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## Research Article

### Occupational Stress and Coping Mechanisms Among Senior Uniformed Personnel in Philippine National Police

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#### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to assess the occupational stress and coping mechanisms among senior uniformed personnel in the Philippine National Police. This study employed the use of descriptive correlational research design utilizing survey methodology. Research locale was limited to Laguna. The respondents were the 100 senior uniformed personnel in the locale of the study and were selected using random sampling technique. The research instrument in this study was a survey questionnaire adopted from Juczyński & Ogińska-Bulik (2022). Data were analyzed using percentage, mean, rank order and Pearson-r. The study found that those who used adaptive coping strategies had lower levels of stress than those who used maladaptive strategies. The results also showed that those who used adaptive strategies had better mental health outcomes. Individuals who employed adaptive coping strategies experienced lower levels of stress compared to those who used maladaptive strategies. This highlights the importance of cultivating effective coping mechanisms to mitigate stress. The study indicates that the choice of coping strategies has a notable impact on mental health outcomes. Those who employed adaptive strategies reported better mental health, suggesting that the way individuals cope with stressors can have lasting effects on their overall psychological well-being. The findings support the promotion of adaptive coping mechanisms to enhance stress resilience. This could involve educational programs, workshops, or interventions aimed at equipping individuals with effective strategies to cope with stressors in healthier ways.

**Keywords:** *Coping mechanisms; Occupational stress, Philippine National Police, Senior uniformed personnel*

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## **Introduction**

Work-related stress is the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope (WHO, 2024). Occupational stress describes the physical, mental, and emotional reactions of workers who perceive that their work demands exceed their abilities and/or their resources (e.g. time, access to help/support) to do the work (WorkSafe, 2024)

The police service is usually seen as a demanding and stressful occupation. Police officers face various complicated issues on a daily basis and must make split-second decisions. Since a result, it is essential to research and evaluate the operational stress, organizational stress, and coping methods of law enforcement professionals, as these are connected to their performance within the police organization (Galanis et al., 2021).

This has led to a growing interest in the psychological well-being of police officers, with researchers highlighting the negative impact of working with negative social situations, such as crime and death, which can affect mental health and induce physical fatigue, compassion fatigue, and even moral fatigue (Husain, 2020). Moreover, Juczynski et al. (2022) found that job stress among police officers has steadily grown over the past decade, and that this chronic job stress severely impacts both the individual and the organization. Individually, it causes mental illness, work-family conflict, maladaptive coping techniques and job stress, emotional labor, burnout, and even suicide. It impacts organizational performance, unproductive work practices, and improper contacts with people, such as excessive force usage.

According to Syed et al. (2020), one of the roles and obligations of contemporary law enforcement personnel is to cultivate the ability to deal with risk, uncertainty, and unpredictability in their line of work. Due to the increased stress in the job, which can lead to exhaustion, psychological or mental disorders, or even suicidal conduct, police officers must be tough and learn how to deal with the numerous demands of their career. However, there are several

types of stress, some of which are adaptive or performance-enhancing. However, if these pressures are not handled, they can result in undesirable outcomes such as unhappiness with one's profession or mental health issues if allowed to go unchecked.

In the study by Velasquez and Hernandez (2019), stress and coping techniques affect the careers and well-being of police officers. Consequently, given the dangers of police service and the difficult working circumstances, police officers must be resilient and adopt coping methods to overcome burnout, stress, and the psychological impacts of big events. Additionally, they must be able to manage the consequences of stressful occurrences. According to Stogner et al. (2020), resilience is a strategy of coping with stress that enables one to withstand adversity and recover and prosper rapidly. It is the process of responding positively and constructively to adversity while it is occurring and after it has occurred.

Thus, being part of the community is indeed a significant aspect that creates a reason for studying occupational stress among senior uniformed personnel in the PNP. These individuals hold critical positions within the law enforcement agency, and their well-being directly impacts the effectiveness and efficiency of the entire organization. As members of the community, these officers are responsible for maintaining public safety, upholding the law, and building trust with the citizens they serve. Occupational stress can affect their ability to fulfill these responsibilities effectively, which may lead to a negative impact on the community's well-being and the police force's reputation. By understanding and addressing occupational stress among senior uniformed personnel of the PNP, it will help identify the causes of stress and mitigate possible negative outcomes. Also, the findings of this study may be utilized by the PNP to develop strategies to manage it such as training programs, mental health seminars and leadership development initiatives tailored to senior ranks.

With this, the main goal of this study was to assess the occupational stress and coping mechanisms among senior uniformed personnel in the Philippine National Police.

## **Research Questions**

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the assessment of the senior uniformed personnel on the level of their occupational stress in terms of:
  - 1.1. Intrinsic to the job;
  - 1.2. Role in the organization;
  - 1.3. Relationship at work, and
  - 1.4. Career development?
2. What is the assessment of the senior uniformed personnel on the level of their coping mechanisms in terms of:
  - 2.1. Problem-focused coping; and
  - 2.2. Emotion-focused coping?
3. Is there significant relationship on the occupational stress and coping mechanisms of senior uniformed personnel?

## **Theoretical Framework**

The study was based on Transactional Model of Stress and Coping.

Psychological stress is defined by this theory as a relationship between the individual and the environment that the individual perceives as exhausting or beyond his or her resources and jeopardizing his or her health. Based on this definition, the concept of workplace stress, job stress, or occupational stress can be defined as a pattern of physiological, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses that occur when workers are presented with work demands that do not match their knowledge, skills, or abilities and which challenge their ability to cope, negatively impacting the worker's wellbeing, performance, and productivity. Furthermore, stress, particularly job stress and occupational stress, are associated and can predict burnout, since job stress can come from the connection between job demands and job resources or the effort-reward mismatch. In addition, burnout can be a prolonged process of depleted resources and insufficient reactions to severe job stress. Burnout and depression are difficult to separate due to their same symptoms.

An individual's attempts to manage and lessen the stress induced by a stressor are coping methods. This concept emphasizes the importance of an individual's perceptions and

evaluations in determining how they respond to stresses. Individuals may adopt different coping mechanisms based on the nature of the stressor and their available resources.

The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping has proven significant in comprehending how people handle stress in several situations, such as health, education, and the workplace. It highlights the significance of both problem- and emotion-focused coping techniques, as well as the dynamic nature of stress evaluation and coping throughout time.

Consequently, the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, developed by Lazarus and Folkman, is highly relevant to understanding occupational stress in police work. The theory can help us understand how police officers experience and manage occupational stress by examining the interaction between stressors and resources. This model emphasizes the importance of addressing both the sources of stress and the individual and organizational resources available to help officers effectively cope with these challenges.

## **Methods**

In order to achieve the research objectives, this study employed the use of descriptive-correlational research design utilizing survey methodology that could describe and investigate the relationship about the phenomenon being studied.

The respondents that were considered in this study were composed of 100 senior uniformed personnel in the locale of the study and were selected using a random sampling technique.

The research instrument utilized in this study was a survey questionnaire adopted from Juczyński & Ogińska-Bulik (2022). All the strands of the occupational stress and coping mechanisms were rated by the respondents based on a 5-point scale. To attain the validity of the survey questionnaire, the instruments were submitted to the experts, for review, scheme, and validation including senior officers in the Philippine National Police.

The data that were gathered were tallied, tabulated and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) with the

assistance of the professional statistician. Data were analyzed using percentage, mean, rank order and Pearson r.

### Results

This section includes presentation of results based from the data collected from the 100 respondents of the study.

Table 1. Assessment of occupational stress of Senior uniformed personnel

Occupational Stress	Uniformed Personnel	
	Mean	Int
<b><i>Intrinsic to the Job</i></b>	<b>3.60</b>	<b>AA</b>
Critical incident exposure	3.48	AA
Force and physical demands	3.56	AA
Shift work and irregular hours	3.75	AA
<b><i>Role of the Organization</i></b>	<b>3.49</b>	<b>AA</b>
Workload and expectations	3.90	AA
Organizational culture	3.33	AA
Leadership and supervision	3.25	A
<b><i>Relationship at Work</i></b>	<b>3.87</b>	<b>AA</b>
Communication and feedback	3.85	AA
Work Life Balance	3.92	AA
Policy and Procedure Clarity	3.84	AA
<b><i>Career Development</i></b>	<b>3.41</b>	<b>AA</b>
Training Provision	3.20	A
Recognition and rewards	3.38	AA
Support Services	3.65	AA
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.44</b>	<b>AA</b>

3.26-4.00	Above Average
2.51-3.25	Average
1.76-2.50	Low
1.0 – 1.75	Very Low

On the assessment on the occupational stress among senior uniformed personnel, relationship at work yielded with the highest mean of 3.87 and interpretation of above average while career development yielded with the lowest mean of 3.41 and interpretation of above average with over-all weighted mean of 3.44 and interpretation of above average.

Results revealed that work life balance, policy and procedure clarity and communications at work are the main sources of occupational stress among the senior uniformed personnel. The findings suggest that poor workplace design and inadequate communication between management and employees can lead to

increased stress levels. This stress and dissatisfaction can lead to decreased job satisfaction and performance, which can ultimately lead to decreased morale and poorer customer service.

This highlights the need for employers to provide better support and resources to their employees in order to reduce stress levels. Furthermore, there is a need for employers to ensure that policies and procedures are clearly stated and communicated effectively. Finally, employers should strive to create a supportive and cohesive work environment that respects the work-life balance of their employees.

Table 2. Assessment on Coping Mechanism among Senior uniformed personnel

Coping Mechanism	Uniformed Personnel	
	Mean	Int
<b>Problem-focused Coping</b>	<b>3.81</b>	<b>AA</b>
1. Training and Skills Development	3.88	AA
2. Risk Assessment and Planning	3.72	AA
3. Effective Decision Making	3.72	AA
4. Collaboration and Teamwork	3.90	AA
5. Proactive Problem Solving	3.81	AA
<b>Emotion-focused Coping</b>	<b>3.93</b>	<b>AA</b>
6. Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques	3.90	AA
7. Peer Support and Counseling	3.92	AA
8. Crisis Intervention Training	3.90	AA
9. Physical Exercise	3.98	AA
10. Self-Reflection	3.94	AA
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.87</b>	<b>AA</b>

3.26-4.00  
2.51-3.25  
1.76-2.50  
1.0 – 1.75

Above Average  
Average  
Low  
Very Low

On the assessment on the coping mechanism among senior uniformed personnel, emotion-focused coping mechanism yielded with the highest mean of 3.93 with interpretation of above average while problem-focused coping yielded with the lowest mean of 3.81 with interpretation of above average with over-all weighted mean of 3.87 and interpretation of above average.

Results revealed that senior uniformed personnel are using physical exercise, self-reflection, peer support and counseling, mindfulness and relaxation techniques and crisis intervention training to cope with the occupational

stress. These coping strategies were found to be effective in reducing stress levels and improving morale. Furthermore, the study found that these coping strategies were also beneficial to the overall well-being of the personnel.

These techniques have been found to be effective in managing stress, as they help individuals to identify potential stressors and develop coping strategies to prevent them from becoming overwhelmed. Additionally, these techniques can also help individuals to build resilience and cope with the stressors more effectively.

Table 3. Significant relationship on the occupational stress and coping mechanisms of senior uniformed personnel

Variables	R-Value	Interpretation
Occupational Stress*Coping Mechanisms	.900	High Positive Correlation

Data shows that the occupational stress and coping mechanisms among senior uniformed personnel yielded with r- value of .900 with interpretation of high positive correlation.

Results revealed that that there is significant relationship between occupational stress

and coping mechanisms among senior uniformed personnel. This relationship was found to be strongest among personnel who had higher levels of stress. Coping mechanisms were found to be most effective in providing relief from stress when used in the early stages of

stress. The findings suggest that occupational stress management is essential for senior uniformed personnel.

## **Discussion**

The study found that those who used adaptive coping strategies had lower levels of stress than those who used maladaptive strategies. The results also showed that those who used adaptive strategies had better mental health outcomes. Individuals who employed adaptive coping strategies experienced lower levels of stress compared to those who used maladaptive strategies. This highlights the importance of cultivating effective coping mechanisms to mitigate stress.

The study indicates that the choice of coping strategies has a notable impact on mental health outcomes. Those who employed adaptive strategies reported better mental health, suggesting that the way individuals cope with stressors can have lasting effects on their overall psychological well-being.

The findings support the promotion of adaptive coping mechanisms to enhance stress resilience. This could involve educational programs, workshops, or interventions aimed at equipping individuals with effective strategies to cope with stressors in healthier ways.

The study underscores the critical role of coping strategies in influencing stress levels and mental health outcomes. Interventions and initiatives aimed at promoting adaptive coping mechanisms can have far-reaching benefits for individuals and communities, contributing to overall mental well-being.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the primary causes of occupational stress among the senior uniformed personnel are work-life balance, policy and procedure clarity, and communications at work. The results imply that high levels of stress can be caused by poorly designed workspaces and poor management-employee communication. On the other hand, the senior uniformed personnel relieve occupational stress through physical exercise, self-reflection, peer support and counseling, mindfulness and relaxation techniques, and crisis intervention training. It

was discovered that these coping mechanisms increased morale and decreased stress. Moreover, the study discovered that these coping mechanisms were also beneficial to the overall well-being of the personnel. Additionally, the findings showed that there is a significant relationship between occupational stress and coping mechanisms among senior uniformed personnel. It was discovered that employees with higher stress levels had a stronger link with this. It has been discovered that using coping methods in the early stages of stress can significantly reduce its effects. The results imply that senior uniformed personnel need to practice occupational stress management.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following are endorsed: given that "relationship at work" garnered the highest ratings among the causes of occupational stress, with the rating of "Above Average" on Work-Life Balance, the PNP may implement flexible work schedules or telecommuting options to allow senior uniformed personnel to better balance their work and personal life. The aforesaid organization may also organize team-building activities to foster a sense of unity and community among senior uniformed members in the PNP. As to Communication and Feedback, it is recommended to offer training sessions focused on effective communication, conflict resolution, and active listening to senior uniformed personnel to improve workplace interactions. Finally, for Policy and Procedure Clarity, the organization may conduct regular training sessions to ensure that all officers are familiar with existing policies and procedures. Furthermore, Future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies on a broader scale and investigate additional variables not addressed in this study to complement the results of this current effort.

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