

Effects of anxiety on police officers' shooting behavior under pressure

Police officers are increasingly often confronted with serious crimes that involve the use of firearms. Surely, getting involved in a shooting incident is stressful – also for police officers. This thesis reports seven scientific experiments in which the effects of anxiety on police officers' shooting behavior were systematically investigated, thereby focusing on shot accuracy, shooting decisions, and the execution of different shooting strategies. Overall, the experiments show that anxiety – caused by the threat of getting shot at – can strongly influence police officers' shooting performance. It is suggested that specific knowledge about the situations with which officers are confronted in real-life – and the type of action that is required from officers (e.g., decision making, shooting) – can be used to predict how anxiety will influence their performances. Knowing this influence may help officers to become safer and increase their effectiveness under stressful circumstances.

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