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### Policy Analysis of the Effectiveness of De-escalation Training

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# Evaluation of De-escalation Training on the Use of Excessive Force



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## Abstract

The objective of this research is to examine the effectiveness of de-escalation training on the rates of excessive force towards mentally ill and minority individuals. A systematic review of studies conducted to assess the impact of this policy on stated outcomes indicates that the policy is an effective means of reducing excessive rates outcomes between police officers, mentally ill, and minority citizens. In addition, the policy has also reduced the rate of assaults and increased confidence and skills in the medical field which contributes to the policy's effectiveness.

## Introduction

Significant issues in police use of excessive and deadly force have been noted. Excessive force is force beyond what is reasonably or necessarily. McEwan (1996) found that among a sample of 861 police officers in Illinois, 21.1% indicated that they had observed an officer using deadly force (p.71).

Further, a March 1991 Gallup Poll indicated that 9% of minority respondents indicated that they had been mistreated or physically abused by the police (p.73). On the other hand, The Treatment Advocacy Center (n.d.) found that people with untreated mental illness are 16 times more likely to be killed during a police encounter (para.1). As a result of these issues in police-citizen encounters, de-escalation training has been proposed

De-escalation training is taught to law enforcement officers for the purpose of giving officers a strategy to calmly deal with the situation at hand. Some of these strategies include creating space, slowing down, and communicating.

## Studies Demonstrating Effectiveness

- Officers trained in de-escalation are described being more confident and knowledgeable in crises (Compton et al., 2014).
  - Also evident in (Isaza et al., 2019) even 4 months after
- Engel et al., (2020) indicates de-escalation training is effective in law enforcement and in the medial field.
- De-escalation training increased confidence and skills dealing with aggressive and workplace violence in the medial field (Feldt & Ryden, 1992).
  - Also evident in Middleby-Clements & Grenyer (2007) in psychiatry and Oostrom & van Mierlo (2008) in the nursing field.
- After receiving training, the rates of assaults decreased as well as the number of future assaults in the medial field (Whittington & Wykes, 1996).
- The more de-escalation skills used in an encounter lower the use of force used by officers (McLaughlin 2019).
  - Also evident in Compton et al., (2011) and Engel et al., (2020).

## Summative Analysis

- Equipping officers with the proper de-escalation skills affords them additional tools for helping individuals in crisis (Olivia et al., 2010)
- Skills and knowledge learned through de-escalation training can possibly decay because of time on memory and the lack of opportunities in the field to use the knowledge (Engel et al., 2020).
- Overall, there is not a significant body of evidence that is available to confirm the conclusions about the effectiveness or issues with the policy so they can be assessed (Todak & March, 2020).

## Studies Demonstrating Ineffectiveness

- Engel (2020) explains with other research how de-escalation is effective in law enforcement and the medical field but unaware of how much that is due to de-escalation training.
- The training increased the number of assaults on staff and other patients in the medical field (Rice et al., 1985).
- Changing the use of force policy (tasers) along with de-escalation training increases use of force incidents (Rockwell et al., 2020)
- Comparing officers with no de-escalation training to officers with training does not affect their de-escalation skills and confidence.(Peterson et al., 2019).

## Conclusions

- De-escalation training was recommended due to the mentally ill and minorities disproportionately being victims of excessive and deadly force.
- De-escalation training is a set of strategies to deal with a suspect using the least amount of force possible. Police officers are taught to slow down, create space, and use communication skills in an encounter that could potentially be dangerous.
- Police officers also use their abilities which include stabilization tactics, decision-making, and both verbal and non-verbal communication skills to connect to an individual through an encounter.
- Research indicates that de-escalation training is a sound criminal justice policy that reduces the use of force used by officers and assault rates in the medical field.



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