supplies because it's like breaking into Fort Knox in order to get any sort of office supplies, like they're afraid of somebody stealing three pens. . . . We don't have the equipment we need to do our jobs. Like, it took me two weeks to get my laptop [when working remotely at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic]. . . . The desk my computer is on has two broken wheels and a piece of 2X4 [lumber] underneath in order to keep it up. We're shoved in the closet. . . . You don't feel appreciated when you walk in and everything's in disrepair. . . . I've worked at four jails [at CSC correctional institutions], it's always the same.

Participant 50's statement demonstrates why some POs feel unsupported and unappreciated within the CSC, including in terms of resource limitations and interpersonal relationships with management. Participant 29 (female, IPO) similarly recognized complex relationships with management but did note that other POs were supportive:

> I think I'm acknowledged in the public safety role . . . amongst my peers, not so much management. I don't ever feel like there's ever a pat on the back for a good catch or a "good case" or a "good job." [However,] other parole officers will definitely say: "I got your case, I read your report, thanks." That is where I feel acknowledged.

As these statements indicate, a lack of organizational support and respect can create stress, even demoralization, among POs. Nevertheless, these sentiments were shared by many CPOs and IPOs, with IPOs identifying several specific concerns directly related to working in a prison environment. For instance, many IPOs felt that there was a hierarchy among prison employees whereby IPOs were situated under correctional officers, and that their work, particularly relationship-building and support of prisoners, was viewed as secondary—or even contrary—to the security mission of the institution. Participant 28 (female), an IPO who had previously worked in community parole, explained how a perceived divide between correctional officers and IPOs affected her experience working in the institution:

> To a certain group of people it's the uniform [i.e., correctional officers] versus non-uniform staff, basically. I think that CSC, upper management in CSC, need to change the way that they operate to promote a healthy workplace for it to be good for everybody. . . . There's not enough being done in addressing, I don't like using the "workplace harassment" word, but . . . there's no repercussions [to impolite or harassing behavior]. That's how I feel, so if that could be dealt with that would remove 90% of my stress. . . . I was in a community parole office, and it was different. Yes, it was a different setting, different stresses, things like that, but it's something that I realised inside an institution, where I'm like "oh okay, we're not all on the same team I thought we were."

As the words of participant 28 indicate, IPOs may face additional organizational stressors arising from their prison workplace, most notably the perception that they are low on the staff hierarchy (especially in relation to correctional officers) and "not all on the same team." However, the experiences of both CPOs and IPOs make clear that parole workers in both institutional and community settings face significant organizational stressors.

Study Findings: Operational Stressors in Canadian Federal Parole

Both CPOs and IPOs identified two predominant operational stressors in Canadian federal parole: challenges arising from working with clients, whether incarcerated or under community supervision, whom they perceived as dangerous or as presenting unpredictable threats to their safety; and exposure to vicarious trauma. However, due to the different nature of working in a community or institutional context, there are operational stressors that are unique to each group. IPOs reported greater potential for direct exposure to PPTEs due to the prison work space; meanwhile, CPOs expressed concern about risks to their safety during required visits to the residences of parolees or their close contacts.

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Perceived Threats. With regard to client interaction, POs described meetings as potentially risky situations and expressed a view that many parolees or prisoners exhibited behavior that they felt was unpredictable—particularly if clients suffer with mental health or substance use issues, or if they have a violent criminal history. Participant 30 (female, CPO) described how interactions with clients can produce safety concerns:

> There has been a couple of incidents that you know have spooked me. . . . I remember I had an offender not let me leave the apartment because he

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> was schizophrenic and, you know, he was off of his meds. . . . We were talking, getting him down, and getting him help, and everything. That was challenging. [Another] offender . . . had a gun on his waistband the entire time and, you know, was involved in a murder that he was charged with. That was annoying to me afterwards.

Although not a circumstance in all client interactions—thus, we are careful not to paint probationers, parolees, or prisoners with a brush of potential aggression of violence—participant 30 explains two situations that caused her to feel vulnerable. Thus, risk potential is a real element in parole work.

Vicarious Trauma. In addition to the perceived risks arising from meetings with clients, as exemplified in participant 30's statement, both CPOs and IPOs described regular vicarious exposure to potentially psychologically traumatic materials. As part of their operational duties, POs must learn as much as possible about their clients' life histories and crimes to make informed risk assessments. As such, they not only interview prisoners or parolees about their criminal and personal histories, they also read case files and police reports (both of which may include graphic images) or victim impact statements. For many participants, these tasks are a challenging part of their work:

> Yeah, vicarious trauma is definitely something that's part of this job. You're reading files that are gruesome. These files, they're terrible. There's children involved, there's violence, there's a lot of brutal things that you read. And some cases will stick to you. . . . Cases that will affect you, because they're relatable to you or to family members and or friends (participant 132, female, CPO).

As participant 132's words indicate, POs are regularly exposed to difficult, potentially psychologically traumatic, materials, and it falls within their occupational responsibilities to become familiar with such material. The impact of vicarious exposure to PPTEs may particularly resonate when the case reminds POs of people in their own lives, or resonate due to personal, professional, or other experiences—an area in need of further inquiry through research.

Whereas CPOs and IPOs largely report shared organizational stressors, there are several unique operational stressors faced by each group derived from their different work environments (i.e., the community versus an institution). For IPOs, working in a prison carries the risk of exposure to vicarious trauma and PPTEs. Demonstrating the potential within a prison for IPOs to be exposed to PPTEs, participant 97 (female, IPO) described an incident she witnessed:

> I work in a maximum security, and about two years ago. . . . I had an inmate stab another inmate in front of me. It was attempted murder. It was across the table from where I was sitting.

Participant 97's direct exposure to a violent incident demonstrates the possibility, which IPOs anticipate, that at any time they may be a witness to, or possibly even the victim of, a PPTE while on duty. While CPOs are less likely to witness or have direct exposure to a PPTE, they face unique perceptions of risk arising from their job duties in different community settings, including their clients' homes. First, as part of their FOC, CPOs regularly conduct visits to the homes of parolees or their close contacts. These visits can create considerable uncertainty for CPOs, who expressed the view that extreme vigilance is required when visiting an unfamiliar site. Several participants cited the death of Louise Pargeter—a CSC CPO who, in 2004, was murdered by a parolee during a home visit (Harris, 2017)—as a stark reminder of the risks that they undertake while meeting with clients. Participant 5 (female, CPO) explained some of the stress created by these visits:

> Going to their family support, that's when things can get a little dodgy I find. So, I've walked into situations where . . . the contact says "oh, I'm here by myself" and then . . . there were like a group of five men all sitting around smoking pot. Like I could not believe that I was walking in, they knew, you know, I'm with the government, and I'm a parole officer and yeah. . . . I guess over the years I know the questions to ask. I always ask "do you have a large dog?" [and] "is there a gate that I need to access?" Like, I'm asking all the questions before I show up for interviews. . . . But yeah, you're kind of walking into situations where you just really don't know when it's, how it's going to go down or what it's going to be like.

As these words show, CPOs anticipate and navigate risks to their safety as they conduct visits as part of their operational duties. For CPOs who cover a large geographic area, these risks can be magnified when parolees live in rural or remote regions. Participant 113 (female, CPO) explained:

> I also have a rural supervision route about 2.5 to 3 hours from [major urban center], so I do that a couple of times a month where I go out and see offenders . . . in their different rural areas dependent on where they live. . . . Safety can be a lot different out there, in terms of being in remote areas without necessarily cell phone access, perhaps having to use a satellite phone. [Police] detachments can often be quite far away.

As participant 113's words show, CPOs may be forced to navigate situations in which their ability to access emergency assistance is limited due to limited cellular coverage or remote police presence. These circumstances create additional stress on top of the already risk-laden visits that CPOs must undertake as part of their duties.

Conclusion

There is a need for employers, stakeholders, PPOs themselves, and the government to understand the complexities and vulnerabilities created by their employment. Although this paper has focused on the experiences of federal POs, Canadian community correctional systems also include PPOs working in provincial/territorial correctional systems, and both groups are now recognized first responders in Canada (Public Safety Canada, 2020). As such, we direct our recommendations broadly to all PPOs working at either the federal or provincial/territorial levels. Recognizing PPOs' experiences of operational and organizational stressors, and the resulting effects on mental health and well-being (Carleton et al., 2020; Ricciardelli et al., 2020), there is a need to consider how to best help reduce the impacts of both types of stressors, which would best be accomplished by reducing the stressor.

Reducing organizational stressors requires dedicated attention to structural processes. It appears that refining administrative processes, as well as paperwork, would both reduce PPO stress and be a time-saving, and thus cost-saving, measure. A dedicated examination of PPOs' paperwork requirements—determining what is and is not required, eliminating duplication, and creating easier processes when filling out or uploading forms—would save invaluable time for PPOs.

Additional recommendations to support organizational stressors include workplace collegiality and effective leadership training and, although clearly a high-cost recommendation, additional staffing. Specifically, hiring more PPOs would reduce existing

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caseloads and help spread workload burden, thus reducing stress. Again, we recognize that our recommendation is economically challenging to implement, perhaps supporting the view that correctional services in Canada are underfunded given the current structures.

Operational stressors are, in many ways, inherent to the job. Recommending how to reduce or remove them requires more nuanced understanding than is currently available. However, operational stressors should not result in compromised mental health and reduced well-being for PPOs. To this end, mental health knowledge, education, and training is essential for PPOs. We encourage mental health education that informs how to recognize, cope with, and manage mental health problems, as well as training in strategies to manage exposure to PPTEs or to remedy the impacts of vicarious trauma.

To conclude, we suggest a number of avenues for future research. First, future research should consider how PPOs' own experiences in their past and current lives inform their experiences on the job, including their perception of risk and safety when interacting with clients and/or working with difficult case materials. This would provide useful information and possibly important directives for correctional actors regarding how to minimize risk potential for their employees, which would serve to increase job satisfaction and wellness, in addition to ensuring that POs are "matched" with clients that they feel they can support to the best of their abilities without risking their own mental health.

Second, scholars should continue to explore the relationships, including perceived or real hierarchies, between PPOs and other correctional actors, such as correctional officers. This, too, would generate useful insights for correctional authorities on how to maximize cooperation and supportive relationships on the job.

Third, it is imperative that we continue to study closely the shared and distinct characteristics and dimensions of institution- and community-based PPOs' job realities that create feelings of insecurity and risk. For example, our research indicates that CPOs working in rural and remote areas face specific challenges that can increase risk perception and potential. Criminological research, however, has traditionally neglected the "rural" in favor of observing correctional practices and work in urban settings. We need a better understanding of how different work environments shape PPOs' distinct experiences on the job. Ultimately, we maintain that safe and healthy work conditions will benefit not just PPOs, but the community as a whole. Parole and probation work is not easy. It requires the willingness and ability to work with people in varied and complex circumstances. PPOs, as our data reveal, are committed to building relationships with their clients and supervising them via direct, interpersonal contact. However, such relationship building can occur only if PPOs feel safe and secure and are given the time and resources that are needed to create positive and meaningful relationships with those under their supervision. It thus behooves correctional decision makers to hear from, and work with, PPOs to ameliorate the stressors faced in community correctional work. Taking such concrete action will both protect the mental health and well-being of PPOs and contribute to broader public safety aims.

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