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## A Preliminary Study on Intra-Departmental Abuse in a Central American Police Force

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**A Preliminary Study on Intra-Departmental Abuse in a Central American Police Force**

By

Emily R. Veroeven

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Arts

In

Clinical Psychology

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

May 2024

December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023

A Preliminary Study on Intra-Departmental Abuse in a Central American Police Force

Emily Veroeven

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's committee.

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Committee Member

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# **A Preliminary Study on Intra-Departmental Abuse in a Central American Police Force**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this study was to serve as a preliminary analysis to investigate the prevalence of sexual violence in the Belize defense and police force, the impact on victim's lives, and the culture of military/police force. This mixed-methods study was conducted through a Qualtrics survey, and 34 participants were obtained. This survey contained a variety of dichotomous, multiple-response, and open-ended questions. This study found that 54.5% reported as a victim of sexual violence in the workplace. We also found that most victims did not report the crime, and many victims' perceptions of their workplace has changed. A thematic content analysis revealed that the overall recommendation participants reported was to change the agency's culture. In addition, this study found that when looking at descriptive statistics solely, as predicted, participants who are victims of sexual violence had more previous trauma experiences, trauma symptoms, and overall harassment compared to individuals who did not report as a victim. Victims also reported lower support from family and friends, unit support, and training and employment preparation compared to individuals who were reported as not a victim. This study reported evidence that there are sexual violence concerns within the police force in Belize that need to be addressed. This added awareness of issues can help inform agencies as to how to address these issues as well as adjust selection and training in a fashion to add roll clarity and help all officers feel safe within their community.

*Keywords:* sexual violence, Belize, defense force, law enforcement

## Introduction

Sexual violence (SV) has been a continuing issue for decades worldwide (Borumandnia et al., 2020). Approximately 736 million women around the world have been a victim of either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (not including sexual harassment), and/or non-partner sexual violence (UN Women, 2023). It is a common misperception to assume sexual violence only impacts women, and while it does affect women, men can also be victims as well and within certain contexts, the impact of their being a victim can be severe. More than half of women and about 1 in 3 men have reported that they are a victim of sexual violence where physical contact was involved, while sexual harassment is reported to be experienced by 1 in 3 women and 1 in 9 men (CDC, 2022).

The legal definition of sexual violence varies, however, the general definition of sexual violence, according to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (2010) “means that someone forces or manipulates someone else into unwanted sexual activity without their consent.” Sexual violence can come in a variety of forms. The various types of sexual violence include sexual assault (i.e., physically touching another person without consent), sexual coercion (i.e., use of pressure, manipulation, or misuse of authority for sexual actions), rape (i.e., sexual penetration without consent), sexual exploitation (i.e., sexual abuse, whether attempted or actual, when in a vulnerable position or power), sexual harassment (i.e., sexual advances, sexual requests, sexual jokes, unwanted sexual innuendo), stalking (i.e., repeatedly following and/or harassing someone else), and relationship violence (i.e., repeated threats, verbal or physical abuse for people in an intimate relationship; MSU Center for Survivors, n.d.).

Sexual violence (SV) can occur in any situation or environment, however, certain environments put an individual at a higher risk of being a victim of SV. Tharp and colleagues

(2013) did a systematic review and found many risk factors associated with SV. Some include, but are not limited to:

- Hyper-masculinity/all-peer groups
- Aggressive behaviors and acceptance of violent behaviors
- Adherence to traditional gender role norms
- Dominance
- Prior victimization
- Relationship conflict/partner violence

Despite evidence that these are risk factors for SV, there are still environments that people are expected to be in (e.g., work, school) that have some of these risk factors. One workplace that is especially at a higher risk and have adopted a workplace culture that has many risk factors of sexual violence is the military and police force.

### **Military/Police Culture**

The military and police force are designed to have a patriarchal society and reinforces hypermasculinity (Franklin, 2005; Gripp & Zaluar, 2017; Kurtz et al., 2012; Robertson, 2016). This type of environment has created a space where risk factors of SV are prevalent, creating an unsafe environment for employees to work (Gripp & Zaluar, 2017). In the United States specifically, before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the military was generally a space for white males, and enlisting in the military was seen as a “manly” thing to do (Robertson, 2016). Even more recently, in 1970, only 1.4% of sworn police officers were female (Natarajan, 2016), while currently in 2023, 12% of sworn police officers are female, and 3% of any leadership roles are delegated to women (FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, 2023). It has been the societal belief that the ones who should be protecting us from outside forces and danger should be the individuals



who match a strong, tough, and dominant persona. After years and years of the military and police force being defined as a “male” job, there are many repercussions when finally inviting women into the workforce, especially when society has created the notion that they aren’t capable of the duties and responsibilities that the job entails.

### ***Hypermasculinity***

Through decades of society conforming to the belief that the military and police force is a job for males, the group continues to reinforce hypermasculinity, despite that this is a risk factor of sexual violence (Franklin, 2005; Gripp & Zaluar, 2017; Robertson, 2016; Vechiu, 2019). Masculinity, as described by Franklin (2005), “is defined as a socially constructed set of values and practices that glorify status, aggression, independence, and dominance” (p. 13). So, hypermasculinity is when people in a group hold exaggerated beliefs regarding masculinity. Often hypermasculinity is shown to be a group that sees a) any feminine attitudes or behaviors as negative, b) the belief that being in touch with your emotions makes you weak, c) aggression and violence are expected, and d) the belief that sexual experiences are based on a male’s act of dominance at the expense of the female (Franklin, 2005; Vechiu, 2019). Any individual who exhibits behaviors other than masculine is discriminated against and looked at negatively within the workplace (Robertson, 2016).

### ***Patriarchal Society***

In addition to adopting a hypermasculine culture, a patriarchal society has been seen as acceptable as well. A patriarchal society is the general notion that who gets to claim the power within a group is solely men, adhering to the traditional gender roles. Not only do men have the power and control over groups that abide by this intergroup norm, but they marginalize people who do not exhibit traditional masculine traits (Franklin, 2005; Johnson, 1997; Robertson, 2016).

Patriarchal societies are designed to hand over leadership positions to men instead of choosing positions of authority based on job performance. It is important to acknowledge that not all men take on the patriarchal society of hypermasculinity, which can lead to them being vulnerable and at risk alongside women in the occupation (Franklin, 2005).

A patriarchal society and reinforcing a hypermasculine culture are often established in the recruitment phase for the military and police force. During initial training, higher authority figures inadvertently reinforce masculine subculture, and females and males who do not exhibit those traits are immediately marginalized (Prokos & Padavic, 2002; Sands et al., 2022). It gives people of power the opportunity to set the expectations of what role women and men who don't exhibit masculine traits are required to play.

### **Military/Police Sexual Violence**

Within the military and police force, rewarding hypermasculinity and adopting a patriarchal culture leads to an increased risk for sexual violence within the workplace. While some men only take on positive aspects of masculinity (e.g., independence, and courage), some men see the traits as a way to justify sexual violence (Kuhl et al., 2018). The culture of the military and police force adheres to gender role norms and promotes hypermasculinity, acceptance of violence, and dominance, all shown to be risk factors for sexual violence. Even though the environment can lead to an increased risk of sexual violence for both women and men, they are still expected to put themselves in that environment despite the risk.

Studies and reports have shown that sexual violence in the military and police force has been an ongoing issue (Lonsway & Hall, 2013; Mongilio, 2022; Taylor et al., 2020). Within the military, according to the number of sexual assault reports as of 2021, one in five service members reported sexual assault, that estimates about 35,900 active-duty members have

experienced sexual assault/unwanted sexual contact, with the majority of reports in the army and navy (Mongilio, 2022). In the police force, Lonsway and Hall (2013) found that 91.3% of female officers reported experiences of gender harassment, and 74% reported unwanted sexual attention by male officers. In addition, Taylor and colleagues (2020) found that 71% of female officers and 41% of male officers reported some form of sexual harassment on the job. As previously discussed, a risk factor of sexual violence is prior victimization, and female officers who were sexually assaulted during childhood had a 237% higher chance of being sexually assaulted on the job (Taylor et al., 2020). Officers are already placed at high risk for sexual assault, so also coming into the environment with other risk factors just increases the likelihood of victimization even further.

These results of sexual violence within the military and police force are concerning, and it is assumed that the numbers are even higher since many sex crimes go unreported (Lonsway & Hall, 2013; Sands et al., 2022). Sexual violence in the military and police force generally goes unreported due to (Lonsway & Hall, 2013; Sands et al., 2022):

- Belief that no action would occur
- Fear of retaliation
- People of higher power were the abusers
- Concern about career
- Didn't think coworkers and superiors would believe them

With reinforcing hypermasculinity and abiding by a patriarchal society, it puts individuals who are not in power at a great deal of risk. So much so that employees who become a victim of SV feel as though they are not in a safe enough environment to report the crime.

### **Military/Police in Belize**

Although investigations have been done to examine sexual violence in the military and police force (e.g., Sands et al., 2022), little research has been reported to investigate if issues noted are happening in other countries. Belize is a developing country on the eastern coast of Central America. There has been sparse research done within this country related to the functioning of the military and police force within. Although there have been specific incidents (Amandala Press, 2021; Jamaica Observer, 2020; Love FM, 2023; News 5, 2022; U.S. Department of State, n.d.) suggesting that there may be issues worthy of concern, no systematic study of the population has been conducted. Investigation may be warranted given some known factors related to the organization of these entities. For example, the Belize defense force and police force website suggests that leadership positions are designated to be solely males, providing support that a patriarchal society is likely present (Belize Defense Force, n.d.; The Belize Police Department, 2014). In terms of their recruitment process, the military states that it requires a recent police record, however, it does not mention what specific requirements in terms of criminal record would be allowed for admission. In addition, both the police and defense force note that officers must be mentally fit, however, they do not report assessing for any previous mental issues or traumas. By not acknowledging someone's previous traumatic history, you could potentially admit an officer who may be at higher risk of being a victim of sexual violence, or inadvertently admit a sexual predator as a part of a cohort of trainees. Also, the Belize police department requires their applicants to be at least 5 feet 4 inches tall (Belize Defense Force, n.d.; The Belize Police Department, 2014). This does not seem like it would be an issue of concern, however, according to Rodriguez-Martinez and colleagues (2020), as of 2019, the average height of a woman in Belize at age 19 is 5'1'', while males' average height at age 19 is 5'5''. This mandatory requirement inadvertently discriminates against women getting admitted into the

police force and similarly limits the pool of male applicants. Overall, aspects associated with the recruitment process in these organizations does raise reasonable questions regarding workplace culture.

Lastly, and most alarming, recent news articles have taken note of recent sexual assault allegations (Amandala Press, 2021; Jamaica Observer, 2020; Love FM, 2023; News 5, 2022). An individual of power in the Belize defense force states, “To continue to say that there is this culture of sexual assault and allegations, I don’t believe it is a culture. It may be a one-off or two-off incident that we try and address immediately because that is not something that we want to perpetrate here in the force” (Jamaica Observer, 2020). This statement suggests that the Belize military force has been getting backlash from sexual assault allegations within the organization. In addition, according to the U.S. Department of State (n.d.), it was reported that sexual violence was a problem in the Belize organization. This concern was raised due to a 23-year-old woman Belize defense force soldier committing suicide after reportedly being sexually assaulted twice by another soldier (News 5, 2022; U.S. Department of State, n.d.). With recent news articles reporting sexual assaults and harassment within the organization and looking at the recruitment process, further investigation is warranted.

### **Purpose of Current Study**

Sands and colleagues (2022) conducted a qualitative research study on female police officers who had been a victim of sexual violence in the United States. Common themes that Sands and colleagues (2022) found were:

- Most victims did not report the incident.
- Masculine police culture played a huge role in how women felt powerless.

- Some victims believed they did not have a strong support system within the police force to safely share information regarding the incident.
- Victim's reported perception of their workplace (e.g., perception of superiors and coworkers) did not change following the incident.

Regarding a limited support system, according to Sands and colleagues (2022), women officers reported they had a support group of women within the force, however, the older women generally told the victims of sexual violence to not say anything, while the younger officers said to say something. This left a confused course of action and less clear support within. It is also worth noting that officer peer groups are often the younger recruits, and the older officers who have risen to higher ranks are those more likely to have reservations. Also, this suggests that depending on the experience within the profession, advice regarding reporting an instance of sexual violence may differ greatly and lead to differing feedback within an organization. In addition, it was surprising to Sands and colleagues that perceptions of the police force did not change as a result of an incident. This may be due to the fact that many victims had been previously victimized before, so they did not see it as strictly a workplace issue. They also had the belief that sexual violence occurs in all occupations, not just theirs (Sands et al., 2022).

The purpose of this study is to expand upon Sands and colleagues (2022) study to examine the nature and outcomes of sexual violence in the military and law enforcement in Belize. The goal of investigating this topic of research is to bring awareness and to serve as a preliminary analysis of the understudied issues of sexual violence within the public services sector in the developing country of Belize. Increasing awareness can help educate individuals on the severity of this issue and its associated outcomes. It could also, in so doing, inform and promote change. This study can help provide insight into how to address occurrences, reduce

them, or perhaps even prevent them from happening. In addition, addressing this issue will assist in providing guidance and safety for employees in the army and/or law enforcement, as well as increase the number of individuals who want to join, thus benefiting the country as a whole.

### **Research Questions**

To address the issue of sexual violence in Belize and bring awareness, this study investigates:

1. Is sexual violence in the Belize defense/police force a concern for those responding?
  - a. Are victims reporting the incidents?
  - b. Are they fearful to report the incident?
2. What impact does sexual violence have on victims' lives in Belize?
  - a. What issues did the victim have to face within the workplace following the incident?
  - b. Did victims' perception change about profession, coworkers, and/or superiors following the incident?
  - c. Do victims of sexual violence in the workplace report higher aversive experiences (e.g., more previous traumatic experiences, and less support from family/friends/colleagues) than individuals who report as not a victim.
3. What is the culture of the military/police force in Belize?
  - a. Is there an unhealthy imbalance of power in the workplace?
  - b. Are officers aware of sexual violence occurring within the workplace?
  - c. What changes might improve the social environment of the police/military?
  - d. Should there be steps taken to keep everyone safe in the police/military and if so, what specific changes?

In seeking to answer these questions, it is hoped that resulting understanding and ideas will assist in addressing any issues within law enforcement and the military in Belize to promote change and challenge leaders to make any necessary modifications to keep everyone in their community safe.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Out of a total of 40 respondents, 34 participants completed 25% or more of the study and were used for analysis. Out of 34 participants, 22 (64.70%) identified as male and 12 (35.29%) identified as female. Thirty-three individuals reported as police officers and 1 participant reported as a member of the military. Due to most participants being in the police force, further evaluation will be discussed concerning the police force only. With only 22 participants reporting age, the average age of the participants who reported is 31.68 ( $SD = 7.24$ ). The age of participants ranges from 22 to 46 years old, describing a varied range. The vast majority of participants reported many years of experience working in their current occupation (police force or military), with 12 (35.29%) reporting 10+ years, 11 (32.35%) reported 6-9 years, and 11 (32.35%) reported 1-5 years of experience. See Table 1 for the full frequency demographic data of the study and Appendix B for the demographic questions.



**Table 1***Participant Demographics*

| Variable                 | <i>n</i> | %     |
|--------------------------|----------|-------|
| Gender                   |          |       |
| Man                      | 22       | 64.70 |
| Woman                    | 12       | 35.30 |
| Occupation               |          |       |
| Law Enforcement          | 33       | 97    |
| Military                 | 1        | 3     |
| Experience in Occupation |          |       |
| 0-11 months              | 0        | 0     |
| 1-5 years                | 11       | 32.35 |
| 6-9 years                | 11       | 32.35 |
| 10+ years                | 12       | 35.30 |

**Sampling Procedure**

A mediator connected the researchers with the coordinator of the Employee Assistance Program in Belize who would proceed to provide us with our target population. Prior to distribution of the survey, we obtained a signed letter indicating permission from the Employee Assistance Program and Ministry of Public Service in Belize to conduct the survey (see Appendix M). The coordinator of the Employee Assistance Program sent the anonymous Qualtrics survey link via email to all individuals who work in law enforcement and/or military in Belize where they could voluntarily choose to participate. The coordinator would not be made aware of who completed the survey. With few participants initially, the Deputy Commissioner of Police assisted the Employee Assistance Program in the second round of requests being

anonymously sent. At the beginning of the survey, there was an anonymous informed consent to voluntarily participate in the survey. If they consent to voluntarily participate, they will proceed to the beginning of the survey, and if they chose not to, they would be sent to the end of the survey and thanked for their participation.

## **Measures**

### ***Quantitative Measures***

**Pre-employment Life Events.** The pre-employment life events survey was revised from section A (i.e., Pre-deployment life events) of the Deployment Risk and Resilience Inventory-2 (i.e., DRRI-2) developed by Vogt and colleagues (2012). This 18-item dichotomous survey assessed life experiences that were experienced at any time before employment. For each question, a participant would indicate whether an experience happened or did not happen. The only revision of this survey was requesting that the participant answers the survey questions based on pre-employment events, instead of pre-deployment events. Higher scores indicate more exposure to pre-employment (i.e., police force and military) stressors.

**Childhood Family Experiences.** This 12-item questionnaire assessed relationships with an individual's family when they were growing up. This survey was measured on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 = (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) and developed by Vogt and colleagues (2012) as section B in the DRRI-2 questionnaire. Higher scores indicate that an individual has had more positive family functioning before employment. For example, "During childhood... family members knew what I thought and how I felt about things" (Vogt et al., 2012).

**Training and Employment Preparation.** Vogt and colleagues (2012) developed the training and deployment preparation survey to measure a sense of preparedness for individuals

being deployed. This survey was revised to assess the training and employment preparation of individuals entering the military and/or police force. The training and employment preparation survey is a 10-item survey on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The possible range of scores is from 10-50, with higher scores indicating a stronger sense of preparedness to become a police officer and/or a member of the military. This survey was measured to investigate if perhaps victims of sexual violence felt less prepared to join a high-risk environment of SV than individuals who were not victims.

**Support from Family/Friends.** This 8-item questionnaire was developed by Vogt and colleagues (2012) to assess an individual's support from family/friends during deployment. We revised this survey to assess support during employment instead of deployment. This survey is a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores on this survey indicate greater perceived social support from family and friends during employment.

**Unit Support.** Unit support was assessed by the unit support questionnaire that was developed as a section of the Deployment Risk and Resilience Inventory-2 (i.e., DRRI-2) developed by Vogt and colleagues (2012). This survey assesses social support within unit members and leaders. This survey was briefly revised to measure support in the police and/or military compared to during deployment. This 12-item survey is on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicate an individual's greater perceived social support from fellow unit members and unit leaders.

**Relationships During Employment.** This questionnaire was developed by Vogt and colleagues (2012) to assess relationships during deployment. Instead of assessing relationships during deployment, individuals responded regarding their current occupation. This 16-item

survey assesses overall harassment, but also has two subscales: general harassment and sexual harassment. The relationships during employment questionnaire were measured on a 4-point scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 3 (*many times*). Higher scores indicate more exposure to overall, general, and sexual harassment on the job.

**Traumatic Experiences.** To assess an individual's trauma experiences, the Trauma History Questionnaire (THQ) developed by Hooper and colleagues (2011) was used. This questionnaire specifically discusses various serious or traumatic life events (i.e., crime-related, general disaster and trauma, and physical and sexual experiences). Each participant indicated whether or not a specific life event happened. The original questionnaire goes into more depth on the number of times the event occurred, the approximate age when it happened, and the nature of the relationship with the person involved if applicable, however, to answer our research questions, the dichotomous (i.e., yes/no) portion of the questionnaire was the appropriate portion to measure.

**Trauma Symptoms.** To assess an individual's symptoms of trauma experienced, the Trauma Symptom Checklist- 33 (TSC-33) developed by Briere and Runtz (1989) was used. This 33-item measure assesses how often an individual has experienced various common symptoms (e.g., insomnia, restless sleep, sadness, stomach problems, anxiety attacks, memory problems, etc.) associated with trauma in the last two months. These symptoms are assessed on a 4-point scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 3 (*very often*). Higher scores indicate more traumatic symptoms an individual has experienced.

### ***Qualitative Measure***

To answer the qualitative research questions, a variety of dichotomous, multiple-response, and open-ended questions were developed. Because a survivor of sexual violence

comes in many different forms, four dichotomous questions were developed to capture all victims of sexual violence. The following questions are the four questions asked to indicate whether an individual is a victim of sexual violence in the workplace or not:

- Have you ever had a coworker in your workplace ask for sexual favors?
- Have you ever had a superior in your workplace ask for sexual favors?
- Have you ever had someone in your workplace make unwanted sexual comments towards you?
- Have you ever had someone in your workplace make unwanted sexual advances towards you? For instance, asking you on dates?

If an individual responded yes to any of the previous questions, further follow-up questions were coded to be presented to the participant, such as whether they reported the incident, issues experienced, perception of the workplace, previous victimization, and if they received any help following the crime. All participants were asked about awareness of sexual violence in the workplace, the balance of power in the workplace, whether there are adequate sexual assault resources available, and if there would be any changes recommended to improve the environment and keep everyone safe in the police force and/or military. See Appendix E for the full list of qualitative questions.

## **Procedure**

The coordinator of the Employee Assistance Program sent the Qualtrics survey link via email to all eligible participants. Participants who voluntarily chose to complete the survey clicked on the survey link and were instructed to read and electronically consent to participate (see Appendix A). Once the participant consented to participate, demographic questions (see Appendix B) were initially asked (i.e., age, gender, year of employment, and type of occupation),

and then the qualitative portion proceeded (see Appendix C). Based on the participants' responses, some participants received more questions (e.g., if reported as a victim of sexual violence), while others (e.g., reported as not a victim) skipped unapplicable questions. After the qualitative portion was completed, a variety of survey questionnaires were asked to be completed for all participants (see Appendix D-K). Following the questionnaires, participants received a debriefing form at the end of the survey. The debriefing form (see Appendix L) includes a variety of contacts for resources in Belize for any participant who feels any mental distress, discomfort, or potential trauma symptoms that are reactivated when discussing a traumatic experience.

### **Data Analysis**

The survey questionnaires (e.g., TSC-33, THQ, DRRI-2) are used to analyze the quantitative research questions. Each participant receives an overall score for each questionnaire and correlational analyses (i.e., point biserial correlation) are measured (dependent on the number of participants) between individuals who report as a victim versus individuals who do not report as a victim. A Point Biserial correlational analysis is used to investigate whether individuals who are a victim of sexual violence are higher or lower in various measures (e.g., trauma symptoms, pre-employment life events, support from family/friends, and relationships during employment) compared to individuals who have not been a victim of sexual violence.

The qualitative questions were analyzed similarly to Sands and colleagues (2022), by using a thematic content analysis of the open-ended questions. This type of qualitative analysis was derived from Silverman (2013). Themes of participants' responses were created for why survivors of sexual violence were fearful to report the crime, changes in perception of the workplace, and changes that should be made to prevent sexual violence and improve the social

environment in the workplace. Further qualitative research questions could be answered in dichotomous (yes/no) question format or multiple response (e.g., select all that apply).

Descriptive statistics (e.g., *M*, *SD*, and frequency) are analyzed to measure the dichotomous and multiple-response questions.

## **Results**

### **Quantitative Results**

Due to an inadequate number of respondents who completed the questionnaires, correlational analyses of survey responses were not appropriate and might have given misleading feedback. Even though there was a limited number of participants who completed the surveys, descriptive statistics was utilized to show the differences between participants who reported as a victim compared to individuals who reported as not a victim of sexual violence. Even though we cannot indicate significance, the difference in mean scores between the two groups is noteworthy (see Table 2, Figure 1, & Figure 2). As predicted, participants who are victims of sexual violence had more previous trauma experiences, trauma symptoms, and overall harassment compared to individuals who did not report as a victim. Victims also reported lower support from family and friends, less unit support, and less training and employment preparation compared to individuals who were reported as not a victim. See Table 2 for the descriptive statistics of each variable measured. See Figure 1 and Figure 2 for a visual description of the aversive experiences and protective factors for victims of sexual violence and individuals who are not victims of sexual violence.

**Table 2**

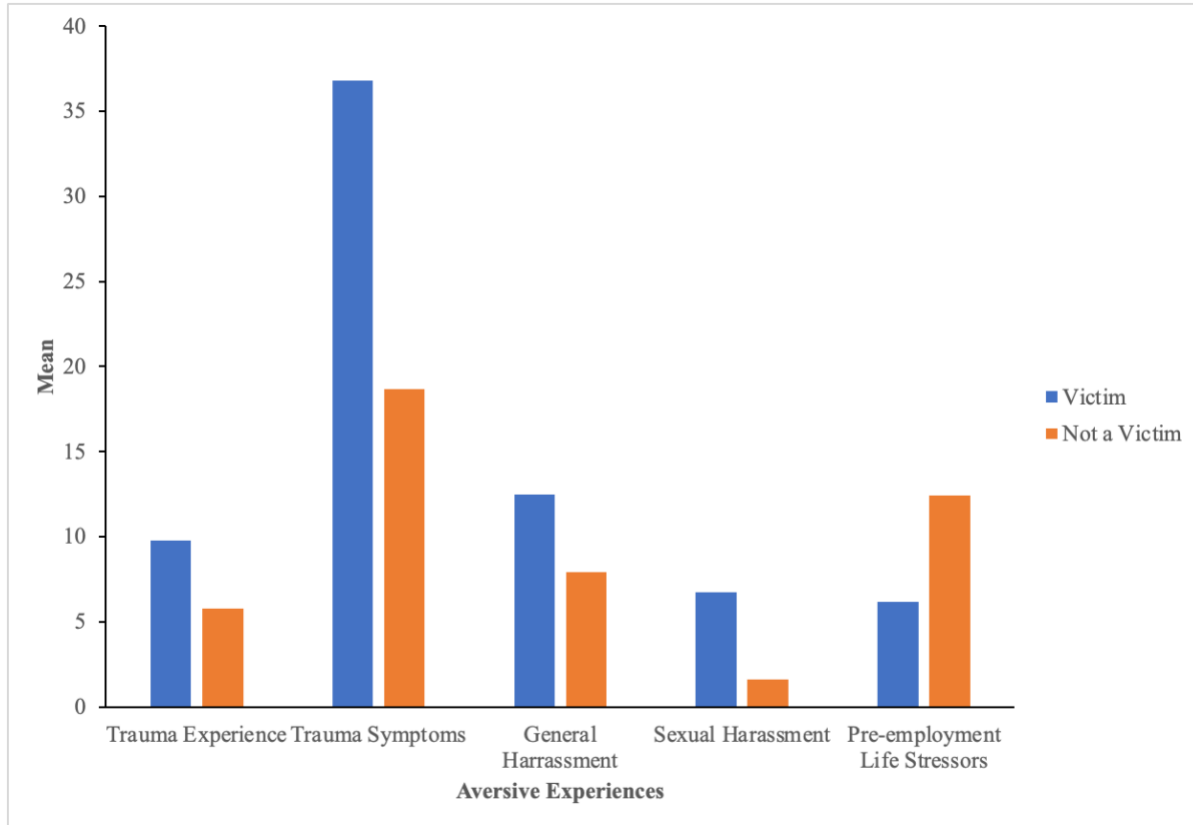
*Descriptive Statistics for Survey Responses for Participants who Reported Victims of Sexual Violence and Participants who Reported as Not a Victim of Sexual Violence*

| Variable                                  | Victim   |              | Not a Victim |              | Overall  |              |
|---|----------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------|--------------|
|   | <i>n</i> | <i>M(SD)</i> | <i>n</i>     | <i>M(SD)</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>M(SD)</i> |
| Trauma Experiences                        | 5        | 9.80(3.19)   | 5            | 5.80(2.17)   | 10       | 7.80(3.33)   |
| Trauma Symptoms                           | 6        | 36.83(23.84) | 9            | 18.67(13.22) | 15       | 25.93(19.69) |
| Exposure to<br>Preemployment<br>Stressors | 10       | 6.20(3.68)   | 10           | 12.40(7.35)  | 20       | 5.10(3.82)   |
| Childhood Family<br>Experiences           | 11       | 46.36(12.21) | 12           | 48.75(8.35)  | 23       | 47.61(10.21) |
| Training and<br>Employment<br>Preparation | 10       | 33.70(7.59)  | 12           | 35.17(8.60)  | 22       | 34.50(8.00)  |
| Support from<br>Family/Friends            | 9        | 30(6.26)     | 11           | 33.82(5.76)  | 20       | 32.10(6.15)  |
| Unit Support                              | 10       | 40.70(12.05) | 10           | 43(6.73)     | 20       | 41.85(9.57)  |
| General Harassment                        | 8        | 12.50(7.56)  | 10           | 7.90(5.63)   | 18       | 9.94(6.77)   |
| Sexual Harassment                         | 8        | 6.75(6.58)   | 10           | 1.60(2.88)   | 18       | 3.89(5.40)   |
| Overall Harassment                        | 8        | 19.25(13.10) | 10           | 9.50(6.79)   | 18       | 13.83(10.95) |



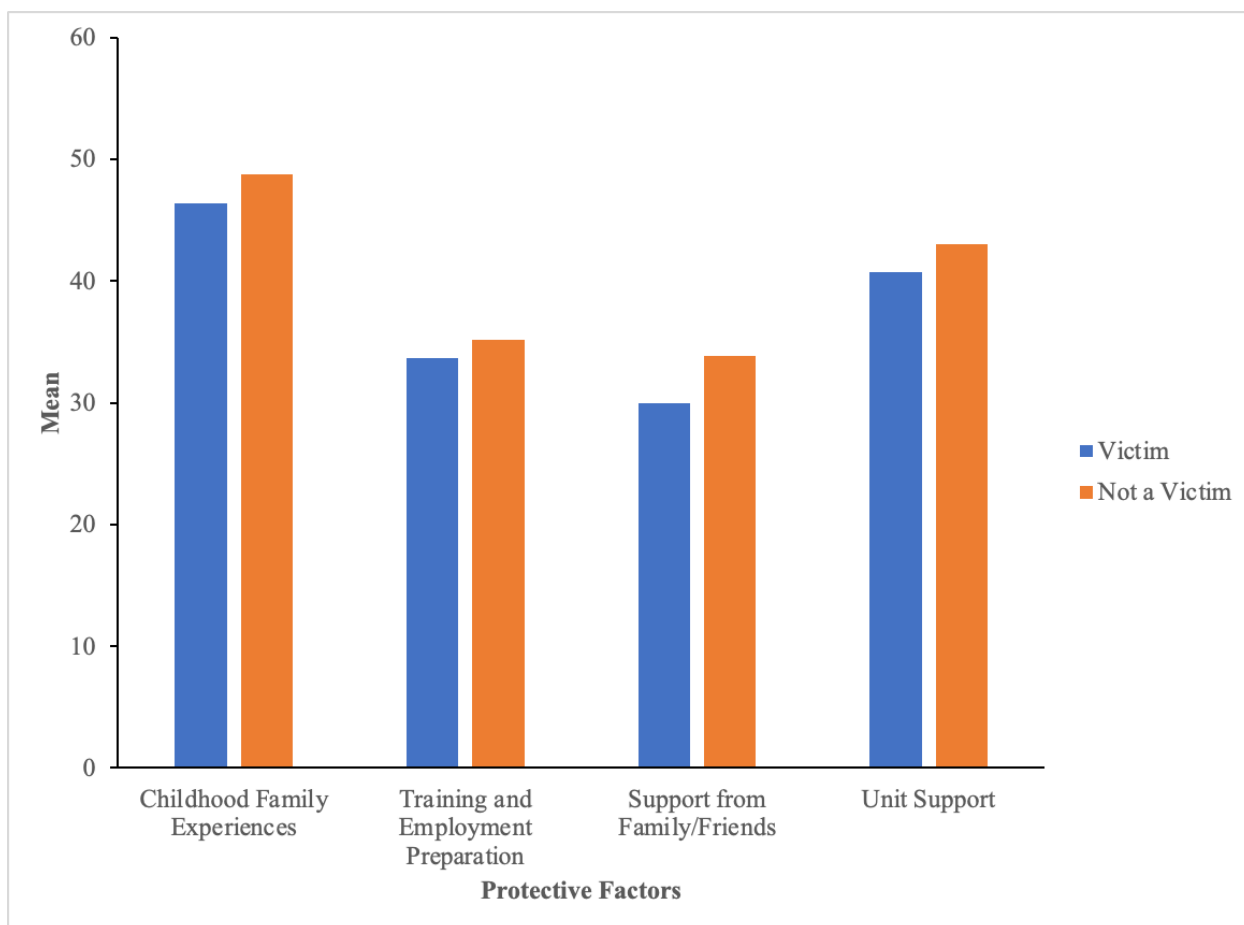
**Figure 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of Aversive Experiences for Victims and Non-Victims of Sexual Violence*



**Figure 2**

*Descriptive Statistics of Protective Factors for Victims and Non-Victims of Sexual Violence*



## **Qualitative Results**

### ***Prevalence of Sexual Violence and Previous Victimization***

Out of 33 respondents, 54.5% reported as a victim of sexual violence in the workplace, with 89% of these victims stating they have received sexual violence in 2 or more different forms. In addition, out of 13 victim participants who answered, 7 (53.85%) indicated that they had some form of previous sexual victimization before the incident(s) in the workplace.

### ***Reporting Sexual Violence***

Out of 13 respondents, 5 individuals reported the crime informally (i.e., sharing the incident with a family/friend), while only 1 reported it formally (i.e., sharing the incident with a police officer with the goal to press charges). Participants who reported the incident informally said so because it was “easier” and “had more support when it came to deal with the trauma than the formal.” However, when asked what the informal person said, they had varying responses. Responses to the victims were, “we all took it for a joke,” “to report the incident which I did but did not make any difference,” “that it wasn’t right, and I should not tolerate it,” “nothing,” and “rather not say.”

Participants who reported as victims also reported why or why not they were fearful to report the incident. From the responses of 12 participants, 6 (50%) reported responses as not fearful to report, while the other half responded in terms of being fearful to report the incident. Common themes for individuals who were fearful to report the incident included fear of additional victimization (50%) and being transferred to another office (33%). A common theme overall for reporting the incident included not feeling as though they would be taken seriously (33%).

### ***Issues Faced in the Workplace***

Victim participants were asked whether they faced a variety of issues (e.g., unpaid leave, hateful messages, denied opportunities) following the sexual violence incident. For victims who had an experience of being asked for sexual favors by a coworker ( $n = 11$ ), 6 said they did not experience any issues in the workplace, while 2 participants reported that they were forced to be around offender, denied promotion and other career opportunities, felt left out, and other issues not specified. For victims who had a superior ask for sexual favors ( $n = 5$ ), 2 participants reported that they were denied promotion and other career opportunities, while 2 reported they

had no issues in the workplace and 1 reported other issues not specified. For victims who had an instance of someone making unwanted sexual comments ( $n = 9$ ), 2 participants were denied promotion and other opportunities, while 1 were forced to be around the offender and other issues not specified, and 6 participants had no issues in the workplace. Lastly, for victims who had someone in the workplace make unwanted sexual advances towards them ( $n = 8$ ), 2 participants were denied promotion and other career opportunities, 1 participant was forced to be around the offender and other issues not specified, and 5 reported having no issues.

### ***Perceptions of the Workplace***

Victim participants were given a survey question where they could report all the different ways their perceptions may have changed in the workplace. Out of 17 respondents who reported as a victim, 7 (41%) indicated that their perception of their superior has changed, 6 (35%) said their perception of their coworkers has changed, and 4 (24%) reported that their perception of their profession in general has changed. When asked why their perception has changed, 5 participants responded. Other responses suggested that officers who do sexual favors get treated better by superiors compared to officers who do not. In addition, one reported that their perception has changed “because I was of the opinion that persons in administrative positions were professionals.” Of the 2 individuals who commented on negative issues faced in the workplace, both reported that they were treated poorly by others (e.g., made fun of, disrespected, belittled) in the workplace.

### ***Recommendations for Change***

A vast majority (79%,  $n = 19$ ) of participants reported that there is an imbalance of power in the police force that could be allowing for sexual violence to occur, and 62.50% ( $n = 15$ ) reported that they were aware that sexual violence is occurring. Despite the knowledge that

sexual violence is occurring in the workplace and that it could be due to the imbalance of power, there are not steps being made to minimize incidents of sexual violence. According to one participant, they need “more strict regulations to govern supervisors as they abuse of their power.” While another participant reported that they need to “change all supervisor,” while another reported that “it would be hard because its mostly the senior officers.” These participants responses show that the imbalance of power with superiors and new officers is extremely inappropriate and needs to be addressed.

In addition to needing to change the power of senior officers, participants reported that the agency should start to have more social groups, and counseling opportunities, create a sexual assault awareness program, and educate workers on the negative effects of sexual harassment. These themes all relate to an agency’s culture, and it is clear that a reconstruction of the company’s culture is imperative. Lastly, when asked what steps need to be taken to keep everyone safe in the workplace environment, one participant reported that the company culture should be “bias free...as supervisor on the higher ranks cover one another.”

### **Discussion**

This preliminary study sought to examine whether there are any issues within law enforcement in Belize regarding incidents of sexual violence or harassment. Specifically, this study examined if sexual violence in the police force in Belize is a concern, the impact on victims’ lives, and the culture of the police force. Despite limited respondents, our study provided evidence that sexual violence is occurring within the police force in Belize, despite colleagues’ awareness. Like Sands and colleagues (2022), most victims did not report the incident formally. The reasons behind choosing not to report the crime aligned with Lonsway

and Hall (2013), such that victims had a fear of retaliation, concern about career, belief that no action would occur, and that the perpetrators were the individuals of higher power.

Even though we were unable to assess relationships between participants who reported as a victim and did not report as a victim, descriptive statistics align with our predictions. Participants who are victims of sexual violence reported more aversive experiences, such as more previous traumatic experiences, trauma symptoms in the last two months, and general and sexual harassment. Also aligned with our predictions, victims of sexual violence reported less positive childhood family experiences, less prepared in training and preparation, and less support from family/friends and unit. However, not accurately predicted, victims of sexual violence reported lower in pre-employment life stressors.

In terms of specific issues victims faced following the incident, participants who reported issues generally faced denial of other opportunities and promotions, being forced to be around the offender, and feeling left out. Surprisingly, majority of victims reported that they had no issues following the incident in the workplace. This was unexpected, as we expected victims to face many adversities following the incident. A lack of participants could have resulted in this finding and future research should investigate this finding further with a more appropriate sample size.

In addition, victims' perceptions of the police force changed. This is inconsistent with Sands and colleagues (2022), who found that most participants perceptions did not change due to the belief that it occurs in all occupations. We found that victims of sexual violence had a new perception of their coworkers, superiors, and profession in general.

Consistent with Sands and colleagues (2022), the overall theme for recommendations for was to change the agency's culture. Based on common themes, the officers in higher up positions

are abusing their power and are not being held accountable for their actions. This aligns with the repetitive pattern of police organizations holding on to a patriarchal society that reinforces hypermasculinity and continuing to allow their workplace to be at a high risk of sexual violence (Franklin, 2005; Gripp & Zaluar, 2017; Kurtz et al., 2012; Robertson, 2016). To combat this issue, participants reported that rules within the organization should be put in place, they should enforce the laws of sexual violence, and a safe protocol should be developed that will help the victim instead of making it worse for them.

In addition to the recommendations from participants, previous literature has provided recommendations for decreasing sexual violence within the police force as well (Borchetta & Morris, 2023; Sands et al., 2022; Tremblay et al., 2022). First, the screening for officers needs to be more extensive and psychological examinations should be conducted for each applicant. In doing so could identify warning signs and prevent potential sexual offenders and individuals with high risk factors for sexual violence from entering the workforce (Borchetta & Morris, 2023; Tremblay et al., 2022). Also, we need to investigate the selection process of officers and hiring requirements to allow more inclusivity within the organization. By having certain strict guidelines, it could favor the strong masculine individuals and continue this culture of hypermasculinity.

According to Borchetta and Morris (2023), an important step could include establishing systems within the police force to prevent abuse from happening. As discussed, victim officers feel like nothing will happen if they report the incident. By creating systems within to hold officers accountable could allow a safer space for victims to report the incident knowing that their offender will be disciplined for their actions. Establishing systems within the police force would also require a strong leadership within the department. When dealing with taboo and

sensitive topics, strong leaders are of the utmost importance to model appropriate actions and communicate that sexual violence within the police force will not be tolerated (Tremblay et al., 2022). Leaders can also inform officers that if they receive a report, an extensive investigation to find the offender will occur and they will be held accountable (Tremblay et al., 2022). This study showed that strong leaders are necessary, as leaders within the police force in Belize are not modeling appropriate actions, which allows sexual violence to continue to occur and no one is being disciplined for their actions.

Lastly, mandated reporting requirements, training programs, and support groups should be implemented within the organization (Sands et al., 2022; Tremblay et al., 2022). By requiring mandated reporting, it will no longer allow officers to be bystanders of sexual violence and require them to intervene when they are aware of an issue occurring. Training programs can allow officers to know how to intervene if they are aware of sexual violence occurring and create a system where the organization comes together as a team to support the victim (Tremblay et al., 2022). These training programs should include a bystander training as well to help officers understand how bystanders play a key role in the issue as well. Bystander training can help create an environment where employees can help prevent and intervene in an act of sexual violence. Creating support groups within the department can help victims feel as though they are not alone and create a culture of unit support within the police force (Sands et al., 2022).

There are many recommendations that could help decrease sexual violence occurring within the police force. It starts with the willingness to restructure the culture within the organization that has tolerated a level of corruption for decades. A modernized culture needs to be created that prioritizes the safety of all officers. In addition to keeping all officers safe, a



strong culture within an organization has shown to improve efficiency and cooperation, thus benefitting the quality of the police force (SHRM, n.d.).

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Even though this preliminary study provided evidence of sexual violence in the police force, it is important to discuss the limitations of this study. First, the study was unable to provide adequate evidence of sexual violence in the military, missing half of the demographic we were hoping to investigate. Further research should investigate sexual violence in the military to measure if the issue we found in the police force is also an issue in the military. Second, our preliminary study only consisted of 34 participants. Even though these participants were able to show that sexual violence is occurring in the police force, it did not allow us to do any statistical analyses other than descriptive and thematic content analyses. In addition, the descriptive statistics and themes reported should be analyzed with caution, as only 34 participants affect the reliability and validity of our results. Our study serves as a preliminary analysis and cannot indicate any significant findings. Future research should aim to get a higher sample size to allow further statistical analyses and gain more reliable and valid results.

Further, many of our participants did not fully complete the survey. The majority of the participants completed the first section (i.e., qualitative portion) but failed to complete the quantitative portion. Future research should consider the length of the survey and create a shorter version to increase participants completing the survey. Lastly, we did not predict that victims of sexual violence would report lower on pre-employment life stressors compared to participants who reported as not a victim of sexual violence. Future research should investigate the relationship between pre-employment life stressors and victims of sexual violence with a larger sample to see if results are consistent.

## **Conclusion**

This preliminary study provided evidence that there are sexual violence concerns within the police force in Belize that need to be addressed. The recommendations provided by officers themselves can allow leaders to make the necessary modifications within the police force to decrease these occurrences from happening. This added awareness can help inform agencies as to how to address these issues as well as adjust selection and training in a fashion to add roll clarity and help all officers feel safe within their community.

Overall, the workplace culture of the police force has been a risk factor for sexual violence for decades worldwide. To keep all officers safe from sexual violence, it starts with acknowledging that the traditional police culture is corrupt, and we need to adopt a more modern police force culture that is more inclusive, and individuals of higher power should be based on job performance and experience, not masculinity.

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## Appendix A

### Anonymous Informed Consent

You are requested to participate in research supervised by Dr. Daniel Houlihan from the Department of Psychology at Minnesota State University, Mankato. This research study is on sexual violence in the defense forces and/or law enforcement in Belize. This survey conducted via Qualtrics should take about 35-45 minutes to complete, dependent on how thorough you are with answering the questions. Participants will be first asked a variety of qualitative questions on various topics involving sexual violence in the workplace, awareness of sexual violence, reporting sexual violence, workplace culture, and availability of sexual assault resources. In addition, they will be asked demographic questions, and asked to complete a variety of questionnaires. The goal of this study is to bring awareness to the understudied issues of sexual violence in the military and/or law enforcement in a developing country (i.e., Belize). This can help educate individuals on the prevalence of sexual violence in these forces and provide insight to government agencies on how to address this issue, reduce, and prevent it from continuing to happen. Further, by addressing this issue, it will assist in providing safety for individuals in the military and/or law enforcement, as well as increase the amount of people who want to join. If you have any questions about the research, please contact Dr. Daniel Houlihan at (507) 389-6278 or [daniel.houlihan@mnsu.edu](mailto:daniel.houlihan@mnsu.edu).

Participation is voluntary. You have the option not to respond to any of the questions. You may stop taking the survey at any time by closing your web browser. The decision as to whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no workplace penalty or loss of benefits. If you



have any questions about participants' rights and for research-related injuries, please contact the MNSU Administrator of the Institutional Review Board, at (507) 389-1242.

Responses will be anonymous. However, whenever one works with online technology there is always the risk of compromising privacy, confidentiality, and/or anonymity. If you would like more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks posed by online surveys, please contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato IT Solutions Center (507-389-6654) and ask to speak to the Information Security Manager.

The risks of participating in the current study are mental distress, discomfort, and potential trauma symptoms that are reactivated from rediscussing a traumatic experience. At the end of the survey, there will be various sexual assault resources to contact if necessary. Any participant will also have the opportunity to receive counseling by a Licensed Psychologist in Belize as part of the debriefing process.

There are no direct benefits for participating. The current study may bring awareness to the understudied issues of sexual violence in the military and/or law enforcement in Belize. Understanding this issue can help provide insight into how to address this issue, reduce, and prevent it from happening.

Submitting the completed survey will indicate your informed consent to participate and indicate your assurance that you are at least 18 years of age.

Please print a copy of this page for your future reference. If you cannot print the consent form, take a screen shot, paste it to a word document and print that.

**Minnesota State University, Mankato IRBNet Id# 1964097**

**Date of Minnesota State University, Mankato IRB approval: 08/27/2022**

Do you agree to participate?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ {If the answer is yes, move to survey. If the answer is no, move to a thank you page.}

## Appendix B

### Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your age in years?
2. I identify as the following Gender:
  - a. Man
  - b. Woman
  - c. Transgender
  - d. Other
  - e. I prefer not to respond
3. What is your occupation/job? Please select all that apply.
  - a. Law enforcement/police force
  - b. Military/defense force
4. How long have you been working in this job?
  - a. 0-11 months
  - b. 1-5 years
  - c. 6-9 years
  - d. 10+ years

## Appendix C

### Qualitative Questions

1. Have you ever had a coworker in your workplace ask for sexual favors?

a. Yes

b. No

2. Have you ever had a superior in your workplace ask for sexual favors?

a. Yes

b. No

3. Have you ever had someone in your workplace make unwanted sexual comments towards you?

a. Yes

b. No

4. Have you ever had someone in your workplace make unwanted sexual advances towards you?

For instance, asking you on dates?

a. Yes

b. No

If Yes for any questions 1-4, each question answered “yes”, questions 5-8 will be asked regarding each question. If No, proceed to question 16.

5. Were you fearful to report [being asked for sexual favors]?

a. Yes

b. No

6. Why or why not were you fearful to report the incident(s)?

7. When you were [being asked for sexual favors], did you tell anyone?

## a. Yes

i. If yes, questions will be presented with logic:

ii. Did you tell an informal individual (family, friends, etc.) or a formal authority (law enforcement or military commander)?

## 1. Informal

a. If informal, the following question will be presented:

i. What did the informal person(s) say when you told them?

## 2. Formal

a. If formal, the following questions will be presented:

i. Was the offender charged with anything?

1. Yes

2. No

ii. What was the process of reporting formally?

iii. Was the incident(s) public in the media/news coverage?

1. Yes

2. No

## 3. Both

a. Present all four additional questions

iii. Why did you report this to an informal and/or formal individual(s)?

## b. No

8. After [the incident], did you experience any of the following issues in the workplace? Select all that apply.

- a. Forced to be around the offender
- b. Denied promotion opportunities
- c. Denied other career opportunities
- d. Feeling left out
- e. Hateful messages
- f. Paid leave
- g. Unpaid leave
- h. Other (with text box)

9. Is there anything you would like to add about negative issues you faced after the incident(s) in the workplace?

10. Which of the following statements do you agree with? Select all that apply.

- a. My perception of my profession has changed
- b. My perception of my coworkers has changed
- c. My perception of the superior in my workplace has changed
- d. None of the above

11. Please explain why or not your perception(s) of your workplace has changed.

12. Before this incident, have you ever had someone ask for sexual favors?

- a. Yes
- b. No

13. Before this incident, have you ever had someone make unwanted sexual comments towards you?

a. Yes

b. No

14. Before this incident, have you ever had someone make unwanted sexual advances towards you?

a. Yes

b. No

15. If yes to 12-14, for each question: After [insert from questions above], did you receive help from any of the following sources? Select all that apply. If no to all, go to 16.

a. Online counseling/therapy

b. In person counseling/therapy

c. Face-to-face (in person) support group

d. Online support group

e. Doctor/physician

f. Other (text box)

g. None of the above

16. Have you been aware of sexual violence occurring in your workplace?

a. Yes

b. No

17. Do you believe that there is an unhealthy imbalance of power in your workplace?

a. Yes

b. No

18. Do you feel there are adequate sexual assault survivor resources in your community?

a. Yes

b. No

19. If you could make changes that might improve the social environment of your workplace, what would they be?

20. Do you think there should be steps taken to help keep everyone safe in your occupation? If so, what would they be?



## Appendix D

### Trauma History Questionnaire

**The following is a series of questions about serious or traumatic life events. These types of events actually occur with some regularity, although we would like to believe they are rare, and they affect how people feel about, react to, and/or think about things subsequently.**

**Knowing about the occurrence of such events, and reactions to them, will help us to develop programs for prevention, education, and other services. The questionnaire is divided into questions covering crime experiences, general disaster and trauma questions, and questions about physical and sexual experiences.**

**For each event, please indicate whether it happened (Yes or No).**

1. Has anyone ever tried to take something directly from you by using force or the threat of force, such as a stick-up or mugging?
2. Has anyone ever attempted to rob you or actually robbed you (i.e., stolen your personal belongings)?
3. Has anyone ever attempted to or succeeded in breaking into your home when you were not there?
4. Has anyone ever attempted to or succeed in breaking into your home while you were there?
5. Have you ever had a serious accident at work, in a car, or somewhere else?
6. Have you ever experienced a natural disaster such as a tornado, hurricane, flood or major earthquake, etc., where you felt you or your loved ones were in danger of death or injury?

7. Have you ever experienced a “man-made” disaster such as a train crash, building collapse, bank robbery, fire, etc., where you felt you or your loved ones were in danger of death or injury?
8. Have you ever been exposed to dangerous chemicals or radioactivity that might threaten your health?
9. Have you ever been in any other situation in which you were seriously injured?
10. Have you ever been in any other situation in which you feared you might be killed or seriously injured?
11. Have you ever seen someone seriously injured or killed?
12. Have you ever seen dead bodies (other than a funeral) or had to handle dead bodies for any reason?
13. Have you ever had a close friend or family member murdered, or killed by a drunk driver?
14. Have you ever had a spouse, romantic partner, or child die?
15. Have you ever had a serious or life-threatening illness?
16. Have you ever received news of a serious injury, life-threatening illness, or unexpected death of someone close to you?
17. Have you ever had to engage in combat while in military service in an official or unofficial war zone?
18. Has anyone ever made you have intercourse or oral or anal sex against your will?
19. Has anyone ever touched private parts of your body, or made you touch theirs, under force or threat?

20. Other than incidents mentioned in Questions 18 and 19, have there been any other situations in which another person tried to force you to have an unwanted sexual contact?
21. Has anyone, including family members or friends, ever attacked you with a gun, knife, or some other weapon?
22. Has anyone, including family members or friends, ever attacked you without a weapon and seriously injured you?
23. Has anyone in your family ever been beaten, spanked, or pushed you hard enough to cause injury?
24. Have you experienced any other extraordinarily stressful situation or event that is not covered above?

## Appendix E

### Trauma Symptom Checklist – 33

**How often have you experienced (on a Likert scale from 0 = *never* to 3 = *very often*) each of the following symptoms in the last 2 months?**

1. Insomnia (trouble getting to sleep)
2. Restless sleep
3. Nightmares
4. Waking up early in the morning and can't get back to sleep
5. Weight loss (without dieting)
6. Feeling isolated from others
7. Loneliness
8. Low sex drive
9. Sadness
10. "Flashbacks" (sudden, vivid, distracting memories)
11. "Spacing out" (going away in your mind)
12. Headaches
13. Stomach problems
14. Uncontrollable crying
15. Anxiety attacks
16. Trouble controlling temper
17. Trouble getting along with others
18. Dizziness
19. Passing out

20. Desire to physically hurt yourself
21. Desire to physically hurt others
22. Sexual problems
23. Sexual overactivity
24. Fear of men
25. Fear of women
26. Unnecessary or over-frequent washing
27. Feelings of inferiority
28. Feeling of guilt
29. Feelings that things are “unreal”
30. Memory problems
31. Feelings that you are not always in your body
32. Feeling tense all the time
33. Having trouble breathing

## Appendix F

### Preemployment Life Events

The statements below refer to the events you may have experienced **AT ANY TIME BEFORE BEGINNING YOUR JOB IN THE MILITARY AND/OR LAW ENFORCEMENT**. Please click “Yes, this happened” or “No, this did not happen” for each question below.

#### Before beginning your job...

1. ...someone close to me died.
2. ...I went through a divorce or was left by a significant other.
3. ...I was robbed or had my home broken into.
4. ...I saw or heard physical fighting between my parents or caregivers.
5. ...I was physically punished by a parent or primary caregiver.
6. ...I experienced unwanted sexual activity as a result of force, threat of harm, or manipulation during childhood (before age 18).
7. ...I experienced unwanted sexual activity as a result of force, threat of harm, or manipulation during adulthood (age 18 or later).
8. ...I experienced a natural disaster (for example, a hurricane), a fire, or an accident in which I or someone close to me was hurt or had serious property damage.
9. ...someone close to me experienced a serious illness, injury, or mental health problems (for example, cancer, alcohol/drug problem).
10. ...I witness someone being seriously assaulted or killed.
11. ...I lost mt job or had serious trouble finding a job.
12. ...I was emotionally mistreated (for example, ignored or repeatedly told I was no good).

13. ...I experienced serious financial problems.
14. ...I experienced serious physical or mental health problems.
15. ...I participated in dangerous military duties.
16. ...I was seriously physically injured by another person (for example, hit, or beaten up) during childhood (before age 18).
17. ...I was seriously physically injured by another person (for example, hit, or beaten up) during adulthood age (age 18 or later).
18. ...I experienced stressful legal problems (for example, being sued, suing someone else, or being in a custody battle).

## Appendix G

### Childhood Family Experiences

The sentences below refer to your relationship with your family **WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP**. Please describe how much you agree or disagree (on a 5-point Likert scale) with each statement by marking the response that best fits your choice. If you spent time in more than one family setting, please answer these questions about the family in which you spent the greatest part of your childhood.

#### **During childhood...**

1. ...I got along well with my family members.
2. ...I felt like I fit in with my family.
3. ...family members knew what I thought and how I felt about things.
4. ...I felt like my contributions to my family were appreciated.
5. ...I shared many common interests and activities with family members.
6. ...my opinions were valued by other family members.
7. ...I was affectionate with family members.
8. ...I played an important role in my family.
9. ...I spent as much of my free time with family members as possible.
10. ...family members told me when they were having a problem.
11. ...I could be myself around family members.
12. ...my input was sought on important family decisions.



## Appendix H

### Training and Employment Preparation

Below are several statements about **HOW WELL-PREPARED YOU WERE BY THE MILITARY AND/OR LAW ENFORCEMENT**. As used in these statements, the term “unit” refers to those you worked with on a daily basis. Please mark how much you agree or disagree (on a 5-point Likert scale) with each statement.

#### **In preparation for your job...**

1. ...I had all the supplies and equipment needed for my job.
2. ...the training I received made me feel confident in my ability to use my equipment.
3. ...the training I received prepared me to deal with the region’s climate.
4. ...I was accurately informed about the role my unit expected me to play during my job.
5. ...I had enough gear to protect myself in case of an attack.
6. ...I received appropriate training for the nature of the work I experienced.
7. ...my duties and assignments were what I expected.
8. ...my unit was well-prepared to operate as a team.
9. ...the training I received made me feel confident in my ability to perform tasks assigned to me during the job.
10. ...the training I received taught me everything I needed to know about the job.

## Appendix I

### Support from Family/Friends

The next set of statements refers to social support from family or friends at home **DURING YOUR JOB**. Please mark how much you agree or disagree (on a 5-point Likert scale) with each statement.

#### **During your job...**

1. ...family members and/or friends at home were sincerely interested in hearing what was going on with me.
2. ...I had family members or friends at home talk to when I had a problem.
3. ...I could count on my family members or friends at home for good advice.
4. ...relatives or friends at home could be counted on to look out for the well-being or my family or other dependents (including pets).
5. ...relatives or friends at home could be counted on to take care of my finances, property, or belongings if needed.
6. ...I was happy with the amount of communication I received from people at home.
7. ...I was happy with the amount of support I received from people at home.
8. ...people at home did things to show they cared about me.

## Appendix J

### Unit Support

The statements below are about your relationships with **other individuals in the military and/or law enforcement**, your most recent deployment. As used in these statements, the term “unit” refers to those you worked with on a daily basis. Please mark how much you agree or disagree (on a 5-point Likert scale) with each statement.

#### During the job...

1. ...my unit was like family to me.
2. ...people in my unit were trustworthy.
3. ...my fellow unit members appreciated my efforts.
4. ...I felt valued by my fellow unit members.
5. ...members of my unit were interested in my well-being.
6. ...my fellow unit members were interested in what I thought and how I felt about things.
7. ...my fellow unit leader(s) were interested in what I thought and how I felt about things.
8. ...I felt like my efforts really counted to the leaders in my unit.
9. ...my service was appreciated by the leaders in my unit.
10. ...I could go to the unit leaders for help if I had a problem or concern.
11. ...the leaders of my unit were interested in my personal welfare.
12. ...I felt valued by the leaders of my unit.

## Appendix K

### Relationships During Employment

The next set of questions is about your relationships with others (for example, other unit members, other unit leaders, civilians) **DURING YOUR JOB**. Please mark how often (on a scale from 1 = *never* to 4 = *many times*) you experienced each circumstance.

#### **During the job, the people I worked with...**

1. ...treated me in an overly critical way.
2. ...behaved in way that was uncooperative when working with me.
3. ...treated me as if I had to work harder than others to prove myself.
4. ...questioned my abilities or commitment to perform my job effectively.
5. ...acted as though my mistakes were worse than others.
6. ...tried to make my job more difficult to do.
7. ...”put me down” or treated me in a condescending way.
8. ...threatened my physical safety.
9. ...made crude and offensive sexual remarks directed at me, either publicly or privately.
10. ...spread negative rumors about my sexual activities.
11. ...tried to talk me into participating in sexual acts when I didn’t want to.
12. ...used a position of authority to pressure me into unwanted sexual activity.
13. ...offered me a specific reward or special treatment to take part in sexual behavior.
14. ...threatened me with some sort of retaliation if I was not sexually cooperative (for example, the threat of negative review or physical violence).
15. ...touched me in a sexual way against my will.
16. ...physically forced me to have sex.

## Appendix L

### Debriefing Form

Thank you for partaking as a research participant in the present study. The purpose of this study is to bring awareness to understudied issues of sexual violence in the military and/or law enforcement in Belize. This can help educate individuals on the prevalence of sexual violence in these forces and provide insight to government agencies on how to address this issue, reduce, and prevent it from continuing to happen. Further, addressing this issue, will assist in providing safety for individuals in the military and/or law enforcement, as well as increase the number of people who want to join. If you have any questions about the research, please contact Dr. Daniel Houlihan at (507) 389-6278 or [daniel.houlihan@mnsu.edu](mailto:daniel.houlihan@mnsu.edu).

You were asked to answer a variety of qualitative questions on various topics involving sexual violence in the workplace, awareness of sexual violence, reporting sexual violence, workplace culture, and sexual assault resources. In addition, you were asked demographic questions and to complete a variety of questionnaires.

It is important to note that we will never attempt to link to your responses to your name. This is all completely confidential. Only the co-principal investigator and the principal investigator under their supervision will have direct access to your specific responses in Qualtrics® and they will not have a name associated with them. All your responses will remain confidential. This study does involve risks to participants, such as mental distress, discomfort, and potential trauma symptoms that are reactivated when discussing a traumatic experience. To manage and minimize these risks, there is contact information regarding resources listed by a Licensed Psychologist in Belize below. However, this research study will provide useful benefits

such as a greater understanding of the prevalence of sexual violence in these forces and provide insight to government agencies.

Remember that no responses will be associated with your name, they will remain confidential, and will be viewed only by the co-principal investigator and principal investigator without knowledge of who provided them. If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, please contact the principal investigator, Dr. Daniel Houlihan at (507) 389-6278 or [daniel.houlihan@mnsu.edu](mailto:daniel.houlihan@mnsu.edu) if you would like to learn more about the results of this research study as they become available.

For research-related problems or questions about participants' rights, please contact the principal faculty investigator, Dr. Daniel Houlihan. If you experience unanticipated distress, you may also contact the listed resources below listed by a Licensed Psychologist in Belize.

Thank you again for participating.

**Resources:**

**Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Contact Information:**

- **Coordinator:** Janine Cayetano
  - Email: [employee.assistant@mps.gov.bz](mailto:employee.assistant@mps.gov.bz)
- **Phone Numbers:**
  - (501) 822-2204/05
  - Direct line: 828-4232
  - Mobile: 634-0392 (24hr)
  - (501) 822-2206

**Ministry of Public Service:**

- **Director:** Janine Cayetano
- **Phone Number:** 001-501-822-2204/2205
- **Email:** customer.service@mps.gov.bz

**Belize Defense Force:**

- **Counselor:** Cary Wong K.

## Appendix M

### Agency Approval

Dear **Dr. Daniel Houlihan & Emily Veroeven**;

I am familiar with your research project titled **An Assessment of Officer Abuse and Victimization in Belize** and your desire to have the **Employee Assistance Program** involved with it. I understand the role of the **Employee Assistance Program** to be **gathering participants and allowing employees to voluntarily respond to online qualitative questions and surveys via Qualtrics®**.

We have also discussed the role of the **Employee Assistance Program** and I am satisfied that their safety and welfare are adequately protected as described in the research protocol. In addition, I understand that this research will be carried out following sound ethical principles and that involvement in this research, for the **Employee Assistance Program** is strictly voluntary and guarantees the protection of participant's privacy. No individualized data will be provided by the researchers. In particular, I understand that the investigator cannot provide me with data that might allow anyone other than the research team to identify anyone's answers unless permission has been specifically given by the subject. I agree that there will be no negative consequences for potential participants based on whether or not they choose to participate in the study. The **Employee Assistance Program** has an understanding of the goals of the assessment study and the feedback they might expect in return for participation in this research.

Therefore, as a representative of the **Employee Assistance Program** I agree to allow you to conduct your research at our agency/institution.

Sincerely,

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_