Influence Of Occupational Stress on Work Performance Among Kenya Police Officers in Njoro Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract

Police Officers are exposed to a high level of stress due to heavy workload, long working hours, and exposure to traumatic experiences emanating from daily duties. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of occupational stress on work performance among Kenya police officers in Njoro Sub-County. The study was based on the role stress theory which explains how individual roles and expectations influence the outcome of individual responsibilities and how these functions cause occupational stress and affect work performance among police officers. The study adopts a descriptive survey design. The study targeted a population of 367 police officers. Stratified sampling was used to select a sample size of 104 respondents. The data collected through self-administered structured questionnaires were used as the research instrument to collect the data. Descriptive statistics were used in analyzing the data where the results were presented in form of tables, graphs, charts, frequency, and percentages to give meaning to the study. The results show that out of 104 questionnaires administered 81 were returned indicating a response rate of 77.88 percent. The study established that the majority of the respondents perform poorly due to stress they experience from work and that there is a strong influence on performance attributed to the poor communication network, lack of serviceable equipment, lack of support, lack of motivation, role conflict, heavy workload and long working hours. The study recommends that the National Police Service should focus on the causes of poor performance among the police officers and develop a strategy for addressing the gap to better service delivery. Develop counseling programs in the police syllabus and sensitize officers on the need of sharing problems that affect their work performance. Finally, the government should increase budgetary allocation and mobilize more resources and training to help them acquire skills to improve police public relationships and improve work performance. The study, 1therefore, recommended for a similar study be conducted in the national police service in other Sub-Counties in Kenya to compare the findings.

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Introduction

Background of the Study

Occupational Stress in the workplace is a common occurrence and is one of the major problems facing the contemporary worker, and occurs across all levels, kinds of employees, and types of organizations (Anshel, 2000; Rollinson, 2005). Police occupational stress is a widespread problem because of its numerous negative effects on individuals and police organizations. Officers who experience high levels of occupational stress report a high incidence of physical ailments and psychological problems that affects their work performance. Specifically, they frequently have poor health, are absent from work, experience burnout, become dissatisfied with their job, and because of weak organizational commitment, they do not fully invest themselves in their work or may retire prematurely (Cooper &Ruffalo, 1995; Wright & Saylor, 1991; Brown, Cooper, & Kirkcaldy, 1996; Norvell, Belles, & Hills, 1998; Kop, Euwema, &Schaufeli, 1999). Melgosa (2004) and Selye (1980) define stress as a condition of being subject to external forces or pressure and can either be positive (eustress) or negative (distress) depending upon the effect of the external forces. Occupational stress is defined as the perception of a discrepancy between environmental demands (stressors) and individual capacities to fill these (NIOSH, 2006). The police profession is an occupation that has been identified as having a high level of stress across the world. Police officers have different roles depending on the level of an individual officer and their main responsibility is to maintain law and order, peacekeeping, protection of lives and property, and investigate and interrogate criminals. Therefore, police officers respond to unexpected situations that may occur when they are on duty. Because of work stress, police officers experience interpersonal relationship problems that may result in low productivity in the service. Police work tends to impose a high degree of stress and a multiplicity of stressful situations which can affect work performance, mental, and critical profession in the world (Govender 2008 and Kayal, 2004). Malach-Pines and Keinan (2007) noted that due to the 2inherent nature of police work, this profession was likely to be one of the most stressful occupations in the world.

Law enforcement officers recognize that stress is part of their profession and working conditions. In the past, police culture did not recognize stress as a problem affecting their officers. However, there is plenty of evidence and research showing that unmanaged stress can lead to anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). WHO (2005) predicted that by the year 2020, stress will be a major cause of workplace ill health. Stress is rated as a silent killer among other illnesses such as; HIV and AIDS, heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. Stress in the workplace is a worldwide issue. A report from the World Health Organization (2005) revealed that the police service has failed to address the matter of stress among police officers. This failure has stifled natural effort toward building a stronger human resource base which is invaluable for development in its entire sphere in the police. A survey carried out in the U.K by the Health Service Executive (HSE) in 2004 stated that around half a million people experience work-related stress at a level that they believe is making them ill. Stress contributes not only to physical disorders but also leads to emotional discomfort. A study carried out by North-Western Nation Life Families and Work Institute and Yale University reported that more workers are reporting that their jobs are very stressful

and that they are experiencing burn-out. The nature of the job is changing due to the economic and social growth where job stress poses a threat to the health of the worker and the organization (Tooley, 1996).

The U.S survey carried out by violanti indicated that there has been an upward trend in working hours among security officers both men and women employed, and further security officers are exposed to long working hours and weeks. The researcher posited that officers work more than52 hours a week and a considerable increase in combined working hours among couples, particularly those with young children. The survey postulated that working more than the normal eight hours a day is quite stressful and will attract various kinds of stress-related problems ranging from mood disturbance, psychological distress, sleep disturbance, upset stomach, headache, pneumonia, violence, and problems with the family relationship. Such frequent exposure places the officer develop stress that puts pressure on the law enforcement officers at risk of high blood pressure, insomnia, increased level of destructive stress hormones, heart problems, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and suicide (Violanti,2008).

3. For many years, stressful events have been recognized as important components in the development of a variety of adverse conditions. Today's high-pressure lifestyles can take a heavy toll on decreased productivity, frustrations, diseases, and even early mortality (Melgosa, 2004). Over the years, medical thoughts have come to recognize the interaction of the mind and the body in the production of health and illness (Gherman, 1981). The American Academy of Family Physicians reported that two-thirds of a visit to physicians are a result of stress-related symptoms and the most frequently prescribed medication are ulcers and hypertension drugs and tranquilizers (Mitchell & Larson, 1987). A study led by Violanti (2008) at the University of Buffalo revealed that stress in police work affects an officer's physical and mental health and reported that officers over the age of 40 years had a higher 10 years risk of a coronary event compared to national standards; 72 percent of female officers and 43 percent of male officers had higher than recommended cholesterol levels and police officers as a group had higher than the average pulse rate and diastolic blood pressure (Violanti, 2008), while in India Wardha City police, officers aged 50years experience stress and engaged themselves in maladaptive behaviors such as excessive drinking and exposure to critical incidents (CIs) such as shootings and suicides. The study perceived work stress to be significantly associated with anxiety, depression, somatization, posttraumatic symptoms of stress or burnout, chronic back pain, alcohol abuse, and inappropriately aggressive behavior. Violanti a renowned researcher at the University of Buffalo noted that 'Policing is a psychologically stressful work environment filled with danger, higher demands, ambiguity in work encounters, human misery and exposure to death". A similar study conducted in the U.S.A on police officers under stress reveals that police work often exposes officers to stress or trauma which may affect their ability to perform effectively (Gershon et.al 2002).

In African countries, for example, in Ghana, studies reported that 25 percent of police officers are stressed due to a lack of housing facilities, contrary to Ghana's condition of service. Out of 75 percent who reside in police accommodation only half have decent accommodation. The rest of the officers live in uncompleted

buildings, offices, garages, and dilapidated buildings (Quaye, 2009). In Nigeria, incidents of police welfare neglect in the country has been reported due to the absence of a comprehensive and sustainable welfare policy, inadequate and improper budgetary allocations by the government, and corruption both in the budgetary and expenditure process, making the performance of the officers to remain sub-optimal as welfare is not given due attention (Alemika, 2008). In South Africa, studies show that police officers' stress is on increase (Govender, 2008). Rothmann and Strijdom (2002) report that shift work, the paramilitary structure of many police departments, lack of administrative support for individual officers, autocratic management styles, the inconsistent enforcement of rules, the excessive or unnecessary paperwork, workload, equipment deficiencies, lack of resources, shortage of staff, poor interpersonal relationships are factors most often cited as causes of occupational stress. In Kenya, National Police Service is a law enforcement institution in the country that ensures that law and order are maintained, and citizens' lives and properties are protected. A study conducted by Philip Ransley in the year 2009 reveals that there is a serious problem in Kenya's police service ranging from poor working conditions and lack of employee welfare services which is a subject of great concern as police officers can barely enforce law and order with such stressful constraints and the type of crime committed nowadays such as cybercrime, drug and arms trafficking, terrorism and marine piracy is dominating (the Republic of Kenya, 2009). Kimani (2012) carried out a study in Kenya among police officers and found that police officers' stress is on the increase due to poor working conditions. Another study conducted by a task force from Kenyatta University reported that a large number of police officers, in general, are either suicidal or homicide as a result of the pressure of work. The study further noted that the most affected were the newly married officers who sometimes share houses with officers who are not married for lack of resources. Officers commit suicide after first shooting their bosses due to being denied days off or leave days, infidelity, frustrations, work overload, poor welfare services, and corruption by the senior officers (Teiye & Wanga, Sunday Nation, Sept, 28th, pg. 5, 2014).

Bosibori, Charles, Nyakundi, and Walter, (2012) carried out a study on the role of employee welfare on the performance of the National Police Service in Kisii County reveals that the scarcity of welfare services of police officers in most police stations, lack of basic lighting, water, proper ventilation, poor or lack of housing units, offices and types of equipment for policing purposes makes police officers stressed. Ransley argued that these issues of concern may cause stress and affect the effectiveness of service delivery in the police service and could pose a serious threat to security, stability, and development in Kenya (the Republic of Kenya, 52009). Therefore, this study sought to investigate the influence of occupational stress on work performance among Kenya police officers and particularly in Njoro Sub-County.

Objective

To examine the influence of the work environment that contributes to occupational stress on work performance among police officers in Njoro Sub-County.

Methodology

Research Design

The study used a descriptive survey design using ex post-factor causal-comparative research design. It was intended to obtain information concerning the current study of the influence of occupational stress on work performance. The design was found appropriate because it enables observation of independent variables (occupational stress) and has an influence on the dependent variable (work performance) without any treatment or manipulation of the subjects by the researcher. This is because in ex post- factors causal-comparative research design, the researcher has no control over the variables and can only report what has already happened or observes what is happening (Kothari, 2009). The design is also appropriate for gathering information, summarizing, presenting, and interpreting it for clarification (Orodho, 2003).

Target Population

The area of study has five police stations and a total population of 367 police officers. The population was drawn from the following police stations; Njoro, Naissi, Likia, Mau-Narok, and Mauche police station respectively. The target population consisted of Five (5) Officers Commanding stations (OCS), Three Inspectors, Five Sergeants, Five Corporals, and Three hundred and Forty-nine Constables who are the main respondents.

Sampling Methods

This study adopted stratified random sampling techniques to carry out this research. The samples were collected from the station commanders, inspectors, sergeants, corporals, and constables. The study sample target was 367 police officers. To get the desired sample size stratified sampling method was adopted to get a sample size of 104 by adopting a formula by Nassiuma (2009). But after distributing the questionnaires, duly filled and completed returned questionnaires were 81, giving a response rate of 77.88% of the respondents who participated in this study. This response rate was considered good for this type of study (Saunders & Thornhil., 2007; Mugenda and Mugenda (2003).

Data Collection and Instruments

The study used Police Stress Questionnaires tool for collecting the data developed by McCreary and Thomson (2006) was used to assess the stress levels associated with the working environment.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using Statistical Packages of Social Science (SPSS) version 20.0 for windows. A total of 31 variables were loaded into SPSS version 20.0 for the analysis using descriptive statistics and frequency tables. The results are shown in the subsequent tables.

Results And Discussions

Table 1 represents the police officers' rating of the degree of the stress experienced by five (5) stress

symptoms ranked from Never, Almost Never, Almost Always, and Frequently. The purpose of this study was to find out the general influence of occupational stress on work performance among police officers, reaction to stressors, and environmental sources of stress in the workplace. The study demonstrates the experience of Kenya police service officers in the context of their daily duties. The findings reveal that policing is highly stressful. The findings from this study reveal that the highest symptom rate was; Getting regular updates about work=59.3%, lacks of types of equipment for use=43.2%; Not feeling comfortable with the working environment=37.0%; Feeling comfortable with the organizational rules= 29.6%; Lack of support from the boss= 28.4%. These findings are consistent with other findings (Shadur et al.,2001; Bartol and Bartol, 2004). Shadur et al., (2001) posit that, if employees are adequately informed about matters that concern them and allowed to make decisions, they will have a more positive work attitude and work more effectively. While Bartol and Bartol (2004) reveal that, pressure experienced by police officers is the product of the environmental factors alone or a combination of psychological and environmental variables related to occupational stress.

Table1: The frequency of the stressors as rated by the police officers (N=81)

Stressors	AN+N= (%)	F= (%)	AA= (%)
Lack of information about what to do	70.4	8.6	21.0
Lack of Support from supervisors/colleagues	54.3	22.2	23.5
Lack of Equipment	21.0	35.8	43.2
Comfortability with Organisational rules	49.4	21.0	29.6
Comfortability with the work environment	49.3	19.8	30.9

AN= Always Never, N=Never, F=Frequently, AA=Almost Always

The above symptoms clearly show that the police officers are always experiencing a high level of stress as a result of a poor working environment which requires urgent attention and to contain the situation to enhance work productivity by the police authority.

Similarly, the findings also are in line with the responses from the participants regarding the management practices as a source of stress as indicated in table 2 below. The lack of adequatepersonnel in the stations was rated high at 77.8%. The officer's response shows that the lack of enough personnel produces a lot of stress thus making them work under pressure to meet the deadline. This finding is consistent with findings

of earlier researchers such as Larson and Stanley (2014); Li and Vlahov (2009) who conducted similar studies on policing and postulated that, police officers were recognized to suffer from a very high level of stress through performing work that is both physically and emotionally draining. However, lack of enough resources rated 76.6%, lack of types of equipment at 72.2%, and inconsistent leadership style at 68.1% are cited as taxing and stressful. This is consistent with findings of Awino and Agolla (2008) that revealed the lack of resources as a major constraint in police work, while 49.4% reported having moderate stress in relation to constant changes in departmental policy and legislation. This is in agreement with a statement from the Florida police stress Unit (2004) which indicated that the common source of police stress involves policies and procedures of law enforcement agencies themselves including not involving officers in both lower and middle levels in making policies.

Officers also rated perceived pressure to volunteer working during free time and dealing with supervisors as a source of stress. This was indicated by 51.9% and 46.9% respectively of the officers who reported having a lot of stress and frustrations and poor work performance. This is in agreement with what the Division of Human Resources (2000), noted that reluctance of coming to work due to constant pressure is accompanied by general physiological, psychological, and behavioral stress symptoms. O'Toole and Palmer (2006) indicated that officers feel frustrated when they lack support from their supervisors and have difficulties in getting along with senior officers.

In dealing with the court system, the majority of officers reported 55.5% having a lot of stress when asked to state whether they find the court system stressful. This supports the findings of Lewis and Coopers (1998) that identified the court justice system as unfavorable and a major concern, while regarding job accountability 39.6% reported having a lot of stress. This is consistent with what Lewis and Coopers (1998) indicated that the negative public opinion about policing, bad media coverage and distorted press accounts of incidences involving police officers' behavior, negative attitudes, and perceived lack of support create further stress for police officers thus poor performance.

Table 2: The frequency of the stressors as rated by the police officers (N=81)

Stressors	NS= (%)	MS= (%)	AS= (%)	CF= (%)
Dealing with co-workers	16.0	48.2	35.8	100
Feeling that some rules apply to different people	13.6	32.1	54.3	100
Feeling like you always have to prove yourself to the organization	17.3	49.4	33.3	100
Excess administrative duties	9.8	32.2	58.0	100
Constant changes in policy or legislation	11.1	49.4	39.5	100
Staff shortage	4.9	17.3	77.8	100
Too much computer work	24.7	24.6	50.7	100
Lack of training on new types of equipment	11.2	38.8	58.0	100
Perceived pressure to volunteer free time	12.3	35.8	51.9	100
Dealing with supervisors	7.4	46.9	45.7	100
Lack of enough resources	1.2	22.2	76.6	100
Unequal sharing of work responsibilities	9.9	32.1	58.0	100
If you are sick /injured you are looked down upon	24.7	39.5	35.8	100
Leaders overemphasize the negatives	11.1	27.1	61.8	100
Internal investigations	18.5	32.1	49.4	100
Dealing with the court system	16.1	28.4	55.5	100
The need to be accountable for doing your job	34.5	25.9	39.6	100
Inadequate types of equipment	13.0	14.8	63.1	100
Bureaucratic red tape	7.2	29.7	63.1	100
Inconsistent leadership style	6.9	25.0	68.1	100

NS=No Stress, MS=Moderate Stress, AS= A lot of Stress, CF= Cumulative Frequency

Conclusion

The perception of police stress on work performance has adverse effects on service productivity. Work-related stress is also known to have a psychological and physical impact on an individual's health. Based on the work environment the findings reported that poor work performance among police officers is a result of interaction with a working environment that is not favorable to the majority of the police officers. Therefore, it is important to understand how work-related stress affects police officers, and what factors in their working environment cause poor work performance or productivity. So there is a need for resources to be directed towards exploring effective ways of modifying the organization of workload and improving the management environment. However, it is not only organizational factors, nature of work, or environmental factors that cause occupational stress on the working performance of police officers. The interaction between these factors and individual characteristics plays a significant role. Because of different working conditions, social status, ranks, working hours, and administrative policies can be assumed that occupational stress differs among police officers within the country.

Recommendations

From the findings of this study the following recommendations are suggested tol help control the causes of occupational stress on work performance among police officers in National Police

Service:

a). There is a need to develop counselling programs in the police syllabus and sensitize officers on the need of coming to share problems affecting their work performance and improve the quality of service delivery.

b). Also, the government needs to develop capacity-building programs for police officers and commanders to improve their leadership and responsibility skills in handling issues affecting them and their junior officers.

e). There is a need for National Police Service to hire more professional counselors and post them to all police stations across the country to facilitate guidance and counseling to all police officers. This will boost morale and increase productivity in the service.

11. **Suggestions for further research**

This study was limited to police stations in Njoro Sub-County, Kenya. Further studies are to be carried out to establish the prevalence of occupational stress among police officers in Kenya.

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