

Relationship between Gender and Levels of Occupational Stress among Police Constables in Kisumu County, Kenya.

Joyce Atieno Oweke¹, James Muola² & Owen Ngumi³

¹Kabarak University Private Bag - 20157 Kabarak

²Machakos University College, P.o Box 136-90100, Machakos

³Egerton University P.o. Box 536 Egerton ,Kenya

Abstract: *Stress is a major global health challenge affecting the well-being of service providers especially those working in the human service sectors like; police officers, teachers, health care providers and media specialists. This study was prompted by emerging information from studies that, stress is a silent killer that affects the health of service providers leading to; mental, physical, and emotional disorders. In Kenya and Kisumu County in particular studies on occupational stress among police constables are scanty The study adopted the Causal Comparative ex-post facto research design. The target population was 451 police constables and 12 Officers Commanding Stations in the four police divisions in Kisumu County. Stratified random sampling technique was used to sample 105 police constables and 4 Officers Commanding Station (OCS). The data was collected using a Police Constable Questionnaire and an Officer Commanding Station Interview Schedule. The instruments were validated by experts while reliability was estimated by use of Cronbach Alpha method for internal consistency. The questionnaire yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.88. Quantitative and qualitative data were obtained. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences for Windows (Version 20). Descriptive statistics and inferential statistical (Chi-Square) were used in data analysis. The findings of the study that gender of the police constables influenced level of occupational stress. The study recommends that: Police service commission should develop a policy on stress management to guide the induction, operations and counselling of Police Constables on their day to day duties.*

Keywords: *Gender ,Level of Occupational stress, Police Constables.*

I. Introduction

The workplace environment is one of the key factors that affect people's physical and mental health. The workplace and work itself contributes to a person's identity and provides income (World Health Organization, 2005). However, circumstances under which people work can be poorly organized posing risks to workers. Risks associated with poor working conditions have not been adequately addressed even though research shows that work in poorly organized work places can have negative effects on the health of workers (Cox, Griffith & Gonzalez, 2000). WHO (2005), predicted that by 2020, stress associated with work place, also known as occupational stress, will be a major cause of ill health. Stress is rated as a silent killer among other illnesses such as: HIV/AIDS, heart disease, cancer and diabetes. Stress in the work place is a worldwide issue. A report by 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 efforts towards building a stronger human resource base which is invaluable for development in all its spheres in the police. Gul, Serder and Kenan (2008); Mostert and Joubert (2005) conducted studies in the USA, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and France. The study findings have indicated that in terms of levels of occupational stress, police officers experience incidences of depression, neurotic disorders and stress. It is therefore likely that high levels of stress among police officers seem to be threatening and varying in terms of levels of job experience. A study in South Africa shows that the police profession was the most stressful (Govender, 2008). What is happening in the other countries is not different from Kenya. Kimani (2010) who carried out a study in Kenya among the police officers' found out that police officers stress is on the increase. There is need to establish causes of stress and its effects on police constables in Kenya and Kisumu County in particular. Melgosa (2004) defines stress as a condition of being subject to external forces or pressures and can either be positive/pleasant (eustress) or negative/unpleasant (distress). Shift work, the paramilitary structure of many police departments, and 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, shortages of staff poor inter-personal relationships are factors most often cited as causes of occupational stress (Rothmann & Strijdom, 2002). However, in the developing countries in Africa, Kenya inclusive, similar sentiments of police officers exhibit stress related issues.

Numerous studies have identified Police work as one of the most psychologically stressful and critical profession in the world (Govender, 2008; Kayal, 2004). Malach-Pines and Keinan, (2007) noted that due to the inherent nature of police work, this profession was likely to be one of the most stressful occupations in the world. Water and Ussery (2007) argued that hazards associated with the occupational stress as dangerous. They attributed stress to the nature of policing. In Kenya, Police constables are charged with the responsibility of maintaining law and order hence preserving peace in the society. Kisumu County is a cosmopolitan town characterized by high crime rates, high population, upsurging in the number of slums, high unemployment rates among others. Police constables in Kisumu County are constantly confronted with challenges from the public like drug and alcohol consumption. Violence meted to persons, political hooliganism during party electioneering and destruction of property. Responding and seeing gruesome road accidents scenes, cattle rustling and cross-border raids appear to be a life-long security challenge in Kisumu County. According to the Kenya Police Annual Report (2010), there were 389 police officers who died in one year either in the line of duty or were killed by fellow officers. Some of these police officers had exhibited harsh and aggressive treatment to suspects, victims and members of public whom they were supposed to protect and serve. Some of the police officers have been arraigned in court for killing, allegations of involvement in robbery, car hijacking, aiding and abetting crime. Given the forgoing, a module on guidance and counseling, sociology and psychiatry has been introduced in the revised curriculum for training of Kenya police officers.

The police department also uses the service of a psychologist who provides welfare and counseling services to its officers specifically counseling (Government of Kenya, 2007). Police officers are given pre-service physical tests to determine their health status prior to employment, but still there was evidence suggesting that the officers developed stress disorders (Waters & Ussery, 2007). There is concern over cause of the rising number of incident where junior police officer are killing their seniors, colleagues, family members and committing suicide in Kenya. In light of this scenario, there was need for research to be done on causes of occupational stress among police officers in Kenya and Kisumu County. Study conducted on occupational stress and gender shows that there was no difference between male and female with regard to work related stress (Regan, 2008).

II. Literature Review

1.1 Concept of Occupational Stress

There are occasions, situations and experiences that upset people's equilibrium and sometimes cause serious consequences to persons' physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being and may require remedies. According to Willis (2005) society has coined a term to describe these occasions as stress. A considerable number of police constables may share the same job experience but police constables with varied levels of job experience react in a different way to it. In support of the fact that these situations are not conducive Selye (1984) who did his research in Australia, has it that the term 'stress' is borrowed from the word of mechanics and physics where stress is described as the physical pressure exerted upon, and between parts of a body. Furthermore, Willis (2005) adds that, historically, Dr. William Bradford Cannon who lived between 1871 -1945 in the U.S.A was the first clinician to identify the physical characteristics of the initial phase of stress. In every occupation that has a goal to be achieved, a deadline to be met, a superior to report to and to be supervised, normally is not stress free. It is a concern to the novice and experienced employees, employers and administrators alike.

Stress in the work place is a worldwide issue. A report by WHO (2005), revealed that the Police service in the world all over has been ineffective and has failed to address the matter of police stress. This failure however, has stifled natural efforts towards building a stronger human resource base which is invaluable for development in all its spheres in police service. Studies carried out in the United Kingdom by Miller (2007), found out that employee working in law enforcement especially police officers reported high levels of stress and increased levels of stress related illness. What is happening in the United Kingdom and South Africa is not different from Kenya. Akololo (2011) who carried out a study in Kenya among the police officers found out that police officers stress is on the increase.

2.2 Relationship between Demographic Characteristics and Occupational Stress

Jansen (2004) carried out a study on stress and demographic characteristics (age, gender, rank, education level) and found demographic characteristics had influence on the stress. These demographic characteristics moderate occupational stress. This explains why different individuals perceive the same stressors and at different times. Brough and Frame (2004) who studied occupational stress as perceived by Norwegian police officers noted that gender had extensive history. They reported that female police officers experienced few traumatic incidents on average at work compared to their male colleagues but still reported the highest rating on all occupational stress. Brown (2007) provided a comprehensive review of gender issues in policing and suggested that British police service remain replete in masculine characteristics. Further Gershon, Lin and

Li (2002) conducted studies on whether gender, age and field of job specialization had an effect on police officers. They reported that police officers in the age group of thirty one (31) to forty four (44) reported higher levels of stress than police officer under thirty (30) while those forty five(45) and above are at increased risk of occupational stress compared to their younger colleagues. Gershon, Lin and Li (2002) raised concern about issues of health, performance and retention of the increasing number of aging workers.

2.3 Relationship between Gender of Police Officer and Occupational Stress

A Police officer work is physically and emotionally draining resulting to high level of occupational stress. He, Zhao and Ren (2005) argue that women have been traditionally confined to the private sphere of the home and family, which resulted in their exclusion from public domains such as politics and paid work. The first appointment of female officers within police services occurred more than a hundred years ago. The tasks of these female officers consisted of carrying out domestic and administrative duties. Wendy (2008) argued that it was not until the 1960's that women were permitted to undertake policing tasks. The tendency to treat female police officers differently to their male counterparts is a worldwide phenomenon. Besides the exclusion of females from patrol duties, most police departments had certain discriminatory policies such as quotas to discourage the hiring of female officers

The South Africa Police Service officially started recruiting and employing female officers for policing in the late 1960, similar to Kenya. In South Africa, deeply entrenched stereotypes against women in police services are still prevalent. It exists in practices such as not allowing female officers to patrol areas without a male police officer and assigning them to clerical, administrative or counseling work (Wendy, 2008). In Kenya, the numbers of police women have increased steadily. It is an official policy that any advertised posts are filled by a third of the gender in order to promote representation (Government of Kenya, 2010). The concern of effects of occupation stress among female police officers should be given more attention now that female police officers are joining the police service. However, the percentage of female in policing compared to their male counterparts was is relatively low. The issues regarding stress and the effect of a male dominated career come to the fore (Griffin, Armstrong & Hepburn, 2005).

In studies conducted by Bezuidenhout and Theron (2000) female police officers were not treated with the same respect as male police officers. Franklin (2005) observed that male and female police officers performed the same tasks although male police officers were generally reluctant to do patrol work in a high-risk area with a female partner, preferring male partners despite females being willing to work in collaboration with males in high risk areas. They reported that the nature of policing has an emotionally blunting effect on the female. Doing patrol work with the opposite gender was the causative factor for stress.

Wendy (2008) noted that traditionally, females should be located in jobs where they have less decision-making power than males. Within the police service, women are often regarded as inadequate officers and are often regarded as a liability in dangerous situations. Morrison (2005) observed that gender had impacted on occupational stress with females experiencing crime-related stressors less intensely and frequently than their male counterparts. According to Cooper and Bright (2001), males are four times more likely to die of coronary heart disease than the female police officers. Males have an average life expectancy of eight years shorter than female. More males take alcohol, and smoke cigarettes compared to the females. Symptoms such as depression are more likely to be diagnosed in female than male.

Griffin (2006) contended that the level of occupational stress experienced by the male and female police officers had little differences between the genders. Well, Colbert and slate (2006) pointed out that females police reported physical symptoms of stress while their male counterpart reported experiencing burnout. Males are accustomed to suppressing their emotions when experiencing occupational stress. Agolla (2008) asserts that most of the times, it is difficult for some male police officers to seek professional help from their friends when they experience work-family conflict and negative coping among themselves, because they think they will be viewed as weak. This denial to seek help could be as a result of the perception of the police officer feeling that such help will only reveal to their colleagues their weakness to withstand challenges that go with the job, hence the officers easily fall victim to stress. Mikkelsen and Burke (2004) argue that female police officers are more likely to use emotionally focused coping strategies compared to male police officers who use problem focused coping strategies. Wendy (2008) says that most studies done on police stress and gender focus on male or female officers separately.

III. Objective Of The Study

To establish the relationship between gender and levels of occupational stress among police constables in Kisumu County.

IV. Hypothesis

There is no statistically significant relationship between gender and level of occupational stress among police constables in Kisumu County.

V. Methodology

This study adopted an ex-post factor design . Stratified random sampling technique was used to sample 105 police constables and 4 Officers Commanding Station (OCS). The data was collected using a Police Constable Questionnaire and an Officer Commanding Station Interview Schedule. The instruments were validated by experts while reliability was estimated by use of Cronbach Alpha method for internal consistency. The questionnaire yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.88. Quantitative and qualitative data were obtained. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences for Windows (Version 20).

VI. Findings And Discussions

The objective of the research was to determine whether there was a relationship between gender and occupational stress. Data was first analyzed using descriptive statistics to enable the researcher to describe and summarize the data. To facilitate the analysis, the instrument used to analyze data was measured on 5 point Likert scale with Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). However, in this study the responses of Strongly Agree (SA) were combined with Agree (A) to get Agree. Responses of Disagree (D) were combined with responses of Strongly Disagree (SD) to get disagree (D) so as to facilitate data analysis. The mean was the preferred measure of central tendency used because it provided the average value of the data set. Standard deviation was considered because of the most stable measure of variability and illuminated the amount of spread in data. Chi-Square was used to test the relationships. The selected demographic variables was gender among police constables and Chi-square tests were conducted to find out whether there was statistically significant relationship between gender and level of occupational stress.

Relationship between Gender and Level of Occupational Stress

The study sought to determine the relationship between the gender and level of occupational stress. The results are presented in Table 1

Table 1: Gender of Police Constables

Gender	N	Mean
Male	94	24.35
Female	11	22.45
Total	105	

The results on Table 1 show the difference between the gender of the police constable and level of occupational stress. Majority (M=24.35) of the respondents were male compared to the female (M= 22.45). This implies gender was a factor in influencing the level of occupational stress. However the percentage of the male experiencing occupational stress was on the increase.

Table 2: Gender and Level of Occupational Stress

Level of Occupational Stress	Observed	N	%	Expected N	Residual
Low (25 -37.5)	1	5	14.3	26.3	-11.3
Moderate (38 -62.5)	3	9	37.1	26.3	12.8
High (63 -87.5)	3	9	37.1	26.3	12.8
Very high (88 -125)	1	2	11.5	26.3	-14.3
Total	105	100			

The results presented in Tables 2 show that a majority (37.1%) of the respondents were experiencing high and moderate levels of occupational stress compared to 14.3% who experience low levels of occupation stress and 11.5% very high level of occupational stress. This implies that males were experiencing high to moderate level of occupational stress. Further Chi-Square test was done to determine the relationship between gender and the level of occupational stress. The result was presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Relationship between Gender and Level of Occupational Stress

Test Statistics	Gender	Level of Occupational Stress
Chi- Square	65.610	24.943
df	3	3
Sig	.000	.000

$\chi^2 = 65.610$ $p < 0.05$

The results in Table 3 showed that there was a relationship which was found between the two variables. The results showed Chi- Square value ($\chi^2 = 65.610$) was greater than critical value of 24.943 at 3 degrees of freedom tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance ($65.610 > 24.943$, $df = 3$). Therefore, the study rejected the null hypothesis which means that there was relationship between gender of the police constable and level of occupational stress was rejected. This indicated that there was significant relationship between gender of the police constable and level of occupational stress. The results concurred with findings of the research conducted by Louw (2007). His findings revealed that there is a positive relationship between the gender and levels of stress ($\chi^2 = 1.843$, $df = 5$ $p = 0.066 > 0.05$). The female police officers were experiencing more stress compared to the male police officers. This could be attributed to the fact that, police work environment was an exceeding masculinized organization where male police are expected to be tough and to suppress their emotions especially fear, vulnerability, and injury.

VII. Conclusion

It was concluded that gender of the police constables contributed to the level of occupational stress.

VIII. Recommendations

The study established that gender of the police constables influenced level of occupational stress. The study should be replicated with large representation of female police constables and be conducted in other counties. The study recommends that: Police service commission should develop a policy on stress management to guide the induction, operations and counselling of Police Constables on their day to day duties.

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